



SNAP - Scaffolding for Numerical Synapses: Awakening Curiosity in the Numbers One to Ten

Sheryl Nichols Morris

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You can help children develop curiosity and a lifelong fascination with numbers! Besides helping to renew student learning, an established structure such as SNAP can enhance a teacher's effectiveness and help her achieve daily, monthly, and yearly classroom objectives as she turns to it for the mutual confidence between her and her students that familiarity can bring. Planned for children as young as two to six, don't be surprised if your older children and you, yourself, become intrigued and want to know more about the world of numbers. Up high in the rankings of student achievement or lower down, we compare our students' skills in math, science, and reading, country to country. We hear about the lack of enthusiasm for math and science in both boys and girls. Teachers witness growing apprehension and anxiety many children have with numbers and math. "Snap" is the sound I imagine hearing as synaptic neurons in our brains make connections when we process new data coming from our senses. The idea of "scaffolding" is used in education to convey the supports teachers put in place to aid learning, i.e., previous knowledge, self-correcting materials, and cross-connections within disciplines, to name a few. The purpose of SNAP is to help adults—at home or in the classroom—provide an environment (scaffolding) to help young children find numbers, their related patterns, and geometric shapes in the world all around them. Its aim is to help any teacher, parent, or caregiver wanting to share with their children the ever-present display of numbers. It outlines a purposefully and consciously prepared environment that 1) stimulates the senses 2) allows a child to build on what he or she already knows daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly 3) makes it possible for a child to learn across subject matters, integrating a full, year-long curriculum 4) enables connections—sometimes directly and sometimes indirectly—and promotes contemplation of interrelated concepts among simple numbers, simple shapes, nature, art, science, and technology. In these ways, SNAP advances new knowledge about our brains and how we learn. Children will notice and connect with the numbers one to ten in ways that develop a sense of wonder, curiosity, and a keen eye for subtle detail. Once they develop a compelling relationship with numbers more engagement with math and science is credible. Observing numbers and patterns can impart a sense of order and inspire quiet observation and reflection; it can also lead to enthusiasm about the unknown. A sense of mystery is sure to instill a lifelong interest in numbers and propel pursuit of numbers beyond adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing. SNAP provides a sound basis for unlimited, far-reaching inquiries into subjects such as geometry and the use of the geometer's tools, Fibonacci numbers, the Golden Ratio, fractals, and biomimicry.

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