

Maths Lives Here

What happens when maths becomes something that brings us together, not something we do alone?



by *Rebecca Northe*
Deputy Principal
Te Mata School

Rebecca Northe is a New Zealand educator and leader known for her expertise in mathematics teaching and learning. As Deputy Principal at Te Mata School, she leads evidence-based initiatives that help students build strong foundations and confidence in maths. Her work focuses on making mathematics accessible, engaging, and meaningfully connected across home, school, and community.

*Located in Havelock North, Hawke's Bay, New Zealand, **Te Mata School** is a vibrant contributing school catering to students from Years 0–6 with over 500 students. Established in 1958, the school is known for its inclusive, innovative, and caring environment, guided by the motto "Seeking the Heights." With a strong emphasis on collaboration, continuous learning, and student voice, Te Mata offers future-focused educational experiences that nurture curiosity, courage, and confidence.*

At Te Mata School, mathematics is more than just numbers—it's connection, conversation, and confidence. It's part of our daily life, both in the classroom and beyond. Whether students are solving a problem, families are joining a community celebration, or older learners are supporting younger buddies, maths is always present, purposeful and shared.

We're committed to ensuring every student thrives in maths and we know that doesn't happen in isolation. It requires strong foundations, built on understanding, and supported by home, school and the wider community. Our approach is aligned with Goal two of our Strategic Plan: Collaborative Community Culture:

"Promoting a sense of community and encouraging students, whānau and staff to work together towards common goals which will lead to improved academic outcomes, life skills and overall student and school success."



That vision comes to life most vividly through the whānau (family) focused events that showcase how learning extends beyond the walls of the classroom in addition to the many moments of everyday learning shared between educators and students. This year, these examples highlighted just how powerful this collaboration can be.

**Parent
Maths
Evening**

**Matariki
Celebration**

**Everyday
Learning
Together**



Bringing Maths Home: Parent Evening

Our Parent Maths Evening was designed to help families better understand what their children are learning in mathematics and how they can support that learning at home. Held onsite and live streamed via Facebook, it allowed those who couldn't attend in person to join in real time or catch up later through recordings shared on our YouTube channel and school website.

We provided a clear and concise handout for each year level, outlining the key number knowledge and skills students need to develop. Parents commented on how helpful it was to see what their child is expected to know and do, and to learn more about the practical ways they could help.

As one whānau (family) shared:

"It was great to experience how maths is taught to our children and it provided some practical ideas for different approaches to homework. We've also been able to help them try new problem-solving strategies, which have worked really well."

Another shared:

"It was great to hear that there was a good balance between having a range of strategies, but without overloading and confusing the children. It was also good to see there was consistency going up through the year groups, it seemed like there is a 'whole of school' approach so the teachers will be on the same page & there is continuity for the kids. And using the whiteboards to show the teacher your answers without the rest of the class seeing was pretty inclusive."




The evening wasn't just about information. It was about partnership. **By making learning visible, removing barriers to access, and opening the door to dialogue, we made maths feel more approachable and achievable for everyone.**

Maths Number - Things you can help with at home

Students progress at different speeds, phases and levels. **As parents you can help by reinforcing basic fact knowledge at home. See the below to know what to focus on at each year level.**

- A lack of fluency in basic facts hinders a child's subsequent progression in problem-solving, algebra and high-order maths concepts. When children develop automaticity in basic facts, they "free up" their working memory and can use it for learning new maths concepts and skills.

If you would like to know more, go to the [Ministry of Education Parent Portal](#)

Examples of Number Maths	Things you can help your child to know/understand - support learning at home (aligned to the refreshed Maths Curriculum)
	First 6 months <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Count objects accurately using one-to-one correspondence to 10. Count forwards and backwards from any number between: 1 and 10 (Later, extend to 1-20). Recognise, say, and write numbers 0 to 10. Compare and order numbers up to 10, e.g. smallest to largest. Know addition facts to 10 e.g. $3 + 2 = 5$, $5 + 5 = 10$.
 	Year 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Count objects accurately (one-to-one) to 30. Recognise, read, write, and compare numbers to at least 20. Order numbers from smallest to largest (to 20). Count forwards and backwards in: 1s, 2s, and 10s (to 20, then extend to 100). Recall addition facts to 10 e.g., $4 + 5 = 9$. Recall subtraction facts from 10 e.g., $9 - 6 = 3$. Know 'ten and' facts e.g., $10 + 7 = 17$, $10 + 9 = 19$. Know doubles and halves for numbers to 10 e.g., $5 + 5 = 10$, $8 + 2 = 4$. Equally share objects into groups e.g., 3 groups of 3 = 9 and e.g., 12 lollies shared with 2 people = 6 each. Use materials to show, name, and talk about: Halves and quarters of shapes, objects, or sets.



