

[00:00:01] Speaker A: So, Becca, when this episode releases, we will be in Chicago together.

[00:00:09] Speaker B: Feels so good, doesn't it?

[00:00:11] Speaker C: Yeah.

[00:00:12] Speaker A: I love knowing the next date on the calendar when we're going to be together. And then your family, the whole berka circus is going to come to my house and we're really going to spoil you guys for a few days.

[00:00:26] Speaker C: We're so excited. The kids are counting down.

They just like, I do love to know the next time we're going to get to see you. And they're convinced that you should be flying to Maine every weekend pretty much at this point, so they can't wait. We're going to road trip to you, the whole circus, so we hope you're ready.

[00:00:49] Speaker A: Oh, we are always ready for the burka circus to arrive.

[00:00:55] Speaker B: We're presenting in Chicago at the joint NCTE NCTM conference.

Our session is with Jody Bailey about a strategy called still thinking. We talk about this complex thinking strategy and share a variety of ways to use it.

This is sticky Hope.

[00:01:18] Speaker A: Yeah.

[00:01:18] Speaker C: You messaged me about this in the fall saying you were thinking with Jodi about this topic and you thought some of the things that I was doing in my classroom would fit in and did I want to consider presenting with you guys?

And I was completely intimidated, but also really excited. And it has been so much fun to dig into this concept of still thinking, um, with my five and six year olds, which is probably not what most people would.

Not the age group that most people would consider using a complex strategy such as this.

But my kids, my kids are rocking it and they are fascinating to listen to.

And it is so fun to stop and listen to Jodi talk about. She teach. She's a middle school math coach, right?

[00:02:13] Speaker A: Instructional math interventionist.

[00:02:16] Speaker C: And the work that she does with her middle school math students is so intriguing to me because I'm like an early childhood literacy person. So that is just a whole different world. But to take this strategy that she uses in such a beautiful way with her middle schoolers and to apply it to early childhood literacy experiences has been just this like, beautiful, beautiful connection and shown. It's really like, brought to light the importance of teaching strategies like this because they're transferable, right? These are strategies these kids will be able to use across all kinds of situations for the rest of their lives. And so this one is, is called still thinking.

And it has been. It has been super fun. Do you want to explain a little bit about it?

[00:03:09] Speaker A: So Jodi wrote an article about this and I'll actually, we'll open it up.

So if you want to read it? You can. I'll include that link.

And basically, the practice is, like, she'll have a math problem for students to solve. And then, like, kind of in the four corners of the room, you can go with what you think the solution is. And one of the places that you can go in the room is a still, still thinking corner. So they'll have the, you know, the math problem. Some students will sort it out. Like, we'll. We'll sort through their thinking. We'll share their thinking. And Jody will ask, you know, does somebody else have a different solution? And so somebody else could share that different solution. And so you have these different possibilities for the answering students can go. But then they could also go to a place with. Which is still thinking, which I think is just honors that idea that we don't always know things right away or when we're learning new concepts. We might need to spend a little time thinking about it. So that's how Jody is using it in her classroom. Then they're in these different places, and they're making a case for it. This still thinking corner. Right. Like, if you then feel like you're, like, you could gravitate to a place, like, to a different place in the room when you're done thinking, you know, like, oh, I think I have an answer now. The still thinking corner could ask questions. I like to be able to get more information.

And so this is how she's using it in math. But you then applied it to literacy.

[00:04:45] Speaker C: Yeah. So we do a lot of work in kindergarten about.

In read aloud and. And the books that we're reading. And I use it to help kids process social situations. So I've always been super intentional about. About the books that I'm choosing to read to the kids and the timing of it.

And now that I've introduced this still thinking strategy to them, we use it to process and to share our thinking. And it allows the kids to take the time that they need, but it's also given a structure to the way that they're thinking about things in allowing them to stop and listen to each other's reasoning, to understand. And it's like, on a different level. Right. Like, they've always. My students have always been, like, super respectful. They learn how to stop and listen and. And be respectful towards each other's thinking. But to have this action of we. They have, like, different colored tables in my room. So they're. They don't go to corners of the room. They go to colored tables. And so, like, one answer is the yellow table. Another answer is the orange table. And then still thinking is the red table. And because there's that action. And then after everyone, like after each time someone shares their thinking, I say, does anyone need to change their thinking? And that's when they can move.

