

## Suggestions for Teaching Math to Special Education Students

- 1) Teachers should pre-introduce the vocabulary (both math and English) that will appear in the class or homework assignments.
- 2) Read the instructions for the activities aloud to the students, telling them what to listen for. Ask the students to restate what they heard in their own words.
- 3) Where possible, teachers might consider breaking assignments into smaller pieces. Special education teachers refer to this as "chunking."
- 4) Explicitly teach cooperative learning skills. That is, discuss with the students what they are expected to do when working in groups.
- 5) If the students are having difficulty working in groups, develop a long-term strategy whereby the amount of group work is steadily increased during the year. Consider using activities both for pairs and larger groups.
- 6) Grade social skills as well as mathematical skills. At the beginning of the term, make a contract with the students indicating that social skills count as part of the grade.
- 7) Give daily grades based on both behavior and achievement.
- 8) Provide rewards for good performance, aside from just good grades. For example, the class can accumulate points towards a pizza party for appropriate behavior. Other rewards for staying on task and completing work might include the opportunity to play a "math game," or simply ten minutes of social time at the end of the period. Be tough, though; if students do not behave appropriately, you should withhold the reward.
- 9) Don't give the majority of your attention to those students who are acting out or otherwise misbehaving. At least 80% of your attention should be giving positive reinforcement to students who are doing what they should. An optimal ratio is to give five positive comments for each negative one. Students act out to gain attention. In the suggested model, attention is given to the students who are on task rather than off.
- 10) Teach at each student's level: not too high ("frustration level") or too low ("mastery level."). Don't go so fast that most students are frustrated, or so slow that they are bored.