

Mathematics Games

The Math Games component of the Balanced Math Program is the most popular activity each week.

By incorporating Math Games into the rotation of the Balanced Math activities, students are engaged in the game while developing social and communication skills. Game playing also develops a student's strategic thinking and logical reasoning.

New math knowledge is created as the students strategize, participate and reflect upon their thoughts and moves as they play the game. Games provide students with the opportunity to become actively involved with a math idea, whether they realize it or not.

When the game reflects math concepts currently being taught, students construct personal ideas that are made meaningful by their experiences in playing the game.

When students play games with other students they develop, form, test and retest their ideas. By witnessing moves made by other students and seeing the outcomes caused by these moves, math discussions occur and opinions are shared.

When planning the Math Games activities, the teacher selects a game for the math group to play. Each day a different small group of students play the same game.

The game the teacher selects may reinforce the current math concepts being taught. For example, if the concept being studied is money, the Math Games group might play Monopoly or Pay Day. The teacher also needs to take into account the age and grade level of the students when selecting games. A list of math games can be found at the end of this chapter.

If the game being played is a new game, if it is a game that has a number of rules or if it is complex, it is important to clarify with the students what they need to know and what is expected of them.

Games can be taught to the class as a whole or to a small group of students during the Modelled/Guided group time. Either way, it is important that the students have a clear understanding of what the game entails. This ensures that all the students who are participating in the Math Games group can benefit from the entire Math Game group time.