

Differentiating Instruction: Working with Struggling Learners

Cardinality Errors (Counter To, Production tasks—Knowing when to stop)

- Remind the child of the goal number and ask the child to re-count.
- If the child counts too few, count the existing collection quickly and ask the child to put on another object. Say, “And that makes $[x + 1]$.” (Continue until the correct number is reached).
- If there are too many, ask the child to remove one or more items, and then recount (again, continue). The child is allowed to take off more than one object. Count the existing collection quickly and say, “There are too many. Erase some so that we have (z) .”
- If there were too many yet again, count the existing collection, stopping at the correct number, and say “That’s (z) . That’s all we need. Take away the others.”
- Demonstration. Count the number of objects, highlighting one at a time. Complete the group for the child by adding objects or stopping when z is reached. Say, “We needed (z) .”

Guided Counting Sequence

- Ask the children to count out loud as they point to each object. Suggest a keeping track strategy if necessary.
- If there are still errors after this remediation, say, “Count with me,” and name the keeping track strategy you will model. Have the child point to each item and say the correct counting word, thus walking the child through the counting. For Counter (object counting) activities, demonstrate the cardinality rule—repeat the last counting number, gesture in a circular motion to all the items, and say “That’s how many there are in all.” For “Counter to” activities, emphasize the goal number (z) , saying “Z! That’s what we wanted!”

Counting On

- Tell the child, “Try again” and remind them of the goal number.
- Reset the group to have the starting number x . Say, “Start at x (gesture at the x items). What’s one more?” If a child responds inappropriately, model the answer and try again. If correct, ask, “What’s two more?” (follow the same strategy).
- Reset the group to x . “Count with me. Start at x (gesture at the x items). Count from there.” Model either reaching the goal number or counting on (adding) the correct number (keeping track on fingers of how many have been added).

Skip Counting

- If the child is “counting out” objects to x people, and they initially placed y objects out in all, give them a problem in which $x > y$ and remind them that “each person needs y objects.”
- 1st: Tell the child, “Try again,” and remind them of the goal z .
- 2nd: Say, “Count with me. Count by y ’s.” [If you are counting items, move the appropriate amount with each count.]
- 3rd: “Count by y ’s like this: [counting verbally only: $y, 2y, 3y$] Count with me.” If you are counting items, move the appropriate amount with each count.

