

Numeracy in the news

Educator Story

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The students in my class tended to enjoy literacy a lot more than numeracy, so I decided to put a literacy spin on a numeracy topic.

The students hadn't learned about data at all this year, so I decided to make a project on data called Numeracy in the News. The topic revolved around data collection, data recording, writing and drawing out questions for investigation, graph drawing and analysis of a number of different graph types.

As I have some pretty advanced children in my group, I also left it broadly open for the kids to explore their 'investigations' as far as they wanted to take it. They had to write questions about their investigations of data and after the project they had to answer them, using the information as their evidence. This was all done by writing a newspaper article with the graph and analysis attached.

The students were extremely engaged throughout the whole process, and are eagerly awaiting the first issue of 'uniquely Alberton' to be published across the school.

Aboriginal Students' Success

The Nunga students I have in my class are Tom, Ned, Jo and Sarah.

Jo was engaged in the topic and pulled other boys in the class into his group to help them understand. His article was fantastic, as was his understanding of each of the graphs and how they are plotted, as well as reading information from other graphs, was fantastic. He hasn't particularly changed a whole amount, as Jo is a student who is generally engaged in whatever he does. One thing that I have noticed in Jo though, is that when we revert to traditional methods, he does tend to become disengaged.

Tom is quite a low achiever, and started the year well below where he should be in terms of averages and standards. Across the few units of work he has done with me, I have seen small changes in his learning behaviours more than his level of achievement. With the contextualised theme, he tends to be more involved and excited about his learning, particularly when he has the one-on-one support with a partner. He still finds it hard to grasp the 'raw' mathematics, but seems to be more focused and is more willing to be resilient and have a go. Tom was very engaged in the topic when he was there, and always wanted to do his own part of the group's duties. This is quite different for Tom, as he usually finds it hard to engage in any topic, and relies on the support of his peers or teachers before reverting to off-task behaviour. The support he had with Tim (another member of the group) was fantastic, which was also a positive. The article they wrote together, as you could imagine, Tim was leading, but for the first time when Tom was working in a group, he wasn't just watching someone do the work, he was actually having an opinion on what should go in the article.

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Ned is definitely an 'outlier' in this situation. Ned started the year reading at a year 1 level, and writing at around the same level, when he is actually a year 6. Ned doesn't do much work in class, but will have a go at basic mathematics conventions on a very low level. With enough prompting from his peers, he and a classmate started their investigation in this contextualised

project. Ned was excited to do this for a while, as I told him he could do any investigation he wanted to do. He of course chose gory video games (which is about his only passion), but when he knew he would be asking little kids, he and Tillie decided to change their question to the most popular drink. This in itself was a success, but unfortunately, due to Tillie and Ned's poor attendance, they did not complete their article. So, much the same as Tom, his learning behaviours changed more than his level of achievement.

Sarah is another low level learner with irregular attendance. When I first started teaching Sarah, she struggled with most mathematics concepts and found it quite hard to engage and would tend to stay quiet. Throughout the recent topic of Numeracy in the News, she achieved great success in starting to have more of a 'go'. I realised this when I developed a more of a relationship with her. After trying to have a go, she would often ask for help when needed, whereas before she would tend to stay quiet, and go unnoticed while not producing a lot of work. This attitude and the work she produced showed that she was more engaged in her learning. Sarah's article was fantastic. She understood the 'raw' mathematics topics of graphs, talking well about the graph she had made, and the numbers that arose from viewing other graphs. With some guidance, Sarah worked out that, "Purple was the most popular colour, we should have a purple day where everyone could dress in purple, because that is their most favourite colour." This was fantastic, as I didn't think that Sarah was going to get to the next step of thinking, "What can you do with this information?" The literacy skills in the article weren't the greatest, but from her wording and the conversations we had, she had grasped the mathematics.



Finding 3.12: Passion

Stimulate a passion for mathematics in teachers by finding intersections with other fields of knowledge (e.g. the Arts).