

Harnessing the Power of Teaching to Advance Racial Justice and Students' Flourishing

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“Acres of Diamonds” in Education and Human Development Lecture Series

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Teaching is powerful.

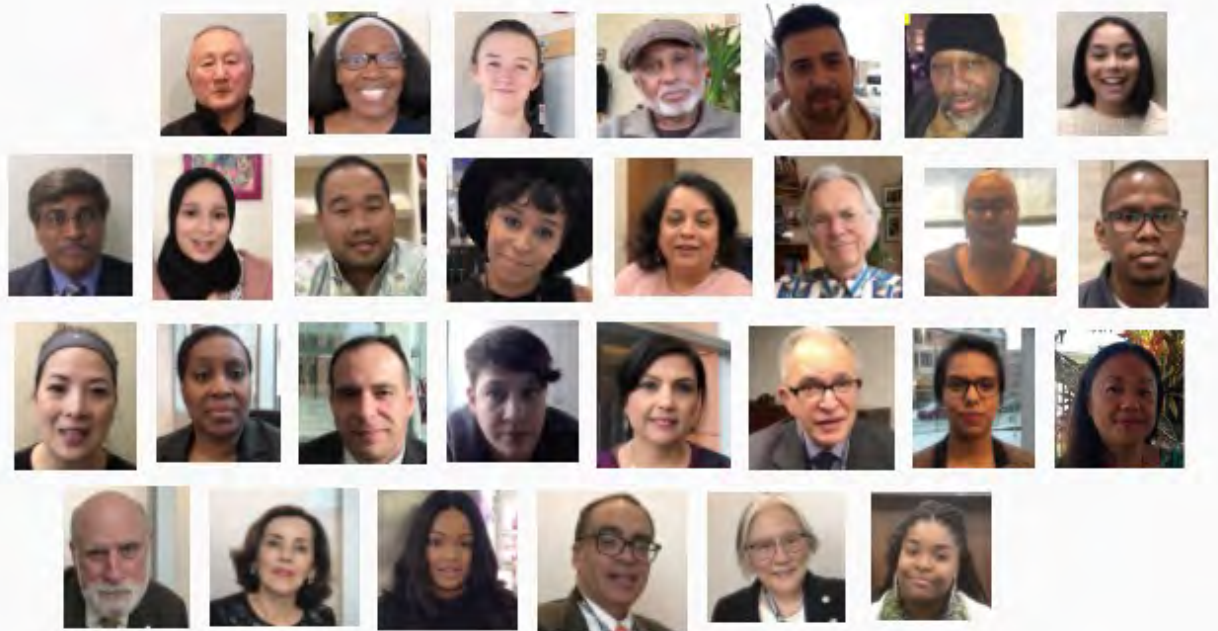


Is there a teacher who had a significant impact on you?



How is teaching powerful?

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
MARSAL FAMILY SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
TEACHINGWORKS



Video: Is there a teacher who had a significant impact on you?



5



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What stood out to you? What patterns did you notice?



The argument of this talk


1. Teaching has tremendous power with respect to racism — for harm or for good.
2. But we systematically overlook and undervalue the power of teaching in the struggle for racial justice.
3. Harnessing the power of teaching is necessary to disrupt patterns of white supremacy and advance equity and justice.



1. Teaching has tremendous power with respect to racism — for harm or for good.



2. But we systematically overlook and undervalue the power of teaching in the struggle for racial justice.

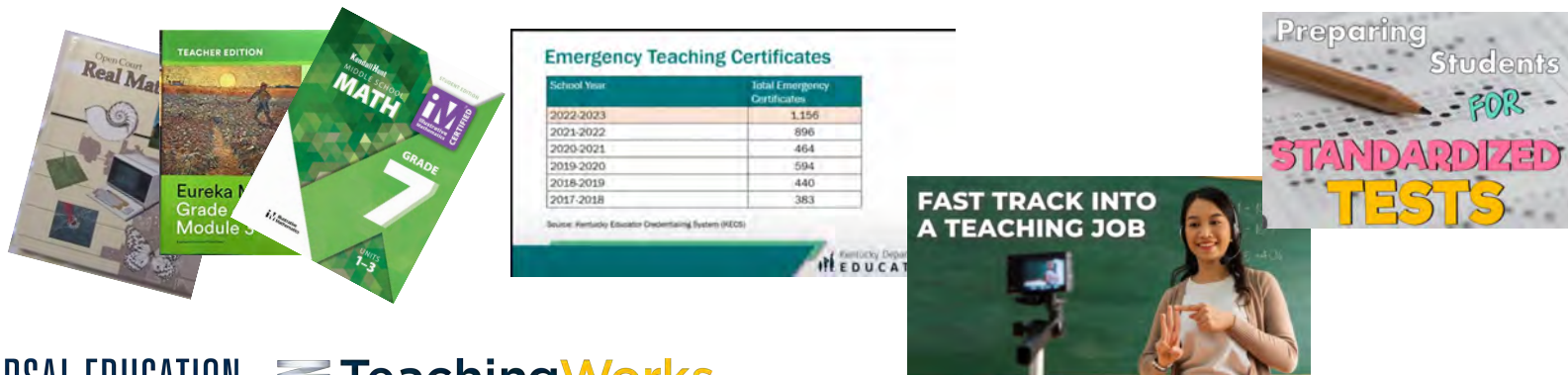


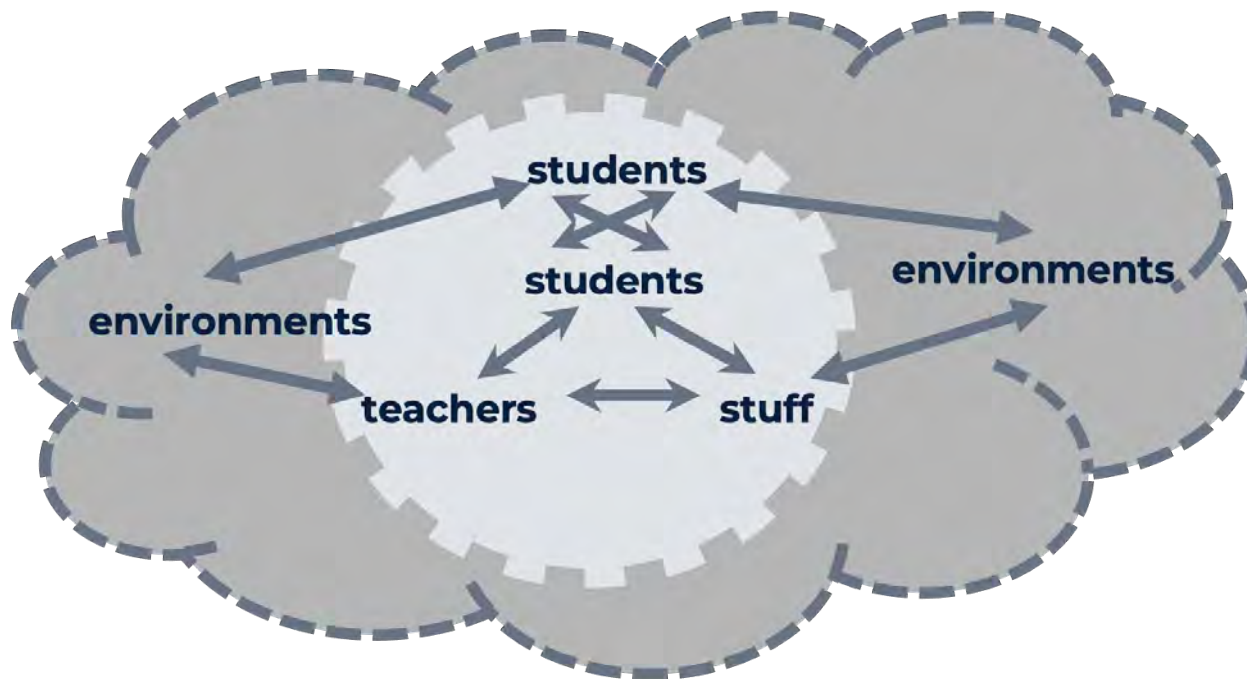
Why does
this matter?



