

Math

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gorithms (equations) until later years, by then they will have a firm enough basis to be able to pick them up very quickly — in fact, they will already know how to do most of them. Children are familiarized with number lines in grid form and learn about negative numbers early, so they feel comfortable with them as their mathematical education progresses. There is also a focus on mental arithmetic, problem solving, and the use of numbers and functions in real-life situations.

One of the significant differences with Everyday Math is there are no textbooks. Instead, children work in "journals" which are half textbook, half activity book. Another difference is Everyday Math is highly interactive; students work with partners and in groups to find information. "It becomes a very social, very productive atmosphere," said Dr. Michael Speziale, Assistant Superintendent of the Dallas Schools.

Everyday Math in action

When asked if they like math, the children in Bonnie Palmatier's first grade class at Wycallis Elementary answer in unison with a resounding "Yes!"

This afternoon they're working on addition and subtraction, using what's called a "function machine." A number is put into the imaginary machine, and the number that comes out of the machine depends on the rule.

"The rule is minus 2 this time," Mrs. Palmatier says. She writes it on the blackboard and turns to her class. "What's the rule?"

"Minus two," the children call out.

Mrs. Palmatier writes a series of numbers vertically on the board. "Go back two on your grid," she says. The children turn to their laminated blue number lines and count backwards two spaces from 5, the first number in the series. If 5 goes into the machine and the rule is -2, 3 comes out of the machine. If 9 goes in, 7 comes out. If 10 goes in, 8 comes out. What comes out if 22 goes in? A flurry of waving hands shows nearly everybody knows the answer.

The children are given more function-machine rules to follow. After working on examples on the blackboard and with partners, they come up with their own in their journals. Then it is time to go on to measuring. "You've measured a lot of things at home, and here at school. What did we do just this morning?" Mrs. Palmatier asks her class.

"We measured our foot and traced our foot," the children reply.

"A lot of times we use our measuring tape. Why would we use our tape?" she asks. "It bends," one of the children answers.

Now they will be measuring their desks. Each child has his or her own "tool kit" containing a calculator, a tape measure, laminated paper dominoes, a template, coins, and number cards. The children get their kits out of their

Food bank

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Christmas merrier for their children.

"We wish to thank the businessmen and woman who were kind enough to let us put boxes in their places of business so that the public could have easy access to make donations," said Pastor Chuck Naugle, food bank manager. They include: Century 21-Ruth K. Smith Real Estate, Inc., Friendly's, Carolyn Lauer's Shear Magic Hair Salon, Mama & Papa's Ice Cream Parlor and the Dallas Post.

"We would like to remind everyone that people are hungry and need to be fed all year long."

Barbara DeBellis
Food Bank coordinator

"We would like to remind everyone that people are hungry and need to be fed all year long. We need donations every day, not just during the holidays," said Mrs. DeBellis. "There are two places in the Back Mountain where donations can be made throughout the year. The office at the Trucksville Methodist Church is open every weekday from 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., and the Mama & Papa's Ice Cream Parlor at the Country Club Shopping Center is open every day from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m."

desks and find their measuring tapes. They work with partners, one doing the measuring and the other writing down the result. Measurements are taken in both inches and centimeters. "Which is the bigger number?" Mrs. Palmatier asks. The children know the answer — centimeters, of course. Why? "Because a centimeter is smaller than an inch," one of the children says.

It turns out the desks are all 24 or 25 inches high — "Remember, we say 'about,'" Mrs. Palmatier reminds the children — and 64 or 65 centimeters. Everyone has the right answer.

"It's a fun way to learn their facts."

After math class, the children go out for recess, which gives Mrs. Palmatier the opportunity to wax enthusiastic on the subject of Everyday Math. "It just has such a different approach, because children take an active role," she says. "They're learning by using it — 'Everyday Math' is a good name for it."

Mrs. Palmatier lists some activities the children do on a daily basis: they have their own thermometers they set to the daily temperature in both Fahrenheit and Celsius, and keep a chart of the results; they work with the calendar, figuring out things such as how many days of school are left and how many days until the holidays; counting change; measuring themselves and things around them; telling time. The children pick up the concepts very quickly and remember them easily because "The numbers mean something to them," Mrs. Palmatier says. "When you're involved with something, it sticks with you."

Unlike the traditional method in which concepts are taught once or twice before going on to the next in the progression, in Everyday Math, concepts are taught several times and out of sequence. "It's a spiral approach.... we don't really dwell on one thing for a month at a time, but we keep going back to it," Mrs. Palmatier says. "Over a two-year period, a concept will be introduced 15 times in five different ways."

