SITTING in on your 9-year-old child’s class may sound boring. But it isn’t if you are playing analytical games that help adults as well.

Ask Mr Milind Sattur, who sat in for at least 15 out of 20 sessions of his daughter’s critical thinking classes. His daughter Sanaya, 9, takes lessons at LogicMills, a private school which teaches students to hone their thinking skills through logic games.

LogicMills conducts workshops for children as young as 8. "Impressed by what the lessons offered, Mr Sattur, 39, signed up for lessons to improve himself. Although his daughter is strong academically, Mr Sattur, who holds two Master’s degrees, wanted to find ways to help her learn better. He said that unlike normal classes, where students may spend a lot of time memorising material, the LogicMills programme teaches students how to hone their thinking skills not just through books but with games as well.

MAGIC TRICKS

Mr Sattur said what impressed him was how the teachers used magic tricks to teach students how to solve analytical problems.

He said: "Students have to go through the entire sequence of the trick step by step and pinpoint where the ‘trick-step’ lies."

Mr Sattur has seen a difference in Sanaya since she started taking the classes.

He said: "She does a lot more reading now, is more confident about her subjects, and has a sharper memory.”

Sanaya said: "I can understand my maths questions faster now."

She was scoring 90 per cent on tests before the classes, but is now scoring 98 per cent.

As for Mr Sattur, he has attended several bi-monthly philosophy discussions for adults, as well as three teacher training workshops, on top of the lessons he attended with Sanaya.

Mr Sattur, who is a researcher for CNBC, said he has learnt to make more cohesive presentations at work and pays more attention to how he communicates with his team members.

He said: “Before, my presentations would be very factual. Now, instead of just collating and presenting raw facts, I process the facts and make interpretations.”

Mr Sattur added: "In my work, I often have to identify possible reasons for why a certain channel or programme is doing well. For example, it could be the time slot or that the presenter has contributed to its success.

"Before, I would come up with three reasons. After the workshops, I could come up with five or six reasons.”

The programme teaches both children and adults how to improve their existing critical thinking methods, said LogicMills lecturer Mark Nowacki, 37.

He said: "When we look through spectacles, we see the world. But we seldom look at our spectacles for common sense. We usually just apply common sense without thinking about it. It takes special effort to see what common sense is.”

"A professor at Singapore Management University (SMU), Dr Nowacki said that using games helps children improve their common sense.

"In playing the games, kids have to figure out the best strategy to play the game.”

For example, LogicMills lets its students play a game called Blokus, in which players use shapes called tetrads (similar to those in the popular game Tetris) to fill up a space.

The students have to figure out how to use all their blocks and fill up the space at the same time.

Dr Nowacki said that the small classes (15 students to a teacher) gives students a better chance to air their thoughts. Teachers can then help them improve on their thought processes.

Dr Nowacki and SMU professor Tan Yoo Guan founded LogicMills in 2004. Last year, the duo conducted a four-day workshop for 100-odd junior college teachers, imparting skills on how to teach “knowledge and enquiry”, the JC subject on critical reasoning.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

While thinking skills are the prime concern for children, Dr Nowacki said that for adults, LogicMills concentrates on communication skills.

He said: "You need to make sure other people understand what you are saying when you work in groups.

"I’ve worked on projects where the instructions given are so bad, that team members wasted days trying to rectify errors made, due to bad communication.”