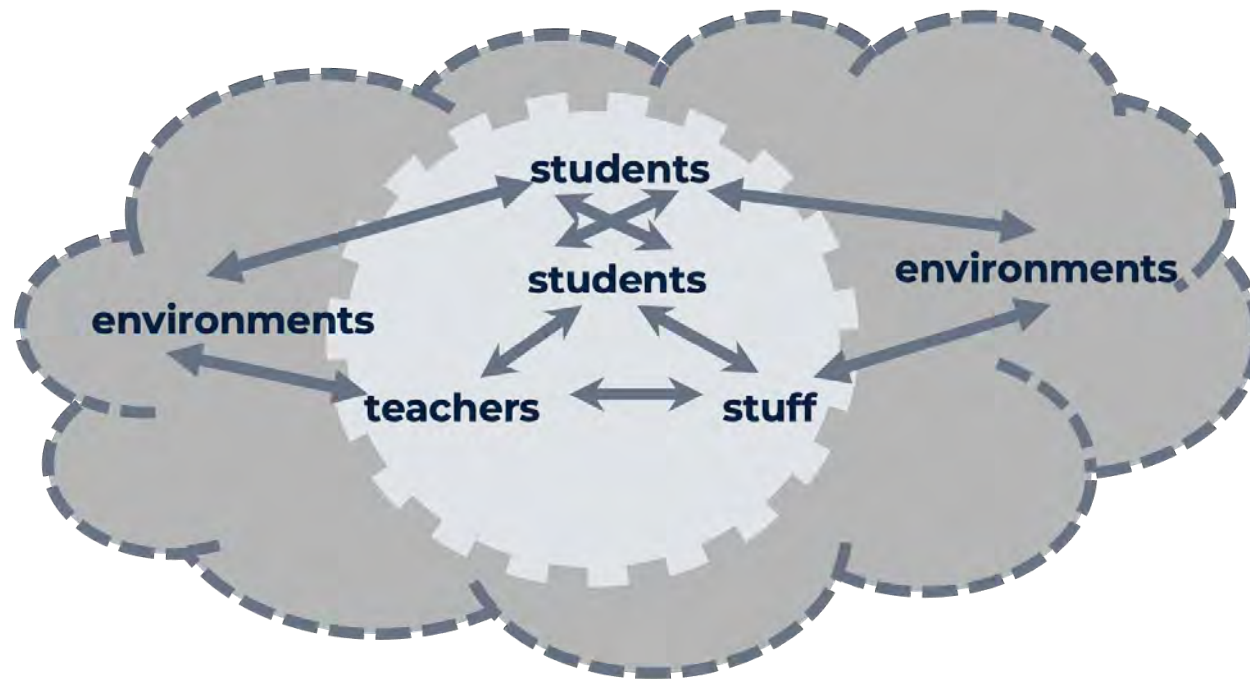
We fail to connect the dots.

And the same strategies keep being recycled.

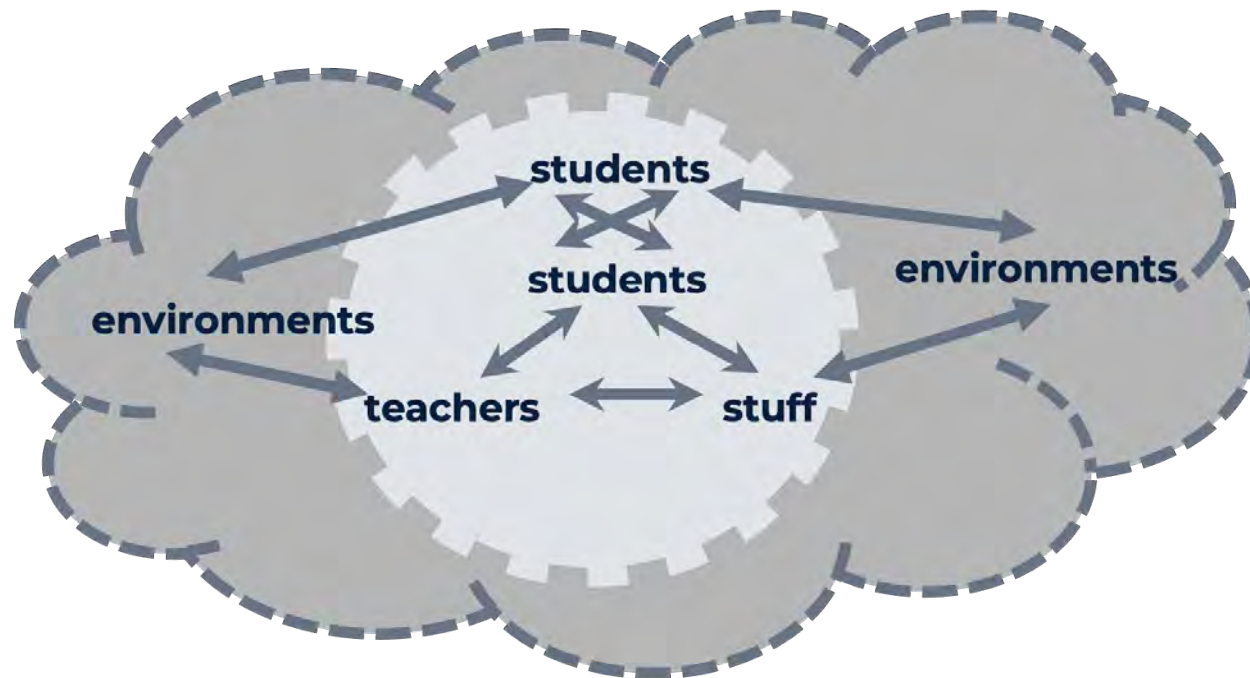




1. Teaching and learning are constructed interactively and are interpretive.



1. Teaching and learning are constructed interactively and are interpretive.
2. They take place within broad historical and socio-political environments.

