

Empowering Students in Math

Empowering Students

AMY ZORZETTO: I'd had a lot of opportunities to read about inquiry and see the kindergarten program in action. And I really loved the way that I saw that engagement. I saw students choosing their learning, and self-regulating, and doing everything that we want students to do, and becoming thinkers. And so when I thought about when I came here and taught a grade 1/2 last year and a grade 2/3 this year I thought why can't that be brought up? Why can't we do that in a primary grade? Why can't it be done in a higher grade to be honest as well? So it was about when I saw that engagement by the full day K program and the students bringing that engagement to class every single day and the learning that came out of that really helped me to decide to kind of jump in and try this. I was afraid but I also was confident that they could--I think it was more my fear than it was the fear that I think they would have. So I was confident that they could meet the expectations, but there's always an element of fear that's with that, but it shouldn't stop you and it didn't stop me and I think that that's a very big message to send to people is to just try it. Just give it a try.

AMY ZORZETTO: So when you do this, Towanda there's parts where you can just drive him around but I don't know if that challenges your thinking, does it? So what I want you to do is look for the pieces of the app that you can actually build the code in that will challenge your thinking. What do you want to have Koji do?

AMY ZORZETTO: Do you want him to go somewhere in particular?

AMY ZORZETTO: Where would you like him to go?

STUDENT: Go around [INAUDIBLE] and then [INAUDIBLE]

AMY ZORZETTO: Go around the carpet? Okay, so you have to be very specific in your instructions to be able to get it to do that, right?

So do you know how far you need him to go?

Hm, do you think you want to start with a big challenge or maybe a smaller version of that challenge?

STUDENT: Smaller.

AMY ZORZETTO: Okay, so why don't you think of a smaller version. Do you have a suggestion?

STUDENT: He could do in the hall.

AMY ZORZETTO: He could do in the hall. I'd like you to stay in here so that we can see what you're doing, but maybe think about something smaller just to practice and then use your thinking to be able to bring it to the next level, okay?

AMY ZORZETTO: I want my students to be engaged, but I want them to be empowered so to me that means that I want them to know when the learning is working for them, and when it's not and then what to do with that learning.

When students are empowered they learn how to make those choices rather than me as a teacher making those choices for them. And so because we know that as life goes on we want students to become lifelong learners and if we don't give them opportunities to become lifelong learners and make choices about their learning and what it is they're going to choose it might be hard for them or it likely will be hard for them to make those choices later on. And so if we can have students be empowered to make those choices now at a young age they've created that skillset that they can take with them and transfer from year, to year, to year.

AMY ZORZETTO: So you're suggesting this, so I'm gonna put it here.

22 divided by 11 is the same as?

What do you think that would be?

Is that gonna be equal to something different?

STUDENT: I don't think it's gonna equal to two.

AMY ZORZETTO: You don't think it's gonna equal two? DO you want to try it?

STUDENT: [INAUDIBLE]

AMY ZORZETTO: I want you to think about what the relationship is between these numbers.

So right now I see you adding them, but I want you to think about is there a different way that we've talked about that you can find a relationship?

STUDENT: [INAUDIBLE]

AMY ZORZETTO: Just wait a second, okay? Yeah, okay so what do you--okay, what are you gonna work on right now?

AMY ZORZETTO: It also sends the message that I'm not the one that's holding the learning. That they're the ones that are holding the learning and so they take that learning onto themselves and make those decisions. They can, you know,

find an area that they're comfortable with and be able to work there, but there's not one assigned area so it's not that at the carpet that's where you do math.

AMY ZORZETTO: So math happens everywhere right? So in the world and it happens everywhere in this class. And so that's really important. And so I think creating those different areas within the environment so that they have areas that they can work in but also not limiting it to specific functions. I go to them in terms of where their learning is rather than them come to me. And that's really important because I want to learn with them in the environment that they're learning in. 'Cause if I look around I do also have reading is happening, writing is happening. There's lots of different pieces that are happening right now and what I'm looking for during that time as a teacher is I'm looking to see what is the student doing? How are they doing with what they're doing? And then what needs are surfacing? Maybe a misconception or a need that they need some support with and then deciding what my next step is going to be in their learning. So it's a constant watch all day and so it's really important. So we have a student now exercising while reading which is exciting too, right? So they learn to manage themselves and share things, and again we do have issues that arise but it's built so they're able to make decisions and learn how to make those decisions which I think is the ultimate goal is that we want thinkers. And so if I look around there's thinking happening in lots of different ways. Not necessarily in the traditional way where everyone would be sitting in one spot doing the exact same thing but there is thinking that's happening and I think that's the key piece.

It's about building that community, building the expectation, setting those expectations for the students but then working with them to develop the skills to be able to create the opportunities themselves and decide what type of learning's going to happen and then for them to actually do that learning.