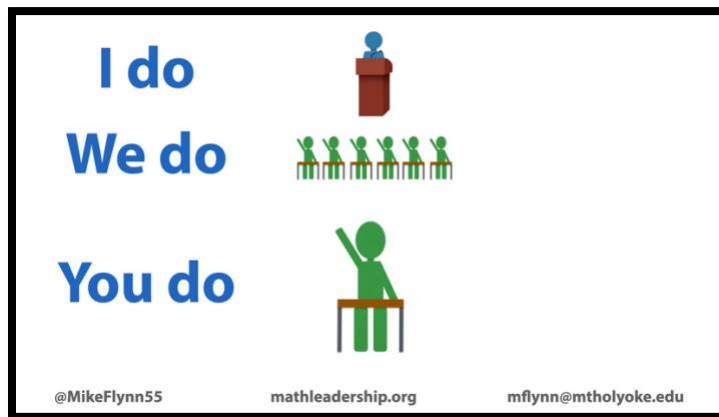


Flipping the I Do, We Do, You Do Approach to Teaching Mathematics

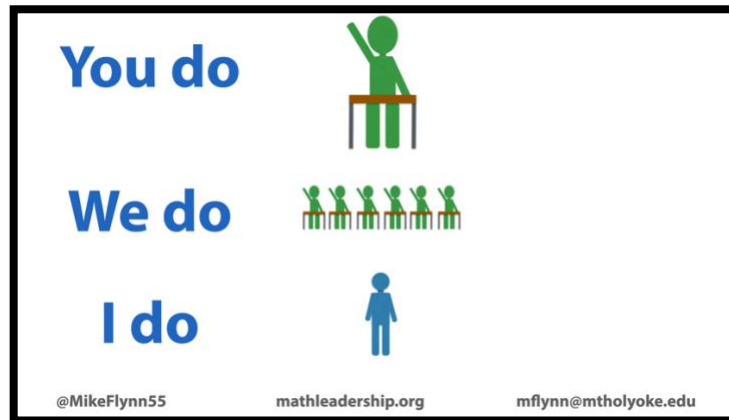
By Mike Flynn

What was math class like for you growing up? Well, if you're like most people, it probably looked something like this: The teacher would lead a lesson, demonstrating how she or he wanted you to solve a problem. You'd practice with some of your classmates with the support of your teacher, and then you were expected to demonstrate mastery on your own. This is known as the I do, we do, you do approach. In recent years, there have been lots of efforts to change this.



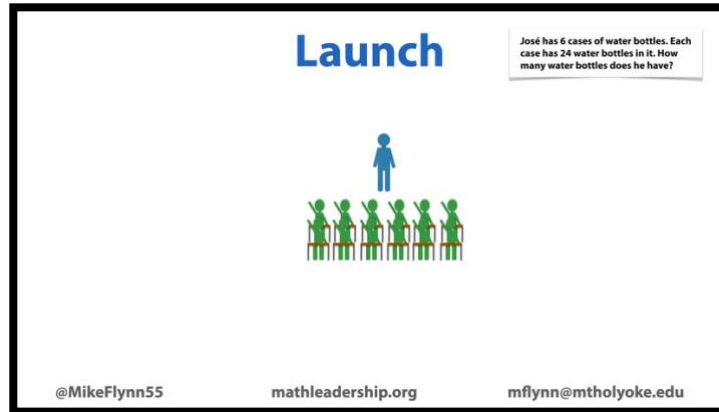
For starters, we need to shift the teacher's role from being the deliverer of knowledge to the facilitator of learning. This means we must eliminate the idea of the stand and deliver approach to teaching. Then we flip the order

around so that it is “you do, we do, I do” which put the students front and center in the learning.

