

The Value of a Name

Assume that the letter A is worth \$1, B is worth \$2, C is worth \$3, and so on.

1. What is the value of your first name?

2. Using this alphabet system, one of the days of the week is worth exactly \$100. Which one is it?

3. Find other words that are worth exactly \$100. Try to find as many as you can.

One Possible Way of Using The Value of Your Name with Students

This is adapted from an activity by Marilyn Burns – finding the value of your name.

1. Have everyone write their names on a piece of newsprint as they come into class.
2. Then give out a sheet explaining how to find the value of your first name, where $a=\$1$, $b=\$2$, $c=\$3\dots$ (you can make the activity more challenging by using decimals for the values where $a=0.01$, $b=0.02$, etc.)
3. Before you have them calculate the value of their own names, ask them to look at the newsprint and make a few predictions on whose name might be the most valuable. Ask them to explain their reasoning.
4. Have them work on their own names.
5. There are two extension questions on the sheet that people who finished started working on. The first asks you to find the day of the week that is worth exactly \$100 dollars. The second is to find as many other \$100 words as you can. You might have a few people start working on these and you can encourage all students to work on them for homefun.
6. Bring the class back together and share their name values. You don't have to necessarily get everyone's name value up on the newsprint (though it is nice). You can start by saying, "Who thinks they have the highest number?" and then "Does anyone have a higher number?". Keep going until you have the highest. Then you can ask, "Who thinks they might have the lowest number?" and repeat the process until you get to the lowest number.
7. Return to the initial guesses and ask how they did on their estimations (see Step 3). Any surprises?
8. Ask a bit about the strategies folks used. Who created a key with the whole alphabet with the value of each letter? How did it help? Was it worth it to spend the time organizing their work? Who had another way to find the value of the letters in their name?
For students who got to one of the two extension questions, did they come up with any strategies to help save time and/or save calculations. One strategy might be to calculate the value of a common prefix or suffix (like, "-day" for question 2 and ""-ing" or "-ment" or "-tion" for question 3.

Try this activity with your students. Let us know what happens.
How did students respond? Any highlights? Any adaptations?