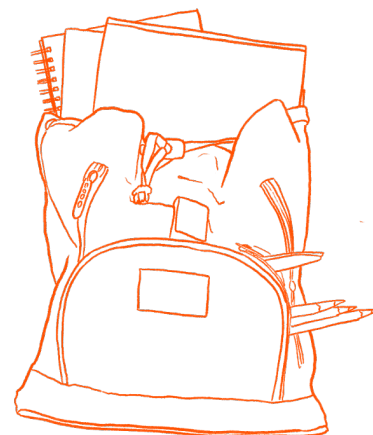




Teacher Math Stories

The Math Narrative Project found that one of the most powerful tools teachers can use to connect with students is sharing their math learning journey. This can build trust and relatability between teachers and students and often helps to normalize the emotional nature of learning math.

The research team designed the worksheet below to provide guidance for teachers on how to craft their math learning stories for students. Importantly, this guidance includes questions aimed at drawing out the information that students (who participated in the research) found most compelling and resonant. The worksheet is one example of an exercise that math teachers can use to develop their *own stories*. The activity can be incorporated into existing materials to train and prepare teachers for the classroom.



Worksheet

As a teacher, you work hard to create relationships with students. Sharing a relatable personal story, specifically about your math learning experience, is one of the most effective ways to build trust. Students appreciate knowing that you, their teacher, are human too. By sharing an honest story about your experience learning math — or your journey to becoming a math teacher — you help to model self-reflection and persistence so that students can better understand and normalize their feelings while learning math.

Reflect: Below are some prompts to help you start writing your own math journey story. **Choose the questions that feel right for you and your students.**

1. What feelings or emotions do you associate with learning math? How have they changed over time?
2. What is your earliest memory of learning math?
For example: How old were you? Who was with you (teacher, parent, friend)? How did you feel at this time?
3. As you got older, did how you feel about learning math change at any point? How so? *For example: Did something specific happen? How old were you when this happened? Who or what played a role in this change? What do you remember feeling at this time or at this moment?*

4. How did your identity impact how you felt about or experienced learning math?
For example, How did your background (the language you speak, your gender, your race or ethnicity), where you grew up, or where your parents grew up impact or influence how you felt about or experienced learning math?

5. Sometimes, students say that they feel embarrassed to ask questions or make mistakes. Is there a time in your life when you have been embarrassed to ask questions or to make mistakes? How, if at all, did you get past that embarrassment?

6. Is there a time in your life when you struggled to learn something new (it doesn't have to be math specifically)? What emotions did you feel? How did it feel to struggle? How were you able to persevere even though it was difficult? *For example, Did you get help from someone? Or approach the topic differently?*

7. How and when did you become a math teacher?
What or who made you want to become a math teacher? How old were you? What were you doing before you made the decision? (For example, were you in school, working in a different sector or career, etc.)

Write Your Story: Now that you've had a chance to think through some of your experiences with math, take a few moments and write your math journey story. Think about how you might share your story with your students in ways that help them relate to you and normalize their own emotions learning math. Use the answers to your questions as the anchors to write a short statement you might make to your students about yourself. Consider what you know about your students and what aspects of your story might be most salient for them.

For example, how can you tell your story in ways that show empathy for your students who are struggling and affinity for your students who may be more excited about math learning?

Remember, it's not a script—just some ideas—that you might use to connect your story to that of your students in powerful ways that will enhance their learning and let them see you as a whole person beyond the classroom!

