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Connecting the equals sign.

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Summary: Children tend to view the equals sign as an operator symbol bereft of the rich relational properties of equality statements. It has been argued by some that this restricted view of the equals sign is due to cultural or cognitive factors. We suggest a significant factor is that rich relational meanings lack relevance within the context of paper-based arithmetic. One possible way to allow learners access to relational meanings is through interaction with technologically supported utilities for the equals sign. We report upon a trial in which two students draw on existing and emerging notions of mathematical equivalence in order to connect an onscreen = object with other arithmetical objects.

Classification: E42 C32 F12 U52

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