It is, it is lifting the level of their thinking and their listening in a way that's like making them stop and consider is what the other person's saying changing my perspective? And so recently I read this book called the Big Red Lollipop by Rukh Sana Khan. And it is just this amazing story. I love it so much.

And it's like this older sister goes to a birthday party and the little or she's invited to a birthday party and the little sister is like, I want to go, I want to go. And the mom's like, well now you have to bring your little sister. And her little sister goes. And my kids just thought like.

So the first question I asked them was, do you think that Sana should get to go with Robina to this party? And the kids who are younger siblings were like, absolutely, Sana should get to go. And then the kids who were older siblings were like, absolutely not. Sana should not go. And

then I had a few kids at the still thinking table. But after, like, after some perspectives were shared, they, they moved for the most part. And that was like a pretty low level question for them. And as the book goes on, the little sister who got to go to the party gets older and she's invited to a party and the youngest sister is now asking to go. And the, the mother saying, well, it's only fair that you have to bring her, right? Because you got to go with Rubina.

And Robina stands up for her sister.

But before that, I asked them this really like higher level thinking, right? This more complex question of do you think that Sana should have to bring Miriam?

And the way that my five and six year old kindergarten students stopped and considered the perspectives of each person in that situation and lifted the level of their understanding of each other's thinking from one of my students saying like, Mrs. Burke, she's going to have a fit if she doesn't go, the youngest sister's just going to throw a fit. So they should just let her go so no one has to deal with the fit. And then someone came right back and they, he was like, this is Burke. If she's going to throw a fit, then she definitely shouldn't go. Like she needs to learn it's not okay to throw a fit. And so then there was like this whole conversation back and forth, and it took an hour and a half, like to go through this one book and to take the time to do that was allowing them this thinking time. Right. And. And if my, if the five and six year olds can take an hour and a half to consider, I gave them three different prompts in this story.

It just showed the level at which they can consider things.

[00:09:04] Speaker A: Okay, so, Becca, there's a lot of things there, but the thing that I think might snag some of us is you spend an hour and a half. Like, so if I'm an instructional coach, I'm like, what aren't you doing? Or how do you have an hour and a half?

And I also am like, do you do this every day?

An hour and a half.

So, so I, I just think that people might have some questions about the hour and a half. Do you have some, some thoughts around that?

[00:09:39] Speaker C: Yeah, I have some answers.

So typical. This is one. Not something we do every day to this level. This was an intentional choice I made. It was the day before a vacation on a half day of school. And so we were given this time, like as a school to kind of make some choices about, like maybe we were going to do a celebration or maybe we were going to do a fun activity together. But if you were in Mrs. Burke's kindergarten classroom, you were going to do some complex reasoning strategies.

[00:10:11] Speaker A: It was a fun activity.

[00:10:14] Speaker C: It sure was. Yeah.

[00:10:16] Speaker A: Because I think the other piece of that is 90 minutes. Kindergarteners, kind of kindergartners in. When you did this, it was kindergarteners in April.

So you're setting some more parameters around this. Like it's a half a day. You had some permission to deviate your normal schedule. You're. You're experimenting. Right. With their thinking. And yet, like one of the things that you said to me while it was happening, like in the

middle of it, you were texting me and you're like, they are still so engaged. Right. So, Becca, there's very few people that I know personally who have such a deep, rich understanding of early learners. And you do, you've. You just have this really strong understanding. So when you say to me, they're still engaged, I really got the sense like, you are following this wave. Right.

And you were really curious about the, the still thinking.

I, I wondered. And as you was listening to you and we've been talking about this, I think part of it too is the movement, right?

[00:11:19] Speaker C: Absolutely.

[00:11:20] Speaker A: Asking a question. And you're not just keeping them right there. On the carpet in front of you. But you're like, think about this now. Move to a table that best represents your.

Your thoughts, what you think the answer is.

[00:11:34] Speaker C: I think that was part of how they stayed engaged, right? Like, I would read two or three pages of the book, I would pose this question, I gave them their options, and then I was quiet. And at the beginning, so. So this wasn't the first time they had used the still thinking strategy. So this is something that they were familiar with the strategy and using it with a read aloud. But this is the longest we had ever gone, right? I've had to. And I've had to like, cut them off before, right? Like, we've had to get to the point where I only have 15 minutes for read aloud and I wanted to use the still thinking and we just had to end or whatever.

But this was a time that I had this leeway. I. I did not expect 90 minutes out of them. I. I was texting you like, Ruth, like, they're still going.