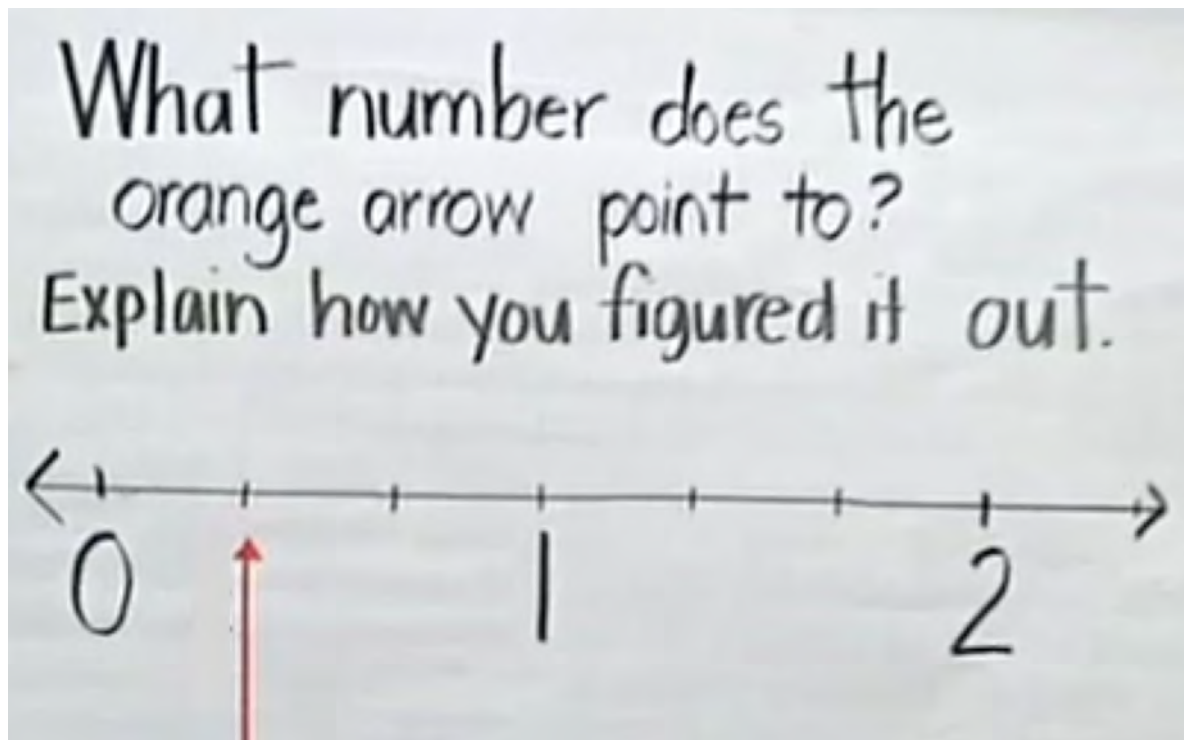


Fractions as numbers: The instructional goal for student understanding

3.NF.2.a

Represent a fraction $1/b$ on a number line diagram by defining the interval from 0 to 1 as the whole and partitioning it into b equal parts. Recognize that each part has size $1/b$ and that the endpoint of the part based at 0 locates the number $1/b$ on the number line.







Aniyah



Toni

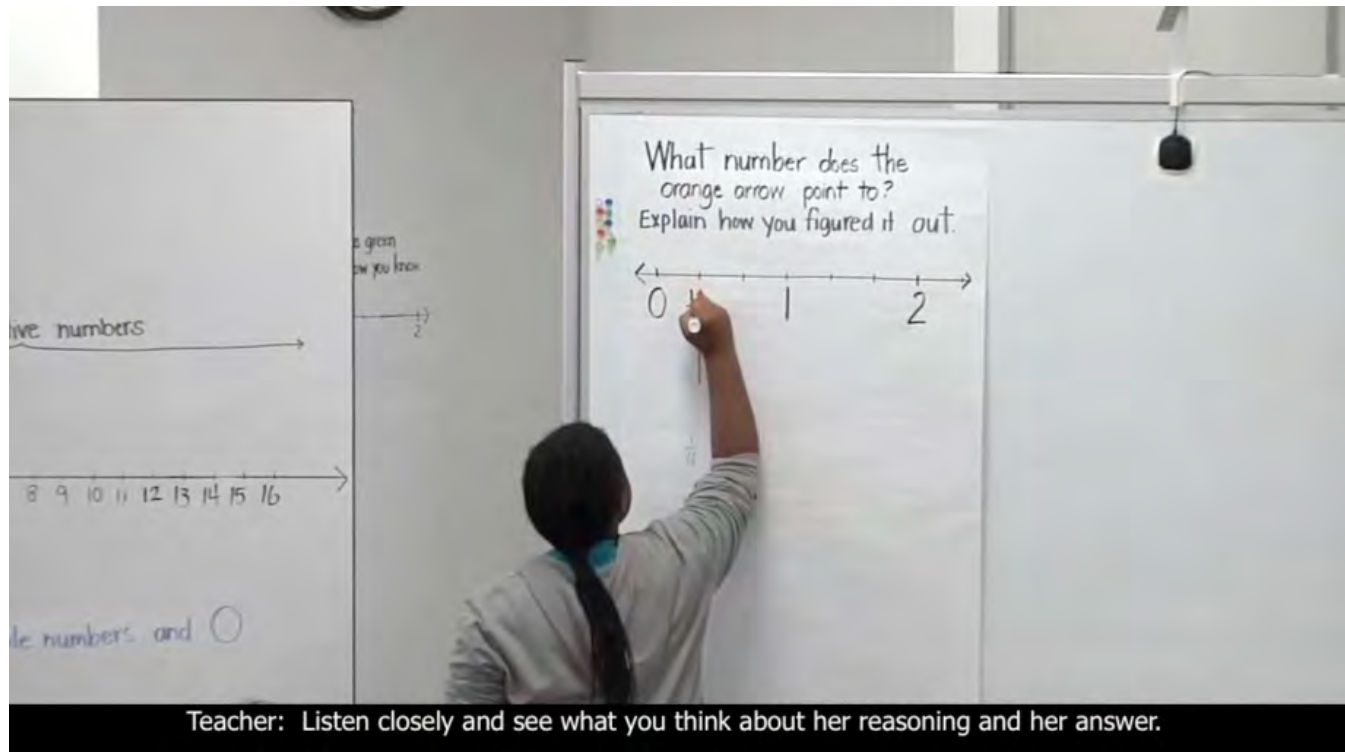


Viewing focus

What do you see about each girl's mathematical knowledge and skill?



Video: Aniyah and Toni




This video and additional supporting materials are available online [here](#).



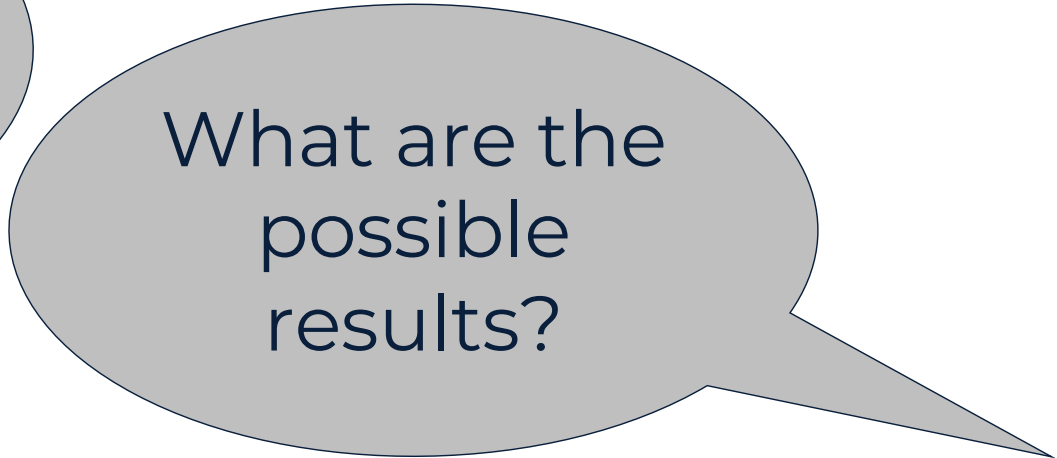
Discuss

What do you see about each girl's mathematical knowledge and skill?





