



Everyday activities designed to help young children with their maths learning

Research shows that in their first year of school, one in four children who live in Australia's most disadvantaged communities start school behind on literacy and numeracy*, and that generally those children who start behind, stay behind.

To address this The Smith Family's *Let's Count* program helps to provide children with the skills they need for a better start in life. With Let's Count we aim to support early years' professionals, parents and carers to help children aged 3 to 5 years to play with, investigate and learn powerful mathematical ideas. The program follows a simple model - use everyday activities to notice, explore, and talk about mathematics.

Let's Count has helped over 186,000 children since its launch in 2009, with children, parents and early years' professionals all reporting enhanced confidence and stronger interest in mathematics. This is a fantastic outcome helping to set families up with essential life skills.

Our latest initiative is the *Let's Count* Parent bot on Facebook Messenger which is an interactive platform that uses everyday activities and objects to suggest ways in which parents and carers can support their children's maths learning. The tool works just like Facebook Messenger, with a series of activities suggested by the bot which the user can weave into their everyday life to help their child **notice, explore, and talk about mathematics**.

These can include counting steps on a walk, ordering fruit by weight whilst shopping or comparing the shapes of street signs during car journeys.

Many parents are unsure of their mathematical ability, which makes it hard for them to talk about it with their children. However, most parents are engaged in social media, making this a really useful e-tool to connect them to their child's learning.

The *Let's Count* Parent bot on Facebook Messenger demonstrates that with the use of accessible technology, we can play an important role in supporting parents, and in turn, benefitting children, at a vital development stage in their lives.

*Australian Early Development Census National Report 2018, Commonwealth of Australia, 2019.



Parents who tested the tool said it showed them new ways of thinking about maths with their children.

"Maths can be anything, from cooking to shapes, it all helps," said Jodi (NSW).

"I love the little characters, they are cute and very relevant to me and my children," said Courtney (NSW).

"The tool gave me ideas and words to use with my kids and made overwhelming tasks like tidying their room fun and educational by sorting and matching," said Karen (Vic).

