

Developing Place Value Concepts

Interviewing the Teacher Grades 1–3

The following questions will help you learn about a primary teacher's approach to helping children learn about place value. Talk to a teacher in grade 3 or below.

QUESTIONS:

1. About how many students in your class have not yet developed a secure understanding of the concept of place value in our base-ten number system? How do you know?
2. Give several examples of tasks or questions you might use to gauge a student's level of place value understanding.
3. Give several examples of the sorts of tasks, problems, games, or questions you use to help children learn about place value.
4. Which of the following hands-on materials do you use in lessons about place value?
 - a. Counting chips
 - b. Bean sticks
 - c. Calculators
 - d. Coins
 - e. Linking cubes
 - f. Abacus
 - g. Base-ten blocks
 - h. Two-color Counters

How do you use these materials?

Are there other materials that you use? What and how?

Which materials do you prefer to use? Why?

REFLECTION:

1. After talking with the teacher, think about his or her students. Is this a class that is strong in its understanding of place value? (What makes you think this?) What else might this teacher consider doing to help his or her students with place value understanding?
2. Think about yourself as a future primary teacher. What will you do to help your students develop sound place value understanding?

The following questions will help you learn about an upper grade teacher's approach to teaching basic facts. Talk to a teacher in grade five or above about what he or she does with students who are not fluent in basic facts. Here are some questions you might want to ask:

1. How many students in your class have difficulty with basic facts? How do you know what facts are difficult? What facts are the most difficult? Do you have specific suggestions for how students can be helped to learn these "tough" facts?

2. Do any of your students receive special instruction in fact strategies? If so, what does this instruction entail? How do you help the students keep track of their progress in learning basic facts?

3. Do your students use calculators routinely for classwork and homework? If so, how do you think this calculator use helps or hinders those who have trouble with basic facts? If your students do not use calculators, why not? How do you think their not using calculators helps or hinders those who have trouble with basic facts?

REFLECTION:

1. After talking with the teacher, think about his or her students. Is this a class that is strong in its knowledge of the basic facts? What else might the teacher consider doing to help his or her students with basic facts?
2. Think about yourself as a future intermediate grade teacher. What might you want to do to help your students with their basic facts? What fact strategies might you encourage your students to use?