



KINDERGARTEN

The theme for this issue is:

REPORTING PROGRESS



We hope you find the information helpful in preparing for report cards and conferences!

Reporting Progress: Report Cards & Parent/Teacher Conferences



Effective communication of student progress in *Math Trailblazers* is essential to the success of the program. Sharing growth with parents as well as helping them understand the diversity in levels of conceptual understanding is an important goal. This also solidifies that their children are provided with rich, challenging opportunities to solve meaningful math problems. This approach shapes strategies and helps in developing computational skills. As students develop their mathematical understanding of concepts, they are able to support and clarify their thinking.

The structure of parent/teacher conferences should include a sharing of student work and progress toward building conceptual understanding. This kind of communication can be quite helpful for parents experiencing *Math Trailblazers* for the first time with their children and aids them when their assistance is required during homework sessions.

*Kitty Rutherford
Salem Elementary Academically Gifted Teacher
Wake County Math/Science Coach
North Carolina*





MTB Tips



The word “assess” literally means in Latin to “sit down beside,” affording you the opportunity to question the students, watch how they solve a problem, and listen as they explain their thinking.

GRADE ONE

Conferences Best Way to Communicate Goals



I remember my first parent conference very clearly. It was with a mom and a dad. They had the “I am not happy look.” You know the one...arms crossed, eyebrows furrowed, mouths turned down. I had the “I’m scared to death” look. You know the one...shoulders hunched, wringing of the hands, dry mouth. I wish I could say that it turned out to be a great success, but that would not be true. I have, however, learned a lot through trial and error, mostly error in the beginning. The most important thing I have come to realize is that however the parents act and whatever they say, their intentions are good. That in fact, we both want the same thing. We want their child to succeed and be happy. When I came to this realization, the way I communicated with the parents changed completely. I now realize that they had a plethora of knowledge to offer me and I could use this information to better serve their child.

I have found that Parent/Teacher Conferences are the best way to communicate my goals to parents. The individual setting offers a personal connection that cannot be made during open-house. My first parent conference is always held prior to a report card being sent home. My school has a very specific way to track students’ progress. We have profile cards which are aligned to the *Math Trailblazers* curriculum. My bi-monthly progress report objectives are taken directly from the math profile cards. During our conferences I discuss my school’s “benchmarks” for the first, second, third and fourth quarter, focusing primarily on the first quarter. After explaining where the student should be and what objectives the student should have mastered, I show the parents the marked profile cards.

According to our school standards each child must be observed meeting the objective at least three times to be considered “mastered”. I use the student portfolio along with the math rubric to illustrate the marked objectives. It is a very straight forward way for the parents to see exactly what their child knows and what they need to know. Our school uses standard based grading, so the transfer from the rubric to the report card is seen less. When we have gone over all the expectations and standards we discuss their child’s level of mastery. By this time it is very clear to them whether their child should receive a 1, 2, 3, or 4 on their report card, so I ask them, “What grade would you assign to your child’s ability? You may be asking yourself, I wonder how many parents have said, “My kid deserves all 4’s”. The answer: only the parents of the children who truly earned them. This system of conferencing takes a little bit longer, but I have found that in the long run it really saves time because there are fewer questions concerning grades. One of the first things I tell the parents at open house is, “You are the expert when it comes to your child. I am the expert when it comes to curriculum and instruction. Together we will make a wonderful team.” I truly mean it.

*Julie Russo
1st Grade Teacher
Heritage Elementary School
Wake County Public Schools
Wake Forest, North Carolina*



Mr. Origin's Adventures



This picture was taken in front of the Golden Gate Bridge. I was so excited to be in San Francisco again that I started dancing for the camera! What a beautiful part of the country!

Best regards,
Mr. Origin

If Mr. Origin goes anywhere interesting with you, take a picture and send it to us!

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GRADE TWO

Reporting Progress: Report Cards, & Parent/Teacher Conferences



We have felt successful in reporting the student's progress to parents through portfolio samples, math journals, and the basic scores from daily assignments and DPP's. The combination of these components provides parents and students with a well-rounded picture of the child's mathematical academic term.

