

MIA BULJAN: I cannot tell you how many times today I stopped myself from saying, "Shh. Be quiet. You're too loud." They're so loud to me. To me they're so loud and it's, like, that's kind of why I did that little activity where I had them rate each other. I think they're too loud, but I needed to know, like, does it bother...like, do they register that they're too loud, and most of them did not. Most of them were like, "We nailed it. Nailed it." You know what I mean? They were like, "Our class did great." I'm like, "Fine." Like, I can't even argue about it anymore because I'm so exhausted from, like...they're just a chatty group and they're very loud. They are loud!

They're very active. They're very excitable. Yeah, I try to be...so I'm trying to scale back a little bit from, like, telling them to always "Tone it down. Sit down. Be quiet. Sit down." I feel like I can do that a lot, legitimately. But if it's...I'm trying to gauge more, like, if it's not bothering them and they're able to work, then I'm trying to let it not bother me. That's just this class. And every class kind of has their own personality that way, so this one just doesn't -- I'm just, like, a very peaceful person. I'm very, I mean I'm talkative but I'm, I'm quiet. Like, you know what I mean? Like, let's just be mellow and they're just, like...

I think Sayana has changed in a sense that, like, um, she used to be, um... Like, the one who hasn't changed is Sa'Rye. Sa'Rye is Sa'Rye is Sa'Rye, you know?

TEACHER: Sa'Rye?

MIA BULJAN: Yeah, Sa'Rye. And, um, the thing with Sa'Rye though, is that she's very convincing. So Sayana used to get the right answer and then Sa'Rye would convince her that her way was the right way even when it was wrong. So I'd put them together, like, "Okay, you talk to each other." And then Sayana would be like, "Oh, now I agree with Sa'Rye." I'm like, "What?" The opposite was supposed to happen, you know. But she's like much more confident now. Like, she'll, if she can prove it to herself, she's much more, "No, I'm pretty sure this works." Like, she doesn't just go with whatever someone is saying. Yeah, Sayana.

So that was like a big leap for her. I was surprised I didn't want to do the garden problem because last time, a few days ago.... What, what was I going to try and do? I think the Ninjago problem, and they came unhinged about that and insisted on the garden problem. So they're funny. They're like...

TEACHER: And so why do you make the decision to do what they say?

MIA BULJAN: Because I don't care. As long as they're doing the math. Because we're at a point now where we're sort of, like, we're going back and forth between some very familiar problems. And those little word stories that they were working on are.... When I was working in this small group, were doing some of those and a lot of it was like, "is this a put-together?" "So was it like the sticker problem? Or "Is this a take-apart?" "Which one of these is take-apart?" "Which one of these is put together?"

And I was pretty impressed, actually. I would consider all of those kids struggling on some level and they all were like, "Oh, this is the one where we're taking things apart. I know because, you know, because there's this part here." They're talking about parts and they're keeping things separate, and they're doing lots of really mathematical things.

So, so we just, we're very familiar with all of these and they're doing something different with all of them. Like, today they're really negotiating bigger numbers, and we have to get into the hundredths place value situation. They're really comfortable with ones and tens, but what happens after you get to 100 is still sort of a mystery to them. And so, I was okay with it because they need to unravel that mystery, and they made progress today. They'll slip again, and they'll do it wrong again tomorrow, but they made progress today. We saw that...Mark and I saw that happen probably no ... fewer than ten times today -- kids that were counting that way and they...when they see the correct counting, they become convinced that what they did was wrong.

So I think that's kind of like the...that's sort of the pitfall, though, of working with kids this age. It's that they know it is right when they see it, and when you go back to the idea of, like, precision or communication, it's like, "Can you describe what was wrong or right about it?"

And so that pushing on them to communicate what they're thinking is a big part of it, so that you... It's really easy to fall into the trap of answer getting, you know, like, "Now I know what the right answer is. Now I know what the right answer is."

And it's almost like you have to...I mean I almost had to tell myself, like, that's trivial. I don't really care what the right answer is. What I care is, why was it wrong before and why is it right now, and to sort of, keep pushing on that. I try never to stop them when they're wrong because I don't stop them when they're right.

And I think we give them a lot of cues that way about...and then they're trying to guess what I want them to say instead of, explain themselves or whatever. So I try really hard not to interrupt them, and sometimes I show great restraint that way, and sometimes I'm like, "Really? Again?" You know, it's like, I'm only human. How many times can I look at this?

