



Across the Street & Around the State

with the Homeschool Iowa Facebook Discussion Group

Curriculum Talk: Math

*Why was the math book depressed?
Because it had a lot of problems...*

Go ahead and groan. It's a classic corny math joke! Math is one of those subjects that we know is important but sometimes struggle to teach. It's pretty common for conversations about Math curriculum to come up in our private discussion group on Facebook. A foundation in the core concepts is essential to success as students progress and move on to more complex mathematical concepts. We're going to highlight the programs and curriculum that are most often recommended by the veteran members of our discussion group. Do you have a math program you love? We'd love to have you email us at editor@homeschooliowa.org and add to the conversation!

Christian Light Education:

After Christian Light Education had been recommended by several people in response to someone's question about what Math programs they should look at for their children, Hannah K. asked, "What about Christian Light do you-all enjoy?" and received several great responses!

The most detailed answer came from Brooke L., who said, "We started with Math U See, and then switched to Christian Light Education Math. It is spiral, so it practices new things and old things. And my kids need that! Also, each lesson is bite size. Once students get into the 300 or 400 levels, they are pretty self-sufficient because the teaching is right in their book." Brooke goes on to add, "The actual lesson each day is short and easy to understand by the student, so you do not have to teach it. Up through 4th or 5th, there are flashcards. But other than that, you mostly just need to be available to help, if needed. There is plenty of white space to work the problems right in the worktext. This does make the lessons seem long, but it is plenty doable in 30-45 minutes. The new information is taught, the skill is practiced for a few problems, and then it goes into 'We Remember,' which will review what was taught yesterday, last week, and last month. It's set up with a nice spiral... practices new stuff frequently, bring up older things less frequently just to refresh your memory. And then the lesson concludes with a few problems of the new information. There are also themes for the year units. One year was around the world, and included information about animals in little info boxes. And the story problems were about that. Seventh is employment themed. In our current unit, it is a construction business, so there are some story problems about labor costs, and some using geometry to figure out how much material to buy for a job. The text is pretty plain, black and green with some line drawings. The simplicity keeps my son focused."

Life of Fred:

Melanie D. asked if anyone had personal experience with the Life of Fred math curriculum because she liked what she had seen of the curriculum online, but really wanted to hear other people's personal experience before making a final decision.

Dana W., our Region 11 Representative, endorsed Life of Fred, saying, "Life of Fred is the only curriculum our son has used. It's just wonderful. We started in 3rd grade. Until then, he worked on memorizing skip counting to songs - multiplication tables, although he didn't know it! He's now finishing 6th grade and we have no plans to ever leave Fred"

Life of Fred was also highly recommended by homeschool dad, Eric V., who stated, "I've become a very big fan of Life of Fred, and our kids have engaged with it really well." Kelli K. adds that her family enjoys Life of Fred because it has "lots of outside-the-box thinking!"

Mastering Mathematics:

This suggestion came through our email from Jana M. who says, "I love Mastering Mathematics by Mastery Publications. For kids struggling with remembering math facts and the basic concepts, this program is a lifesaver. We started with Mammoth Math and it moved way to quickly for him and he just was not understanding it. I found Mastering Mathematics and it is perfect. We are taking one whole year for each thing and have covered addition, subtraction and multiplication. Next year in 6th grade we will do division. These kids need lots and lots and lots of repetitiveness to solidify the math facts and this has been working famously for us. By the time he is in 8th grade he will be ready for pre algebra. I don't ever anticipate doing high level math with this child, but perhaps we can cover algebra basics and then move on to more general math problems, household economics and etc."

Math Mammoth:

Janice H. recommends Math Mammoth as an affordable option with an extremely supportive customer service team. She says, the curriculum, "meets and exceeds common core, but also teaches old math, which is Maria's preferred method. She made it core compliant to help those that needed it to be, but you can skip portions of that if you choose. When it came to multi-digit multiplication, I showed my daughter the old way, and she caught it so fast we could skip most of Chapter 3 that year to not over-teach since so much is core math for that concept. I simply emailed Math Mammoth to ask what was safe to skip and what we should make sure we did, like the puzzle corners for higher concepts. And they emailed back right away which pages in the chapter to do for building concepts coming in future chapters and which we could skip safely since she knew how to do it. Saved us weeks!"

Math U See:

A new homeschool mom asked for advice on Math U See, wondering how comprehensive it was, what she needed to buy to get her seven-year-old started, and if she needed to also order all the