Martina: Okay. So I guess we can – I’ll just read them out loud and you can check them there too, but it’s – we can see how we go. So next year we will be starting a hub school with another set of teachers coming on board. Do you have – what specific advice would you give to new teachers joining Math Minds?

V-Gr6: Not to sweat the resource. It’s all really well laid out. It looks really foreign at first. You really just have to – I think the best way is to jump in and just use nothing but JUMP.

I know last year we were given the option and I was – throughout the year I kept thinking, okay, I’m going to try to use JUMP for this next concept and because I wasn’t using JUMP throughout the year, whenever I opened up my JUMP resource and thought, okay, I’m going to use it for this concept, it just didn’t jive with the other things that I was doing.

So you just jump into it but it’s very well laid out. You don’t have to sweat it. You know. Spend your summer going through the resource or anything. Like I – I’ll tell you I didn’t. And I just began in September and – and I think it’s really a good thing to just experience it as the children are experiencing it because you relate more to – I think you can spend – you could spend your whole summer going through the resource, trying to prepare but it’s not going to be the same experience as actually teaching it and seeing how it actually unfolds and unpacks within the classroom.

But it’s very well laid out and it is actually very easy to – to implement. It’s all there for you.

Martina: And by not – and by feeling that you don’t have to know it all in advance, that takes off a lot of the pressure for you then.

V-Gr6: Yeah. I don’t think there’s any reason for the teachers to stress about it in advance. Just enjoy your summer and come back in September and it’s all going to unfold for you as you go along through the program.

Martina: Okay. Good. Thank you. And the next question is, why do you see this as being useful or important – I think you’ve kind of answered that. Would you add anything?

V-Gr6: Yeah. I know that because it was so foreign to me at first, and I had this whole idea of oh my goodness, I’m going to use a whole different resource come September. It was kind of looming in my mind all summer but I was determined I wasn’t going to – I was just going to enjoy my summer. But I kept on, you know, stressing about it. In retrospect, I shouldn’t have. I shouldn’t have been even thinking about it. And I think the teachers within your hub school should not even worry about it all summer.

Martina: So something we should tell them before they go on summer vacation then.

V-Gr6: Don’t worry about it. Don’t worry about it. It’s all going to be just fine.

Martina: Oh, nice. Okay.

V-Gr6: It’s all going to be just fine.

Martina: Okay. So what advice would you give the research team going forward in the project in terms of working with new teachers here or at the hub school? Either one or both.

V-Gr6: Well, I think the – like working with the research team has been a really positive thing for me. It’s been really great. I’ve really felt privileged to be able to work so closely with Steven in my classroom.

And it’s been more often than not, it’s been a case of just discussing thing – like there’s all these – just like when you’re teaching, you have teachable moments. Things just come up in lessons that we just – we want to talk about right away as soon as the lesson is over and so we share ideas and develop so many great things that we – that I can implement the next day or the next days.

And I think one of the things is I know when we first started out with this, that the very first time Steven was in my class and he sat there very poker-faced. And I thought, I can’t handle this. This is going to drive me nuts.

And I think you have to be really honest and it’s your class and you still have to teach there and – and I just said, you know what? I said if we’re going to do this, I can’t have you just sitting there poker-faced throughout the whole thing and he said, well, I’m trying to look neutral. And I said, to me, you’re looking unimpressed. That’s how it makes the teacher feel.

But – and you know, I mean that just totally changed I mean right after that. But I think no matter what it is that you’re uncomfortable with, you have – it is your class and it’s still your responsibility to teach those kids and cover the curriculum and you have to feel comfortable and so if something’s not feeling right, I think just get it right out there and share. Share your feelings.

But it’s been really great to have the research person getting involved with the students when they’re doing independent work and I mean it’s great and sometimes he notices things that I wouldn’t have been able to notice, just because there’s so many people to get around to. So getting that feedback and it’s really been – it’s good.

Martina: So two key things then were the – for the researcher – for you, where it’s helpful when the person is involved in the class, not just [INDISCERNIBLE].

V-Gr6: Totally.

Martina: And the conversations that happened afterwards.

V-Gr6: Yup. Right. Totally.

Martina: Those are two key things to –

V-Gr6: Yeah. And be honest and upfront. If something doesn’t feel right, then – then feel free to share. Yeah.

Martina: It’s better than poker-face.