What would
happen
next?



What are the
possible
results?



In the next moment, what is likely to happen?

NORMALIZED NEXT MOVES

RESULTS



In the next moment, what is likely to happen?

NORMALIZED NEXT MOVES

- “Can someone help Aniyah out and show what we call the whole on the number line?”

RESULTS

- Aniyah is excluded and her mathematical contributions are sidelined.



In the next moment, what is likely to happen?

NORMALIZED NEXT MOVES

- “Can someone help Aniyah out and show what we call the whole on the number line?”
- “Great, Aniyah, almost! But remember that the whole is from 0 to 1.”

RESULTS

- Aniyah is excluded and her mathematical contributions are sidelined.
- Aniyah’s answer is signaled to be incorrect and she is positioned as not having contributed to the work.



In the next moment, what is likely to happen?

NORMALIZED NEXT MOVES

- “Can someone help Aniyah out and show what we call the whole on the number line?”
- “Great, Aniyah, almost! But remember that the whole is from 0 to 1.”
- “Thumbs up if you agree with Aniyah; thumbs down if you disagree.”

RESULTS

- Aniyah is excluded and her mathematical contributions are sidelined.
- Aniyah’s answer is signaled to be incorrect and she is positioned as not having contributed to the work.
- Aniyah’s solution is “voted” on by her classmates.



What else is likely?

NORMALIZED NEXT MOVES

RESULTS



What else is likely?

NORMALIZED NEXT MOVES

- “Toni, when you’re ready to participate appropriately by not playing with your hair and laughing, and have a question to ask, I will come back to you.”

RESULTS

- Toni is publicly excluded from the discussion.



What else is likely?

NORMALIZED NEXT MOVES

- “Toni, when you’re ready to participate appropriately by not playing with your hair and laughing, and have a question to ask, I will come back to you.”
- “You need to be a better listener, Toni. Aniyah already explained why she picked one-seventh. Who else has a real question for Aniyah?”

RESULTS

- Toni is publicly excluded from the discussion.
- Toni is judged to not be listening, her question is judged as not good, and she is excluded from the discussion.



What else is likely?

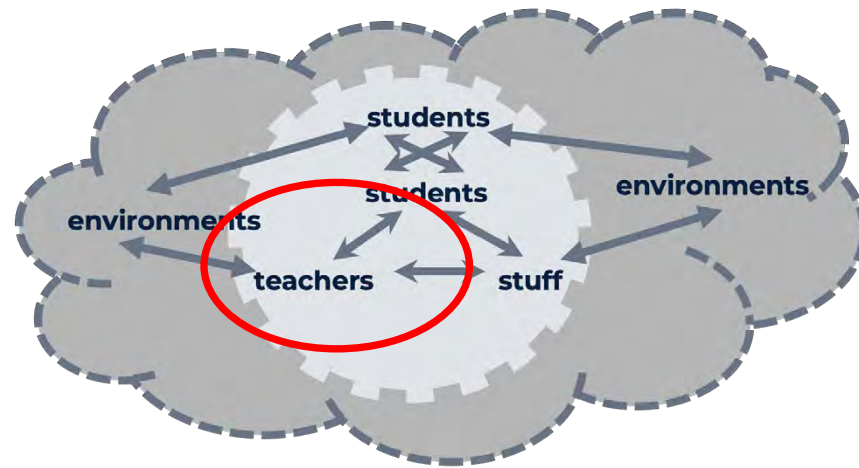
NORMALIZED NEXT MOVES

- “Toni, when you’re ready to participate appropriately by not playing with your hair and laughing, and have a question to ask, I will come back to you.”
- “You need to be a better listener, Toni. Aniyah already explained why she picked one-seventh. Who else has a real question for Aniyah?”
- “In this classroom, we are respectful of one another. When you are ready to be respectful, you can rejoin the discussion, Toni.”

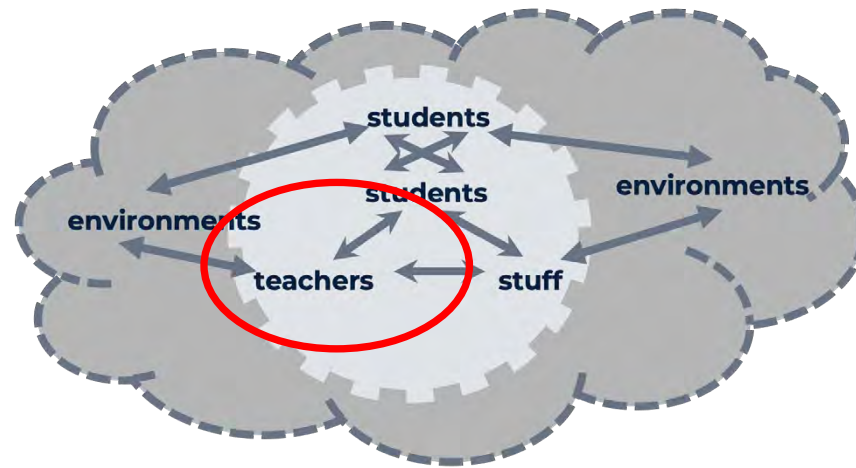
RESULTS

- Toni is publicly excluded from the discussion.
- Toni is judged to not be listening, her question is judged as not good, and she is excluded from the discussion.
- Toni is publicly named and shamed as “disrespectful,” rebuked, and her role in advancing the mathematics is sidelined.

