

Journal # 6

I recently tried something called a “number talk” with the whole class at the end of our regular morning meeting routine. It is basically a brief 10 minute activity where I show them a series of dot arrangement cards to have them recognize quantities and share their strategy for recognizing the quantity with the class (such as grouping/clumping the dots to small numbers and adding them).

For being my first time to attempt a “number talk” I don't think it went too badly but there was definitely room for improvement. I chose to do it as a end cap to morning meeting because they do this on the rug sitting together and I thought that it might be a better environment for this type of activity than while sitting at their desks. I am happy to report that although I don't have what it would've been like at their desks to compare it to, I do think they benefited from being together on the floor as a group and thinking of this as an extension of the morning meeting routine.

The problems that quickly arose were due to the fact that this type of activity was very foreign to them. Their first instinct was to call out and/or wave their hands wildly when they knew the quantity rather than quietly putting their hands on their head to show me that they knew it. However, we did 4 cards and by the last one when I reminded them of the expectation to be quiet and show me you know silently rather than give it away and set that as the goal rather than wanting everyone to have the right answer, I remarkably had not one child call out or wave their hand!

The other issue was that these children have obviously not been taught or haven't been expected to listen very well to each other instead of just the teacher. It was very difficult to get them to listen to the responses or strategies of the other children. They don't seem to realize the purpose of sharing is so that we can all gain from what the members of the class are thinking. I wasn't as successful with this. Each time I had a child share their thinking, there were at least two other students talking over them, not paying attention or obviously just anxiously waiting to give their own response and not listening at

all. I wasn't clear with this expectation I guess, or maybe the reasoning I gave for the expectation was not enough to inspire the children to want to follow through and actually listen. Some of the kids that would have benefited the most from hearing other students strategies were the ones that clearly weren't listening at all.

I'm going to keep at it though and try the re-voicing another students idea tactic as much as possible. I told the children I would do this type of number talk every Wednesday after morning meeting so we could keep practicing our numbers and also practice the routine! Hopefully it will go smoother next time. I thought about how maybe for these first few times, the goal for our number talk activity shouldn't necessarily be to have a great number talk where kids are really sharing good number sense strategies. Instead my goal for these first few attempts should be to hook students and get their buy in for the activity and then also help them learn the routine, expectations and appropriate way to be during this activity. Hopefully, once I have their attention, investment and foundational social skills down after a few repetitions of this routine, then I will be ready and able to expect a productive number talk with more content specific goals.