

Facilitator Guide: Key Words Can Be Misleading!

Module Focus

The focus of this module is to emphasize the importance of understanding rather than generalizing “key words”. This “math trick” can lead to pulling numbers and keywords to determine how to solve the problem, rather than truly understanding the context of the problem.

Estimated Time

20 - 30 minutes

Resources

Research Based Article : [“Key Words”: A Misleading Strategy” by TERC: Investigations](#)

Article from Blog Posting: [\(1 page\) Be Wary: Using Key Words in Your Math Instruction](#)

Video: [\(1 minute\) Marisa & Key Words](#)

Suggested Steps for Engaging in Module

Prepare: Copy one or both of the articles. They are both short and could be copied back to back.

1. **Video:** Watch [video of Marisa & Key Words](#). (1 min)
 - a. Discussion: What did you notice about Marisa’s solution in this video? Additional thoughts?
2. **Article(s):** Ask participants to read the article(s) independently. While reading, highlighting and recording what resonates with you, ah-hahs, or questions.
3. **Go Around Protocol:** (Groups of 3-4)
 - a. Each person goes around and shares 1 idea that he/she has recorded. While person #1 reports one idea, other group members are listening actively, but do not comment or ask questions.
 - b. Continue to go around the group until all members have shared their ideas.
 - c. Then, discuss your ideas as a group and be prepared to report out to the large group.’
4. **Connecting to Classroom:** With a partner, discuss. “As a result of KNOWING, what might you DO differently?”
5. **Summing it Up:** “Tips, tricks, and “generalizations” can sometimes backfire! Rather than relying on “key word tips and tricks”, we want students to think through the entire structure of the problem and understand the situation. Instead of asking “What keywords helped you know to add?” Perhaps ask, “Why did you choose to add to solve this problem?” or “What is *happening* in the problem that prompted you to add?”