And, and they even still. I had like 10 more minutes before they had lunch. And there were kids that would have kept going, but there were kids that we were done. They were done.

And so I had to honor that too.

But the act of moving, like, there's something to be said for the kinesthetic movement in your processing and thinking, right? Like something that I do. And I know that you do this too when you're trying to process information as you walk, right? And now they're not like, going for a mile walk, right? But the movement from one table to another gives them an outlet for the energy that they're trying to move through as they're processing this thinking. And you watch them go from like, going to sit at the table with their friend to like, realizing that they have a different perspective than their friend, and that's okay. And so it's like honoring these differences.

And I remind them all the time, like, there isn't a right answer. Right? Both of these things are. Okay. I break it down to, like, this answer, this answer, or still thinking. So they really only have two choices and then still thinking. Because I don't want to push them too far. But.

But they might be ready for a third option. But it has been fascinating to watch them stop and think. And when I introduced this strategy, when you were talking about this before, how important it is to give them the time to think.

I have this little guy, Desmond, I said, like, do you ever feel like grown ups are asking you questions and they want you to answer like, right away.

And he, like, immediately was like, yes. And I was like, and. And what if you don't know your answer? Like, how does that feel? And he said, it's frustrating, Mrs. Burt. I was like, tell me more.

And he said, sometimes I just need to think, and if you want me to answer, I'm not going to be able to answer nicely.

And it was interesting to be like, does. Yikes, man. Like, okay. And I was like, so is this a strategy you think will be helpful? Like, back when I was introducing it? And he was like, this is something we need to do all the time, Mrs. Burke. And so, like, that gave me insight into how his brain works. And now I can be more intentional with him, but also, like, just in general about giving time to think and honoring the fact that, like, everyone's brain is different. And I work so hard to try to honor that on a daily basis. But it was, like, a really important check in for me to have him say that.

[00:14:55] Speaker A: Well, and it's giving him ways to talk about, right? So even if there's not, like, a still thinking option, he now knows I have the option to still be thinking, and I think that's so powerful. And Jodi would talk about the same thing, like, about being really, like, neutral, you know, like not giving away or not making people feel like they have to go to one way or the other, but. And that still thinking is a fine option.

So I was a middle school teacher. Like, that's where I started my career. My. My heart is in middle school. Although I love. I love kindergarten and everything, my heart really is in middle school. And so I'm like, okay, so what about the kid that's heading to no thinking or just still thinking, but it's actually no thinking.

Like. Like, what about that? Like, I think there's some pitfalls to think about, but as we're exploring this, it's not a reason not to do it, right? Like. Like that. That element of where you're like, oh, we could have had a celebration this day. You know, we could have done anything. But I'm going to try this. I want to explore this. I'm really curious. I'd love to hear from listeners who are experimenting with the still thinking corner and. Or spot and how we're sure that it's not no thinking.

Did you have any. No thinkers.

[00:16:17] Speaker C: Oh, for sure. And like, as time went on, especially that day, I had more no thinkers.

And. And in kindergarten. Right. That, you know, they're in. In the still thinking at the still thinking table. But they're not thinking because they're like sitting backwards on the chair and. And of course I'm like filming this for Chicago, right? So it's all on video, right? The, the foot's going through the hole in the chair and they're, you know, and you hear me kind of like whispering the name. So you have those moments and you get to choose, right? You get to choose to put everybody's focus on that behavior or you get to choose to keep the focus of as like the rest of the children on the child who's sharing their thinking and their reasoning. And you like see me kind of go and stand next to the child whose leg was through the chair and they like pull their leg out of the chair and are sitting properly by the time I get there.

And it's just kind of where your value is. And, and in kindergarten it's a little bit easier than I imagine it would be in middle school and I would need to work through that with older kids. Like I have an almost middle schooler and she for sure would find a way to use the still thinking corner as a no thinking corner.

But I think also there would be ways to engage back if there was a way to provide check ins. So I would be intrigued to hear what listeners do too. And Jody too, I'm sure she has some strategies.

[00:17:51] Speaker A: So you can check the show notes for Jody's article for a link to the book the the Big Red Lollipop and just try it out. And meanwhile I'm gonna still be thinking right about still thinking.

[00:18:12] Speaker B: If you enjoyed this podcast and would like to hear more, please subscribe wherever you like to listen to podcasts.

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