V-Gr6: Well, it’s better than just – just feeling uncomfortable as a teacher. Feeling uncomfortable with the situation and stressing about it and letting it brew and become a bigger thing in your mind. Just get it – you know, just get it out right away and – and think about well, what would make this better?

Martina: Okay. All right. One of the specific goals is to support the development of a strong Math Minds community within and between St. Rita’s and the hub school. Do you have any suggestions for us in that regard, in the development of school community?

V-Gr6: Well, I’m wondering if – if the hub school, will they be participating in our Professional Development on – when we have our Math Professional Development here at this – at St. Rita, then will they be invited to come and join us for that. That would probably be a good thing.

Martina: You think it would be good to have some or all joint PD days or –

V-Gr6: Probably all of them. They’re – because why would they miss out on – on some of the PD that we were having, do you – that St. Rita was having.

Martina: Oh, I just meant whether they would have it at their own school with their teachers or if everything should be together. I wasn’t sure what you were suggesting.

V-Gr6: So much of the PD is covered by the research team and so how would that happen when it’s happening at the – on the same day. How would it happen at both locations at the same time? Do you know what I mean?

Martina: Oh, because all the PD days are the exact same day.

V-Gr6: Right.

Martina: I see.

V-Gr6: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And they are a small staff. I think there are only seven teachers and so it’s not – it isn’t as if the – we wouldn’t have the space to accommodate everybody in the portable so – something that’s been – I’ve been wondering how that’s going to unfold.

Martina: Okay. So number Two A. JUMP materials such as teachers’ guides, Smartboard lessons and workbooks are intended to help with planning and implementing Math instruction. Have you found these materials to be helpful?

V-Gr6: Yeah. Extremely. Yeah. Extremely. Very easy to use. It’s very easy to plan. I quite often will – I go through the slides all the time in advance and quite often I will print certain slides off and make student copies so if there are a lot of problems – or maybe there’s bonus questions that are on slides, then I’ll print those off. So, yeah, they’re very well laid out.

In – there have been a few cases where the slides – there are sometimes a few mistakes in slides or – and the interesting thing is, though, the students quite often will notice it and they’ll go, oh, they made a mistake. Well, yeah, you’re right. They did.

But, yeah, it’s interesting because – and that can be a good thing too, a learning thing, because the students are realizing, oh, they made a mistake and that’s a good thing to have happen for them.

But, yeah, sometimes they – the lesson and the workbook will be kind of slanted one way and then all of a sudden, whoops, there’s a glitch in a slide and it’s posing it the opposite way and so sometimes I’ve caught those and sometimes it’s just, you know, the odd out and out mistake. There aren’t a lot of them but they’re there.   
And I think it’s because – like the slides are a fairly new resource and they were – the slides were created by different people than – not the same people that created the other resources, yeah. Yeah. So sometimes there are some glitches there but I mean not a lot. Not a lot. Just the odd one.

But overall, you know, all the resources are great and they all go together really really well. Really well.

I think until you start using it, it’s – when I – last year, when I wasn’t using it but I kept going to it throughout the year, thinking I’ve got to try this. I’ve got to pull this lesson out. You know, this – and one of the teachers who’s not as familiar with JUMP brought up the same thing up earlier this year that what is this NS6 dash 68. What is – what do all these numbers mean?

And I remember thinking the same thing last year. Every time I opened it up. What is that? Like what’s going on? Because nobody sat and explained that to me and – but it’s very well laid out and it all makes perfect sense. It’s very logical.

Martina: But just figuring out those simple little –

V-Gr6: That’s all that is.

Martina: That made a big difference in terms of –

V-Gr6: Yeah. Yeah, but nobody pointed that out.

Martina: So that would be a good thing to draw attention to.

V-Gr6: Yeah. Nobody pointed that out. So for the teachers in the hub school, definitely. That’s something that I would explain because it’s a very simple simple thing. But until –

Martina: But one that makes a big difference.

V-Gr6: But the thing is teaching Math, you’ve never been – you’ve never, you know, come across this NS6 dash 68. I mean what the heck is that, right? You’ve never – you’ve never come across that, that format before. And so it does look foreign but it’s very simple and it makes perfect sense once you know it. But anyway.

Martina: Okay. And was there anything that you found restrictive or difficult?

V-Gr6: No.

