

Fighting Fixed Mindsets: Five Shifts for Teaching and Learning Elementary Mathematics

Juli Dixon, Ph.D.
JuliDixonMath@gmail.com
www.DNAMath.com



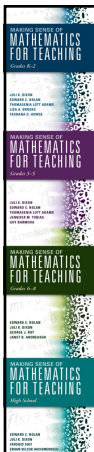
© 2025 Juli K. Dixon



Divide this:

$$3 \div \frac{1}{7}$$

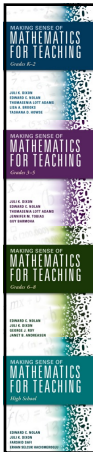
© 2025 Juli K. Dixon



Goals for this Session

- Make sense of five instructional shifts to support students to engage in mathematical practices.
- Create a shared image of classrooms where teachers are actively fighting fixed mindsets.
- Explore strategies for supporting each and every learner.

© 2025 Juli K. Dixon

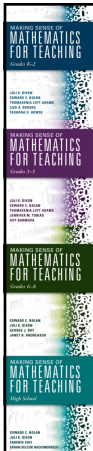


Where do we learn to divide?

In grade 3 – but not with fractions.

Create a word problem to represent $12 \div 4$

© 2025 Juli K. Dixon

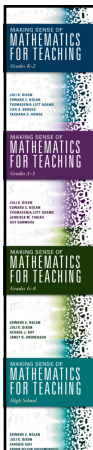


Cultivating Perseverance

- Just-in-case scaffolding
- Just-in-time scaffolding



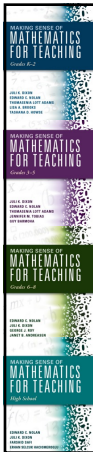
© 2025 Juli K. Dixon



Five Instructional Shifts

1. Teachers use engaging and multifaceted tasks.
2. Students provide the strategies.
3. Teachers provide strategies “as if” from students.
4. Students do the sense making.
5. Students talk to students.

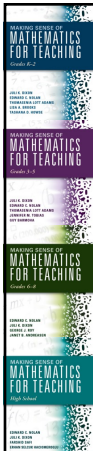
© 2025 Juli K. Dixon



Five Instructional Shifts

1. Teachers use engaging and multifaceted tasks.
2. Students provide the strategies.
3. Teachers provide strategies "as if" from students.
4. Students do the sense making.
5. Students talk to students.

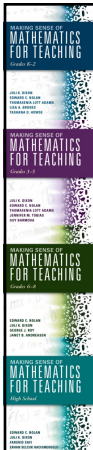
© 2025 Juli K. Dixon



Shift 1: Teachers use engaging and multifaceted tasks

The right tasks have the potential to provide access to all learners as well as to elicit understandings and common errors.

© 2025 Juli K. Dixon

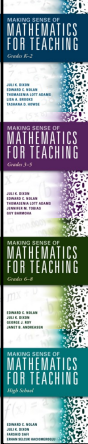


Shift 1: Teachers use engaging and multifaceted tasks

Teachers set the stage for students to provide the strategies.

This has the greatest return on investment if teachers have a plan for what to do with what students provide.

© 2025 Juli K. Dixon

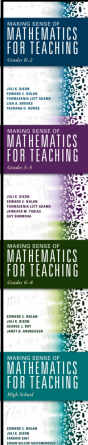


Plan with the TQE Process in Mind



- **Tasks** connect to learning goals and help identify student errors.
- **Questions** elicit mathematical understandings and common errors.
- **Evidence** drives scaffolding and guides extensions.

© 2025 Juli K. Dixon

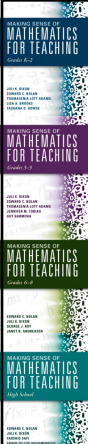


Shift 1: Teachers use engaging and multifaceted tasks

Learning Goal for Grade 1:

Use strategies to add and subtract within 20.

© 2025 Juli K. Dixon

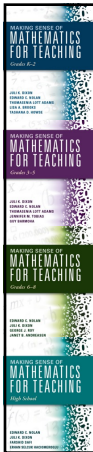


Shift 1: Teachers use engaging and multifaceted tasks

What strategies can you use to add 7 and 8?

What makes this task engaging and multifaceted?

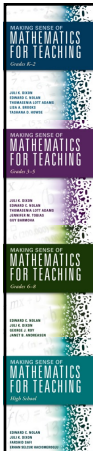
© 2025 Juli K. Dixon



Five Instructional Shifts

1. Teachers use engaging and multifaceted tasks.
2. Students provide the strategies.
3. Teachers provide strategies "as if" from students.
4. Students do the sense making.
5. Students talk to students.

© 2025 Juli K. Dixon

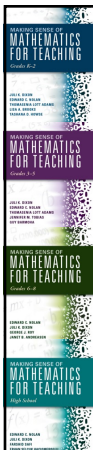


Shift 2: Students provide the strategies

What happens when the teacher uses **Gradual Release of Responsibility (I do, we do, you do)**?

If the goal is for students to provide the strategies, then the teacher can't demonstrate them first!

© 2025 Juli K. Dixon



Shift 2: Students provide the strategies

Teachers set the stage for students to provide the strategies.

What does this look like in grade 1?

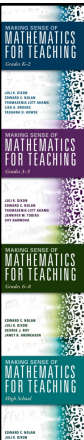
© 2025 Juli K. Dixon

Plan with the TQE Process in Mind



- **Tasks** connect to learning goals and help identify student errors.
- **Questions** elicit mathematical understandings and common errors.
- **Evidence** drives scaffolding and guides extensions.