Matariki: Maths in Community

During our Matariki celebration in June, families and our wider community were invited into school to share food (kai), enjoy student performances, and explore classroom learning. Maths was woven into the celebration through a whole-school Numicon Number Hunt—a playful and interactive experience that invited families to find Numicon shapes or equations hidden in every classroom.



Students and their whānau visited each classroom to search for numbers, solve puzzles, and engage in rich conversations about what they found. Once they completed the hunt, families gathered in a room transformed into a Maths Display and Discussion Space, filled with:

- Hands-on resources and Numicon equipment
- Visual displays about our updated curriculum
- Information about how families can support maths learning at home
- Space to sit, chat, ask questions, or explore at their own pace

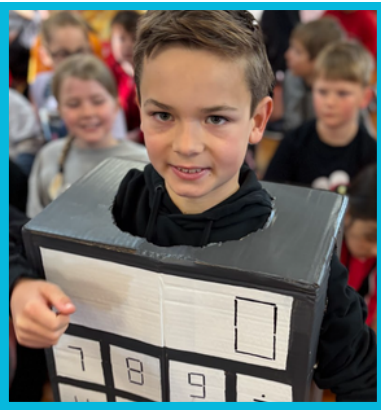
This was more than a school event—it was a vibrant example of maths as community learning. **Parents didn't just observe their children learning. They learned alongside them.** The atmosphere was joyful, relaxed, and full of energy.

One family reflected:

“We liked that we could stay and chat in this space, ask questions or simply read/view the content.”

And students were just as enthusiastic:

“We loved being able to race around the school and find all the numbers and answers!”



Knowing, Doing, Understanding: Together

At Te Mata School, we make sure that students don't just memorise maths. They understand it. With support from The Learner First professional learning, our teaching focuses on approaches that deepen understanding. We design tasks with "high ceilings and no floor." These are open-ended problems that students can access at different levels, and extend as far as they're ready to go. This allows every learner to find success while also being challenged.



We expand teachers' insights through award-winning professional learning. We invest in pedagogical content knowledge to optimise existing programs and resources, and develop teachers' ability to differentiate and monitor in real time—creating inclusive practices that meet the diverse needs of all learners.

Build Capacity, Confidence, and Competency in Mathematics Instruction



www.TheLearnerFirst.com



info@TheLearnerFirst.com

You'll see this in action during our lunchtime Maths Week activities, which students choose to attend. These include:

- Code Crackers
- Bingo
- School-wide Number Hunts
- Measurement Mayhem challenges using standard and non-standard units



Students completed these tasks socially, often with friends or buddies, outside of class time. They enjoyed the freedom to learn at their own pace, and in ways that reflect their interests.



A maths-themed dress-up day capped off the week, with parents helping to create creative outfits: dice, Numicon t-shirts, calculator costumes and more.



Learning Support That Reaches Everyone

Every learner is supported, valued and celebrated in our maths programme. In our junior school, the Maths Coaches Programme sees Year 6 students from Te Mata and Year 8s from Havelock North Intermediate working alongside younger students each morning.

Together, they

- Read and write numbers
- Use Numicon equipment to represent number concepts
- Identify numbers on number strips
- Practise addition and number combinations

As one student said:

“We feel really smart after Maths Club.”

This collaborative approach builds confidence and reinforces understanding in a safe, supportive environment.



Students also access Mathletics both in class and at home, where parents can engage with the tasks their children are working on.

Further support is offered to families by:

- On-selling Numicon shapes for home use
- Providing to families who need them linked to teacher led focuses, as and when needed
- Offering targeted tier two support through teachers, Deputy Principals and lead maths staff, based on learner needs





Maths Is for Everyone

At Te Mata School, maths lives in classrooms, but it doesn't stop there. It's found in the conversations at home, in school celebrations, in playground games and in shared experiences between students and families. **We're proud to be building a learning culture where mathematics is seen, heard, felt, and enjoyed—together.**

Te Mata School is a current partner of The Learner First. The 2025 school year was their second year as a cluster school that worked with the TLF Mathematics team to provide professional development that supports high quality mathematics instruction.

Explore More

- [Te Mata School Maths Learning Story – Matariki](#)
- [Te Mata School Maths Story – Rich Tasks and Collaboration](#)
- [Mathletics NZ](#)
- [Numicon Shapes – Edushop NZ](#)



CONTRIBUTIVE LEARNING THROUGH MATHEMATICS

Elevate your teaching, coaching, and leading with innovative pedagogical strategies and practical tools that will impact student outcomes.

REACH OUT TO LEARN MORE!

For levels P-10

Schools can collaborate with us through our award-winning professional learning series or a customized support package.



Joanne McEachen
Founder



Deb Dunstone
CEO



Rob Proffitt-White
Executive Director of
Mathematics