Martina: No. Okay.

V-Gr6: No. It’s very easy. I have my – oh, I guess I don’t want to answer the next question.

Martina: Okay. Well, we’ll move on to the next one then. To what extent did you follow the teachers’ guide? And we will start with just that one. To what extent did you follow the teachers’ guide?

V-Gr6: What I do is I have the teachers’ guide always open to that lesson right next to my computer facing my laptop. And so as I’m going through my slides I’m also glancing at the lesson and making sure I’m not missing anything and if there’s anything that I’m really stuck, I’m like whoa. Why are they doing that? Then I’ll really read up in the lesson. Oh, now that makes sense.

And, yeah, one of the things I do, I don’t do the workbook questions myself prior to the lesson and there’s a couple of reasons I don’t do that. One is just logistically what happens then is you almost need two copies of the – two teachers’ copies of the workbook, one where it’s not complete and one where it is.

So that you can put the page up onto the document camera, the unfinished, to go through it with the students, and then you’ve got another copy that is finished and always what ends up happening is you go, oh, whoops. I went and filled out the other copy. Now I’ve got this one in this copy. It’s blank. Get the blank one on that page but then the next lesson – because I’m mixing my copies up.

So it’s just cumbersome because you’re – you’re going – you’re switching back and forth from, you know, the mini Whiteboards to the workbooks to the Smartboard and back and forth from the Smartboard slides to the document camera.

There’s so much juggling going on throughout the class anyway, and then to have those two different copies of the teachers’ copy of the workbook just – it was just like, oh God, I’m not doing that.

But the other thing too, is that I find it valuable to get the kids started on an exercise in the workbook and then I quickly do it myself because I’m relating to it more in the exact same context that they are and experiencing it as they are and – and then uncovering any little things at the same time they are and so I do it very very rapidly and then I take that around and I go through and I’m checking their work as they’re working.

But everybody is so engaged – am I answering other questions now?

Martina: That’s okay. Just –

V-Gr6: Okay. Everybody is so engaged in the workbooks and so it gives me an opportunity to continually assess their learning and because there – there is generally enough in the workbook that everybody has enough to do, and it’s easy – having said that, it’s very easy to create challenges from – because of the way that the questions are structured, because of the way the work is structured.

It’s very very easy to just create challenges on the spot for those who need it. And in a lot of cases, the students will create challenges on their own – their own challenges. They know how to up the ante, the ones that – that need it.

Martina: Did you teach them that at all or was that something that –

V-Gr6: I did at first but now – quite often I don’t need to ask them to do that. They just do it. But the other thing is like I’m constantly assessing, assessing, assessing. It’s not just a benefit from – for the teacher to know where everybody stands before you go on but it encourages them because they’re getting – they’re getting instant gratification knowing – oh, I get it. Oh, I get it. She just said I get it. She just said I got it right.

Like they really really appreciate that and it just – it just eggs them on. They just want to do more and more and more. Like even with the Whiteboards, they – they want – every single one of them participates all the time with the mini Whiteboards.

So I’ve got one hundred percent participation in the class, one hundred percent of the time. I’m assessing every single one of them all of the time and they all want to make sure they’ve got it. Like they want that. Yes, yes, yes, you’ve got it. They want to hear that.

And even with the – like I just use a pencil to check off as I’m going and if I don’t – like sometimes I’ll be in a hurry and I’ll maybe just put a checkmark at the end of a section that they’re working on on a page and then sometimes the odd student will say, what about that one, that one, that one, that one? You didn’t put a checkmark beside that one. They want – they want that little checkmark. It’s kind of like the stickers in Kindergarten. They want that. They want that gratification. Yeah.

Martina: That’s interesting.

V-Gr6: Yeah. And then when I – even – because they are doing so much more Math than I’ve ever had students do, they know it more and they’re – you can actually see that they know it and when we do quizzes, I don’t tell them in advance that they’re getting a quiz and when I – when I say, you know, put everything away. We’re going to have a little quiz. Their body language even shows that they – they just – they sit upright and they’re ready for it.

They know they’re ready for it. They’re more confident about it. They feel competent and so they’re not – they’re not stressed about it at all and I haven’t made a big deal about it either. That’s probably part of it.

Part of it is I haven’t made a big deal out of it and part of it is they practice so much anyway so it’s like, oh, I’ve got this.