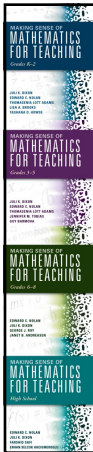
© 2025 Juli K. Dixon



Five Instructional Shifts

1. Teachers use engaging and multifaceted tasks.
2. Students provide the strategies.
3. Teachers provide strategies "as if" from students.
4. Students do the sense making.
5. Students talk to students.

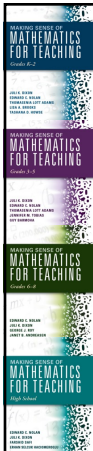
© 2025 Juli K. Dixon



Shift 3: Teachers provide strategies "as if" from students

Teachers maintain control of the learning target by providing strategies "as if" they came from the students when necessary.

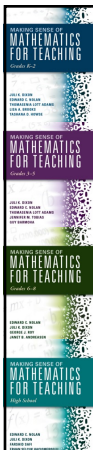
© 2025 Juli K. Dixon



Five Instructional Shifts

1. Teachers use engaging and multifaceted tasks.
2. Students provide the strategies.
3. Teachers provide strategies "as if" from students.
4. Students do the sense making.
5. Students talk to students.

© 2025 Juli K. Dixon

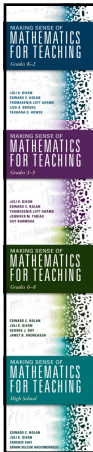


Shift 4: Students do the sense making

Teachers must *expect* students to do the sense making.

It can be frustrating for students at first – a reminder might be helpful 😊.

© 2025 Juli K. Dixon

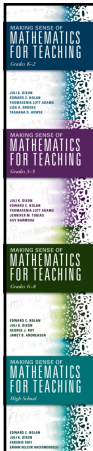


Shift 4: Students do the sense making

Teachers must expect students to do the sense making.

Supporting good tasks during instruction is the key – including during small group instruction...

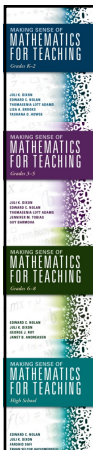
© 2025 Juli K. Dixon



Shift 4: Students do the sense making

Brandon shared 4 cookies equally between himself and his 4 friends. He started by giving each person (including himself) a half of a cookie. What could he have done next?

© 2025 Juli K. Dixon

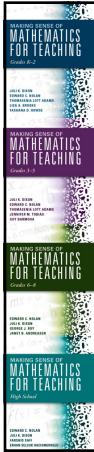


Try this.

Talk through the process of adding the fractions without using:

- numerator & denominator, or
- top number & bottom number

© 2025 Juli K. Dixon



What happens when you don't use academic vocabulary?

Everyday language should come first – take a lesson from our English Language Learners!

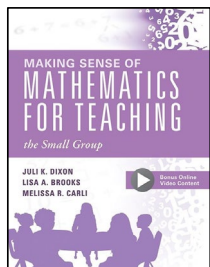
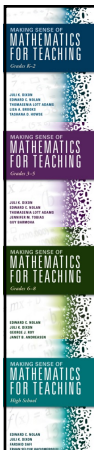
© 2025 Juli K. Dixon



Academic vocabulary is still important – when you introduce it is what needs to be adjusted.

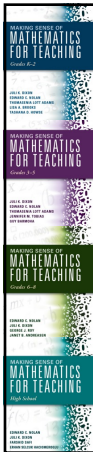
Introduce academic vocabulary only after students have the opportunity to explore the concept.

© 2025 Juli K. Dixon



Making Sense of Mathematics for Teaching
the Small Group

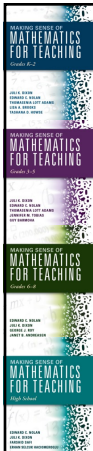
© 2025 Juli K. Dixon



Five Instructional Shifts

1. Teachers use engaging and multifaceted tasks.
2. Students provide the strategies.
3. Teachers provide strategies "as if" from students.
4. Students do the sense making.
5. Students talk to students.

© 2025 Juli K. Dixon

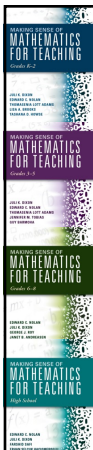


Shift 5: Students talk to students

Teachers set the stage for students to talk to students.

This occurs when the teacher is an active facilitator of instruction.

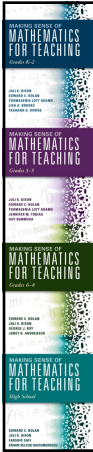
© 2025 Juli K. Dixon



Discourse Norms

- Provide explanations and justifications with solutions.
- Make sense of others' solutions.
- Communicate when you don't understand or don't agree.

© 2025 Juli K. Dixon

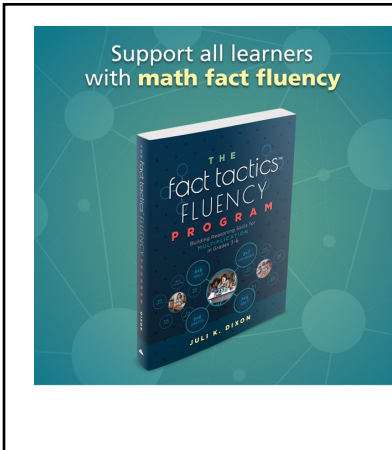


Five Instructional Shifts

1. Teachers use engaging and multifaceted tasks.
2. Students provide the strategies.
3. Teachers provide strategies “as if” from students.
4. Students do the sense making.
5. Students talk to students.

© 2025 Juli K. Dixon





Support all learners with **math fact fluency**