We choose papers from student work to put in the portfolio that exemplify an interesting perspective, capable problem solving or good explanations so that the focus is on the process and not simply the correct answer. The children choose the papers they will show their parents from these teacher selected samples. They choose papers they are proud of and write on an attached paper what they did well. They also choose a paper they may have had a difficult time on and describe what further goals they have in this area.

The students use their Math Journals to expand on difficult vocabulary words, write and draw about mathematical ideas and summarize each unit's content objectives. The children write reflections of their group experience in TIMS labs or in problem solving activities in their journals as well. While we only have covered a few units by the time the first conference has arrived, there is much growth and insight to share with parents from our Math Journals by second semester. The children's command of the vocabulary has increased as well as their confidence to "talk about math" in their own words.

The traditional collection of math scores from daily work and Daily Practice Problems are recorded in categories that match our district indicators. Some activities are more appropriately scored by rubrics. Samples of papers scored by rubrics are collected and discussed to support the philosophy of respecting the process as well as reaching the correct answer. We combine these scores with the anecdotal records that are collected each week, regardless of the work that has been completed, to ensure that our markings are meaningful. Nothing means more than comments that directly tell about the mathematical behaviors we observe in our students.

While we are still fine-tuning our process of presenting the whole child during our conferences, we feel positive about the direction in which we are heading. Our goal is to show-case the multi-dimensional qualities and different learning styles that can be observed as our children experience math the *Math Trailblazers* way.

Jan Green
Angie Webb
Kathy Farwell
Hillcrest Elementary
Lawrence, Kansas



GRADE THREE

Math Trailblazers and Parent Communication

MTB Tips

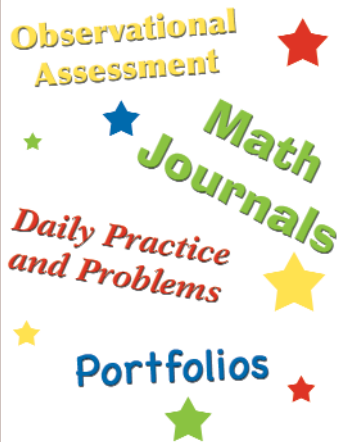


Each year when school is coming to an end and teachers are packing things away for the summer, we are assembling our portfolio assessment books for the next year. At our open house a few days before school starts, we share the booklets with parents so they are aware of what their child will be learning and then assessed on throughout the year. We also take this time to share examples of parent notes from the *Math Trailblazers* program that will be coming home throughout the year. These notes help to emphasize the importance of parental involvement.

During the first week of school, we begin our assessments to identify the skills our students already possess, as well as skills we will need to focus on. We developed a monthly assessment tool based on the state standards and the *Math Trailblazers* pacing chart to monitor progress. These are incorporated into our assessment books which are shared with parents during parent/teacher conferences. The skills in the assessment book are also reflected on the child's report card. Mid term reports are sent home to show progress as well as inform parents of skills not yet mastered.

The assessment books have been a wonderful organizational tool for us as teachers because it allows tutors, aides, or volunteers to be able to walk in to our classroom, grab a book and know exactly what that child needs to work on. At the end of the year, the assessment books are sent home so that parents can see their child's accomplishments but to also know what to focus on over the summer.

Jami Dakin and Korie Ranger
Village Elementary School
Emporia Kansas



Remember that the only fair way to assess a student's growth is by using a convergence of evidence.

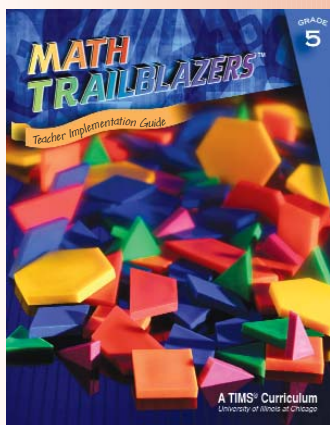




GRADE FOUR

Parents and *Math Trailblazers*

MTB Tips



Remember to revisit **Section 8** of the *Teacher Implementation Guide* for many resources on assessment!



As a team leader for my school and a facilitator for professional development for Wake County Schools, I am often asked how to explain *Math Trailblazers* to parents. Often, the parents are frustrated with the many “new ways” of learning math. After a thorough explanation and demonstration of the program parents feel much more comfortable. There are several steps that I have used to, hopefully, make the parents feel more at ease.

