Mathematical moments with 6- and 7-year-olds

Number – fractions (Year 2)

The children had been learning about fractions in their taught maths sessions.

In the creative area the teacher placed different shaped and sized pieces of paper that had been folded into different sections, creased and unfolded. During the morning discussion she told the children about the paper and suggested they might like to use them to show what they know about fractions.

Alex was at the painting table and had picked up a large triangle of paper that had been folded in two. He was painting one side of it. The adult complimented him on his careful brush strokes and enquired about his work. Alex explained that the paper was in two halves and he was going to paint each half a different colour. Later, when the adult came back she saw Alex's work on the drying rack. He had painted each side of his triangle different colours and labelled each side with a painted 1/2 symbol.
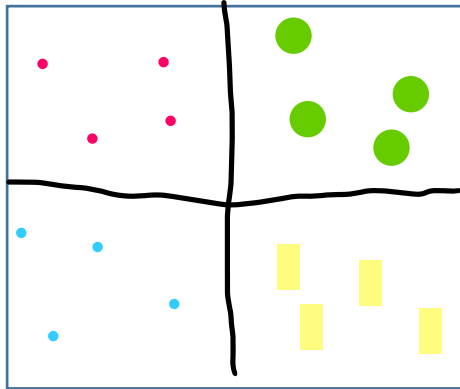
Connor was painting at the table. He had picked up a rectangular piece of paper that had been folded into quarters. In the first quarter he was painting some dots. The adult asked him what he was doing and he explained he was going to paint red dots in this bit and then different coloured dots in the other bits. The teacher said, '*What a brilliant idea to paint different coloured dots in each quarter! I see you have nearly done the first quarter, so what colours will you use for the other 3 quarters?*' Connor said he would use green, yellow and blue. The teacher said, '*I can see you have done four red dots in your first quarter. Will you make each quarter the same number of dots?*' Connor agreed it would be a good idea and went on to finish his work. At the end of the session the teacher asked Connor to count to make sure he had the same number of dots in each section. Connor agreed that there were four in each. The teacher asked Connor, '*How many altogether?*' and Connor quickly counted sixteen. They then had a discussion about 1/4 of sixteen is 4, 2/4 is 8, 3/4 is 12. The teacher then asked Connor if he could work out what 1/2 of sixteen is. At first he wasn't sure, so she picked up another piece of paper the same size and folded it in half and they compared it to Connor's paper. He was then able to say that the top part of his painting was half and that was 8. They discussed that 8 was also 2 quarters and that 1/2 is the same as 2/4.

With thanks to Maureen Hunt

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