

Qualitative Study

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“I hereby declare upon my word of honor that I have neither given nor received unauthorized help on this work.”

Deidre Norman

### Reference

Tretter, J. D. (2012). *Mathematics anxiety in ninth-grade pre-algebra*. Retrieved from Masters Thesis & Specialist Projects. (Paper 1165)

### Summary

In Jacquelyn Tretter's qualitative study, entitled "Mathematics Anxiety in Ninth-grade Pre-algebra", explores the opinions of five students of ages thirteen to fifteen-year-old on mathematics. These students possessed fourth-grade or lower math skills on standardized tests. The study involved a series of questions that dealt with individual's experiences, feelings, and perceptions of mathematics. Researchers also wanted to understand how these students coped. After obtaining permission, researchers observed the students in their classrooms to better understand the environment before conducting interviews. These interviews were contained within six categories of interest: self-image, mathematics difficulties, successes in mathematics, support for learning, teacher support, and coping techniques. The self-image results indicated that the majority of the students did not feel positive about themselves in math classes. Only certain situations caused positive reactions, such as getting better grades or passing the class. Students also confirmed that mathematics difficulties begin long before entering high school, as many teachers prior did not explain problems in detail. Students found themselves in agreement that solving equations in high school was difficult. Participants noted that they completed the homework at school with friends, worked on it alone at home, or simply left it blank and copied off a friend. Nonetheless, support from teachers, especially in the form of positive reinforcement and rewards, helped students feel encouraged to continue. Through it all, students continued to

not study on regular basis and left answers blank on tests as ways to cope with math anxiety. This gives key information to teachers that students similar to these participants may be struggling with math anxiety.

### Implications

As a mathematics teacher, especially in middle school, these signs of math anxiety and coping techniques clues me into how students will react. It also puts pressure on middle school teachers as a whole, as they have a great influence during the transition period of students from children to teenagers.