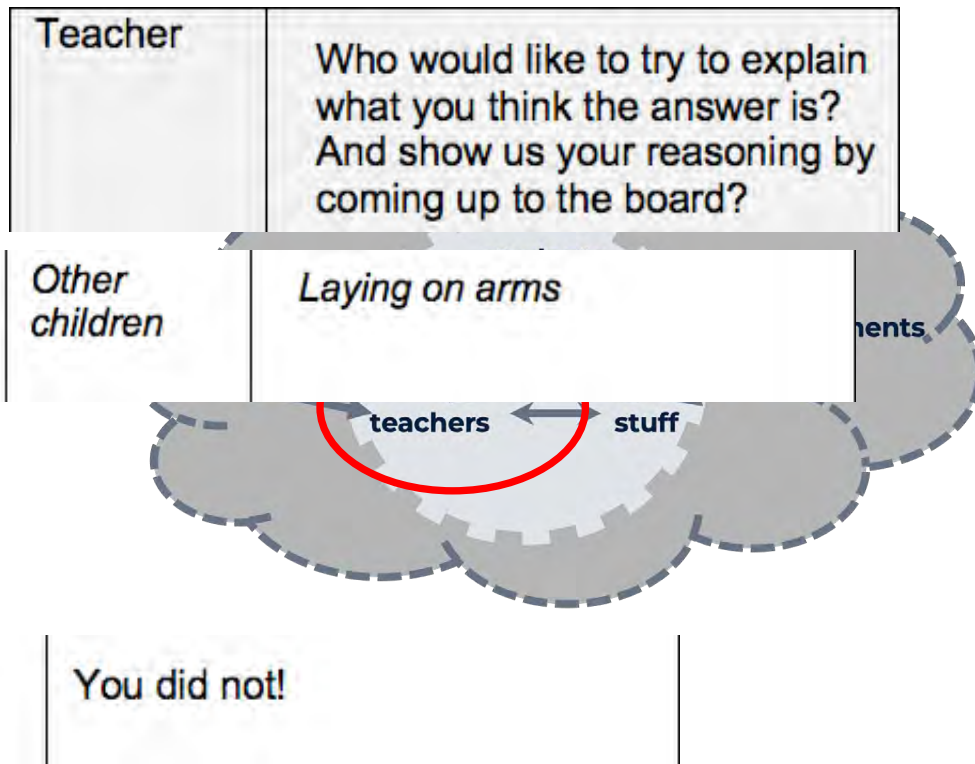




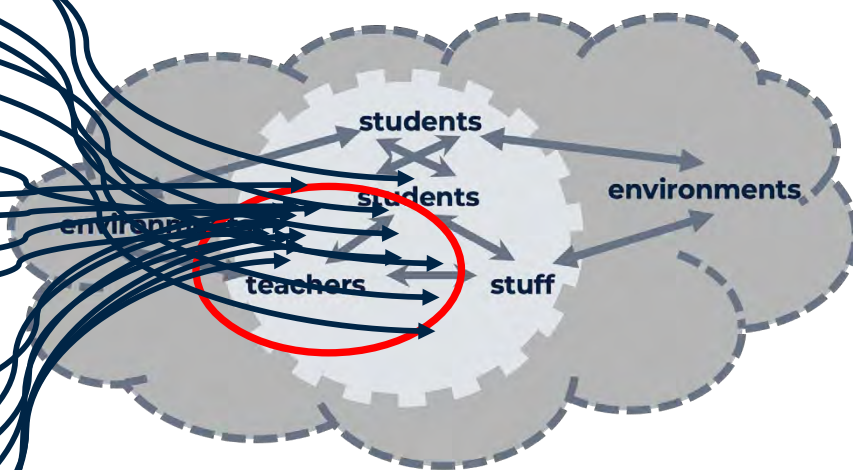
Speaker	Talk	Discretionary space
Teacher	Who would like to try to explain what you think the answer is? And show us your reasoning by coming up to the board? Who'd like to come up to the board and try to tell- And you know, it might not be right. That's okay because we're learning something new. I'd like someone to come up and sort of be the teacher and explain how you are thinking about it. Who'd like to try that this morning?	1. Deciding when to open whole-group discussion 2. Deciding what to do to launch discussion 3. Framing the expectation for presenting 4. Framing of what it "coming to the board" entails
Teacher	Okay, Anyiah?	5. Selecting a student to present
Toni	Playing with hair	6. Deciding whether to comment
Other children	Laying on arms	7. Deciding whether to comment
Teacher	When someone's presenting at the board, what should you be doing?	8. Setting norms for what to do when a student is presenting
Students in chorus	Looking at them.	
Teacher	Looking at that person.	9. Responding to students
Teacher	Uh-huh?	10. Taking up an individual student question
Anyiah	You want me to write it?	
Teacher	You're trying to mark what you think this number is and explain how you figured it out.	11. Clarifying task
Teacher	Listen closely and see what you think about her reasoning and her answer. (Anyiah writes $\frac{1}{7}$ by the orange line).	12. Setting task for the other students
Anyiah	I put one-seventh because there's-	
Toni	Did she say one-seventh?	13. Responding to student
Anyiah	(turns to Toni) Yeah... (continues to class) Because there's seven equal parts, like one, two, three, four, five, six, and then seven. (Uses her fingers to count the parts on the number line).	
Teacher	Before you agree or disagree, I want you to ask questions if there's something you don't understand about what she did. No agreeing and disagreeing. Just. All you can do right now is ask Anyiah questions. Who has a question for her?	14. Setting task for responding to student explanation
Teacher	Okay, Toni, what's your question for her?	15. Selecting student to speak
Dante	You did not!	16. Responding to student speaking across room
Toni	Why did- (laughs at another student who says something to her from across the room)	17. Responding to student laughing
Teacher	Go ahead, it's your turn.	17. Responding to student laughing
Toni	Why did you pick one-seventh?	
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Teacher	Let's listen to her answer now. That was a very good question.	19. Setting task for class 20. Responding to student



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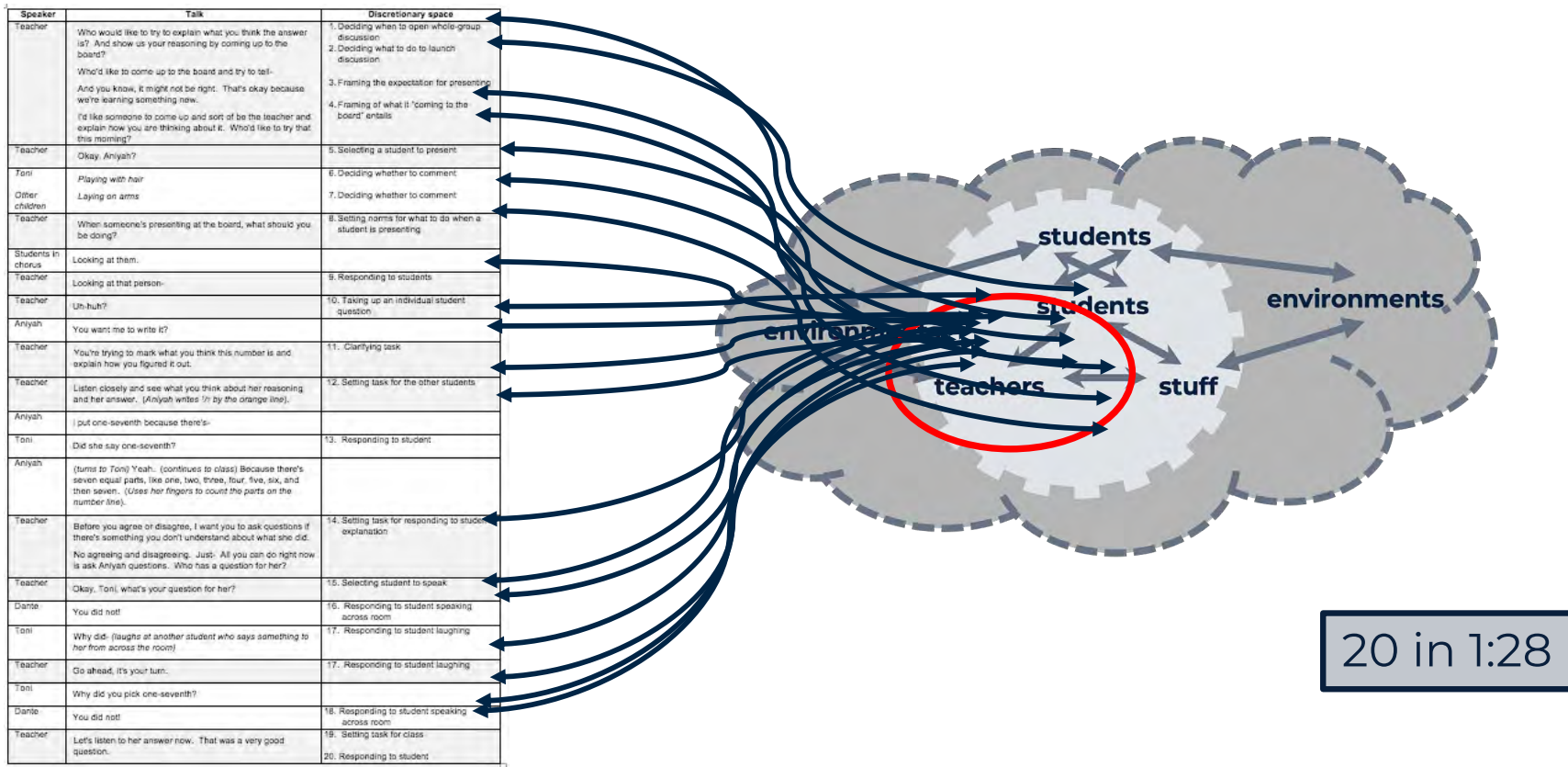
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20 in 1:28



