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Sometimes one just needs a fresh perspective on things from an unbiased eye. Once in front of the classroom, I discovered the problem is not so much that students do not know how to add, subtract, multiply, or divide, but rather, they are uncertain as to when these operations are to be performed.

I liken math problems to a deck of playing cards. The math operations (addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division) are the suits. Math problems consist of individual cards. For generations, math has been taught by first shuffling the deck of areas, perimeters, unknown variables, etc., and then begin teaching how one would solve problems involving, say, perimeters. Next, before the student may have grasped when to add, subtract, multiply, or divide with problems involving perimeters, the system may move on to teaching how to solve problems involving area, or graphs, or odds, or whatever.

Statistics show the odds are not good that a student will develop a strong understanding of when to add, subtract, multiply, or divide under the current system, which only emphasizes the how. By using the SoLoco Math I developed, all the “suits” are put in a mold. All the hearts (addition problems) are kept together, all the spades (subtraction problems) are kept together, and so are the diamonds and clubs (multiplication and division problems).

There are some problems (especially with mixed numbers such as $10 \frac{1}{2}$) that require multiple operations to solve, and they are handled as a separate group as well. As students continually practice doing a variety of addition problems, and later go on to do the same with subtraction, multiplication, and division, the students quickly see both the *how* and the *when*.

There are number lines and grids at the front of the book for students who may need help with the basics of addition, subtraction, multiplication, or division. These are two of the most important pages in the book. Study a scrambled group of multiplication flash cards, and simply glance at a multiplication grid. There is zero-zilch-none-nada connection to be made that $3 \times 8 = 24$...after having seen 7×6 on a flash card a second earlier! Flash cards are good for testing what students already know, but not for teaching the patterns seen in addition or multiplication. Students who recognize these patterns early, excel at math (the group for whom the typical math text is written).

Solve

day 3

ADDITION

1.
$$\begin{array}{r} 15 \\ +12 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

2. $m - 4 = 49$

$m =$

3. If $w = 712$ and $b = 213$
 $w + b =$

4. After selling 10 phones, Phil had 24 left. With how many phones did he start?

SUBTRACTION

5.
$$\begin{array}{r} 87 \\ -15 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

6.
$$\begin{array}{r} -87 \\ +15 \\ \hline \end{array}$$

7. $n + 12 = 50$

$n =$

8. If you have a total of 16 marbles, 9 are blue and the rest are red, what are the odds of picking a red marble?

_____ : 9