

Teaching What “Equals” Means to First Graders

Janet Zegna

This mathematics unit is designed for first grade students and can be adapted for students in kindergarten and second grade. It should be used at the beginning of the first grade year when students are beginning to compare sets and learning addition and subtraction. It can be used for whole class instruction, small group intervention, independent math activities or intervention. The lessons are designed to help young students begin to develop a relational view of equality. Students will work with sets of manipulatives and pictures to compare quantities and to discuss the relationship between sets. Students will play simple elimination games to explain the relationship between sets. Students will solve story problems again to discuss what they understand about equality. Through play the teacher will facilitate the students' discovery of equality, and through discussion the teacher will help concrete thinkers to begin to reason abstractly. This unit draws from several curricular resources already available, however, the activities have been extended or altered to provide a more thorough and accurate delivery of instruction about the concept of equality and to address misconceptions that are typically developed in early childhood education.