MIA BULJAN: And one of the things that's really obvious when you're teaching reading is you don't do that by getting a brand-new book. You go get a book with a character that they already love, like *Chrysanthemum*, or *Pete the Cat*, or *Lo Que* -- or whatever it is.

So you take that book that they know and love and you say, "Let's look at the character," right? So, like, you know, if you have two books you could probably teach everything you need to teach by just, like, the lens at which you are looking at the book today.

And I think, when I started thinking about a math story problem as an actual story, that made a lot of sense to me to think of it as like, "This is my mentor text and this is the problem where my kids are going to learn about combining things." And it's a very straightforward problem. Like I think the one I'm using now, it's almost always, their names and something they're interested in.

So, the first couple of days of school, I learn something about them -- they're all into Pokémon one year, one year they're into something else. And this year they were really into stickers. Like, Diva brought all these stickers on the second day of school. So it was easy enough to just say, "Diva had some stickers, and then she went to the store and got some more stickers. Now how many stickers does she have?" And it's very put together; it's very combining.

And so what I do is I leave out the numbers. "So Diva had *mmm* stickers and she got *mmm* more stickers. How many stickers does she have now?" And over time -- like in the beginning, we just act it out. Diva comes up, and she gets some stickers out of the box. And then, "okay, she goes to the store and she gets some more stickers." And we always name it, like, "five more stickers" and she shows getting five more. "Did you see what she did? She got five more stickers.

And then how did she figure it out? She counted them all together. Who wants to be Diva now?" "Oh, I do!" "Okay, you come up and be Diva. You're going to the store. Here's your stickers." We use very small numbers. They keep acting it out and we'll be mocked. [laughing] That's what it's like when they're little.

So we just...and we keep doing the same problem over and over, acting it out. "Now who wants to be Diva? Now who wants to do this? Now who wants to...?" And we -- we show her getting her stickers and going to the store and getting more stickers. "Tell me again, who can describe how she's figuring out how many she has? Oh, she's counting all the stickers. Did she count the ones that she had? Did she count the ones that she got at the store? See what she did there? She counted them all." Like, it's really that explicit.

And then I send them off to do the problem with numbers they don't understand. So we act it out with very small numbers -- two and three and four and five, like numbers that are totally in their wheelhouse.

But then I'll send them off with like, you know, on the second day of second grade it might be like, "She had 23 stickers and then she went and bought 17 more stickers. How many stickers does she have?" And the wheels fall off completely, immediately. They start doing the craziest things. You realize they don't know what a 10 is, which is very alarming in second grade.