But, I think more valuable is to have them watch someone count it correctly, and start to sort of make sense of, like...well, not even count it correctly. Count it differently. Because at that point they don't know what's right and wrong. They think they're right, so when they see someone do it differently, it's sort of...there's that cognitive load, right, of like, "What did they do? How is that different than what I did? Which way is right? Which way is...like, why would we count them differently?"

And that sort of piece, that little sweet spot is where we're looking to work with them, right? When they start thinking. When they start wondering, then you have something to work with, but before then, you just have right and wrong answers. So I try not to...I try really hard not to interrupt, but I am only human. I swear sometimes I'm like, "Oh my gosh, it is so lonely at the top. Like, I am really lonely up here."

But then there's, like, little gifts, you know, like... And then there's even kids...yeah, and then there's the kids who can explain it. Like, Afoa, he was totally, like, "Oh, that's not how you count those." Well, you don't count them by hundreds either, sweetheart, you know? So, you don't count them by ones but you also don't count them by hundreds. So, so, like, there's this moment of real clarity followed by "I don't see it in my own work," and he still needs to go work it out.

So that's why I send them away, so I'm not tempted to show them. So it's like, "Okay, bye-bye."

There's a lot of really strong personalities in this room and they sort of clash sometimes. And that's what happened during the independent work, is that they just...they got emotional about feeling bossed around, or feeling not heard, or feeling not...and there's a lot of that. So I just wanted them to,...that was sort of, a bold move, actually. I shouldn't have done that during math but I felt like it was important enough. I saw some ones and two's and I wanted to deal with it. We're at the beginning of that sort of rotation and I need them to be really good at that, so that I can pull those small groups to work with them.

Well, we ran out of time. So I look around and I think, "Well, we could've cleaned up if we hadn't done that." Or we could have done some...you know, we could have done this longer if we hadn't done that or, you know. But it's part of being mathematical. It's part of the process, right? So it's, like, in that moment, it was really not something I had planned on doing, but in that moment I just took the opportunity. There were only a few pairs of kids and one of them was really legitimate. Like, Isaiah...like, when I went over to talk to Isaiah and Anthony, Isaiah was, like, you know, "I don't feel like he was sharing with me."

And they had left everything set up and we're sitting there, and all the cards are on Anthony's side of the table, and none of them are on Isaiah's side. So I...we sort of like, "Well, what happens if we put them in the middle?" You know? And Anthony was like, "Well, that makes a lot of sense," you know. Yeah, it makes a lot of sense that he can touch them the same way you can touch them, you know. So, so stuff like that, it had to be dealt with. And sometimes they can't talk to each other, right? Like, they don't...they clam up or they just get mad, or they get really emotional, and so sometimes...although I only talked to one group.

When I went to the other ones, they were like, "Yeah, we're okay." And I was like, "Well, tell me what happened." And they were like, "Yeah, it was like this, but now we're okay." "He said he was sorry, or she said she would do it this way."

They worked it out without me but they just needed that few minutes, you know, to do it. There was one group I didn't even check with. I was just, like, "Whatever. You're fine. We're moving on." But the big thing that I wanted to do there was to also break before putting things away because this class is very excitable. And I have found that if I just call their attention and then say, "Okay, it's time to clean up." Like, before I can get the next words out of my mouth, it's like, the yelling and the running starts. It's...they're just really excitable. And so what I really wanted was to, bring them, bring them down completely, and then send them back to clean up a lot more focused. And so....

TEACHER: It seemed to work.

MIA BULJAN: It did. I was really shocked. I looked over and I was like, "Well, everything got done and I didn't have to do anything."

TEACHER: They were quieter.

MIA BULJAN: They were. Yeah. This is a class I'll... This is what I'll remember about this class: I started with 35 kids. I'm down to 31. But since the first day of school I only have three days of perfect attendance. So there's, like, there's no one day when just like, everyone is here. So, it's a serious problem. So, one of...two of my students, Bibi and Krishnil, they've been struggling a little bit today. They

just came back from extended...like, one was in Germany for a couple of months on a family emergency and one was in Fiji for a month on a family emergency.

And they just came back, and I don't even have a seat for Krishnil because I immediately... I don't know if you can tell, but I moved this desk. I opened up all this up because I lost a couple of kids so I took their desks out and moved everything around so I'll have more space. And Krishnil, he's been back for a few days and I haven't even had to get him a seat. He just kind of sit where there's absent people or whatever.

There's times where I'm, like, that thing with the counting by... switching to ones or whatever, sometimes I'm just, like, I just put my hands on the, I don't... Thank goodness for Diva! We had...I was sitting next to a kid who could count them right and every time someone came over and said, "I think the answer is a 105." I'm like, "Hmm. Diva! Get over here! Help me!" Every single time. You only need one.