

Lower Makefield's Claire Passantino has heard it many times.

"I hate math."

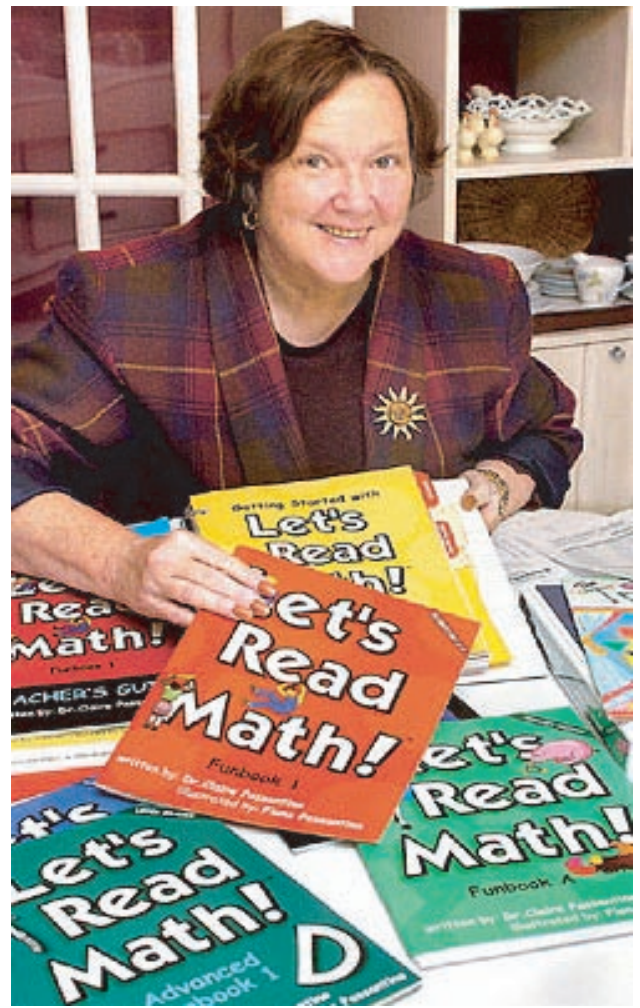
"I can't do math."

It's an attitude she's working hard to stamp out by making math easier for children to digest. Her Projects in Education business publishes workbooks that subtly incorporate math lessons into children's stories.

"Math phobia knows no bounds," Passantino said. "In this period of accountability with No Child Left Behind, I thought it was time to relax with math a bit. Americans love to hate math. We need to do something to stop that."

Projects in Education publishes Passantino's "Let's Read Math" workbooks, teacher guides and workshop manuals. Her series of workbooks creates activities based on math-related themes — geometry, telling time, counting money — in children's books.

The business sells the workbooks and the children's titles that inspired the exercises to parents, teachers, schools and after-school programs. Workbooks cost \$6.95 each; teachers guides are \$9.95; and the first set of 15 children's titles costs \$99.95.



Passantino has also established a nonprofit organization, called Let's Read Math, which provides free workshops using the materials.

"They aren't math problems," she said. "They're children's stories that identify and give math ideas a context they would not otherwise have."

Passantino, a longtime educator with a doctorate in elementary math education, started providing Let's Read Math workshops for parents and their elementary-age children in late 2004 at the Yardley-Makefield Branch of the Bucks County Free Library. Participants would read the stories and then do the exercises in Passantino's workbooks.

She estimated that Let's Read Math lessons have reached more than 3,000 adults and 12,000 children since then. Schools in the Morrisville, Council Rock and Central Bucks districts have used the workbooks.

The workshops, the portion of Passantino's project that is nonprofit, have received grants from the American Association of University Women, the Wachovia Foundation and Verizon's Check Into Literacy Program.

"The children don't even realize they're learning math concepts," said Carol Dubas, a member of the board of directors for the AAUW's Makefield Area branch. "Everyone likes to have a story read to them. It gets math concepts into their lives without it being a dogmatic teacher-student environment."

Dubas said this year the association body that represents Pennsylvania named Passantino its Susan K. Nensteil Humanitarian Award recipient in honor of her contribution. She's scheduled to accept the award at the association's convention in April.

Passantino said that helping children appreciate math is its own reward.

"When I start a presentation and you see the children getting excited, I'm very energized by that," she said.

ON THE WEB <http://www.letsreadmath.com/>