Teaching is dense with “discretionary spaces”



20 in 1:28



Discretionary spaces lie in the many, many moment-to-moment moves, uses of language, and decisions that are inevitable in practice.

These are both crucial resources for supporting students and also where harm happens.

Video: Aniyah and Toni



This video and additional supporting materials are available online [here](#).

Using discretionary spaces with care



- Interpreting Toni as asking a real question that she means.
- Hearing Toni's question as central to advancing the mathematical content.
- Reinforcing her mathematical identity, not choosing to read her body as disruptive.

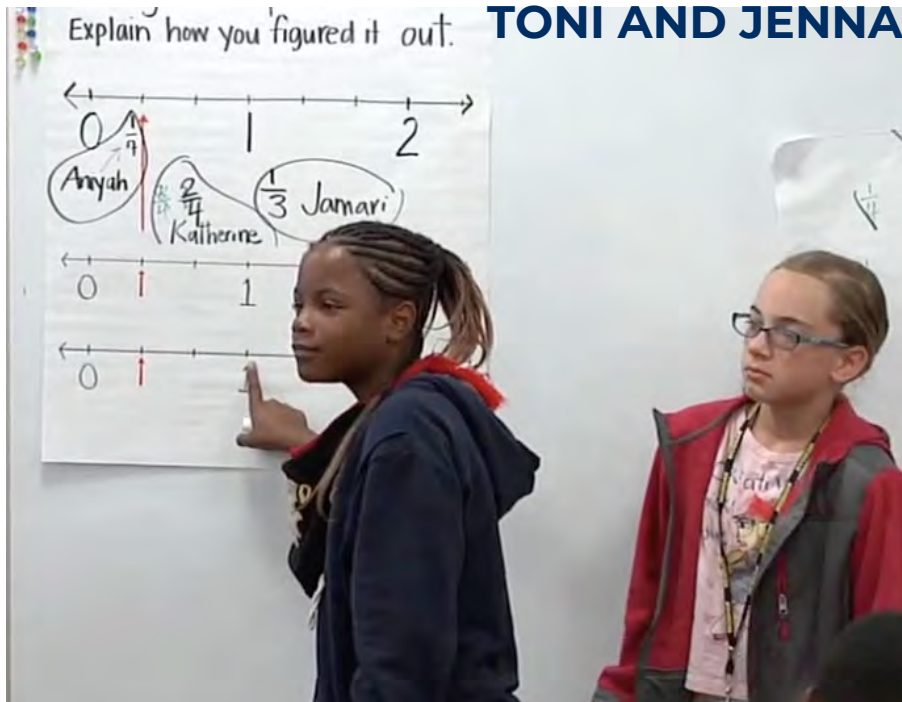


- Other children hear Aniyah as getting the discussion going, and Toni as asking an important mathematical question.
- Aniyah and Toni are both positioned as contributing to the discussion.
- Children see a teacher attending to Black girls as mathematical thinkers and contributors to collective work.



- Interpreting Aniyah as competent to answer questions about her ideas.
- Hearing Aniyah's explanation as central to advancing the mathematical content.
- Reinforcing her mathematical identity, not choosing to read her body as struggling.

14 minutes after where we stopped



ANIYAH

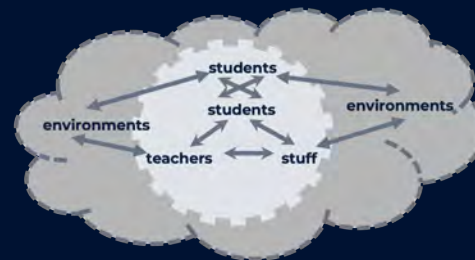
I did well on my goal today because my goal was to to share my ideas with the class and I did I went up to the board and share my idea with the class on Fractions.

AND: On an “exit ticket,” 28 of the children were able to correctly identify a different fraction ($\frac{2}{5}$) on the number line.

What does it take to disrupt the patterns that perpetuate inequity and marginalization?



Gholson & Martin, 2014; Langer-Osuna, 2015, 2017; Leonard & Martin, 2013; Martin, 2012, 2015

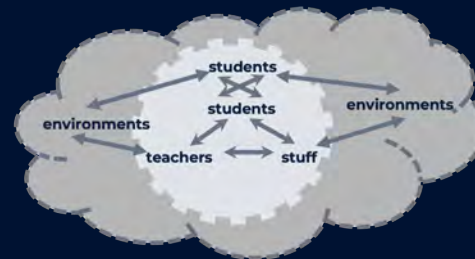


What does it take to disrupt the patterns that perpetuate inequity and marginalization?



- Seeing Aniyah's explanation and Toni's question as key to the class's work

Gholson & Martin, 2014; Langer-Osuna, 2015, 2017; Leonard & Martin, 2013; Martin, 2012, 2015



What does it take to disrupt the patterns that perpetuate inequity and marginalization?



- Seeing Aniyah's explanation and Toni's question as key to the class's work
- Seeing brilliance in students and holding high expectations of them

Gholson & Martin, 2014; Langer-Osuna, 2015, 2017; Leonard & Martin, 2013; Martin, 2012, 2015



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Knowing and using mathematics in teaching (MKT)

Interpreting Toni as asking a mathematical question that she means



Gholson & Martin, 2014; Langer-Osuna, 2015, 2017; Leonard & Martin, 2013; Martin, 2012, 2015



What does it take to disrupt the patterns that perpetuate inequity and marginalization?



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- ... AND having something different to DO

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Knowing and using mathematics in teaching (MKT)

Interpreting Toni as asking a mathematical question that she means

Having a repertoire of practices that can be adapted and used in contexts



Gholson & Martin, 2014; Langer-Osuna, 2015, 2017; Leonard & Martin, 2013; Martin, 2012, 2015



3. Harnessing the power of teaching is necessary to disrupt patterns of white supremacy and advance equity and justice.



How can teaching can disrupt these patterns?

