

EDUCATION NEWS AND NOTES

Parents Are Part Of Equation For Teens' Math Success

(NAPSA)—National U.S. Department of Education studies show that high school students with strong math backgrounds are more likely to go to college, finish faster and earn more money. With today's competitive job market, strong math skills are increasingly important for future success. Yet, the U.S. Department of Labor reports, only 20 percent of the workforce possesses the skills required by 60 percent of all new jobs early this century.

In fact, math-focused college degrees, including engineering, economics, marketing and computer science, are all among the most lucrative for entry-level salaries. The top careers of the future, according to U.S. News & World Report, such as a green consultant, investment banker or patient advocate, will require math, science and technology backgrounds that your student should begin working on in middle school.

"Math skills are critical to the future success of our high school students and learning doesn't stop in the classroom," said Gail Burrill, math teacher and former president of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM). "Parents are a critical part of the equation for helping teens gain a strong foundation in math and making sure their children have the background they need to succeed."

Burrill, who has been honored with the Presidential Award for Excellence in Teaching Mathematics, has several tips for parents to help their teen find the right path to math success:

1. Strong math skills start at home.

Whether or not you enjoy or



were good at math yourself, children need encouragement to learn that hard work and persistence are important for success and understanding in math. Be sure they attend school on a regular basis. Be positive and inquisitive—ask how things are going in class, encourage your children to work hard and help them find solutions if they are struggling. By paying attention to your teen's education and expressing high expectations for their success, they learn that their math education is a priority.

2. Math is important for any career.

People with strong math backgrounds are more likely to be employed and earn more, even if they have not gone to college. Math is also an important skill for people in all stages of life to make decisions about such issues as personal finance, health or property management. Without taking a challenging math curriculum throughout high school, teens' career options will be seriously limited. Building a strong foundation in math should begin in middle school, allowing them to succeed in math through their high school years and beyond.

3. The right tools can make all the difference.

Math can sometimes be a chal-

lenge for even the best students, so make sure your student has the right tools for success. For example, research shows that students do better in math when they use a graphing calculator at home and in class, like the TI-Nspire from Texas Instruments. For additional help with class work, check with your student's math teacher or counselor to see if your school provides resources, such as a homework hotline, organized study group, tutoring program, after-school program or even extra credit work. If not, check to see if your state education department or state mathematics organization offers some support.

4. Show teens that math is important in everyday life.

Showing students how to relate math to the "real world" will help them understand why it's important. Figuring out the remaining cell phone minutes on their monthly plan, how to balance their first checkbook or the difference between the weekly cost of driving a car and taking the bus all require math skills. If students know that math can help them make good decisions every day, they are more likely to want to learn.

5. Ensure that they take four years of high-quality math in high school.

All students should be enrolled in challenging, high-quality math courses. If your student is entering high school in the next few years, plan to work with a counselor to create an academic program that allows your child to take a challenging math course every year to be sure he or she has the preparation that can open doors for career options in the future.