But I’m able to mark most of the Math tests while they’re doing it and by the time they’re all done, I’ve probably got anything left to mark. And I just – again, I just –

Martina: Oh. That’s nice for you.

V-Gr6: I just use pencil and so nobody can look over very easily. And I just use a pencil and mark as they go and, yeah, I don’t mark anything wrong but the ones that are right, I’ll mark them right. And they know to look again at the ones that aren’t marked. Take another look. Did I make a silly mistake there? What happened? How come she didn’t put a pencil – like checkmark there? But anyway. Yeah.

Martina: Oh, that’s good. So let’s see. The next part is in what ways did you improvise, extend, elaborate – you’ve touched on that a bit. Did you – did you want to add anything?

V-Gr6: Okay, where are we?

Martina: Two B. The second part.

V-Gr6: Oh.

Martina: In what ways did you improvise, extend or elaborate. You’ve been talking about that. I’ll just put it out there in case you want to add anything.

V-Gr6: Well, and sometimes – sometimes I’ve – sometimes I’ve created my own Smartbook – I mean sorry – my own Smartboard page to illustrate something. So I might like use a bunch of cone, a bunch of squares or circles or whatever to illustrate making sense of division or doing equivalent fractions or whatever and so I’ll just – I’ll create it ahead of time and just save it and bring it up.

So sometimes I’ll do that. And I use the – a screen a lot on the Smartboard as well to screen and it helps pace the lessons too, so especially if I’m having them respond with the mini Whiteboard – let’s say I’ve got four examples for – we’ve talked about a concept and then there’s four questions that they’re going to do that illustrate that – the test they’re – that assess their comprehension of that concept.

Instead of having all four questions up at once, I’ll screen them and then they answer quickly with their Smartboard or with their mini Whiteboards and then uncover the next one. Rather than having some of them go – you know, all four answers on the Whiteboard. Here you go. And it just – it still goes really quickly but it just paces everybody.

So I use the screen quite a bit for that sort of thing. You know what I mean?

Martina: Uhm hmm. Yeah, that sounds – that makes sense.

V-Gr6: The Smartboard screen. Yeah. Yeah, that’s all I can think of right now.

Martina: Okay. No, that’s great. So Two C.

V-Gr6: Oh, and I have used – for a few students – I have a few gifted students in my class and I’ve started to use Grade 7 - material from the JUMP Grade 7 workbooks. And so I always make sure it’s perfectly aligned with exactly what we’re doing though.

So – and it’s surprising how it’s not really much more difficult than what we’re doing with that concept in Grade 6. But it does just give them a little bit more of a challenge and a little bit more to think about without having to teach them more. So it always – you know, I’m careful to align it real – you know, really well.

The other thing is, though, I have to be careful that when I give those students that, that they are also participating in the general lesson. Because if they’re just totally engaged in that Grade 7 book, then I’ve lost my keeners. Do you know what I mean?

Martina: Yeah.

V-Gr6: They’re – they’re key people in the class and it brings the whole class down if they’re not participating.

Martina: Oh, that’s interesting.

V-Gr6: Yeah. So I kind of, you know, made a deal with them. Okay, I’ll give you these but –

Martina: So they actually have their own copy of a Grade 7 book.

V-Gr6: Right.

Martina: Okay.

V-Gr6: No, I’ve photocopied – MJ told me – just gave me one copy and said I can go ahead and photocopy the pages but – but yeah. So they know. Yeah, the deal is, yeah, you can do that but only when everybody else is independently working. Still have to participate in what’s going on. Yeah.

Martina: Okay. So C. JUMP emphasizes teaching with microsteps, frequent assessment and feedback, bonus questions, mental math. You’ve talked quite a bit about those already, but have you found these ideas helpful?

V-Gr6: Uhm hmm. Yeah. And the mental math at the – towards the end of each concept is great. It’s really good.

You kind of have to know when to cut it off though, because it does get - for a lot of the students, it becomes pretty challenging and so as a teacher sometimes, I get really caught up in it because I find it so cool but sometimes I have to remind myself, well, okay, we’ve already got this concept.

We’ve covered this for the curriculum and now I’m starting to lose some of them with some of this – these extra challenges that are going beyond what they need to really understand and sometimes you just need to say, okay, you know what? We’ve gone far enough with this and we need to move on to the next concept.

