



Making Sense of Numbers in the Early Years

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On a daily basis, without even realizing it, we all use Math skills instilled during our early education years. These fundamental abilities are called 'number sense.' When the brain identifies patterns, amounts, or mathematical symbols, it is using number sense. We use these skills so often; they become part of our subconscious. Because of this, early childhood educators have an important role in planting the mathematical seed that will blossom both in and outside of school.

A Math Infused Environment

Providing an environment that encourages Math in an early education setting allows children to become comfortable with exploring Math and relating it to their own world. A great way to encourage number recognition is to provide visuals of varying amounts of animals, shapes and insects to correlating digits. Math carpets or posters are repetitive reminders to a child's brain of symbols and amounts. 'Counting Critters' or the 'Counting Fun' carpets from Flagship Carpets are both vibrant visuals that help children associate quantities with digits.

Referencing calendars and clocks give children real world number visuals as well. Teachers constantly label amounts of desks, caddies or cubbies to keep organized, but it also provides good examples of numbers in the classroom. A child's mind is absorbing concepts and developing math skills through what appears to be just a fun and colorful learning environment.

Playing with Numbers

Incorporating number sense into daily lessons is simply done with classic games we've all grown up with. Dice, Memory, or Bingo are still hits today in the classroom, and they reinforce the standards! Math Memory helps students with memorization and patterning with a competitive twist. Although dominos are fun to set up and knock down, they're also a great tool to strengthen comparison and counting skills. Without realizing it, students start to see patterns and remember the amounts associated with the arrangement of dots. BINGO is another classic game that can be altered to develop number recognition and basic arithmetic skills.

Depending on the student's ability, almost any game can be altered to meet varying math concepts. Even board games support number sense, as movements around the board require addition and subtraction.

Math All Around

Children with strong number sense are able to perform mental math quickly and relate numbers to real world situations. Next time you 'just know' the amount of dots on a set of dice without having to count it, or you tell a friend the time – think of your teachers who implanted number sense into your young mind through games, rugs, and even décor. They are the reason you can make any sense of numbers!