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**Evolution of a teaching approach for beginning algebra.**

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Summary: The article reports aspects of the evolution of a teaching approach over repeated trials for beginning symbolic algebra. The teaching approach emphasized the structural similarity between arithmetic and algebraic expressions and aimed at supporting students in making a transition from arithmetic to beginning algebra. The study was conducted with grade six students over two years. Thirty-one students were followed for a year, and data were analysed as they participated in the three trials conducted that year. Analysis of students' written and interview responses as the approach evolved revealed the potential of the approach in creating meaning for symbolic transformations in the context of both arithmetic and algebra as well as making connections between arithmetic and symbolic algebra. Students by the end of the trials learnt to use their understanding of both procedures and a sense of structure of expressions to evaluate/simplify expressions and reason about equality/equivalence of expressions both in the arithmetic and the algebraic contexts.

*Classification:* H23 E43 D43 D33

*Keywords:* arithmetic; algebra; structure; teaching approach; term; equality; expressions

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