This Former Teacher Created a Business to Bridge the Gap Between Math and Creativity



Shanequa Dasher is a former teacher who is bridging the gap between math and creativity through her company Dasher Creations. She sat down with Jessica Abo to talk about her program “Calculate and Create” and shared some fun ways you can connect creativity and math with your children.

Jessica Abo: Shanequa, tell us about your background and how you became so interested in bridging the gap between math and creativity.

Shanequa Dasher:
As a classroom educator for over 10 years, I noticed a big disparity between children who were on the creative side and who were more logical, mathematical brains. So, I bridged that

gap through my time as a creative and realized that we could bridge the two, creativity and math, to make a program called Calculate and Create.

Tell us a little bit more about this program and how it works.

Dasher:
We provide online courses, in-person classes, and after-school programs, and we create crafts that intuitively have math included in them whether it's a measurement, learning about circumference, or learning about different types of groupings and sizes. We take those craft projects, and then we incorporate that math. I have a master's degree in curriculum and assessment and instruction; so, I used that curriculum development to create a program that's engaging, fun, and sneaks math into the craft.

What do you think is the appropriate age to start incorporating math concepts?

Dasher:
I'm calling it babydom. You can start from babydom, for example: 'You have a very small hand, and mommy has a very big hand.' Big and small are math concepts. They just don't have quantitative data to them. So, you're saying and talking and using that language with your children from the very, very beginning of birth. Just like you read to your children, give them some math concepts, that problem solving, that lovely, lovely, lovely math.

What are the four ways that we can incorporate math and creativity?

Dasher:
My tips are to become a Calculate and Create STAR. So, S, share your math thinking with your kids. Oftentimes, we do so much math thinking, and we're not even realizing it. *Oh, my gosh, I have a dollar, and I need seven more cents for the tax. What should I do? Oh, I should probably add a nickel and*

another penny. Literally, those are simple to us, but saying those things out loud for your kids makes a world of difference. They see you engaging in math thinking, and they begin to do the same.

T, take advantage of those teachable math moments. You have times in the kitchen where you're cooking, you're measuring, you're doing all of the quantities. You have times in the bathtub, when you can say that the bathtub is a quarter of the way full, half full – there's so much math thinking that can happen in your home. So, you want to just take that time to use it and take advantage of it.

The A in STAR is access. Give your students or your children access to math tools that they can use at home, whether it's a tape measure or measuring cups. Give them access to that. Give them ownership. Let them use them as they want. I know water sounds scary for you, but let them take those measuring cups and fill them up with water. It's okay. Let them take the tape measure and measure how big the TV is, measure how big their couch is. When I tell you I've done this activity with my kids, and I've given them a timer and let them do that, they have so much fun, and they don't even realize it's math.

Then R, reflect. Take about 60 seconds because, naturally, math thinking is not going to happen for you as a parent or any layman parent by themselves. I'm a teacher. I've done this for years. It doesn't even come naturally to me. You have to be intentional. Take the time to reflect on ways that you can have those experiences in your house. I have plenty of tips for it. You can visit my website for that, but take the time to reflect. Take 60 seconds and say, 'Hmm, this is how I can use math today to build confidence in your children and to really, really get them thinking mathematically.'

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