

Building Equitable Math Talk Classrooms: Expanding on Number Talk Techniques

Summary: Number talks are an instructional routine designed to build fluency and help students see and use structure (MP7). Fuson and Leinwand (reference linked in title) have created a framework to demonstrate how many aspects of Number Talks can be built upon to create an "Equitable Math Talk Classroom" (for a longer summary, see my newsletter [here](#)). Number Talks are built into the [Illustrative Mathematics Curriculum](#), and you can find a list of Middle School lessons that use this routine [here](#).

School Connection: I presented a small group of 7th graders with the prompt from the article mentioned above, ["It costs \$12 to buy 20 bananas. Sarah needs 35 bananas. How much will Sarah have to pay for the bananas she needs?"] and asked them to work in pairs on a solution they could share with the class. [See [this blog post](#) for more details about the group's discussion.] This task produced more discussion than usual. One reason may be that although only one student found the correct answer, more than half the students were very confident in their solutions before the discussion began. I will look for another Number Talk prompt to turn into a short word problem to see if it also encourages more mathematical discourse!

Connection to Equity: This activity covered many equity practices, but I would like to focus on how it affirmed "mathematics learners' identities" because it promoted the idea that "mistakes and incorrect answers are sources of learning from the "[Five equity-based practices](#)"). Only one student found the correct answer on the first try, but by reasoning through that student's work, other students found strategies (such as estimating the \$24 for 40 to know \$56 for 35 was too high) that will help them in the future. Furthermore, this activity included others as experts (the "I" in the [ICUCARE equity framework](#)). The student who presented her table was a special education student who often struggles in discussions, but by highlighting her work and strategy it gave her confidence that she can make valuable contributions in math class too.