But they are really really good. They are really good, the – yeah. They’re very good.

Martina: Okay. Okay, so refer to the list of principles for prompting success – and they’re copied down there for you. Have you found these to be helpful?

V-Gr6: Uhm hmm. Uhm hmm. Well, it’s basically what we’re doing with JUMP Math. So yeah, the systematic recursion by design. Oh, I wish we had that other format with the other wording. But – that we discussed about in our last PD.

But anyway, yeah, I mean that’s just constant and the kids – like at this point in the year – well, even earlier, they were starting to realize, ah, this is just like when we did this. Oh, this is the same as when we did that.

Like for instance, when we started at the beginning of the year with the fractions unit, and I thought, oh, God. Like how is that going to work? Because I’ve always started with much easier things and thought I had to build up to fractions and left fractions for just before geometry. All the time I’ve done that. And then I thought, oh, this is just going to – you know, we’re going to fall flat on our faces here.

And instead the kids did really well with the fractions. They understood so much and understood it well. Well, then when we got to – to division and lowest common multiples and all of those things, they said, oh, this is just like when we trying to do equivalent fractions at the beginning of the year.

And so it just – it was like all circular. It was always tying back because there’s so many things that you do in fractions. You know, you do division and you do multiplication and you do lowest common multiples. You do all those things in your fraction work and so now it’s all coming back at us with all these other concepts and – and it’s – feels easier to them because they’re like, oh, we’ve got this. We did this before when we did fractions. Yeah.

Martina: And they recognize that connection themselves?

V-Gr6: Yeah.

Martina: That’s interesting.

V-Gr6: Yeah. Yeah. There is a lot of – there is a lot of repeating. Like re – rehashing what you’ve learned in the previous grades and even when you look at the workbooks in Grade 5, some of the pages are identical in the workbooks to the Grade 6 except there’ll be just a few more questions on the page in Grade 6. But it’s definitely beneficial.

I think that in the coming years, like the – the kids that are in Grade 5 now, when they get to Grade 6, probably won’t need as much repetition. The kids who are in Grade 4 now, by the time they get to Grade 6, because they’ve been using JUMP Math already for two years, will need even less repetition I would think. Yeah.

Martina: So things will move quicker.

V-Gr6: Right. Like right now, it feels like it’s taking a long time to get through everything the JUMP way but I think it’s because it’s this group. It’s their first year of a full year of JUMP Math. And so it’s talking – it’s almost like it’s an investment in – you know, it’s an investment in time and it’s an investment in the future. Yeah.

Martina: That makes sense.

V-Gr6: Yeah.

Martina: Did you want to speak to any others?

V-Gr6: Oh, okay.

Martina: You don’t have to go through them all, but if there’s – whichever ones kind of –

V-Gr6: Okay.

Martina: Are –

V-Gr6: So that line grained incremental progression that, you know, speaks to the repetitiveness and then slowly adding on and going forth. I find that really important because so often, especially in Grade 6, so many kids coming to you have so many gaps in their Math learning.

And, you know, and I always think of it as a – it’s like a brick wall. If you’ve got bricks missing underneath, well, then the whole wall is compromised and it could cave in – which happened to my son by the time he got to high school in Math and – but you’re more likely to catch those kids and fill in those gaps and patch up those holes in that brick wall with the JUMP program.

And that’s one of the most valuable things about this whole program is that I’ve had students come to me this year that, you know, I was told they were way below grade level and I probably have to give, you know, Grade 4 work and that kind of thing, which I think all teachers hate doing that kind of thing. You’re never going to catch a student up and you know that when you’re doing that.

And I know that if – if one of my own children came home and said that their teacher was giving them work that was two grades below, they would be devastated and I would be really irate. And – but every single student in my class is working at grade level and so they all understand the concepts.

So it’s definitely a worthwhile thing to – to build – rebuild all the time and circle through and re-emphasize the prior learning.

The interesting thing is it’s done in such a way that it’s not usually boring for the kids who get it. So – which is surprising but it’s good.

Okay, so this distractors business. I remember last year, I heard about this last year, about how the JUMP slides were, you know, all black and white and the workbooks were all black and white and I thought, oh, God. That’s going to be so dull. But really it’s not at all and it is just – they’re focusing on the Math and you’ve got the coloured markers on the Smartboard and everything to emphasize things. So that’s all good.

