Welcome fellow Recovering Traditionalists to Episode 11. Today we are talking about why we should never say anything a kid can say.

Welcome to Build Math Minds the podcast, where fidelity to your students is greater than fidelity to your textbook. I'm your host, Christina Tondevold, the recovering traditionalist and BuildMathMinds.com Founder, where my mission is to change the way we teach elementary math to our kiddos. Are you ready to start building math minds and not just creating calculators? Let's get started.

This week I'm talking about an article from Mathematics Teaching in the Middle School. It's one of the journals you can choose to receive if you are a member of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. Which I highly recommend that you become a member if you aren't already.

Today I’d like to talk about one of my favorite articles. It’s “Never Say Anything A Kid Can Say” by Steven Reinhart. It was published back in April of 2000. That's over 19 years ago!! But the information in this article is so powerful and still so relevant. Normally, you have to be a member to access the articles but this article is available as a free download on their site. I’ll link to it on the show notes page buildmathminds.com/11.

In the beginning of this article he talks about his journey of transforming how he taught mathematics. He says

"AT SOME POINT DURING THIS METAMORPHOSIS, I concluded that a fundamental flaw existed in my teaching methods. When I was in front of the class demonstrating and explaining, I was learning a great deal, but many of my students were not! Eventually, I concluded that if my students were to ever really learn mathematics, they would have to do the explaining, and I, the listening. My definition of a good teacher has since changed from ‘one who explains things so well that students understand’ to ‘one who gets students to explain things so well that they can be understood.’”

The remainder of the article goes on to discuss how he did that with middle schoolers. Now even though the article is about middle school students, the ideas still apply to helping kiddos in elementary get to a point where they explain things so well that they can be understood.

I really love that line.

We are constantly told in our pre-service education that it’s our job to explain things clearly to our students. But as we make this shift to a student-centered learning environment we have to step aside as the Keeper of Knowledge and allow our students to share their thinking, their understandings, their misconceptions, in order for true learning to happen.

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However, it is not an easy change to make. In the article, Steven gives lots of practical ideas about how to make that change. One of which is the advice to Never Say Anything A Kid Can Say.

I think this article should be mandatory reading for any math teacher no matter what grade you teach. So, head on over to buildmathminds.com/11 to get the link to the article.

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