MATH CURE

based on the book MATH CURSE
Author: Jon Scieszka
Illustrated by: Lane Smith
Publisher: Viking

THEME:

Math is such an integral part of our lives that we often don't realize we are using it. Chaos may result, however, when we forget how much math can help us.

PROGRAM SUMMARY:

The episode *Math Cure* based on the book *Math Curse* by Jon Scieszka, illustrated by Lane Smith and narrated by actor Michelle Trachtenberg (from the movie *Harriet The Spy*), is a zany and hilarious look at how most everything in our lives is math related. LeVar tracks down, scouts out and sneaks up on math-in action, and he finds out first hand that a factory — and life — can't run without it.

TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION:

Ask students what it means to be well organized. Talk about why organization is important in most aspects of our lives. Pose some questions for discussion, such as "What would happen if nothing in our classroom were organized?"; "What would happen if a fast-food restaurant (or other place of business) was not organized?"; "What happens if we are disorganized when we are trying to get ready for school in the morning?"

Before viewing the program, ask students the question that LeVar asks, "Where have you used math today?" Make a list of their responses on the board. After they have watched the program, add any new examples they think of to the list.

Before viewing the program, have students identify some occupations that require a great deal of math. Discuss how and why workers in these jobs use math.

Invite students to share their experiences with having "one of those days"— the kind of day when nothing seems to go right!

CURRICULUM EXTENSION ACTIVITIES:

Have students take an inventory of ways in which math is used in the operation of the school (not including math classes). Send pairs of students to interview school personnel, such as the nurse, secretary, custodian, principal, physical education teacher, music teacher, art teacher, library media specialist, etc., about work they do that involves math in some way. Bring the results back to the classroom and start tabulating what will likely be a very long list.

"Math Cure," the READING RAINBOW program, and *Math Curse*, the book, both contain a great deal of math vocabulary. Before students see either one, brainstorm a list of math terms and have students arrive at definitions for them. After they have viewed the program and read the book, they will be able to add many more words to the list.

Obtain a supply of styrofoam packing peanuts and some boxes or other containers in different shapes and sizes. Have students first estimate the number of peanuts that will fill each container and then count to determine the accuracy of their estimates.

Place a common object in a box that does not conform to its shape (if possible) or size. Have students ask math-related questions to determine what the object is. For example, they might ask, "Is it a round shape?"; "Is it larger than a tennis ball?"; or "Is it as long as a ruler?" Let students take turns putting different objects in boxes and have others guess. Pre-determine the number of questions that can be asked before the person holding the box finally reveals the object.

Provide supplies, such as heavy paper, cardboard, tape, string, and staples, and have students work in small groups to make a box for an object that has an unusual shape. Objects such as a ball cap, a broom, a mug, a tennis racket, etc., might pose interesting challenges.

Introduce students to the concept of managing their time by having them think about how long it takes them to complete different school tasks. Prepare a recording sheet on which students can make the following prediction: "I think it will take me _____ minutes to do my spelling (or math page or read my book, etc.)." As always, stress the importance of working accurately and carefully. Have students assess how much time was actually needed to complete the tasks. Discuss the fact that some tasks require more time than others and why. (This activity is particularly useful for students who typically delay starting a task and then need to rush to finish or do not finish.)

Obtain a copy of *Math Curse* and have students to examine it for the many clever examples of math language and concepts that make up the entire book. All of the design features of the book contain math references, including the book jacket, the dedication page, the publisher's information page, and the information about the authors. Depending on the age level of the students, some of the math references will require explanation.

The last page of the book suggests that our daily lives are also filled with science experiments. Have students think of one fairly common activity or material that is related to a scientific principle or formulated through science and illustrate it. Collect all of the pages into a book and let students think of a clever title.

RELATED THEMES:

time
measurement
estimation

RELATED READING RAINBOW PROGRAMS:

Program #120 — How Much Is A Million?
Program #123 — Hotel Animal

ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

Jon Scieszka (pronounced "Sheska"-like Fresca) was born in Michigan. He has a degree in fiction writing from Columbia University and was an elementary teacher before becoming a full time writer. He and Lane Smith have collaborated on many other books including *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales*, a Caldecott Honor Book. The father of two, Jon lives in New York City.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR:

A native of Oklahoma, Lane Smith grew up in California. In addition to books, his illustrations have appeared on numerous magazine covers and in the feature film, "James and the Giant Peach." He makes his home in New York City.

