

Young Children's Coordination of Number Sense in Solving Word Problems

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Solving word problems provides children opportunities to put their number sense to work! Participants will learn about number sense and explore how to “watch” for students’ coordination of number sense concepts to better understand children’s mathematical thinking. Grade Level: PK-2

Carpenter et al.'s Cognitively Guided Instruction Strategies	Sarama & Clements' learning trajectories and Fosnot & Dolk's landscape of learning
Direct Modeling	Subitizing Magnitude Counting 1-to-1 Cardinality Hierarchical Inclusion Part/Whole Relationships Compensation Unitizing
Counting	
Derived Facts/Invented Algorithms	

CCSSM Problem Types

TABLE 1. Common addition and subtraction situations.⁶

	Result Unknown	Change Unknown	Start Unknown
Add to	Two bunnies sat on the grass. Three more bunnies hopped there. How many bunnies are on the grass now? $2 + 3 = ?$	Two bunnies were sitting on the grass. Some more bunnies hopped there. Then there were five bunnies. How many bunnies hopped over to the first two? $2 + ? = 5$	Some bunnies were sitting on the grass. Three more bunnies hopped there. Then there were five bunnies. How many bunnies were on the grass before? $? + 3 = 5$
Take from	Five apples were on the table. I ate two apples. How many apples are on the table now? $5 - 2 = ?$	Five apples were on the table. I ate some apples. Then there were three apples. How many apples did I eat? $5 - ? = 3$	Some apples were on the table. I ate two apples. Then there were three apples. How many apples were on the table before? $? - 2 = 3$
Put Together/ Take Apart ²	Total Unknown	Three red apples and two green apples are on the table. How many apples are on the table? $3 + 2 = ?$	Five apples are on the table. Three are red and the rest are green. How many apples are green? $3 + ? = 5, 5 - 3 = ?$
	Both Addends Unknown ¹	Grandma has five flowers. How many can she put in her red vase and how many in her blue vase? $5 = 0 + 5, 5 = 5 + 0$ $5 = 1 + 4, 5 = 4 + 1$ $5 = 2 + 3, 5 = 3 + 2$	
Compare ³	Difference Unknown	(“How many more?” version): Lucy has two apples. Julie has five apples. How many more apples does Julie have than Lucy?	(Version with “more”): Julie has three more apples than Lucy. Lucy has two apples. How many apples does Julie have?
	Bigger Unknown	(“How many fewer?” version): Lucy has two apples. Julie has five apples. How many fewer apples does Lucy have than Julie? $2 + ? = 5, 5 - 2 = ?$	(Version with “fewer”): Lucy has 3 fewer apples than Julie. Lucy has two apples. How many apples does Julie have? $2 + 3 = ?, 3 + 2 = ?$
			Smaller Unknown
			(Version with “more”): Julie has three more apples than Lucy. Julie has five apples. How many apples does Lucy have?
			(Version with “fewer”): Lucy has 3 fewer apples than Julie. Julie has five apples. How many apples does Lucy have? $5 - 3 = ?, ? + 3 = 5$

TABLE 2. Common multiplication and division situations.⁷

	Unknown Product	Group Size Unknown ("How many in each group?" Division)	Number of Groups Unknown ("How many groups?" Division)
	$3 \times 6 = ?$	$3 \times ? = 18$, and $18 \div 3 = ?$	$? \times 6 = 18$, and $18 \div 6 = ?$
Equal Groups	There are 3 bags with 6 plums in each bag. How many plums are there in all? <i>Measurement example.</i> You need 3 lengths of string, each 6 inches long. How much string will you need altogether?	If 18 plums are shared equally into 3 bags, then how many plums will be in each bag? <i>Measurement example.</i> You have 18 inches of string, which you will cut into 3 equal pieces. How long will each piece of string be?	If 18 plums are to be packed 6 to a bag, then how many bags are needed? <i>Measurement example.</i> You have 18 inches of string, which you will cut into pieces that are 6 inches long. How many pieces of string will you have?
Arrays, ⁴ Area ⁵	There are 3 rows of apples with 6 apples in each row. How many apples are there? <i>Area example.</i> What is the area of a 3 cm by 6 cm rectangle?	If 18 apples are arranged into 3 equal rows, how many apples will be in each row? <i>Area example.</i> A rectangle has area 18 square centimeters. If one side is 3 cm long, how long is a side next to it?	If 18 apples are arranged into equal rows of 6 apples, how many rows will there be? <i>Area example.</i> A rectangle has area 18 square centimeters. If one side is 6 cm long, how long is a side next to it?
Compare	A blue hat costs \$6. A red hat costs 3 times as much as the blue hat. How much does the red hat cost? <i>Measurement example.</i> A rubber band is 6 cm long. How long will the rubber band be when it is stretched to be 3 times as long?	A red hat costs \$18 and that is 3 times as much as a blue hat costs. How much does a blue hat cost? <i>Measurement example.</i> A rubber band is stretched to be 18 cm long and that is 3 times as long as it was at first. How long was the rubber band at first?	A red hat costs \$18 and a blue hat costs \$6. How many times as much does the red hat cost as the blue hat? <i>Measurement example.</i> A rubber band was 6 cm long at first. Now it is stretched to be 18 cm long. How many times as long is the rubber band now as it was at first?
General	$a \times b = ?$	$a \times ? = p$, and $p \div a = ?$	$? \times b = p$, and $p \div b = ?$

⁴The language in the array examples shows the easiest form of array problems. A harder form is to use the terms rows and columns: The apples in the grocery window are in 3 rows and 6 columns. How many apples are in there? Both forms are valuable.

⁵Area involves arrays of squares that have been pushed together so that there are no gaps or overlaps, so array problems include these especially important measurement situations.

Handout Citations

- Carpenter, T. P., Fennema, E., Franke, M. L., Levi, L., & Empson, S. (2015). *Children's mathematics: Cognitively Guided Instruction* (2nd Ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
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