

Opportunities for Conferencing

Conferencing in mathematics can serve one of two main purposes:

Immediate: To differentiate the lesson to meet current needs of each student

Future: For differentiation in lesson planning

Conferencing provides the teacher an opportunity to gain insight into individual student learning. Through kid watching, questioning, and explicit teaching, the teacher can determine how to best meet the specific needs of students. It is also a time to set goals for the student to further their understanding. By taking notes, the teacher has an opportunity for reflection and future lesson planning.

1. Kid Watching

Spending a short time watching children as they work provides an opportunity to step inside their minds.

2. Questioning

After watching a child, sit down and ask, “What are you doing?” Listen as the child explains the task, and then ask further questions to help elicit his/her mathematical thinking. You can refer to the list of sample questions that follow (see [Questioning](#)).

3. Choose a Teaching Point

Based on kid watching and questioning, one can determine what that student needs to push his/her thinking to the next step or to remediate specific deficits in understanding.

4. Explicit Teaching

Tell the student, “I see you are... now I’m going to show you another way....” Let the student know you are planning to check up on them to see how they are doing.

5. Follow-Up

Make sure you do follow up. This enables you to check on how it is going with the student, and encourages continued effort. It also provides accountability for both you and the student regarding what was taught in the conference.