- Interrogating our identities and experiences with the curriculum of white supremacy
- Making visible the curriculum of white supremacy, normalized practice, continuity, and harm
- Identifying normalized habits and working to break them
- Highlighting discretionary spaces and developing repertoires of practice that disrupt these continuities



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These can be developed separately and also intertwined.



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Let's explore an example.



Acknowledging competence



How teachers signal who and what is seen as competent





“Positioning” theory

A theory from social psychology, originated by Bronwyn Davies and Rom Harré

Focuses on how discursive and other moves in social interactions and situations set up how people are seen, interpreted, and how people experience and feel themselves to be seen interpreted, and how they experience their sense of self in that context.

Davies, B. & Harré, R. (1990). Positioning: The discursive production of selves. *The Journal of Social Behavior*, 20(1) 43–63.



Acknowledging competence (case of mathematics)

Deliberately deploying the power of teaching to:

1. Broaden and label what being competent (“smart”) in mathematics means
2. Intervene to position who (and what) is seen as competent in mathematics
3. Support positive individual identities and self-positioning

Sources: E. Cohen and R. Lotan, complex instruction; J. Boaler’s work; *Smarter Together: Collaboration and Equity in the Elementary Mathematics Classroom* (Featherstone, Crespo, et al., 2011)



What does “acknowledging competence” require?

1. Having a broad understanding of mathematics oneself
2. Using the concept of “positioning” to intervene to influence who (and what) is seen as competent
3. Strategically making these moves in authentic and well-timed ways; having ways to do that that are sensitive



Distinguishing acknowledging competence from praise

Praise

- “Good job!”
- “You’re working so well today.”
- “Nice work!”
- “I am proud of you.”
- “You’re working like such good mathematicians.”
- “You made so much progress on the problems today.”

Praise – verbal feedback with the purpose of evaluating what a student says or does

Acknowledging competence – intentional identifying, naming, and highlighting specific mathematical or learning competencies of what a student says or does

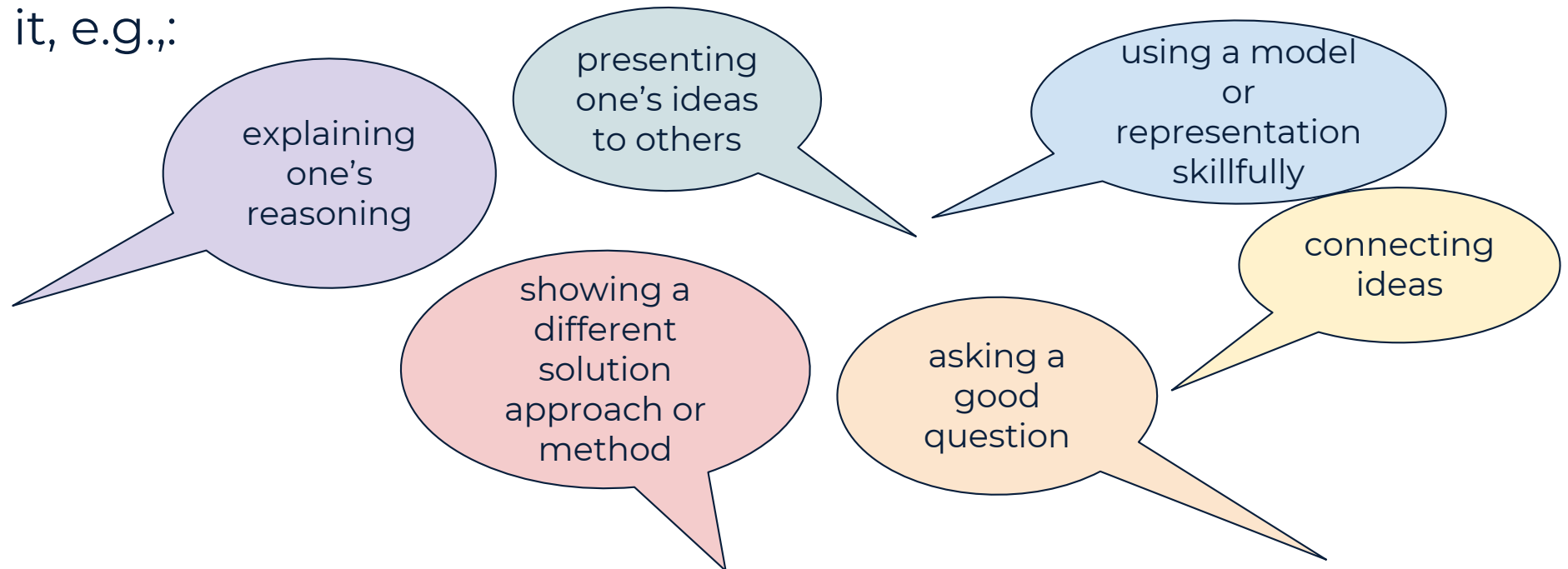
Acknowledging competence

- ★ “It was particularly clear how you used your drawing to explain your thinking.”
- ★ “Belin gave a clear and specific mathematical explanation.”
- ★ “You solved that in a really interesting way. Can you tell us more about your thinking?”
- ★ “Ibn used a very interesting method to show that there are no more solutions. Who can say what Ibn did?”
- ★ “It is clear how closely you are following other people’s thinking and connecting it to the idea you had.”
- ★ “One thing that was really important about what Laken did was to use the definition we developed.”



Practicing acknowledging competence

Identify **specific examples** of mathematics learning competence and **what you might say** to acknowledge it, e.g.,:



Acknowledging competence is a disruptive practice

Disrupting patterns of:

- Narrow, reductive, and distorted views of mathematics
- “Under-teaching”
- Who is seen as mathematically competent
- Negative and deficit views students carry of themselves



What is involved in acknowledging competence?

1. Recognizing and broadening conceptions of what comprises mathematics and mathematical competence, and seeing that in children
2. Understanding the broader systemic factors that shape everyday micro-interactions related to racism and other forms of oppression (sexism, linguicism, ableism, classism) and seeing risks and status hierarchies in one's own class.
3. **Based on #1 and #2, intervening explicitly to acknowledge particular students' competence.**

