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Oral language needs: making math meaningful.

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Summary: As a Title I kindergarten teacher, Michelle Pace, second grade teacher at Lake Mary Elementary School in Florida, has seen firsthand how oral language can create roadblocks for students in all areas of the curriculum, both academically and socially. At the time this article was written, the state of Florida had recently adopted the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics (CCSSM), providing an opportunity to address mathematical concepts with more depth and meaning. Pace noticed a major difference between CCSSM and the standards she had been following. CCSSM requires students to deepen their learning by communicating explanations of their answers, in oral language and in writing. Additionally, CCSSM presents the Standards of Mathematical Practice (SMPs), which offer a teachers' guide to teaching mathematics with a focus on processes and proficiencies. Of the eight practices, SMP 6: "Attend to precision" focuses on students' ability to accurately use vocabulary when explaining their reasoning behind an answer. Teachers should strive to include this practice within their lessons to help their students deepen their mathematical understanding through communicating their thought process. How do kindergarten teachers take a mathematical practice as advanced as "attend to precision" and make it happen in their kindergarten lessons? How do teachers like Pace overcome the major hurdles presented to them by kindergarten students coming from different levels of preparation? They must use oral language strategies to make kindergarten mathematics meaningful. In this article, Pace and Enrique Ortiz, an associate professor who teaches mathematics methods courses at the University of Central Florida, discuss how building a strong foundation and employing a vocabulary strategy are key to successful oral language development. (ERIC)

Classification: C51

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<http://www.nctm.org/Publications/teaching-children-mathematics/2015/Vol21/Issue8/Oral-Language-Needs-Making-Math-Meaningful/>