
**Séminaires de l'unité de recherche éducationnelle en
mathématiques**

Mathematics Educational Research Unit Seminars

**What's a literature person like you doing . . .
teaching and researching in elementary level
mathematics?**

Dr. Vicki Zack

Abstract

During the MERU session on April 17, I will be speaking to you about the research I did, as a teacher researcher, in my fifth-grade elementary classroom (10 - 11 year-olds) for twelve years (1989-2001). I retired in 2001 but am still thinking and writing about the work. My main overarching goal has been to study how learning is interactively accomplished, namely: How is mathematical meaning made, and shared? My focus when I began was on explanations -- children's explanations to their peers-- and I then extended my search to explore arguments, and the children's notions of convincing and proving. The school in which I worked is a problem-solving culture in which the students are expected to support their positions and present arguments for their point of view in most areas of the curriculum. In my classroom we used an inquiry-based approach in which we-- students and teacher alike-- often pursued questions of interest to us. I will use as an example one non-routine mathematical task (of the approximately 40 tasks we worked with during a year), and show how the ensuing inquiry evolved. I would characterise my pre-1980 relationship with mathematics as "math-avoidant." For the first 30 years of my life my identity was intimately bound up with literature and language arts. In working with the children and making more visible what was going on, I came to better understand the mathematics and the children's thinking, and to engage actively and joyfully with mathematical ideas.

Date:	Thursday, April 17th, from 4.00-6.00pm
Room:	LMX 475

We look forward to seeing you!