



IT WORKED!

Constructive Classroom Conversations

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I took a course in constructive classroom conversations to improve my teaching practice and engage my students in high quality conversations. My main goal was to use this teaching strategy to build students' abilities to engage in constructive face-to-face interactions and to shift from teacher-driven instruction to more student-centered learning. The success I had with this kind of teaching in literacy encouraged me to apply it to improving my math instruction. Every day I would give my first-grade students a math problem and they would come up with their own strategies to solve it. My students would then share their work with the class. Through constructive classroom conversations, students are able to explain their math thinking, clarify ideas for solving the problem, provide feedback, and build upon each other's ideas as they interact with the content.

As a teacher, I enjoy highlighting these "math discoveries and successes" through pictures and videos of my students effectively leading classroom discussions. I got so excited when my students started incrementing and compensating in solving multi-digit numbers that I decided to share these student-led math strategy videos on Facebook.

The student interactions were powerful and the students' work samples have shown what students can do. My co-teachers saw these videos and approached me for help in implementing this teaching strategy in their own classrooms. One of them asked me to model a lesson, but I suggested something to show joint accountability, co-teaching. We brought two classes together and learned from each other. It was wonderful to see students respectfully sharing their strategies and asking and answering each other's questions.

We were able to put together a team of three teachers co-teaching lessons with a focus on student mathematical thinking and writing. We found that this method was successful in helping our students develop their problem-solving skills. I was glad to hear that these teachers would want to continue doing this as a team next school year. I also mentioned this to the Kindergarten and 2nd grade team leaders and they are looking forward to trying it. We no longer focus solely on our "own students", but we have come to see the school as a whole, working together to help "all of our students" in achieving their learning goals.



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