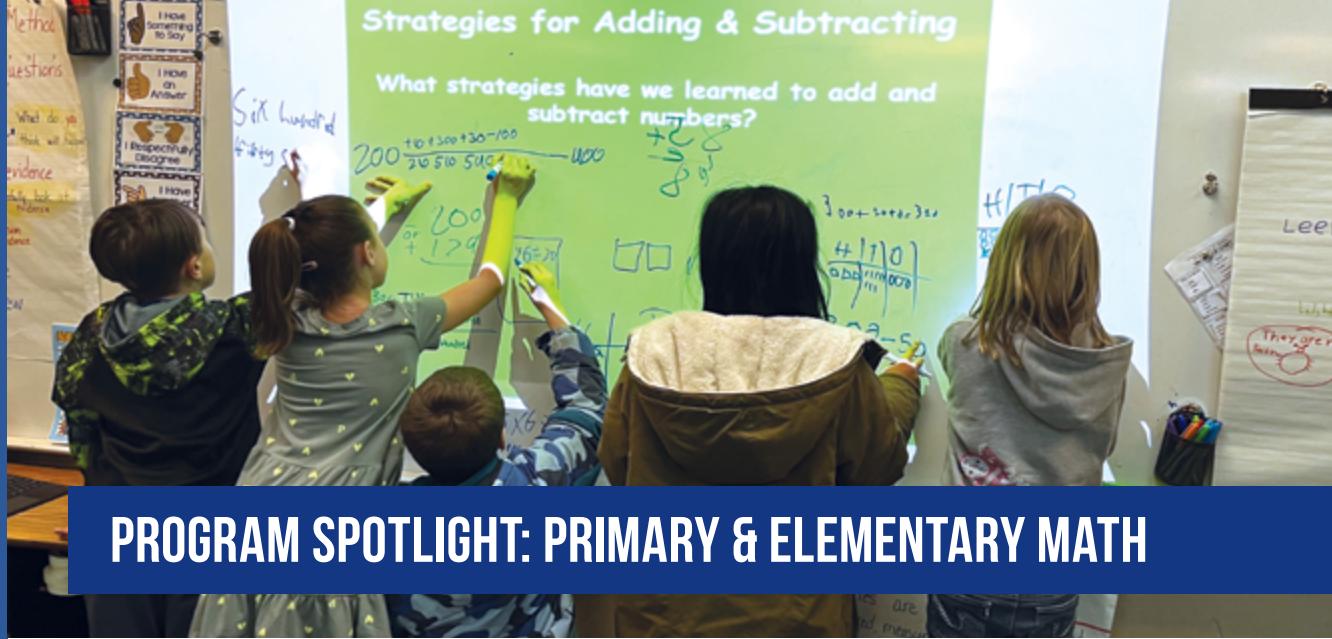


INNOVATE



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PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: PRIMARY & ELEMENTARY MATH

Chimacum Primary students go fishing for equations

If you were to stop by Mrs. J's (Heidi Johnson's) second grade classroom earlier this year, you would have been transported to an outdoor lakeside scene, given a hand-made fishing pole and asked to join the students in "Going Fishing."

This project-based learning lesson incorporated different facets of their classroom learning: a variety of math concepts, creative building, collaboration, critical thinking and problem-solving, all with direct real-life applications.

"Math is everywhere around us, and we use math daily in our lives. Budgeting, shopping, cooking, vacations, jobs, time management, farming, construction, retail – these are just minuscule examples," Mrs. J shared.

Students worked together to write equations on color-coded fish before the fish were added to the lake. They used "money" to purchase the supplies needed to create their own fishing poles. Supplies included fishing line priced at \$38 per three-foot section and a (paper clip) hook at \$50 each, which sparked a healthy debate on the high cost of supplies in both the classroom and at home.

While students had to be mindful of their budget when purchasing the necessary supplies, people around the world use budgets to manage their needs in their daily

lives. Sometimes that means thinking critically about needs versus wants, as was demonstrated in the fishing lesson.

The bright blue "lake" lined with brown "dirt" held a variety of neon colored fish swimming along with equations written on the fish. Each fish was color coded by the type of equation the student would be solving, such as addition or subtraction using single, double or triple digits plus multiplication and quadruple equation problems. Once the fish were caught, students were tasked with solving the equations and proving their classmate's answers were correct.

Just as fishing for real fish can bring folks together, students enjoyed sharing their own experiences and fun memories of fishing with family and friends while waiting for the fish to "bite."

"Project-based learning is engaging and student-centered with real-life personal connections. This is especially critical for younger students," said Mrs. J. "Math fluency shouldn't be based on how fast a person responds to the equation. Instead, it should be focused on developing skills and building math confidence through determination and resolve. It's OK to make mistakes as long as we learn from them and make revisions."





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Small group instruction promotes greater math understanding

Students, just like adults, are all different and learn in different ways. A whole class lesson is a great way to introduce topics, but it's in small groups and practice/homework where many students' understanding takes off.

Teachers Shari Glessing (third grade) and Josette Mendoza (fifth grade) both regularly use small group rotations as main components in their classroom learning, especially with math concepts.

"During small groups, I am able to differentiate instruction, which promotes self confidence in each and every student. The students walk away feeling a sense of accomplishment and have a 'Can do!' attitude," said Glessing.

There are different ways of approaching almost every problem, and being able to

talk amongst a smaller group of peers "gives them a variety of strategies to solve problems so that they can find the one that works best for them," Mendoza shared.

Sharing strategies with others also helps students increase their understanding and then build on the basics to move forward with tackling more complex problems.

Mendoza has used a recipe round up activity to help students understand the relevancy of math in everyday life. Students bring in recipes from home, then use information from their recipe to answer questions about amounts and prices in the grocery store.

Glessing and Mendoza agree, "we want them to *understand* the math, not just *do* the math."



Keeping it in the Family

Third grade teacher Shari Glessing has worked in education for over three decades. It runs in the family – her grandmother was a school secretary and her mother worked for Olympic Educational Service District.

The family link continues today: Glessing's mom, affectionately known as Ms. Carol (shown above with students), is one of her regular volunteers and is in the classroom multiple times a week. Ms. Carol is one of the leaders for small group math rotations and students love when they get their turn to play Work Place games. During Work Place games, they get to play games that reinforce concepts and standards from their math lessons with Glessing.



Third grade teacher Shari Glessing works with a small group of students on a math lesson.