

STEPHANIE LETSON: I knew number of the day was a routine that I had heard about at Noyce. That I wanted to try but I never really committed myself to doing it every day. I did other sort of number routines, like number talks, number strings, using number lines as part of my math curriculum but I never really made it a priority I guess to do this every day. So, it started when I came back from maternity leave in January. I was trying to figure out how I could “authentically”, if that’s a word, assess what my kids had done while I was gone in a meaningful way that would give me a lot of really good information. And I had read this article in TCM about number of the day as a routine and how it was...what was it called? School Days Decomposing Numbers. It really got me thinking that this would be a really interesting thing to do and it would be a good place to start with my kids. So what happened was we came back and the first thing we had to do was figure out how many days there were in the school year. So that was really where we started. So we came up with what would we really need to do? You know, I poised these questions with them. If we wanted to know how many days left in school, what information would we need to figure this out? Well we would need a calendar they told me and how many days to count and we’ll only count school days and not weekend days. So then we figured out -- I gave them the calendars for the days...oh this is how many more but I gave them one like this for how long have we been in school already. So we had a list of all the days that we have not been in school that we crossed off. I didn’t find that one because I cleaned my desk. I only found the second part which was how many more days.

BECCA SHERMAN: So this one was all marked up. Did you give it to them like this or what did the kids actually receive?

STEPHANIE LETSON: No. They got one that was more like this. With a blank one so we came up with holidays and days we weren’t in school. And then we sort of talked about ways that you sort of could do it and they came up with some ideas, you know like “Well we could cross off the ones that were not school days.” Some of them choose to cross off all the weekends days and holidays and some of them did it like this, where they color coded which ones were school days. And then that was our starting point and so it was coming up with “How many days have we been here?” “How do we know?” “How can we prove this?” And we probably spent two weeks doing this and figuring this out.

BECCA SHERMAN: And some of -- I see on this is your paper of notes the different ways that kids organized. Keeping track of...

STEPHANIE LETSON: Right. We spent a lot of times sharing out. You know I would do it on a big chart which I would’ve kept if I knew we were going to be talking about this now. Um, but we kind of came up with what were their strategies; that they shared their strategies, how they counted and how they knew they were correct. And sort of came up with “what did you do?” We counted for each month and what do we do with those numbers now that we have them? So looking at the ways that they added them up, what kind of strategies they used. You know, they were doing all kinds of amazing things like making them into groups of ten so they were easier to add because I wanted to know what they would do if they had big numbers. Can they add them? Do they use strategies like this? Do they do a traditional line them up and add the ones and then add the tens? Which some of them did but others did.

BECCA SHERMAN: I just was going to say, so going back; originally your goal was to assess what your students had been doing in your leave of absence. So what stood out to you as what they could do, were doing? What stood out to you as next steps?

STEPHANIE LETSON: Well some of them...I mean all of them were obviously able to figure out, which you always tell me, is not always obvious...not obvious but it is to me...that they you know could figure which days to count and which days not to count. Which for some of them it was kind of a big idea, like how do they figure that out. And they had all these interesting strategies. For some of them you know “Oh I see that these are fives, so that I can add five, ten, fifteen, twenty. You can do five times four plus these two extras.” So some of them were already to that point and others were just adding them all up. Or counting...

BECCA SHERMAN: So some kids had the structural organization and some kids...

STEPHANIE LETSON: And some just one, two, three, four five. Just counting.

BECCA SHERMAN: Okay. What were some barriers that you found?

STEPHANIE LETSON: Barriers?

BECCA SHERMAN: To getting...To getting started on this?

STEPHANIE LETSON: Okay, so... Well the first, like I said, I wanted to do this before but I never really committed myself to do it and done it, so we kind of...I guess the way we started it is because we really had already invested our time in figuring out and had this...

BECCA SHERMAN: There are kids learning in here?

STEPHANIE LETSON: A classroom with kids doing stuff? Um, that we had invested a lot of time together which was a great thing for me coming back and just being back for a week or so. That was a great starting point for us, spending all this time figuring out because we had to know if we're going to do number of the day. That's what I told them, that we're going to do number of the day but we don't know what the number is. How are we going to find out? That was sort of my hidden agenda in all of this assessment.

STEPHANIE LETSON: You so have to go somewhere else for now. Whatever you need, you need to get it at another table.

BECCA SHERMAN: Thanks so much.

STEPHANIE LETSON: And so we had to figure out what that number was going to be. And then I guess we had invested that time and I knew that I wanted to make it a priority and I wanted to do it every day. Because what I had read in that article was so interesting to see how kids evolve. So part of it was making time and I decided that the beginning of the day was an easy time to do it because it was sort of a weird