MAKING MATHEMATICS INTERESTING TO ELEMENTARY STUDENTS

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In order to build a strong building, an architect plans and selects the best materials to be used in order to ensure a strong foundation. In terms of learning Mathematics, pupils need to start constructing the foundations of understanding at the earliest. It means we have to start at the base elementary pupils and elementary teachers in order to meet the demands and expectations when pupils tend to be in high school or colleges. It is because it is during their elementary years that young children begin to acquire and develop those habits of reasoning upon which later understanding in Mathematics depend. When a child failed to develop early understanding on how to manipulate arithmetic expressions or problems it will be hard for him to manipulate algebraic expressions with such confidence. Those pupils who never had experiences with shapes manipulation in early mathematics education will surely meet difficulties to attach meanings to geometric figures or abstract reasoning. When a child enters school, he is already curious with numbers, figures, shapes, sizes, and already uses mathematical applications to his daily activities. Thus, it is and it should be at this stage this curiosity should be cultivated. When pupils are encouraged to solve the problem, they become aware of certain ideas thus develop certain habits of reasoning upon which later complicated tasks depend. As Piaget had stated “Children have a real understanding only of that which they invent themselves, and each time that we try to teach them something too quickly, we keep them from reinventing it themselves”. Therefore, it is the duty of the teacher as an educator to offer young minds with different opportunities to make Mathematics exciting and full of discoveries and make the pupils enjoy the challenges that come with it. To make an effect, elementary mathematics teachers must be prepared to teach everything from counting down to
algebraic thinking. They must not only understand the subject they are to teach but also be able to encourage the pupils in that content. Teachers who have a deep understanding of content are capable of making connections, promoting discoveries, evaluating alternative responses, and providing experiences that promote higher order thinking skills. However, content knowledge is not enough because teachers are expected to do more and offer more in order to make Mathematics interesting at an early age. Teachers need to know what questions to be asked as teaching-learning process goes on, they need to know what problem is suited to the ability of the pupils and what the pupils could say to demonstrate understanding. Summing it up, elementary mathematics teachers need to develop within an attitude towards learning and teaching mathematics that will help them realize that mathematics is not just a world of definitions, facts, computational procedures that are just to be memorized but rather it more of discoveries and challenges. Making mathematics interesting to the pupils at early age would certainly help them develop those habits of reasoning thus make them confident in performing more complicated tasks at higher level.

References: