

TABLE 1.1

Types of Conversations in Mathematics Classrooms



	Description	Purpose	Example	Frequency
Conversations for Assessment	The teacher keeps a record of students' understanding of specific mathematics skills.	To keep a record of students' learning progressions and mastery of skills.	The teacher wants to assess which students have developed an understanding of cardinality and which students are still developing an understanding of this counting principle. In order to learn more, the teacher observes and talks with students. The teacher also keeps an ongoing record to help plan future learning experiences.	Ongoing through observation and interviews.
Conversations to Scaffold Learning	The teacher adjusts the level of rigor by asking students specific questions, prompting specific student actions, or providing students with another resource or tool.	To increase or decrease the level of rigor of an activity to meet the child's needs. The goal is for all children to work within their zones of proximal development.	The teacher notices that a student is successful with measuring a piece of yarn with large paper clips. To challenge the child, the teacher asks if they might like to try it with smaller paper clips. This change in tool will provide an opportunity for the child to compare results of measuring with a smaller unit.	As needed based on teacher observation of student understanding.
Conferences	The teacher elicits student thinking, reinforces specific practices, and nudges students to make generalizations and share their thinking as part of a math community.	To guide students to develop and share their mathematical ideas and to develop healthy identities as valuable members of a community of mathematicians.	The teacher notices that a student is touching each object as they count. The teacher asks the child about their decision to touch each object. Next the teacher reinforces that touching each object is a useful strategy to ensure that each object is counted only once. Then the teacher asks the student if they think this is a useful strategy to use all of the time. The teacher might say, "When is it useful to touch each object as you count? Is it useful with any number of objects?" Finally, the teacher invites the child to explore when this strategy is useful and to share their findings with their classmates.	Daily