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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2015 Volume V: Problem Solving and the Common Core

Taking the Problems out of Story Problems

Guide for Curriculum Unit 15.05.01, published September 2015

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This unit explores ways to give first grade students a good foundation of solving one step addition and subtraction story problems so that they will become better problem solvers in not only first grade but it will follow them into high school and even college.

It begins with decomposing numbers so that students understand how to break numbers into smaller numbers, adding and subtracting within ten, breaking double digit numbers into tens and ones, adding within twenty, and story problems.

The emphasis on this unit is the fourteen types of story problems (six change, six comparing, and two types of part, part, whole. Not only what they are but how to solve them. It focuses on using inverse operations to help students make connections about numbers and story problems.

This unit included the four step strategy in solving problems. Step one: How to understand the problem. Step two: Devise a plan of how to solve the problem. Step three: Carry out your plan and check your answer. Step four: Reflecting on the problem. Was the solution correct? If not what went wrong? Is there an easier way to solve the problem?

(Developed for Math/Story Problems, grade 1; recommended for Problem Solving, grade K, and Story Problems, grades 1-2)

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