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Today's students lead lives quite different from the ones their parents led when they were young. They tote cell phones, chat online, and play high-tech video games. Although parental involvement is essential to a child's educational development, many parents find it difficult to relate to *how* and *what* their children are learning in school. This disconnect is particularly true when it comes to learning math.

Consider the familiar scenario: Rachel asks Dad for help with a division problem, but Dad's explanation only proves more confusing because it diverges from what Rachel's teacher has been teaching her all week. Both parties end up frustrated, and Rachel is less likely to go to her parents for help with math in the future.

With this dilemma in mind, Claremont Graduate University President Steadman Upham saw an opportunity to use math research conducted by Claremont's School of Education to develop a commercial educational product that would combine the most current math content knowledge with the technology tools that students use everyday. He approached Walt Rose, a local businessman, who was also involved with community work to benefit children, for help with this issue.

As a result, Rose founded Get Ahead Learning, a family-owned company of developers with degrees in education, human and organizational development, business administration, and instructional technology. The company was formed to create high quality educational software products that would engage parents and other adults in the learning process. The first product became Get Ahead Math, which came on the market in April of this year.

Aligned with the California state education standards, Get Ahead Math is a CD-ROM-based product that provides learning modules for grades three through eight. The program delivers instruction via video streaming with detailed step-by-step examples, developmental practice worksheets, and comprehensive assessments. The basic concepts covered in the lessons allow students to review, practice, and master the key building blocks of mathematics. And, to bridge the technology gap between parent and child, the program includes 42 brief tutorials to help parents understand current classroom methods and technology.

A sample tutorial, which is focused on one concept, lasts about 5 minutes. The video shows a teacher who explains the concept conversationally, using popular imagery that a student would understand. As the teacher is doing the work, the camera moves in to show a close-up of what the teacher is writing. The teacher explains the concept by approaching it from different perspectives. The teacher talks to the student in the video and then to the student in the "audience" as a coach would talk to a team player.

The software is targeted to families, but it has also been used in after-school programs that deal with similar problems of math-learning methodology. Since the Get Ahead Math program videos review the key mathematical concepts and topics, tutors can develop their own mathematics expertise.

Get Ahead Math has been approved as a supplemental educational services provider by the State of California. "Supplemental educational services" under *No Child Left Behind* are free tutoring and other academic assistance available for low-income children who attend Title I schools that have been designated by the state as in need of improvement for two years or more. This tutoring may be offered in math, as well as reading/language arts and other core subjects, before or after school, on weekends, or in the summer. In California, over 200 public and private entities are approved as supplemental educational service providers.

While the product was designed for students to work with adults to study math, students can also work independently, because the program is self-paced and can target specific skill levels. This feature is particularly useful in a group tutorial setting, because it allows adults to work one-on-one with those students who need more individualized help.

To date, several after-school programs have adopted Get Ahead Math, including six Boys and Girls Clubs in California, which have been using the program as a regular part of their after-school schedule. In addition, schools in such districts in California as Los Angeles Unified, Monrovia, Pasadena, Mountain View, West Covina, and San Luis Coastal have begun using Get Ahead Math in the classroom as a supplement to regular teaching. Home-schooling families have also discovered it.

Even though the program just came on the market in April, it has already won national recognition. The National Parenting Center awarded Get Ahead Math with its Seal of Approval, and the National Parenting Publications Awards (NAPPA) gave it their Gold Award.

The creators of Get Ahead Math see replacing math frustration with math confidence as the key to helping students, and they are committed to providing a solution that also improves test scores. According to Chris Mihm, one of the Get Ahead Math team members, preliminary independent studies of the product show promise of effectiveness. Prior to launch, Robert Lazars of the Mark Sheridan Math and Science Academy in Chicago conducted two studies of the product. Then, after launch, Jeffrey S. Lagozzino, principal of La Primaria Elementary in El Monte (CA) conducted a third study of student performance in his school's summer program. These initial studies indicated that students who use Get Ahead Math can improve their academic achievement.

The Office of Innovation and Improvement provides information and technical assistance on supplemental educational services and *No Child Left Behind*. OII also administers grants to support educational technology. Get Ahead Math was developed without federal funding.

Resources:

- [Get Ahead Math](http://www.getaheadmath.com) (www.getaheadmath.com)
- [Supplemental Educational Services](#)

Note: The featured program is an example of one approach to teaching math and supplemental educational services. To be designated an approved provider of supplemental services in California, the program had to demonstrate "evidence of effectiveness." The success of the program may not be replicable, depending on unique conditions in differing locations.