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Children's use of variables and variable notation to represent their algebraic ideas.

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Summary: In this article, we analyze a first grade classroom episode and individual interviews with students who participated in that classroom event to provide evidence of the variety of understandings about variable and variable notation held by first grade children approximately six years of age. Our findings illustrate that given the opportunity, children as young as six years of age can use variable notation in meaningful ways to express relationships between co-varying quantities. In this article, we argue that the early introduction of variable notation in children's mathematical experiences can offer them opportunities to develop familiarity and fluency with this convention as groundwork for ultimately powerful means of representing general mathematical relationships.

Classification: H22 H32 E42

Keywords: variables; use of variables; algebraic ideas

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