

Parrot Math

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“Hey, if it was bad enough for me, it’s bad enough for my kids”: Many of us cheerfully acknowledge that we’ve always hated math or were never any good at it. In the next breath, though, we may insist that our children be taught the same way we were – with an emphasis on memorizing facts, filling out worksheets, mindlessly applying procedures and formulas they don’t understand – in short, the very approach for whose inadequacy we are walking advertisements. The irony would be amusing if it weren’t for the fact that better math programs, along with the people who introduce, teach, or defend them, are being battered. And our kids are getting an inadequate education as a result.

The latest casualty is a very fine superintendent who, according to the New York Times, was pressured into declining a job in an affluent New Jersey district by angry parents who wanted to roll back the clock and replace a math curriculum called Investigations with a return to what one writer has called Parrot Math: worksheet and quiz, listen and repeat, drill and kill. It’s an approach that tends to be favored by three overlapping groups: nervous parents, political conservatives, and professional mathematicians (not to be confused with math educators).

In reality, we should be concerned if our kids are still

*getting traditional math instruction. We should be relieved if they're getting a richer, more meaning-based curriculum, regardless of whether it looks unfamiliar to us. To learn why this is so – and to see what the research finds when the two approaches are carefully compared – click [here](#) for an excerpt from *The Schools Our Children Deserve*.*

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