

ZMATH 2016f.00734

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Helping early childhood educators to understand and assess young children's mathematical minds.

ZDM, Math. Educ. 48, No. 7, 941-946 (2016).

Summary: This issue of ZDM Mathematics Education focuses on the formative assessment of young children's mathematical thinking, with an emphasis on computer-based approaches drawing upon on cognitive and educational research. The authors discuss several different assessment methods, including clinical interviewing, observation, and testing, that are appropriate for children from about 3–8 years of age, and that can provide information useful for the improvement of teaching. This paper begins with a discussion of principles underlying this work and then introduces the paper topics and authors. The paper concludes by projecting a future in which professional development provides a sound basis for formative assessment; in which formative assessment is central to education; and in which the need for standard achievement tests is largely eliminated.

Classification: D61 D62 D39

Keywords: mathematical thinking; formative assessment; early childhood education; professional development

doi:10.1007/s11858-016-0807-7