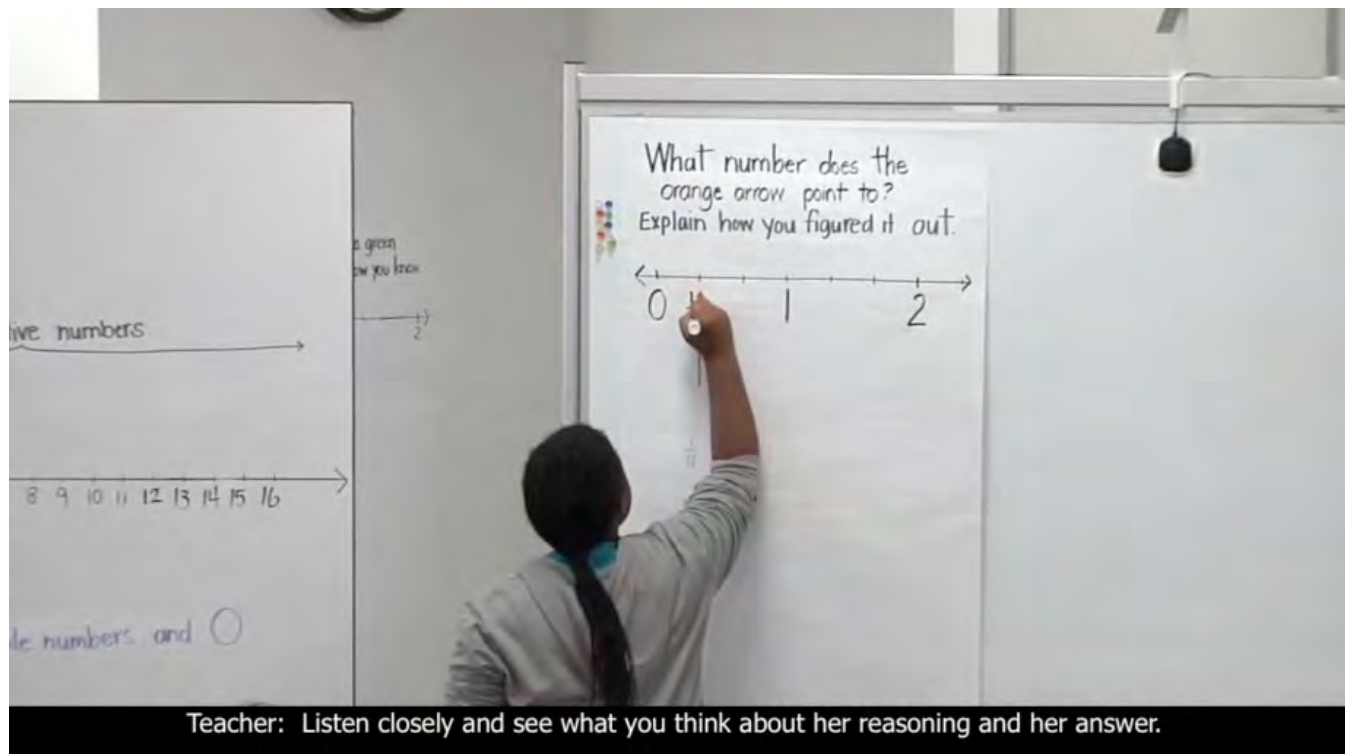


Practice

1. What competences would you acknowledge here?
2. Whom would you choose to acknowledge and why?
3. What would you actually say?



Video: Aniyah and Toni



This video and additional supporting materials are available online [here](#).



Looking back across this session

1. Teaching has tremendous power with respect to racism — for harm or for good.
2. But we systematically overlook and undervalue the power of teaching in the struggle for racial justice.
3. Harnessing the power of teaching is necessary to disrupt patterns of white supremacy and advance equity and justice.

Upcoming programs at TeachingWorks
Registration available now
Learn more at teachingworks.org



View our upcoming programs calendar
teachingworks.org/events-calendar



1

May 20–24, 2024

Content Methods Laboratory Class and Workshop

Join teacher educators from around the country in person or virtually as we investigate the best ways to use the semester-long methods course.

Register by May 1, 2024



2

June 17–21, 2024 | Detroit, MI
June 24–28, 2024 | Grand Rapids, MI

Elementary Mathematics Laboratory

Explore the complexity of teaching and investigate and challenge what it means to use skillful teaching to disrupt patterns of injustice.

Register by May 30, 2024



3

August 1–2, 2024

Introduction to Practice-Based Teacher Education Workshop

This workshop enables teacher educators to develop approaches to making teaching practices explicit to beginning teachers and engaging them in supported practice during pre-service training.

Register by July 19, 2024



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THANK YOU!



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Credits



Image on slide 8:

Screenshot of video from “A Momentary Lapse or Abusive Teaching?” The New York Times.

Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/video/nyregion/100000004159212/success-academy-teacher-rip-and-redo-video.html>



Image on slides 8 and 48:

Photo from “Research brief addresses teacher stress and health,” Prevention Research Center, Penn State College of Health and Human Development.

Retrieved from <https://prevention.psu.edu/news/research-brief-addresses-teacher-stress-and-health/>



Image on slides 8 and 48:

Photo from “Corporal Punishment in Schools: Research and Reporting Tips to Guide Your Coverage” by Denise-Marie Ordway, The Good Men Project.

Retrieved from <https://goodmenproject.com/featured-content/corporal-punishment-in-schools-research-and-reporting-tips-to-guide-your-coverage-2/>

Credits



Image on slide 8:

Photo from “Why Many Academic Interventions Don’t Have Staying Power—and What to Do About It” by Sarah Schwartz, Education Week.

Retrieved from https://www.phillytrib.com/lifestyle/health/black-doctors-earn-less-than-white-peers-study-reveals/article_2d359910-85c8-524b-b6d2-15d1705ad762.html

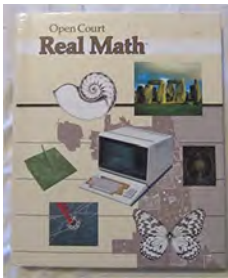


Image on slide 10:

Cover of *Open Court Real Math, Grade 7*, 1991.

Retrieved from <https://www.amazon.com/Open-Court-Real-Math-Grade/dp/081260637X>

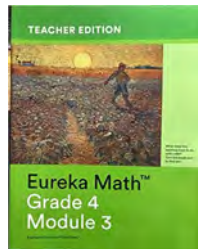


Image on slide 10:

Cover of *Eureka Math, A Story of Units: Grade 4, Module 3*, 2015.

Retrieved from <https://www.amazon.com/Eureka-Math-Grade-Module-Teachers/dp/1632553724>

Credits

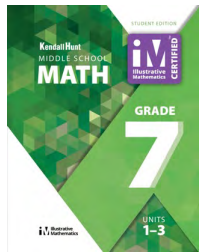


Image on slide 10:

Cover of *Illustrative Mathematics: Grade 7*, 2019.

Retrieved from <https://k12.kendallhunt.com/product/illustrative-mathematics-grade-7-student-edition-set>

School Year	Total Emergency Certificates
2022-2023	1,156
2021-2022	896
2020-2021	464
2019-2020	594
2018-2019	440
2017-2018	383

Source: Kentucky Educator Decertifying System (KEDS)

Kentucky Department of EDUCATION

Image on slide 10:

Graphic from “About Kentucky’s teacher ‘CRISIS’” by Richard Innes, Bluegrass Institute.

Retrieved from <https://bipps.org/blog/about-kentuckys-teacher-crisis>



Image on slide 10:

Photo from “Fast Track into a Teaching Job with SCC’s ‘Live Online’ Teacher in Residence STEP Program”, Scottsdale Community College.

Retrieved from <https://www.scottsdalecc.edu/news/2020/fast-track-teaching-job-sccs-live-online-teacher-residence-step-program>

Credits



Image on slides 10:
Photo from "Preparing Students for Standardized Tests" Chomping at the Lit.
Retrieved from <https://www.chompingatthelit.com/standardized-testing/>



Image on slide 49:
Photo of Bronwyn Davies.
Retrieved from <http://bronwyndavies.com.au/about-bronwyn>



Image on slide 49:
Photo of Rom Harré.
Retrieved from <https://dailynous.com/2019/10/18/rom-harre-1927-2019/>