# Exploring Student's Mathematical Reasoning Through Horizon Problems



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# With my ears to the ground, listening to my students, my eyes are focussed on the mathematical horizon

Ball, D.L. (1993). With an eye on the mathematical horizon: Dilemmas of teaching elementary school mathematics. *Elementary School Journal*, *93*(4), 373-397

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#### Horizon Knowledge

The type of knowledge teachers need to "create and explore practice that tries to be intellectually honest both to mathematics and the child" (1993, p. 377).

... a kind of mathematical 'peripheral vision', a view of the larger mathematical landscape, that teaching requires. We call this kind of vision horizon knowledge of mathematics and we consider it a part of mathematical knowledge for teaching (p.1).

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# Ability Grouping Does Not Work!

The 'Psychological Prisons' from which they never escaped: The role of ability grouping in reproducing social class inequalities.

Jo Boaler, Stanford University.

FORUM, 2005, 47, 2&3, 125-134.

Anabelle Dixon's recent editorial (2002) revealed that 88% of children placed into sets or streams at age 4 remain in the same groupings until they leave school. This is one of the most chilling statistics I have ever read. The fact that our children's future is decided for them by the time they are 4 years old derides the work of schools and contravenes basic knowledge about child development and learning. Children develop at different rates, and they reveal different interests, strengths and dispositions at various stages of their development. One of the most inportant goals of schools is to provide stimulating environments for all children; environments in which children's interest can be peaked and nutrured, with teachers who are ready to recognize, cultivate and develop the potential that children show at different times and in different areas. It is difficult support a childre's development and nutrure their potential if they are placed into a low group at a very carly age, told that they are achieving at lower levels than others, given less challenging and interesting south, taught by less gualified and experienced teachers, and separated from pers who would stimulate their thinking. Yet the predicability of performance in English schools seems not to trouble policy makers who support early and extensive ability grouping (Carvel, 1996). This is one of the reasons that the UK scores at the bottom of the scale on PISA's measures of equality (OECD, 2000; Green, 2003).

http://www.youcubed.org/wp-content/uploads/psychogicalprisons2005.pdf

### Professional Standards

Teachers know the content of their subjects and curriculum. They know and understand the fundamental concepts, structure and enquiry processes relevant to programs they teach.

Teachers understand what constitutes effective, developmentally appropriate strategies in their learning and teaching programs and use this knowledge to make the content meaningful to students. (p. 5)

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#### Horizon Problems

- Are problems that would normally be considered appropriate for students at more advanced levels of schooling (e.g., rate problems at Foundation, division problems with remainders at Year 2, proportional reasoning problems at Year 4).
- Focus on an important aspect of mathematics in a way that is comprehensible to a broad range of students (i.e., they allow most students to make a start).
- Provide windows into students' mathematical reasoning that we might not be aware of otherwise.
- May be solved partially or completely using 'strategies at hand' but their representations can provide valuable opportunities to make connections and notice mathematical relationships.
- Support collaborative problem solving in mixed ability groups.
  Provide opportunities to deepen teacher knowledge of mathematics for teaching – in particular, how mathematical ideas introduced at later stages in the curriculum are connected to ideas and strategies at earlier levels.

Dianne Siemon, November 2019

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'This Goes With That'

proportion and percent

1. Collect survey data (e.g.,

2. Discuss how this might be

represented and

communicated

favourite sport, fast food, type of television program, ...)

An activity that explores data representation,

3. Make a strip graph by deciding on a scale (e.g., 3 cm

From Maths300

# Post and Rail Fence ...

Post-and-rail fences are made by placing lengths of timber ('rails') between wooden posts. For example, a 4-post, 8-rail fence might look like this:



Imagine you are a fencing contractor specialising in post-and-rail fences. Design and quote for a post-andrail fence that uses 48 'rails'. How might your quote vary for different clients?

Explain your reasoning.

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# How far ...

Proportional reasoning refers to detecting, expressing, analysing, explaining, and providing evidence in support of assertions about proportional relationships.

The word reasoning further suggests that one uses common sense, good judgement, and a thoughtful approach to problem solving, rather than plucking numbers from word problems and blindly applying rules and operations (Lamon, 2007, p. 647)



How far could you hop? Interesting fact: Frogs can jump 20 times their own length

## Father and son:

At the present time a father is 3 times as old as his son.

In ten years time, he will be exactly twice his son's age.

How old are they at the present time?



# **Painters:**



It took 3 men 3 days to paint the inside of the house.

How long will it take 2 men?

32

#### 31



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Butterflies 2 drops of nectar are needed to feed 5 butterflies. How many butterflies could be fed with 12 drops of nectar? How many drops of nectar are needed to feed 63 butterflies?

Feral Cats 35 Feral cats were found in a 146 hectare nature reserve. 27 feral cats were found in a 103 hectare reserve. Which reserve had the biggest feral cat problem?





Samantha's Snail Samantha's snail covered 1.59 metres in 6 minutes. How far might Samantha's snail travel in 17 minutes (in metres)?

### **Bargain Price**

Juli bought a dress in an end-of-season sale for \$49.35. The original price was covered by a 30% off sticker, but the sign on top of the rack said "Now an additional 15% off already reduced prices". How could she work out how much she had saved? What percentage of the original cost did she end up paying?





