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Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from Readers Read. Writers Write. Mathers Math!.

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Early Literacy + Early Numeracy = Academic Success

What if I told you that early numeracy skills are one of the best predictors of long-term academic success, not only in math but across other content areas as well? In a study initially conducted to determine the connection between school readiness and later academic achievement, Duncan and colleagues (2007), discovered that early math skills were the greatest predictor of academic success, followed by reading and attention skills. Yes, you heard right, early mathematics skills—not reading—was found to best predict future reading and math achievement. While reading and language development were important, foundational math skills were found to matter most. Playful math experiences and leveraging children's born math abilities, such as noticing patterns and manipulating numbers, are critical to laying the groundwork for students to thrive in later grades.

A similar study conducted by Romano and others (2010), looked at family relationships and support, social-emotional behaviors, and reading and math abilities of kindergarten students. They found that early literacy and numeracy skills were the strongest predictor of academic achievement through third grade.

In a more recent study, Mononen and colleagues (2014) found that later math achievement could be predicted by children's performance on preschool math tasks. They also found that supporting students early on with moving through the concrete-representational-abstract process and engaging them in games improved the performance of those struggling with math tasks. This means that early interventions in mathematics have a lasting impact on students' academic achievement overall.

TIP

Simple adjustments to language can make a big difference in students' attitudes toward tasks. The next time you are solving word problems with students, introduce the "math story" with a smile and curiosity about the problem you will get to solve.

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Source: [istock.com/FatCamera](https://www.istock.com/FatCamera)

So, do I have your attention now?

Shouldn't we invest more time, energy, and resources in professional learning focused on mathematics instruction? Isn't it critically important for educators to prioritize building a community of readers, writers, and **mathers**? What can we learn from literacy instruction to support us as we strive to redefine the core academic skills as reading, writing, and mathing? The first lesson is that when we introduce reading and writing, we take the time to lay a solid foundation. We spend time learning about the sounds 'a' makes, the symbol that represents it, and how it can help us form words. Children learn one letter at a time, blend letters, and eventually decode words. They are read to before they can read their own stories and are given opportunities to discuss elements of a story they cannot decode independently yet. Why do we take this approach? Because we want students to learn to read fluently and accurately, but we ultimately want them to comprehend what they are reading. This takes time. So, what does this look like in math?

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Well, let's start with the basics. Just as reading begins with A, B, C, mathing begins with 1, 2, 3. We want students to be fluent

and accurate, but we also want them to develop conceptual understanding. We want them to be flexible thinkers who understand number relationships, and that takes time.



READ. WRITE. MATH. CONNECT.

When teaching students to read, we introduce letters and their sounds one at a time. Students explore the things in their environment that start with that letter and practice making the letter sounds before blending the letters to make words. Consider introducing numerals in similar ways. Before students are introduced to expressions and equations, they need lots of practice connecting the number symbols to quantities. As they learn to write each numeral, take time to support them with connecting the symbol to multiple representations like fingers, drawings, and items in their environment. Answering the question “How many?” is critical to developing number sense.

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