BOOKS REVIEWED BY CHILDREN:

MARVELOUS MATH: A BOOK OF POEMS
selected by Lee Bennett Hopkins, illus. by Karen Barbour (Simon & Schuster)

TWELVE SNAILS TO ONE LIZARD
by Susan Hightower, illus. by Matt Novak (Simon & Schuster)

PIGS ON A BLANKET: FUN WITH MATH AND TIME
by Amy Axelrod, illus. by Sharon McGinley-Nally (Simon & Schuster)

SUPPLEMENTARY BOOKLIST:

WHAT COMES IN 2'S, 3'S, & 4'S?
by Suzanne Aker, illus. by Bernie Karlin (Simon & Schuster)

ANNO'S MATH GAMES
by Mitsumasa Anno (Philomel)

MATH IN THE BATH (AND OTHER FUN PLACES, TOO!)
by Sara Atherlay, illus. by Megan Halsey (Simon & Schuster)

COUNTING ON FRANK
by Rod Clement (Gareth Stevens)

HOW MANY BEARS?
by Cooper Edens, illus. by Marjett Schille (Atheneum)

BOXES! BOXES!
by Leonard Everett Fisher (Viking)

MATH MINI-MYSTERIES
by Sandra Markle (Atheneum)

PICKING PEAS FOR A PENNY
by Angela Shelf Medearis, illus. by Charles Shaw (State House Press)

BETCHA!
by Stuart J. Murphy, illus. by S.D. Schindler (HarperCollins)

PATTERN ("Math Counts" series)
by Henry Pluckrose (Children's Press)

HOW MANY, HOW MANY, HOW MANY
by Rick Walton, illus. by Cynthia Jabar (Candlewick Press)
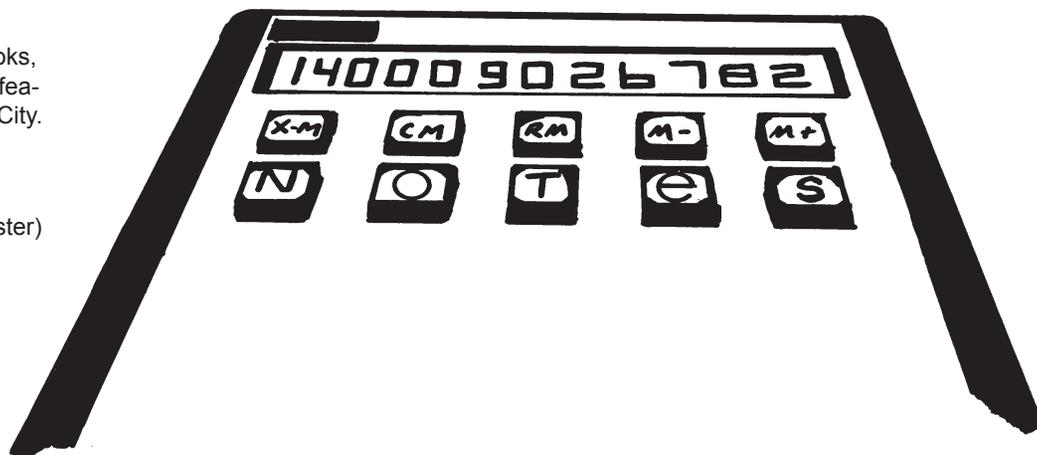
From "Can Math Cure Cancer?" by John F. McGowan, Ph.D., at The Math Blog % %. Author: John F. McGowan, Ph.D. % (C) 2011 by John F. McGowan, Ph.D. % E-Mail: jmcgowan11@earthlink.net % %.Â Mathematics may be able to cure cancer through systems of smart drugs that perform a relatively simple calculation within a cell or on the membrane of the cell and kill or neutralize cells that are or probably are cancer cells. There are some attempts to develop a method along these lines.