

the students, the Balanced Mathematics modelling process may take 4-6 weeks to achieve the desired level of comfort with the program. It is critical that the Balanced Math Program does not commence until the teacher feels satisfied that the students understand their roles and what is expected of them. When the students are confident with the expectations they will be more independent and the Balanced Mathematics Program will be successful.

Scheduling - A Sample Time Framework

Planning the Balanced Mathematics Program, raises questions such as “When do I teach the lesson?” or “When do I give unit tests?” To answer these questions, a sample time framework is provided to suggest one way to incorporate the Balanced Math Program into the daily schedule. It is recommended that the Balanced Math Program be incorporated into a 100 minute math block. However there are other options to create the Balanced Mathematics Program. The activities that make up the Balanced Math Program encompass activities that, in the past, have been allotted into periods other than mathematics (e.g., math journals and problems of the week). By incorporating these types of activities into the Balanced Mathematics Program on a consistent basis, blocks of time that had been reserved for math journals for example, have been freed up and can now be allotted for different subjects.

The following sample framework is based on a 100 minute block of math time.

The First 30 Minutes

The first 30 minutes of math time is when the teacher teaches the specific lesson for the day to the students in a large group (whole class). This lesson may include introducing a new concept or building upon the lesson taught the previous day. During this time, the teacher may want to take up any problems with the previous day’s homework, or read a mathematical story that pertains to the concept currently being studied. A list of mathematical story books and the specific concepts they relate to can be found on pages 31-32 of this handbook.

During this 30 minute teacher directed block of time, the teacher also assigns that day’s individual activity/seatwork/homework (e.g., a page in the textbook). As students complete their Balanced Mathematics rotation for that day, they move to their seats to work independently on that day’s assigned task. This task is written on the blackboard to avoid interruptions to the teacher when students forget the assigned task.

Towards the end of the first 30 minute block of time, the teacher takes the opportunity to direct the class to their group activities in the Balanced Mathematics Program. On Day 1 of the Balanced Mathematics rotations, each of the activities for the five components needs to be explained to the students in detail. On subsequent days, students need only to be reminded of the activity they are participating in that day and the components that go with each activity. They have already heard the detailed explanations for each activity.

Teachers can use a posted chart that shows the daily rotation of the groups. This chart acts as a visual reminder for the students (see page 9). If the chart is enlarged and laminated, it is easy for teachers to write the activities for each component on the chart with a dry erase pen or an overhead marker. At the end of the five day rotation, the chart is wiped clean and ready to be used again.

50 minutes

The next 50 minutes of the 100 minute math block is reserved for the daily Balanced Mathematics activities. After being reminded of what each group is doing for that day, the students move to their group's working area and begin on their activity (Shared Problem Solving, Independent Math Journals, Modelled/ Guided Problem Solving, Math Games and Math Facts).

Even though each of the five components was modelled and students should have a clear understanding of what each component entails and what is expected of the students individually and as a group, they may need to be reminded that if problems arise within their groups, they need to solve that problem themselves.

During this 50 minute Balanced Math rotation the teacher is working with the Modelled/Guided Problem Solving group and interruptions should be kept to a minimum.

Students should be aware that if their group activity is completed before the 50

minutes is up, they move directly to their own seats and start on the independent seatwork/homework that was assigned earlier.

20 minutes

The final 20 minutes is for the students to work on their independent seatwork/homework for that day. This gives the teacher the opportunity to circulate and address any questions or problems the students may have.

When math units have been completed, it is likely that the students will write some sort of unit test. On the days when a unit test is scheduled, it is unlikely that time will be needed for either a daily lesson (which is scheduled for the first 30 minutes of the 100 minute math block), or for independent seatwork/homework (scheduled in the last 20 minutes of the math block). This allows 50 minutes when students can be writing their unit test, and the remaining 50 minutes can be used for the Balanced Mathematics Activities.

On the fifth day of the Balanced Math rotation, all students are given the opportunity to participate in the Share the Wealth session (see page 61). A separate period of time, after the students have taken part in all five components, should be allotted for these presentations. For example, if the Balanced Mathematics Rotation begins on Monday and the final rotation is on Friday morning, the Share the Wealth session could happen on Friday afternoon.