Another way in which Everyday Math differs from the tradi-

What's My Rule?

1. Table 1

in	out

Unit
pennies

Rule
?

2. Table 2

in	out

Rule

3. A table (or desk)

about _____ in
about _____ cm

4. Your journal

about _____ in
about _____ cm

38 (thirty eight) Use with Lesson 44

A sample workbook page from Everday Mathematics shows how first-grade students use common objects to learn math concepts. © 1998 by Everyday Learning Corporation.

tional variety is that students are not taught there is only one way to solve a problem, but are encouraged to look for alternative methods to coming up with the right answer. "How did you get your answer" — that's a big part of the program," Mrs. Palmatier says.

Her students enjoy their math class — or classes, since "it's an all-day program, interspersed with everything we do," she says. "Even kids who aren't math-oriented like it.... it's a discovery on their part." She says the children have "number scrolls" in which they write numbers in different patterns — even, odd; counting by twos, fives, tens; and so on — and are allowed to work on them in their spare time, which a surprising number of them do, Mrs. Palmatier says. "It was great to see them want to sit down and write numbers —

how many kids do that voluntarily?"

What does she, the teacher think of Everyday Math? "I love it. It's an authentic assessment of what the child knows." And, she adds, "It's fun to teach, because it's not boring!"

How Everyday Math came to Dallas

Dr. Speziale explained how the change came about. Two years ago, six teachers attended summer training, funded by the Mid-Atlantic Eisenhower Consortium, in Everyday Math. They came back last year to pilot the new program alongside the regular math curriculum; around that time, the new Pennsylvania standards for mathematics were passed. As a result, the Dallas school district

opted to wait to purchase new textbooks, instead studying a variety of math texts for grades K-12 and observing other schools that had already implemented the Everyday Math program. In those schools, said Dr. Speziale, "their kids' achievement levels have improved significantly." Ultimately the faculty on the textbook-adoption committee — and the faculty in general — decided to give Everyday Math a try.

"Everyday Math is significantly different from a traditional math program," Dr. Speziale said, and because of this, it has been implemented in phases, starting with kindergarten, first and second grades; third, fourth, and fifth are integrating some Everyday Math activities along with the traditional curriculum, and will eventually be switched over entirely to the new program.

"In the past, the curriculum primarily focused on computation," Dr. Speziale said. That will continue in the higher grades, but with elements of the new program mixed in. "By the time kids get to middle school, they'll be much more capable of handling high-level mathematics."

The success of the Everyday Math program so far, he said, is largely due to the support of the faculty, administration, and school board: "Dr. Griffiths has been extremely supportive, the board has been extremely supportive; the building principals even sat in on the training programs during the summer," Dr. Speziale said. He admitted there were some skeptics at first, but in the end they were converted when they saw the results. And as for the faculty, Dr. Speziale said, "I recognize that our teachers have worked very hard to implement this program.... I really can't say enough about how wonderful they have been. We are very fortunate to have such outstanding teachers."

Adding it up

So — will a program that's practical and comprehensive plus enjoyable and innovative equal students who feel comfortable with numbers, have better arithmetic skills, and possibly achieve higher test scores?

You do the math.

Cell tower hearings wrap up January 9

The months of hearings on NextelPartners' proposed telecommunication tower in the Woodridge II development will culminate at 7 p.m. on Jan. 9, when Nextel and the opposing residents present their closing arguments to the Kingston Twp. Planning Commission, and the Commission makes a recommendation to the board of supervisors.

It's been a long and arduous battle for both sides. The Woodridge residents have been expressing their concerns to the commission about the effects of electromagnetic radiation; numerous safety issues including worries about fire, weather, and the "attractive nuisance" factor of a monopole; decreased property values; aesthetics; and setting a precedent. Nextel has been trying to allay some of the residents' concerns while attempting to prove the property is the best site for its purposes. The company has been waiting for over a year to put up a tower, and claims it is crucial for its customers to get some kind of coverage in the area.

Over the course of the hearings the planning commission has heard testimony from a vast array of professional witnesses and concerned parties ranging from radio-frequency engineers and real-estate appraisers to fire-safety experts and Daniel Voitek, the owner of the property. The commission has studied countless maps, plans, charts and diagrams and toured the site itself with Voitek and William Anzalone, counsel for the property owners and himself one of the primary opposing residents.

All that remains is for the commission to sort through the glut of testimony and information, hear both sides out until the end, and make an informed decision.

by Elizabeth Skrapits

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