

REFER TO THIS DOCUMENT WHEN WRITING YOUR LETTER.

Introduction

- Start notes to your Math Buddy with a greeting; use their name and a friendly opening sentence. Let them know if they got the answer correct or not, add a general praise if they've improved.
- **Praise and Prompts**
 - Praise them for things they improved.
 - Prompt them / remind them in general what to do to improve their problem solving skills for next time.

For this letter we just will praise them for specific things they have done well that apply more generally to the problem solving process and give prompts that are applicable in a slightly more general way.

So we aren't trying to help them fix all their mistakes in this letter, you don't have to worry about writing enough to help them do the problem correctly (they aren't going to work on this one anymore) but DO praise and prompt general "good practices" they have or have not shown. For example, give compliments on correct answers, organization and explanations or comments reminding them to check their work or to be sure to answer the question that was asked in the problem.

The state scoring guide can be used as a reference for things that are important in problem solving. By examining the rubric you can praise them on things that they did that are valued by the rubric and prompt them on things they did not do that is valued by the rubric. Keep the scoring guide handy as you prepare your praise and prompts.

Below are some examples of general praise and prompts. Remember for this section it's best to focus on one idea per paragraph.

Praise

What did your Math Buddy do that was good and we want to encourage them to continue in future attempts to solve problems? **Try to address their mathematics here, not just their handwriting or picture drawing.** Tell them specific things you liked and **WHY**. Don't be too general. For example instead of "I liked your explanation" say "I appreciate how you told me how you found all of the numbers in your problem".

Examples (comments in italics)

- I like how you organized your thoughts in a table. (*praise*) That made it easier for me to follow. (*Why that is important to problem solving*)
- I like how you used units in your problem. (*praise*) There were a lot of different numbers and that helped me keep track. (*Why that is important to problem solving*)

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- I like that you checked your work in a different way. (praise) That helps you defend your work and be sure your answer is correct. (*Why that is important to problem solving*)

Prompts (Suggestions and/or Questions)

What will help the student become a better problem solver? The scoring guide states that explanation is important. If their work is hard to follow, suggest some ways to improve their explanation. Verification is important, if they did not verify their work suggest they try to think of a way to check their answer or reflect on their process. Be specific and explain your comment! What purpose does your suggestion serve for helping their solution be better? For example instead of “I would like to see more explanation” say “I was wondering how you decided to multiply the 150 students by 2 slices of pizza per student.” (prompt) “It is helpful when you explain why you chose your way to solve the problem. “(reason for suggestion)

Examples:

- I was wondering what the 150 meant in your work. Is that students or pieces of pizza? (*prompt*) It is helpful when you use units with your work so I can understand what you are doing. (*reason for suggestion*)
- I see you found that $\frac{1}{4}$ of 600 is 160. Perhaps you could check your work by adding 160 four times to see if you get 600. It's a good idea to check your work so you don't make simple mistakes.
- If there are no real big problems you can try to get them to do more. For example:
 - Next time I'd love to see you try the problem in a different way to check your work!
 - You did a great job! Next time write a little to tell me if you thought the problem was easy or hard and why.
 - Great work! Have you done problems like these before? Did you solve them the same way?

Personal

If they sent you a note and asked questions, feel free to respond to them here. Possibly ask a few new, brief questions to keep the dialogue going.

Closing (1 short paragraph – 1 sentence is OK)

Close with an encouraging phrase. For example: "I am excited to read your work on the next problem".

Signature

Sign your name