WHERE IS NUMBER IN ALGEBRAIC REASONING?

Rice University School Mathematics Project
Houston, Texas

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Session 165
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Why Algebraic Reasoning?
What is Algebraic Reasoning?

“Algebraic thinking or algebraic reasoning involves forming generalizations from experiences with number and computation, formalizing these ideas with the use of a meaningful symbol system, and exploring the concepts pattern and function.”

(Van De Walle, 2010, p. 254)
Algebraic Reasoning includes:

- Pictorial descriptions
- Graphic and verbal descriptions
- Numeric representations
Where is number in algebraic reasoning?
Algebraic Reasoning

- Generalization from arithmetic
- Meaningful use of symbols
- Study of patterns and functions
Generalization from Arithmetic
Developing Arithmetic in the Elementary Grades

- The separation of arithmetic and algebra deprives students of powerful ways of thinking about mathematics.

- Fundamental properties that children use in calculating are the basis for most of symbolic manipulation in algebra.
Using Playing Cards

Let’s play the game ‘Salute’

- Three players on each team
- Deck of cards
- Paper to record (optional)
Using Playing Cards to form Equations
Using Playing Cards to form Equations

Figure 1

Four problems involving playing cards

\[
\square + 7 = 10 \quad (x + 7 = 10)
\]

\[
\square + \square = \boxed{8} + \boxed{6} \quad (2x = 8 + 6)
\]

The first two cards are the same.

\[
\square + \square + \square = \square + \square \quad (3x = 2y)
\]

The first three cards are the same, and the last two cards are the same.

\[
\square + \square + \square + \square = \square + \square + \square + \square
\]

All eight cards must be different.
Order of the Operations Practice
Using Playing Cards

Value of cards
Numbered cards: value as indicated
Face cards: Jack, King, Queen all have a value of ten
Face cards: Ace has a value of one
Meaningful Use of Symbols
Figure 2

The students were introduced to a system of equations. How much is each symbol worth?
(a) The second activity used symbols familiar to the students.

**HOW MUCH DOES EACH FISH COST?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUM</th>
<th>$13</th>
<th>$19</th>
<th>$21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$16</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Goldfish  
Beta  
Clown Fish
(a) Students had more difficulty when the activity dealt with larger sums.

**Figure 4**

**How Much Does Each Whale Weigh in Tons?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUM</th>
<th>Right Whale</th>
<th>Gray Whale</th>
<th>Blue Whale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>215</td>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Whale" /></td>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Whale" /></td>
<td><img src="image3" alt="Whale" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>375</td>
<td><img src="image4" alt="Whale" /></td>
<td><img src="image5" alt="Whale" /></td>
<td><img src="image6" alt="Whale" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>295</td>
<td><img src="image7" alt="Whale" /></td>
<td><img src="image8" alt="Whale" /></td>
<td><img src="image9" alt="Whale" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>330</td>
<td><img src="image10" alt="Whale" /></td>
<td><img src="image11" alt="Whale" /></td>
<td><img src="image12" alt="Whale" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>170</td>
<td><img src="image13" alt="Whale" /></td>
<td><img src="image14" alt="Whale" /></td>
<td><img src="image15" alt="Whale" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200</td>
<td><img src="image16" alt="Whale" /></td>
<td><img src="image17" alt="Whale" /></td>
<td><img src="image18" alt="Whale" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>185</td>
<td><img src="image19" alt="Whale" /></td>
<td><img src="image20" alt="Whale" /></td>
<td><img src="image21" alt="Whale" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Questions to ask students

- Can you tell me what you were thinking?
- Did you solve this in a different way?
- How do you know this is true?
- Does this always work?
Math Challenge #30

**SMILES**

**Figure This!**

Which is worth more, a SMILE or a FROWN?

**Figure This!** The costs of combinations of frowns, smiles, and neutral faces are shown. How much is a smile worth?

**Hint:** Find a way to combine two of the rows or columns that have something in common.

**Reasoning about unknowns is essential in studying equations. Economists, nurses, chemists, and engineers all use equations in their work.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sum</th>
<th>$52</th>
<th>$50</th>
<th>$42</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$40</td>
<td>$32</td>
<td>$35</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$37</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Objectives of the investigation

Students will:
- Develop their ability to reason with and represent with variables;
- Move away from random guess-and-check to a more logical approach for finding values for variables in a system of equations; and
- Understand various approaches to solving the same problem.
Make up your own chart

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_______  ___________  ___________
Study of Patterns and Functions
Two of Everything
By Lily Toy Hong
Two Of Everything

- Read the book.
- Act out the story using a magical pot.
- Develop a table of values using Input and Output.
- Utilize pattern found from the table to generalize a rule verbally and using symbols.
Activity Sheet 1

What would you choose?

- Choice A: 100 coins each day for 10 days
- Choice B: 5 coins and a magical pot that doubled the coins each day for 10 days

Justify your reasoning
Activity Sheet 2

Square Numbers

Pattern I see: sides are the same.

1 \times 1 \quad 2 \times 2 \quad 3 \times 3 \quad 4 \times 4
Study of Patterns and Functions
The Dinner Table Problem

Scenario:
Susan is preparing for a dinner party. She has seven tables that will be placed with one side close to one side of another table to make a long row. How many people can she invite?
## Dinner Table Problem

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dinner Tables</th>
<th>Show How</th>
<th>Number of People</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>![Diagram 1]</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>![Diagram 2]</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>![Diagram 3]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Finding Patterns and Functions
The Tiling a Patio problem

Alfredo Gomez is designing square patios. Each patio has a square garden area in the center. Alfredo uses brown tiles to represent the soil of the garden. Around each garden, he designs a border of white tiles. The pictures show the three smallest square patios that he can design with brown tiles for the garden and white tiles for the border.
# Tiling a Patio

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Patio Number</th>
<th>Number of Brown Tiles</th>
<th>Number of White Tiles</th>
<th>Total Number of Brown and White Tiles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is now time for GETS
(Graph, Equation, Table, Story)
Students will:

• develop their ability to reason with and represent with variables
• move away from random guess-and-check to a more logical approach for finding values for variables in a system of equations and
• understand various approaches to solving the same problem.
Crossing the River Problem

Scenario

Eight adults and two children need to cross a river. A small boat is available that can hold one adult, or one or two children. Everyone can row the boat.

How many one-way trips does it take for them all to cross the river?
Crossing the River Problem

Extension

Can you describe how to work it out for two children and any number of adults?
Internet Resources

- **Scales and balance**
  http://nlvm.usu.edu/en/nav/frames_asid_324_g_3_t_2.html

- **Pan Balance Shapes**
  http://illuminations.nctm.org/Activity.aspx?id=3531

- **Function Machine**
  http://www.shodor.org/interactivate/activities/FunctionMachine/

- **Function Machine Math Playground**
  http://www.mathplayground.com/functionmachine.html

- **Stop That Creature!**
  http://pbskids.org/cyberchase/media/games/functions/
• **Visual Algebra Puzzles**
  Create your own algebra puzzles then try to solve them! This easy to use, educational tool was designed to work together with Shuttle Mission Math, an algebraic reasoning game in the app store. Puzzles can be solved with at least one of the following visual strategies: Scale Up, Scale Down (multiply or divide),


• **Shuttle Mission Math**
  Shuttle Mission Math is a mathematical puzzle game that makes algebraic thinking both visual and interactive. The goal is to find the weight of each space creature and assemble a team for the next shuttle mission.


• **Algebra Champ**
  Game like environment for solving linear equations

www.rusmp.rice.edu
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