The bonus questions are good. It – you just never – you don’t lose anybody because the way it’s set up, everybody’s able to be successful at every concept and they’re not measuring themselves, looking at – they’re not saying, oh. Well, the person next to me is, you know, is doing this but I’m not. Everybody is doing the work for every single concept but some of them are just doing – are just able to complete more but they all still get it.

Martina: Now you mentioned – I was going to ask you to elaborate a moment ago on – you said it’s easy to create bonus questions. Can you say more about how – how do you do that?

V-Gr6: I wish I had a workbook in front of me to give you examples. Well, when you look at the workbooks, it’s easy to see how they – how – how the JUMP Math workbooks have increased the difficulty from left to right and – and – so you just keep going with that.

Martina: Making it a little bit harder?

V-Gr6: A little bit harder, a little bit harder, a little bit harder. It’s just really easy to do on the spot. Like just – as you’re walking by them, okay, do this. Okay, do this now. Just write it down for them. And they just gobble that up and they’re anxious to do it.

Martina: Okay.

V-Gr6: Yeah. It’s really easy to do.

Martina: Good.

V-Gr6: Yeah. Let’s see. Yeah. I mean this – JUMP facilitates all of this. The culture of inquiry that – it is – JUMP is more focused on teaching the algorithm but teaching the understanding of it and why we’re doing it and why – why this works. So not so much throwing it out to kids to – oh, go figure this out. Yeah. So –

Martina: Okay. So Two E. Have particular experiences stretched you –

V-Gr6: Oh, there’s another page. I didn’t realize that.

Martina: Oh, it’s on the back, sorry. Mine’s a little different. Have particular experiences stretched you outside your comfort zone?

V-Gr6: Well, being videotaped was – is definitely a new experience. But there again, I’ve always felt free to – to say some days, you know what, I hardly slept last night so please let’s not have that camera on or – you know. So – yeah, it definitely stretched me outside my comfort zone but I think I’ve gotten fairly used to it.

Martina: Okay.

V-Gr6: Yeah. But it has been a learning experience too because there have been times when I’ve looked at that video and thought, oh God. Do I really do that? So I’ve learned from it as well.

Martina: So you watch your videos.

V-Gr6: I’ve watched some – I haven’t watched all of them. I mean there’s like 50 hours’ worth so now I haven’t watched them all, but I have watched some of them. Yeah. Early on I watched more of them. Yeah.

Martina: Okay. Well, I’m going to – we probably have to move a little quicker through these.

V-Gr6: Okay.

Martina: Sorry, I’m – okay. So Three A. Math teachers learn something new about Math whenever they teach it but they don’t always notice. Have you noticed something new about Mathematics this year? So the actual Math? Has there been places where that has been a learning for you?

V-Gr6: I have. I just have to think about something. Okay. Like when we were doing multiplication, it was just really easy – and I’m trying to think back because this is a couple months ago now. I’m trying to think back how we made this step. But it was really easy to – oh I remember.

To have them go – the way JUMP broke it down, which I hadn’t thought about doing quite this way – was let’s – we were multiplying a single digit by a three number.

So saying that, okay, two times 234 is the same as two times 200 plus two times 30 plus two times four and then once they got that, it was so easy to make the step for them – to instead of writing it like this – to first – vertically – to first of all just do it horizontally and go 234 times 2 – mentally they were – every single one of them was able to make the leap and to two times four is eight. Two times three is six. Two times two is four and do it that way horizontally before they did it vertically knowing that this was just an extension of writing in – in standard notation.

Martina: Okay.

V-Gr6: And I had never thought of breaking it down with this step first and then going to that before I went to that. And – but seeing them all get that and every single one of them being able to do that mentally was pretty powerful. And then, to make the leap to be able to do it this way when they have to do some regrouping and just doing the regrouping above right here.

Martina: And they were able to do that?

V-Gr6: And they were able to do that. And so then it was – they did this so well. So that was pretty powerful.

Martina: Nice. Okay. There are times during the planning for teaching of a lesson when it becomes evident that there are gaps in our own mathematical understanding that make it difficult to teach a particular concept or to respond to a student’s question. Have you noticed anything like that in your classes this year?

V-Gr6: I don’t think so. I can’t think of anything that doesn’t stand out in my mind right now. But I’ve taught Grade 6 for a lot of years now. If you’d asked me that six years ago, I would maybe some examples but I can’t think of anything right now.

