

Talking it out hones math skills

• Educators share tips to prevent summer slide.

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As studies have shown, children can lose up to three months of academic progress over the summer because of the absence of learning and engagement. This, for educators, is often called the summer slide.

Ginger Rowston, Rome City Schools Family Engagement Coordinator, works to inform individuals on what activities are important in helping children prevent the summer slide.

"One of the most important ways to prevent the summer slide is to use intentional math talk. This is intentionally talking about math in a way where there is no pressure, as well as talking about math in a way to keep children engaged in numbers. You can do this while driving in the car, at the dinner table, while folding laundry, waiting at the doctor's office and more. The practice does not require pen and paper, which is automatically more appealing to students," said Rowston.

An example of intentional math talk would be to ask your child a math question such as, "What is 37 plus 3 tens?" Every time they give an answer ask your child, "How do you know that?" The goal is to encourage feedback from the child and it does not matter if they are right or wrong. The point is to talk about the math, not about correct answers.

Other examples on intentional math talk could be playing a game called "Would You Rather?" Playing this game starts with asking your child, "Would you rather have 30 percent off of a pair of jeans or \$30 off your entire price?" Always be sure to ask "Well, how did you know that?" There is no pressure, and no getting it right or wrong; it's just simply talking about it with your student.

"What I love about intentional math talk is that it is a variation of the number talks our students hear every day at school. Rome City Schools' students are already prepared with these strategies, so we aren't asking parents to do anything but ask their children questions. They are going to learn so much about what their kids are doing with intentional math talk at home," explained Rowston.

Some key points for parents to remember are to keep the learning casual, make it meaningful and make it intentional. Always be interested in the subject and engaged in the conversation.

"If a parent is really interested, it makes it more authentic to the child. Keep it short. Don't make it boring but do it often," said Smith. "We really wanted to provide things parents can do that doesn't take any more time, and initiates a social period between the adults and the children," said Rowston.

"We know that technology is great but we really want to encourage parents to talk with their children, have conversations, play board games and read books together. We want interaction and making those connections with our children is so important," said Rowston.

"The best thing we can do for our children is to communicate and interact with them," Rowston continued. "When they come to school it helps with their behavior if they know they have made connections, and they know they have those connections with parents and others around them."