

Five Practices For Orchestrating Productive Discussions

Margaret Smith and Mary Kay Stein

Practice 1: Anticipate your students' responses

Do the math yourself! Ask yourself...

- ...what do my students know about this math idea?
- ...what are the main mathematical ideas on which I will focus our discussion?

Think about your range of learners...

- ...how might they solve these problems?
- ...record possible solutions and possible misunderstandings

Practice 2: Monitor and Observe Students

As your students work...

- ...make note of their strategies, misconceptions, points of confusion and ideas that relate to the focus point
- ...ask probing questions

Practice 3: Select

Select the focus of the discussion with a purpose! Think about the needs of your class based on...

- ...your observations
- ...the math idea you want to make explicit

Practice 4: Sequence

Before the discussion begins...

- ...think about how the sequence will uncover the focus points of the mathematical ideas
- ...choose students who will share
- ...order student work and ideas in order to allow access for your range of learners

Practice 5: Connect

Be explicit in the mathematical goals! Ask your students to make connections

- ...across strategies,*
- ...between representations and story contexts*
- ...across examples of particular numbers.*