Start the year with a curriculum night. At this time, give a brief overview of the *Math Trailblazers*’ philosophy, the research on math education, and the spiraling. Model a lesson for them. Explain that there are many ways to solve math and what works for the parent may not work for the student. It is our job to teach all the different ways and then let the child use the method that best works for him. For example, show them that 2 and 3 digit multiplication can be solved in a variety of ways. Let them try the new ways. They may even show you yet another method. Explain that mastery of objectives comes in time. Children learn at different paces and *Math Trailblazers* accommodates the pace by addressing the same standards every 3-4 weeks. I always stress to the children and parents that “if at first you don’t succeed, TOGETHER.... we will try, try again.” Either send home the parent letter at the beginning of each unit, or give math tips in a newsletter. Invite parents in to observe lesson or help in lessons.

I always invite the student to be a part of the conference. This holds the child accountable to explain what the work was and their method for solving problems. I hope that having the student explain will, ultimately, help the parent understand the way his or her child thinks. At conferences, many parents want to know how their child is being challenged to use higher order thinking skills. Pull out the Student Guide and show them examples. Show them the URG and the type of questions you ask. The parents often ask how the previously learned material is reinforced. Show them the DPP’s. Explain the bits, tasks, and challenges. Again, explain the spiraling.

Next, since I am in an upper grade, the parents want to know if *Math Trailblazers* will prepare the students for middle school. I explain the textbook adoption process and how middle school teachers were involved. Finally, and perhaps the most important, I think that we as teachers must be confident in the program and let that confidence show through our enthusiasm.

At my school, we have had much success with using some of these simple methods for helping parents understand *Math Trailblazers*.

Ann Rowland
4th grade Teacher
Briarcliff Elementary
Wake County Public Schools
Cary, North Carolina



GRADE FIVE

Content Related Parent Conferences



Have you ever greeted your students in the morning only to hear “Guess what? My parents showed me a shortcut to my math homework last night!” That’s when you get that tightness in your chest wondering if the parents, in their zeal to help their child, showed algorithms that you were not ready to give.

We all believe that forming a partnership with parents will benefit students in our school. *Math Trailblazers* has always seen the importance of this relationship. Monthly letters explain to parents the unit’s main focus. But there are additional strategies our school utilizes to help parents understand the philosophy of *Math Trailblazers*.

During the first month of school our school schedules a parent meeting to discuss the philosophy of *Math Trailblazers*. During this initial meeting, we show how reform math looks different from traditional math, discuss how math facts are addressed in the program (that’s always a big topic of discussion), and explain the spiraling curriculum. While parents have enjoyed these sessions, we have found it necessary to schedule another time with parents of 4th and 5th graders.

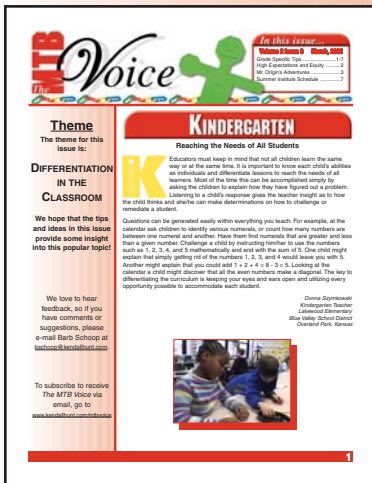
During this second math meeting, we discuss the algorithms that look so much different than “the way I learned.” Parents work as students on all-partials method multiplication, forgiving method in division, and adding unlike fractions using rectangles. Parents have found these sessions to be quite helpful and we get a lot of positive feedback.

By scheduling these two nights, parents seem more comfortable with *Math Trailblazers* and a stronger bond is built between home and school.

Carmen McDermott
5th Grade Teacher
Prairie Hills Elementary
Colorado Springs, Colorado

Want to Share Your Ideas?

Then volunteer to write an article or submit tips for **The MTB Voice!**



The next issue will focus on keeping the pace and we are looking for volunteers to submit ideas and write articles. The deadline for submissions is February 1, 2006.

If you would be interested in sharing anything for the next issue or for future issues, please email:

Barb Schoop at
bschoop@kendallhunt.com

or

submit any stories, quotes or tips at:

www.kendallhunt.com/mtbvoicesubmit