MOTIVATING THE STUDENTS TO SOLVE WORD PROBLEMS

by:

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Lessons in Mathematics are obviously difficult to understand. Student’s confusion towards the subject decreases their eagerness in learning this subject. Operations on integers, fractions and writing a two column proof are some of those topics that make them chaotic. The learner’s craziness in Mathematics leads to disappointment and fear. For the past eight years of teaching Mathematics, I noticed that one of the most hated topics that is too hard for the students to grasp is solving word problems. Age, number and geometrical problems give them boredom. Most of the time, they did not even exert effort to solve the given problem written on the board. Several of the learners are not interested in solving word problems.

The applications of the different topics in Mathematics is problem solving. This topic measures deeper understanding of the students. This will also test if the learners can think critically and can solve such situations in real life applying what they had learned in this subject. The most common example is teaching arithmetic series. Providing a word problem about a student who is saving money every day then ask what will be his total savings at the end of the month is an application of this lesson. But the sad truth is that they will not even read this word problem that is included in the summative test. It is wretched to think that most of them are not attempting to make a solution for these word problems. What can we do as teachers for them to absorb this tough lesson in Mathematics?

There are diverse suggested teaching strategies that can be implemented to teach this topic. Wise (2016) gives emphasis to the effectiveness of identifying key words and making visuals to make the student learn on how to solve word problems. Making the learners familiar to keywords such as added to, diminished by or fewer than and informing them the correct operations to be used in these words are effective ways to develop their understanding in word problems. In terms of visualization, it will be easier for them to absorb this lesson if a teacher can
draw the situation being illustrated in the problem. By doing this they can simply identify what is being ask. Through pictures, they can also create the situation in their mind of the given objects and values in the word problem.

Additionally, Findley (2016) recommends teachers to create and use silly word problems. Math teachers can use names of their favorite cartoon character or name of Korean popstar who is used to idolize by most of the learners. Hearing the names of those celebrities will motivate them to listen. Silly word problems like asking the number of zombies needed to perform in the theater may also encourage them to solve word problems. By implementing these methods, teachers can increase students’ interest in problem solving.

Furthermore, for Brack (2017), the most effective way to teach the students to be successful in solving word problem is to circle the important numbers, box what is ask and underline the key words. This method will make the students identify the essential data/s that can be used in finding solution of the given word problem. Teachers can also eliminate extra information that will make the problem complicated. Nonsense words will make the students more confuse. By doing this, the learners’ comprehension skills may also practice.

Solving word problems will enhance the mathematical abilities of our students. Teaching this lesson will inspire them to explore more and discover different methods in learning this subject. This will measure their eagerness to learn in learning Mathematics. Providing more word problems to the learners will make them recognize the essence of patience in studying. Solving word problems successfully signifies that any task can be accomplished with full of honesty and perseverance.
References:

Math Problem Solving Strategies
Tyne Brack 2017

3 Effective Strategies for Kids to Solve Math Word Problems
Rachel Wise 2016

8 Ways to Help Students Be Successful with Word Problems in Upper Elementary
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