

## A TEACHER REFLECTS

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This number content often creates some anxiety in students, and I was afraid that this phase's connections back to fractions would stir up some discomfort for students. While students did a decent job overall with *From Wholes to Parts*, there still existed a range of mastery of this content across my classroom. Still, connecting this content is critical, and I was happy that this unit would build upon the work of the prior unit and continue to use the area and number line models.

I was eager to hear my students talk about their understanding of decimal notation and the relationship of decimals to fractions. For this reason, I had students complete this part of Lesson 3 in pairs. I gave each pair 7 index cards on which to write each of the numbers from the Student Guide. Then, I asked them to work together on ordering them, discussing out loud with one another their reasoning and taking notes as necessary for them to explain to someone else.

When they had agreed upon an order (or when they reached an impasse and could not agree), I asked them to raise their hands to alert me that they were finished. Then, I asked them to write their solution at the top of a blank piece of paper and write an explanation outlining why each number was greater than or equal to the number that it followed.

My point in structuring the lesson was two-fold. First, for assessment purposes I wanted the benefit of hearing students talk about their answers. Prior to starting Phase Two, I wanted to identify

particular areas of individual weakness as well as any patterns of misunderstanding across the class. Secondly, I hoped to give students structured experience in writing out a rationale for their answers. Students often told me they understood something but could not write down that explanation. Since this is an essential skill in mathematics and in our state assessment, I wanted students to have the experience of discussing and note-taking prior to writing out an explanation. I hoped that an opportunity to discuss their solution with a classmate would facilitate their putting that explanation into writing.