

November 21, 2008

5H News

Calendar of 5H Events

November 24 No Word Study
November 24 No RRJs
November 26 Math Assessment
November 24 – 26 Egypt Mapping
December 1 No School
December 2 Begin Nile Brochure
December 4 MFA Field Trip
December 11 Egyptologist Visit
December 15 Choral Concert 8:45AM

Writing Essays

Children in 5H chose a point to prove based upon observations and opinions about the world around them. We have a fantastic list of topics and subtopics that children generated. Below are a few. Next, children reviewed their free writing for what they noticed about the topic and what it made them think. These are turning into subtopics of a first essay. This style of writing is very new, (and challenging) for children. We spent time discussing and listing how a narrative is different from an essay. A narrative tells a story, has a beginning, middle and end. An essay is organized by an idea, an argument is developed and it makes you think about a topic.

Why writing is hard
The point of homework
Why adults lose their sense of “fun”
Why some people lie
Thanksgiving is the best holiday
I need to work in a noisy environment
Math is so challenging
Being a younger sibling is hard
Feelings of amazement
What I can do about global warming
Why some people care about being popular

5H

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Mathematics – Subtraction Strategies

5H is currently working on a number unit that practices and develops computational fluency, place value and subtraction strategies. In this unit I am really pushing children to work with larger chunks of numbers and compute mentally. In subtraction we are practicing four strategies; subtracting in parts, adding up, changing one number and using the traditional algorithm. The goal in using the first three strategies and mental math is not to get to the algorithm, but rather for children to decide which strategy is the most effective in a given situation.

Computational fluency has three parts, efficiency, flexibility and accuracy. We want children to develop all three aspects in computation. For example, in fifth grade the expectation is that a child would subtract $1,001 - 300$ mentally, not use an algorithm. At other times subtracting in parts makes the most sense. To solve $1,809 - 850$ children are working with $1,809 - 800 = 1,009$ and then subtracting 50 more.

Changing one number can help make a problem friendlier to solve mentally. $501 - 60$ can become $500 - 60 = 440$ then adding 1. (441) I asked children why does this work? We spent time representing how you can change a number in a problem and compensate later. Does this always work? Why or why not? Children worked with number lines, double checking and looking at difference between two numbers.

In the end, using multiple strategies is more efficient than trying to always mentally juggle or have to record an algorithm. Using these strategies frees up thinking for more complex mathematics and develops flexibility. In examining the algorithm I have

shown children expanded notation, which is better at showing “how” the algorithm works.

$$\begin{array}{r} 867 = 800 + 60 + 7 \\ -549 = 500 + 40 + 9 \end{array}$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 800 + 50 + 17 \\ 500 + 40 + 9 \\ \hline 318 \end{array} \qquad \begin{array}{r} 300 + 10 + 8 \end{array}$$