

OPEN AND PARALLEL TASKS FOR KINDERGARTEN

In *Great Questions: Great Ways to Differentiate Mathematics Instruction*, (2009) NCTM, Marion Small proposes big ideas for each strand of mathematics and then presents the strategy of using Open and Parallel tasks related to the same big mathematical ideas as a way to better meet the needs of all students in a classroom.

Kindergarten

These differentiated tasks are based on task titled “Sort of Fun” on page 34 of *Making Sense of Problem Solving: Targeting NCTM Curriculum Focal Points, Level A/Kindergarten* (2008) Teacher to Teacher Publications, Inc.

Open Task:

Select two students. Ask the class, "How are they alike? How are they different?"

Parallel Tasks:

Option 1:

Today we're going to play a sorting game. I'm going to sort students into two groups. You have to figure out which group you belong to. This time our groups will be students with pockets and students with no pockets.

Option 2:

Today we're going to play a sorting game. I'm going to sort students into two groups. You have to figure out which group you belong to. This time our groups will be students wearing short sleeves and students with brown hair.

Notes about the Kindergarten tasks: One way to create an open task is to choose two items and ask students to look for similarities and differences. In the case of the task above, students are comparing the attributes of two of their classmates. Option 1 of the Parallel Tasks is suitable for students who are just beginning to be able to sort. Recognizing items that contain a particular attribute and then identifying everything else that does not contain that attribute is a good entry-level task at Kindergarten for children with limited sorting experiences. Option 2 is more complex and targets proficient students who are ready for a challenge. It introduces the possibility of an intersection of two attributes if there are any students having both the attributes of brown hair and short sleeves. A Venn diagram would be a useful graphic display to represent this type of sorting task.