

NUMBER CLICK, REAL MAGIC

by:

Trixia Carla C. Bonus

Teacher III, Pantalan Luma Elementary School

Teaching seven-year-olds two-digit addition, subtraction, place value, or basic fractions isn't about drill; it's about making abstract concepts tangible. If we are going to look at the Enactive concept, they were just there. In Grade 2, we taught math from simple counting to problem-solving. But we have to be sensible in doing so - easy, understandable, tangible. This shift intimidates young minds, but the secret to breaking through the anxiety lies in a combination of sensory manipulatives and imaginative storytelling. Yes, we can use these instead of usual gamification strategies. In other words, we have to go to the basic, the foundational. When numbers are tied to physical objects, mathematics transforms from a task into a game.

In my classroom, the real breakthrough with "regrouping" (or having them work a task via a group) happened when we stopped using paper and started a "Donut Shop" simulation. Here, we were like bakers, and we have clays and pots, and everything. Ten blocks taped together represented a box of donuts, and single blocks were individual donuts. I gave a student two full boxes and two individual donuts, then asked them to sell twelve donuts to their classmates. The student froze for a moment, counting the two single donuts. Then, a lightbulb went off.

"Mam, wala na po akong natirang sobra. Pero pwede ko po hatiin yung isang ox para po makalahti ant mabigay po sa kanya ang 12." ("Teacher, I don't have enough loose ones! I have to break open one of my full boxes so I can give her twelve!")

Suddenly, often confusing rule of "borrowing from the tens place" became an exciting and a logical mission for them. The student physically broke the ten-rod apart into ten

individual units, instantly visualizing what regrouping actually means. Such is an example of HOTS as well as how to solve problem using what they only have. Such a classic example.

To replicate this kind of success, a Grade 2 math curriculum must consistently prioritize physical objects before moving to abstract symbols. $2 + 2$ in the board is good. But better if we follow enactive, iconic and then the symbolic approach by Bandura. When introducing fractions, skip drawing circles on the whiteboard. Instead, hand out real cookies or cupcakes. It will be more interesting. Ask the students to break them into halves, and then quarters, or even sixteenth but that's too much for a little hand. The moment a child sees that a quarter is smaller than a half, the concept of denominators clicks, and the magic starts. I saw my co-teachers or in the Internet that they also use popsicle sticks bundled into tens with rubber bands for addition, or play money to teach skip counting by fives and tens. There are many enactive things to work on.

The language we use in math matters. Instead of asking, "What is 25 minus 17?" frame it as a narrative, such as, for example: "Marcus has 25 fish stickers, but 17 of them swam away into the classroom. How many does he have left to guard?" Use creative words or use stories. This minor shift engages their imagination and creative minds together, turning a symbolic equation into a story they want to solve. By grounding abstract numbers in physical reality and narrative play, we can be able to build mathematical confidence that lasts a lifetime and impact the lives of these little learners.

References:

Chen, Y. Y., Wu, S. C., Chang, Y. L., & Chang, L. A. (2026). Promoting Mathematics Learning in Young Children Through the Use of Embodied Mathematics Teaching Modules. *Behavioral Sciences*, 16(6), 875. <https://www.mdpi.com/2076-328X/16/6/875>

Monareng, N. F., & Selepe, M. A. (2026). Unlocking Early Mathematics through Digital Manipulatives: A Scoping Review. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*. Available at:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/403543671_Unlocking_Early_Mathematics_through_Digital_Manipulatives_A_Scoping_Review

Almulhim, M. G., & Fujita, T. (2026). The Enhancement of Number Sense Through the Interactive Reading of Mathematical Stories in Kindergarten. *Education Sciences*, 16(2), 296. <https://www.mdpi.com/2227-7102/16/2/296>

Lee, M. Y., & Yeo, S. (2026). Exploring Preservice Teachers' Problem-Solving with Fractopia: A Dynamic Digital Tool Developed to Support Semiotic Mediation in Fraction Learning. *Journal of Mathematics Teacher Education*.

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10857-026-09746-1>

Mahayudin, M., & Prasetyo, I. (2026). CRA-Based Problem-Based Learning to Improve Whole-Number Addition Outcomes for Students with Learning Difficulties. *Journal of Innovation and Research in Primary Education*.

<https://ejournal.papanda.org/index.php/jirpe/article/view/3835>