

Cambridge Public Schools has adopted a new elementary math curriculum: Illustrative Mathematics. This problem-based curriculum makes rigorous elementary school mathematics accessible to all learners.



We are now one of the only districts in the country to use Illustrative Mathematics all the way from elementary school through high school.

What is a problem-based curriculum?

In a problem based-learning curriculum, students spend most of their class time solving interesting problems. Teachers are there to help students understand the problems, to ask them questions to make them think, and to use class discussions to make sure everyone understands the math concepts.

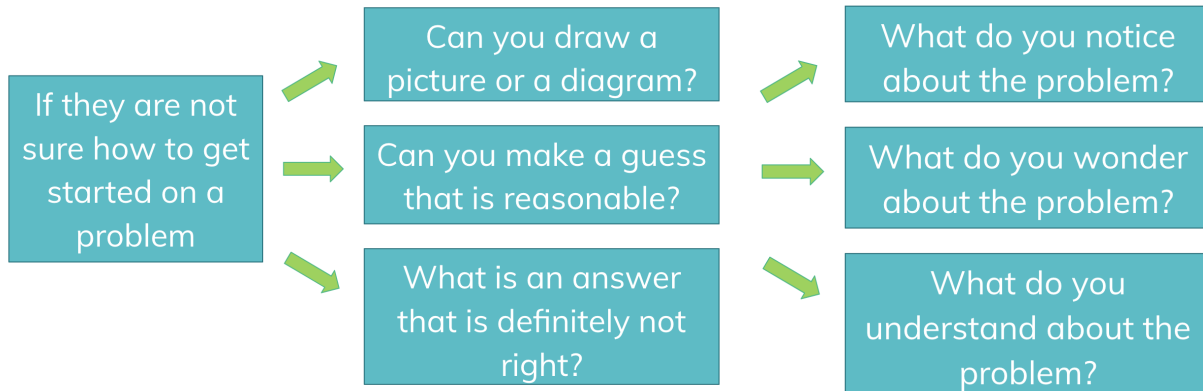
This way of learning math might be different from how grown-ups learned it when they were kids. Research shows that it's very important for kids to be able to think and solve problems in flexible ways, and to make connections between ideas. This helps them not just in their everyday lives but also in the tests they take in school.

What supports are in the materials to help my student succeed?

- **Warm-ups:** Each math class begins with a warm-up activity that introduces the day's math topic. These warm-ups follow a familiar pattern, helping students become accustomed to them. Everyone in the class is encouraged to share their thoughts and questions at this time.
- **Activity and Lesson Syntheses:** Following every activity or lesson, there's a "synthesis" time when we gather all the key math concepts and discuss them. Students have the opportunity to express what they've learned from the activity and lesson and explain how it connects to other math ideas.
- **Section Summaries:** At the end of every few lessons, there is a short summary of the important math ideas we have learned. The summary often includes pictures and sample problems. Students can use these sections to review what they have learned.
- **Representations:** The curriculum uses a few carefully chosen visual representations that students can use to make sense of mathematical ideas. Students can choose the ones that make sense to them. These visuals help students understand and solve problems.

- **Caregiver Support Materials:** Included in each unit there is a letter and a video about the unit's math content, with questions to ask or problems to work on with your student.

How can I support my student in math?



Positive Messages about Math

Thinking is more important than speed.

Errors are gifts that promote discussion.

Ask questions until ideas make sense.

Answers are important, but they are not the math.

We learn by talking about each other's ideas.

We are excited to be able to support your student in their journey toward knowing, using, and enjoying mathematics.