

in fostering interdependence among students makes it a worthwhile endeavor, however, and that is one of the first routines teachers should invest themselves in.

Another important routine is called *quick start*. In this routine, students are expected to get themselves ready to work at the start of class. Their backpacks and materials should be in the expected place, out of the way. They should be at their desks or tables. The teacher should have an established way for class to begin, and students should get right to work. Teachers can make these expectations explicit and keep the structure the same so that students enter the room ready to work.

Some students have a difficult time starting an activity with their groupmates. Such students need time to process a task themselves before they start a discussion. Incorporating an *individual think time* routine might be wise. That is, when groups begin a task, tell facilitators to have the group take two minutes of quiet time to make their own notes before the groups' discussion begins. Alternatively, students can be asked to do a *quick-write activity* about their own thinking before they share with the group. For individual think time or quick-write routines to be effective, the activity must truly be groupworthy in that it requires multiple perspectives. If an individual student can complete the problem in that brief time, status problems will only be exacerbated.

Sentence starters can help students find the language for discussing their thinking together. If students have not had much experience in collaborative learning, they might have a hard time meeting norms such as *helping is not the same as telling*; they might know only how to tell. Teachers can post sentence starters in their classroom. Students may use them in a playful, singsong way at first. As they recognize their value, they can become natural ways for students to speak to one another.

Some good sentence starters include the following:

- “How did you know how to _____?”
- “What does _____ mean?”
- “_____ because _____.”
- “Why did you _____?”
- “Why are our _____ different?”

These sentence starters embody a strong push toward justification. The goal of sentence starters is to give students a way to have deeper mathematical conversations. In a limited-exchange format, students are used to asking each other, “What number are you on?” or “What did you get for problem 3?” These sentence starters help communicate different expectations and set them toward more creative interchanges. Likewise, sentence starters offer teachers a tool to support students in this work.

I will discuss other routines below, because they contribute to the accountability system in the classroom.

“I think I figured out the importance of holding groups accountable for each other’s understanding. When I consistently hold kids accountable for each other, I find understanding becomes more important than completion or product—which is what I wanted!”

—Laura Evans, Complex Instruction Educator, Mathematics Teacher, and Coach