

## Hints for Helping At Home

As parents we often ask how we can help our children with mathematics at home. Here are some ideas that might help.

**Be more concerned with the processes of doing mathematics than with getting the correct answer.** The answer to any particular problem has very little importance, but knowing HOW to find the answer is a lifetime skill.

**Practice estimation with your children whenever possible.** Estimation helps the thinking about a problem that precedes the doing, and is one of the most useful and “sense-making” tools available.

**Don't expect that all homework will be easy for your child or be disappointed that it seems difficult.**

**Try not to tell children how to solve the problem.** Once they have been told how to do it, thinking usually stops. Better to ask them questions about the problem and help them find their own methods of working it through.

**Be ready to talk with your children about mathematics and to listen to what they are saying.** Even if you yourself don't know how to solve a problem, asking a good question can open up a problem and help develop a strategy. Following are some questions that you might try; notice that none of them can be answered with a simple “yes” or “no.”

### **Getting Started**

What do you know now?

What do you need to find out?

How might you begin?

### **While Working**

How can you organize your information?

How can you make a drawing (model) to explain your thinking?

What would happen if...?

What approach (strategy) are you developing to solve this?

What do you need to do next?

What patterns or relationships do you see?

What predictions can you make?

Why did you...?

What assumptions are you making?

### **Reflecting About the Solution**

How can you show your solution (conclusion) is reasonable?

How did you arrive at your answer?

What did you try that didn't work? Why didn't it work?

### **Responding**

Why do you think that?

What else can you tell me about that?

How can you explain it in a different way?

What other possibilities are there?

**Good questions and good listening will help your children make sense of mathematics, build their confidence, and encourage mathematical thinking and communication.**