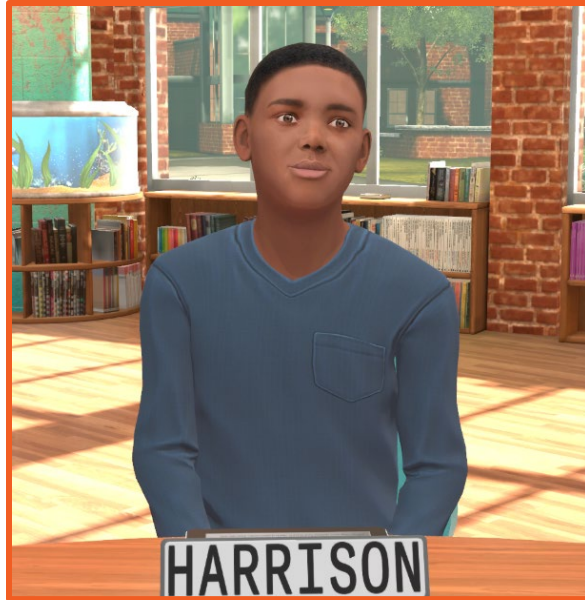




Make Math Relevant

You are a middle school math teacher working one-on-one with Harrison, a 6th grader who usually finds confidence in math because reading is more challenging for him due to his reading disability. During your session, Harrison begins to show frustration as he works through practice problems. Finally, he asks quietly, “Why do I need to know this anyway? I won’t use it after I graduate.”

As you think back, you realize that while Harrison often engages in class when the pace is fast and procedural, moments like this highlight a deeper need: helping students see how math connects to their lives and futures. You also wonder how often other students may share the same question silently, without voicing it.

In your next lesson, you plan to emphasize the real-world value of higher-level math, to show that math is not just about getting answers right, but about building skills that open doors for the future.

You are working through a word problem where Harrison has difficulty moving from words to symbols.

The word problem asks for five more than twice a number which Harrison writes as $5x+25x + 25x+2$. The correct answer is $2x+52x + 52x+5$.

Your objective: The goal is to make the problem relevant to the student’s life.

Strategies:

- Deliver credible messaging on higher-level math's relevance, value, and utility for students' lives and futures. Include examples of relevance that students understand, believe are real, and care about, such as keeping your career options open; financial literacy; and having greater financial power so you don't get scammed or cheated.
- Use different examples that resonate to different degrees with different young people:
 - Examples should show how math is used in that specific instance.
 - Examples should include a mix of concepts and applications so that students at different points in their math education can relate.