Martina: Okay. We’ll go on to Four A then. Think of a lesson prior to Math Minds that didn’t go as well as you hoped.

V-Gr6: Multiplying big numbers.

Martina: Like the example you just gave?

V-Gr6: Yup. Some get it right away but some doesn’t. The other thing about this is it made it easier for kids of transition into, okay, now I’m adding another digit down here. And the order that you multiply in. So because they started with this and they did this, then they – they got it in their brains that I’m going this way, this way, this way and then this way, this way, this way.

Prior to this, prior to using JUMP, the biggest hurdle was getting that directional thing going because what they would do is they would – oh, and here’s the other thing. I always reversed this with that number first. So two times – because it gets them in the habit – even though the slides weren’t always that way.

I always change it because that helps get them – their minds focusing on I see this number first Two times four. Two times three. Two times two. Otherwise, when they start to put the big numbers vertically, they don’t know where to go.

Martina: Okay.

V-Gr6: They might start with this but they might say – if they say four times two instead of two times four, then their brain afterwards goes, oh, four times three, four times two. Like where do I go from here?

Martina: It helped them get more of a rhythm of –

V-Gr6: Do you know what I mean?

Martina: Yeah.

V-Gr6: Yeah. Yeah. So I always made sure that I did – put this number in front when I was at this step.

Martina: Okay.

V-Gr6: Yeah. And then – because that – in previous years, I’ve always found that’s the biggest problem that kids have who are having trouble multiplying big numbers. Which order do I go in? And, oh, okay, I’ve done these two. I’m going to try these two now. And – you know what I mean?

Martina: Uhm hmm.

V-Gr6: Yeah.

Martina: Okay. So as you teach – as they teach teachers often think about ways I might do this next year. Can you think of a lesson taught this year that you’re excited to try again next year? Well, I know you’re not actually -

V-Gr6: That’s hard to answer. But one of things I have done is as I go along and – wherever I have printed copies of the slides, and printed off copies to distribute to the students, I’ve kept a copy of that and just put it in my binder, in my teacher’s resource with that lesson so that it’s easy to pull that off for the following year for whoever.

I can’t think of anything offhand, to be honest with you. I just can’t think of an example offhand.

Martina: Well, we’ll go on to C then. Where do you see your greatest strengths as an elementary teacher?

V-Gr6: I think working individually with each student which JUMP has enabled me to do better because I’ve got the time because they’re all engaged so I can get around to each student.

I think I’ve always been – I’ve always thought I was pretty good at explaining things a different way if somebody didn’t get it one way, but I’ve learned through JUMP and also through working with Steven that there are even other ways to explain things and so that’s been – that’s been really good.

But just being able to explain things different ways and never give up on anybody. I always believe everybody can – everybody can do it if given the right opportunities and, you know, prior to this year, there – sometimes you had the odd student who was so far below grade level and we just didn’t have the – we didn’t have the – a good way to bring them up to grade level along with everybody else and now we do.

So yeah, I think believing in – in everybody. Yeah.

Martina: Maybe we should just skip ahead to that question for a moment since you’re speaking to that and then we’ll go back, because I think that’s important. Five A is one of the principles that drives JUMP Math is that the vast majority of students can succeed with challenging Math. What do you – would you – what do you think about this principle? Has your thinking changed over the past year?

V-Gr6: My thinking has changed big time over the past year. Last year, whenever I saw MJ do the presentation about Maven Private School and how – how they changed – how the students’ understanding of Math changed, right away my mind – I put up a roadblock that Maven Private School, they are – private school.

I was stuck on that and I thought they’re handpicked before they walk through the door and that’s not our population at St. Rita.

We’ve got – you know, and right away, I thought, you know, our diverse population here, not everybody’s good at Math and, you know, I really felt that way a year ago but now, I’ve seen absolutely everybody be successful at Math.

Kids, you know, the kid that – that – the student that I was told she’s never going to do grade level math. You’re going to have to do Grade 4 stuff for her, blah blah blah. And even though she’s still weak in basic skills, addition and multiplication, but she’s gotten so much stronger, she’s understanding all of the concepts, the greater concepts and able to do it and she just meticulously does her work and it’s just so – I mean I just – I can’t believe what she does.