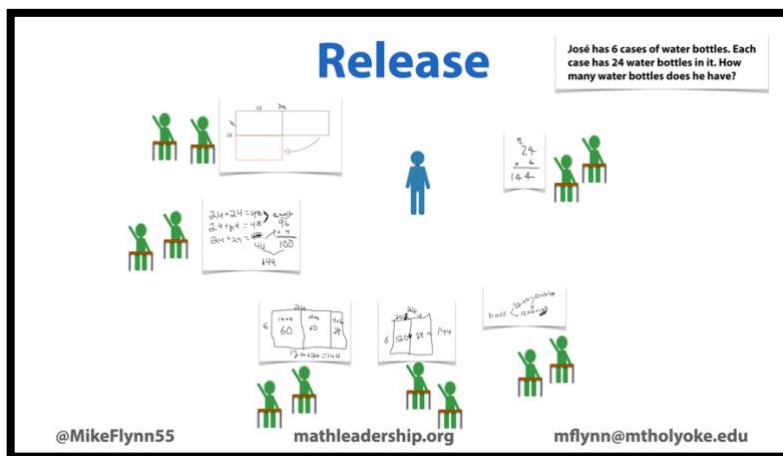


With this approach, we start with the problem and allow each student to make sense of it for themselves. Then students work collaboratively to solve the problem using methods that make sense to them, all the while sharing and revising their thinking. Finally, the teacher comes in and synthesizes the learning based on what students have done. Teachers facilitate conversations among students and support them in connecting their individual thinking to the thinking of their peers.

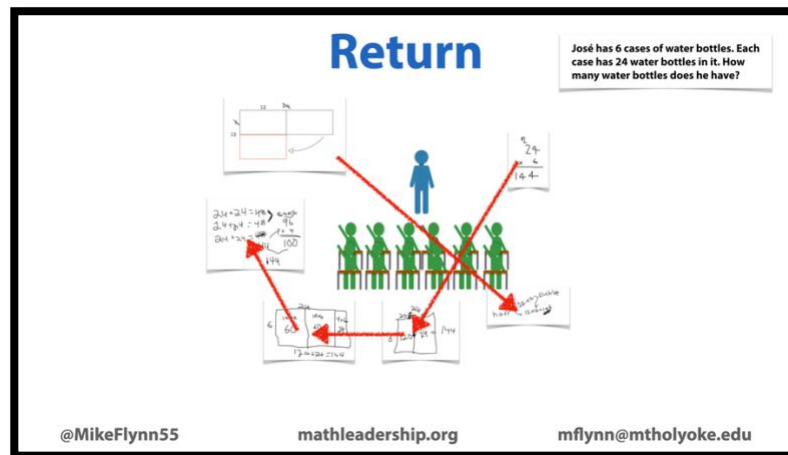
We can visualize this in three key steps. First, there is the launch, where students are introduced to the problem and work to make sense of it.



Then there's the release, where students go off to work on the problem, using strategies they understand. During this time, the teacher moves throughout the classroom making observations of each student's approach. She might confer with some groups or just listen to their conversations. She may use this time to provide some intervention or support for students who might need it. She may push some students to dig deeper and extend their thinking. Most importantly, she is identifying the key information that needs to come up during the whole group discussion at the end of the lesson.



Finally, there's the return, where the class comes back together to share their thinking while the teacher facilitates the discussion. As a result of paying such careful attention while the students were working, she is able to select specific students to share their ideas and support all students in finding connections between their strategies which moves everyone's thinking forward.



When teachers have a clear sense of the ideas they want to develop, and they strategically select student work to bring to the discussions, then the teacher's agenda is fueled by student thinking and understanding. The difference is, with this approach, the students hold the authority because their ideas take center stage and not the teacher's. This shift in dynamic creates classroom cultures that truly value student thinking and agency in mathematics.

About the Author:



Mike Flynn is the director of [Mathematics Leadership Programs](#) at Mount Holyoke College. He runs the [Master of Arts in Teaching Mathematics](#) program and creates a wide variety of professional learning for educators looking to become leaders in mathematics education. Mike was one of the first educators to use Zoom back in 2013 to design interactive online learning experiences and has been perfecting the format ever since. Presently, Mike is supporting teachers and school districts around the world in creating engaging online learning experiences for students. Visit [Distance Learning Support](#) to learn more about Mike's work in this area.

Mike also travels to schools around the country to work with teachers, coaches, and administrators. His expertise on developing people's mathematical content knowledge and supporting systemic change help make these big shifts much easier for staff, students, and parents. Click [here](#) to learn more about Mike's work in this area.

Mike is also the author of [Beyond Answers: Exploring Mathematical Practices with Young Children](#).