Reviewing the Language of Math

The purpose of each activity is to 1) review the core concepts in math 2) create opportunities for students to use the language of the core and describe the meta-cognitive and cognitive strategies used to access the academic and content language.

- Take a Stand

  Language Objective: Justify your decision by explaining your thinking, strategies you use or giving examples.

  Teacher makes a statement about a math concept (It does not change the sum when you change the order of two addends. When multiplying fractions, the denominators must be the same.) Allow a certain amount of time for students to individually make a decision of agreement or disagreement. Allow a certain amount of time for partners to compare their thinking and come to a conclusion. At the designated time (1-2-3 SHOW ME), teacher asks for response. Students stand if in agreement of the statement and stay seating if they disagree. (If you don't like the standing, give each student a set of two colored cards. They hold up pink for yes and blue for no.) Students are then asked to explain their reasoning, strategies they used or give examples to justify their decision.

- Numbered Heads Together with Written Response

  Language Objective: Justify your decision by explaining your thinking, strategies you use or giving examples.

  Teacher asks a question (What are two attributes of a triangle? What is the difference between quotient, divisor and dividend?). Allow a certain amount of time for students to individually think through the question and write a response (definition, picture, computation, etc.). Allow a certain amount of time for students to share their thinking with their partner (group). Once they come to a conclusion, they choose the response that best addresses the question. Teacher spins (or rolls a dice) to choose the group that will share their written response and describe how they got to it.

  Don't forget to include questions about math strategies (How can a number line be used?) or connections among math vocabulary (What are 3 words that come to mind when you think of fractions?)

  For lower grades or less proficient students, the written component may not be appropriate.

- Stroll Down Memory Lane

  Language Objective: Describe important things to know about a math concept.

Post a number of posters around the room, each with a different math concept (Addition, Money, Equal Equations, Surface Area, etc.). Put students into groups, each group getting a different color of marker that they keep with them the whole activity. Groups rotate to each poster and write two things about that concept that are important to know or remember. Instruct students to write enough information that everyone will know what they mean. They cannot repeat anything previously written by a different group. Once students can no longer think of anything to write, markers are put down and each group gets a post-it note for each poster. As a group they rotate through the posters reading everything and deciding on the one thing per concept they feel is most important to understand/remember.

Prompts may be given, such as:

Don't forget to _____.
First, ____ then _____
You need to _____.
This is similar to _____.
One strategy to use is _____.

- Word Sort

  Language Objective: Group words into categories.

  Students are put into triads and are given a set of math terms, pictures, symbols, etc. Students sort the words into categories (you can give them the categories or not). Explain to students their sort may look different than other groups because their thinking may be different. When time is up, Group 1 explains their sort to Group 2. They must explain their thinking. Then Group 2 explains their sort to Group 1.

- Review Pictionary

  Language Objective: Illustrate concepts and vocabulary to deepen content understanding.

  One student draws a picture of a concept or vocabulary (greatest, regrouping, subtraction, etc.). Teams of students try to guess what is being drawn. The person who guesses correctly must provide an explanation, definition or example.