You know, there are – you always have somebody at the beginning of the year that you just think oh my gosh, how am I going to teach that student this year? You know. You do. You do because they’re all at different levels and they’re all doing great.

Martina: I’m going to go back to Four C. There was just the second part of that. How is what you’re doing in Math class similar to our different from what you’re doing in other subjects such as science, English, art, music, phys.ed., or –

V-Gr6: Okay. So I – I just teach language arts which is English and art because I’m just half time. But I touched on that when I was giving the example of the art lessons this morning, how, you know, when you teach an art class, if you’ve never taught art before and we’re just starting to teach art, it can be a total disaster, a total mess.

And you realize afterwards, oh my gosh, I didn’t break it down into small steps for them. So they didn’t understand how to do this. They didn’t understand how to be successful with this project because I didn’t tell them. I didn’t show them. And – and it’s such a visual thing. You can see right there in what they produced in their art that, oh – oh God. They didn’t know what to do.

And so then that makes you stop and think oh yeah. Well, in Math, if you don’t break it down into micro lessons, you don’t know – especially if you’re not constantly assessing like you are with JUMP Math. If you’re not constantly assessing, how do you know what they didn’t get? You know, how do you know how many steps along the way that they’ve missed. Well you don’t know until you test them.

But if you’re constantly assessing them, the way I – I am now, with mini Whiteboards and with the workbooks, with the constant work in the workbooks and breaking it down into micro lessons, then you do know. You do know that they’re getting it just like you do know if you break down an art project into small steps. Oh, yeah, they’re getting this part. Now we can add on this part. Now we can add on this part.

So yeah, same thing. And the same thing in language arts. If we’re writing a story or – or anything. Anything we’re doing, break it down into micro steps. We can’t just throw the whole ball of wax at them and expect, boom. They’re going to get on the story. You know.

And I’ve had – you know, I’ve had student teachers and my own children’s friends and whatnot who have said to me nobody ever taught me how to write. I’ve never learned how to write. They’ve made statements like that. Well, that’s unfortunate but it’s probably – it’s exactly how a lot of older kids feel. Nobody’s really taught me how to write. I don’t really know how to write. Well, it has to be broken down step by step. Just like Math.

Martina: Okay. So I guess we’ll just go to Six then. Having participated in this interview, does anything else come to mind that you would offer to teachers at the hub school, to the research team or to JUMP developers as we embark on the next phase of this project?

V-Gr6: The only thing is for like JUMP developers, I think the slides have to be gone through with a fine tooth comb because I think not every teacher is going to be as critical of – is not going to look at those slides with this critical an eye or in some cases teachers might even just – oh, I don’t quite get that but muddle through, not realizing, oh, that doesn’t quite fit. That doesn’t quite align. There’s been a little bit of a glitch. A little bit of a mistake made here. Especially if they haven’t previewed the slides for that particular lesson and it just comes up, oh. What’s going on here?

But I think that those slides need to be gone through with a fine tooth comb in conjunction with the lessons and the workbook. Make sure it’s fitting in every case. Yeah. That’s, you know, that’s the main thing.

Martina: Okay. Well –

V-Gr6: One of things with teachers using the resource at the hub school, like what I’ve done is I’ve gone through like my own – I’ve cross referenced the curriculum with – with my own copy of my workbook and I’ve put tabs in for every – it’s just sticky notes for every concept.

Martina: Okay.

V-Gr6: And then I’ve just taken a pencil and draw and crossed out pages that I know. I don’t – I don’t have to cover this in Grade 6. I don’t have to cover that in Grade 6. So that it’s just a visual reminder when I get to that one. No, I don’t have to do that. I don’t have to do that. And it also just gives me a visual of where I’m going to when I’m planning my lessons and what else I’ve got left to do and it’s just easy to refer to it that way.

Martina: Helps you to monitor your own movement through the program.

V-Gr6: Yeah.

Martina: Okay.

V-Gr6: Yeah.

Martina: Okay. Well, is there anything about anything that you wanted to add?

V-Gr6: I don’t think so.

Martina: I mean you’ve offered us a wealth of insight here but if you wanted to –

V-Gr6: I don’t think so.

Martina: Okay. All right. Well, thank you, Vicky.

V-Gr6: Okay.

**[End of audio]**

**[Duration: 00:49:23]**