

Blame Your Parents for Your Crappy Math Skills

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Pacific Standard:

There's a seemingly constant stream of news about how bad Americans are at math, with much of the blame aimed at teachers and the sometimes confusing curricula they're supposed to teach. But, a new study suggests, parents' own anxieties about mathematics might have as much to do with kids' math abilities as teachers or the materials they're supposed to teach.

“Although the classroom is usually viewed as the primary vehicle for advancing academic achievement, parents also play an important role in students' academic success,” writes a team of psychologists led by the University of Chicago's Erin Maloney. “But what if parents are themselves anxious about the material their children are learning, as is often the case with math?”

To see how parents could pass their worries on to their kids—and hurt their test scores in the process—Maloney and her colleagues went into 29 elementary schools across the Midwest. The researchers had 438 first- and second-grade kids take standard math and reading tests at the beginning and end of the school year. During test season, the researchers posed a set of math problems (“There are 13 ducks in the water, there are 6 ducks in the grass, how many ducks are there in all?”) and situations (“being called on by a teacher to explain a math problem on the board”) to each child, who then pointed at one of five faces to indicate how nervous the problem or situation made them feel.

Read the whole story: [Pacific Standard](#)