

Family Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for Elementary Math

Q: Why was Innovamat adopted across all grade levels at once rather than rolling it out one grade at a time?

A: California's updated Math Framework emphasizes 21st-century problem solving, reasoning, and mathematical modeling across all elementary grades. During the 2025–2026 school year, an FCUSD teacher committee field-tested top programs and overwhelmingly recommended Innovamat Thinking Math. Implementing the program district-wide ensures that all students immediately benefit from modern, research-aligned math instruction.

Q: What are Family Stretch Letters and when should I expect them?

A: Units in Innovamat are called "Stretches" (typically lasting 6 weeks). At the start of each Stretch, teachers share a **Family Stretch Letter**. These letters explain the concepts being taught, highlight key calculation strategies, and provide optional home activities and games. If you have not received a Stretch Letter, you can locate them on the [Innovamat Family Resources Page](#).

Q: What are "Number Talks" and where can I see an example?

A: A Number Talk is a short (10–15 minute) classroom routine where students solve mental math problems and share their different thinking strategies aloud. For example, when solving $29 + 15$, one student might add $30 + 15$ and subtract 1, while another breaks 15 into $1 + 14$ to make $30 + 14$. You can watch video examples of Number Talks across different grade levels on the [Innovamat Family Resources Page](#).

Q: How are 4th and 5th graders supported if they did not experience Innovamat in earlier grades?

A: Innovamat builds on what students already know rather than repeating lower-grade content. Teachers use the Concrete-Pictorial-Abstract (CPA) approach, introducing physical manipulatives and visual representations to bridge any foundational gaps. Complex concepts like fractions, decimals, and place value are developed through problem-solving discussions that accommodate students at different entry points.

Q: How does Innovamat support neurodivergent students and children with IEPs or dyscalculia?

A: Innovamat's framework features built-in supports for diverse learners. The heavy use of visual models and hands-on manipulatives creates a concrete bridge to abstract concepts, which is especially beneficial for students with dyscalculia. Reduced reliance on timed drills and memorization lowers math anxiety. Additionally, general and special education teachers utilize accommodations and specialized support logbooks to scaffold instruction.

Q: How does the curriculum accommodate students who are shy or hesitant to speak during group discussions?

A: While mathematical discussion is a key component, instruction involves multiple modes of engagement. Students work with hands-on tools, record reasoning in individual logbooks, complete digital practice on Atlas, and collaborate in small groups where shy students feel more comfortable sharing.

Q: Why doesn't my child have mandatory daily math homework worksheets?

A: Research on elementary mathematics shows that mandatory drill worksheets yield near-zero academic gain and often promote procedural memorization over genuine reasoning. In FCUSD, real math learning happens through active problem-solving in class and at home. We provide optional home practice resources and games

that families can use without the stress of mandatory night-time worksheets. In 3rd-5th grade, families can expect to see optional home practice twice a week, except during assessment week.

Q: How will I know my child is making progress without graded daily homework?

A: Teachers monitor progress daily through student logbook reflections, discussion observations, weekly Atlas digital practice metrics, and unit Check-In Assessments. Progress is formally reported each trimester using standards-aligned marks or letter grades. The full grading guidance for math this year can be found [here](#).

Q: Can we access the Atlas app at home for extra practice?

A: No. The Atlas digital practice app is designed strictly for classroom use during the school day. Because weekly Atlas completion scores are used as formal evidence for trimester report card grades, the platform is restricted to school hours to ensure fairness and accurate progress monitoring. Families seeking home activities can use the optional Home Practice sheets or games in the Family Stretch Letters.

Q: Can parents purchase or receive a separate Innovamat workbook to use at home?

A: Innovamat logbooks stay in the classroom as part of the student's daily learning portfolio. However, for 3rd–5th grades, optional Home Practice sheets include QR codes that link directly to video tutorials and answer keys. Families can also access games, activities, and calculation guides on the [Innovamat Family Resources Page](#).

Q: How does Innovamat challenge students who are advanced in math?

A: Innovamat tasks are designed with a "low floor and high ceiling," meaning every student can enter the problem, but the depth of reasoning is unlimited. When students complete core logbook tasks, teachers utilize **Extension Pages** that offer deeper conceptual challenges rather than just giving more of the same problems.

Q: Is there an advanced math placement pathway in elementary school?

A: Elementary math in FCUSD focuses on deepening conceptual understanding within grade-level standards rather than skipping grade-level content. Middle school placement relies on multiple measures (including Renaissance Star Math scores and placement assessments) rather than elementary acceleration tracking.