Discretionary Spaces:
20 judgments a teacher makes in 1 minute and 28 seconds

From Deborah Loewenberg Ball’s AERA conference address, April 2018

Presented by Jennifer Bell (@jkjohnsonbell)
Disclaimers

This is not my work. It is from Deborah Loewenberg Ball’s AERA conference address, April 2018.

The skin and mindset that I’m in:
• White, cis-gender, able-bodied woman
• Currently learning and unlearning so much about race
• I believe we need accountability partners - call me out
• I’m not an expert, but trying to do the work
Stand up if...

You teach elementary students...

You teach middle school students...

You teach high school students...

You teach mathematics...

You wonder about all the decisions you make all day long…

You want all of your students to feel safe in your classroom!
Agenda

- Do a little **math**
- Watch a **video**
- **Discuss** Discretionary Spaces in video
  - Consider the Students
  - Consider the Teacher
  - Consider Possible Results of Teacher Moves
- **Connect to your context**
Goals

**Content:** Analyze teacher moves in discretionary spaces that impact student engagement and status in the classroom.

**Language:** Discuss in partners and small groups - sharing claims with evidence for opinions.

**Application:** Apply the concept of discretionary spaces to your own classroom.
A little math...

What number does the orange arrow point to? Explain how you figured it out.
Discretionary Spaces

“In a one-minute 28-second period that was filmed in her classroom, Loewenberg Ball counted 20 separate micro moments when she had to decide how to react. She calls them “discretionary spaces,” and in a lecture at the American Educational Research Association annual meeting in April 2018, Loewenberg Ball put a scientist’s microscope on discretionary space #19 to give us all a lesson in how racism and sexism unintentionally creep into the classroom.”

From Hechinger Report Column by JILL BARSAY, May 7, 2018
Video

ANIYAH AND TONI
Consider the Students:

1. Unpack Aniya’s ideas. What is correct about her thinking? What question is she answering?
2. What does Toni ask Aniya? What is Toni wondering about in terms of Aniya’s work?
3. Why is Toni’s question important? What idea does Toni’s question raise?
Consider the Teacher:

1. What are some possible teacher responses to Toni? Consider the range of possibilities.
2. What might be the outcomes for students for each of the different teacher responses?
## WHAT DOES EACH OF THESE DIFFERENT EXERCISES OF DISCRETION DO?

### POSSIBLE NEXT MOVES

1. “Toni, when you’re ready to participate appropriately by not playing with your hair and laughing, and have a question to ask, I will come back to you.”

2. “You need to be a better listener, Toni. Aniyah already explained why she picked one-seventh. Who else has a real question for Aniyah?”

3. “What do others think?”

### POSSIBLE RESULTS

1. Toni is publicly excluded from the discussion.

2. Toni is judged to not be listening, her question is judged as not good, and she is excluded from the discussion.

3. Toni is excluded and her mathematical point is sidelined.
What about Aniyah?

“Aniyah reflected in her notebook: ‘I did well on my goal today because my goal was to share my ideas with the class and I did. I went up to the board and shared my idea with the class on fractions.’”
Benefits of Praising Toni

“Classmates benefited in two ways from Lowenberg Ball’s praise of Toni. They got the opportunity to see black girls as brilliant. Given the sexist and racist society we live in, those opportunities are rare. And the class had a great math discussion that they might not have otherwise had.”

From Hechinger Report Column by JILL BARSHAY, May 7, 2018
Your Students

Think of a student who “disrupts” class like Toni. What are some ways you could respond to engage and honor their contributions?
Resources

Books:

- Why are all the Black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?
- White Fragility
- White Rage

1619 New York Times Articles and Podcast

#ClearTheAir Twitter Chat and Book Studies
Join us for the TODOS 2020 Conference
Activating Agency for Students Access, Engagement, and Advancement in Mathematics
June 25 - 27
Scottsdale, AZ

https://www.todos-math.org/
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Feedback: What stuck with you?

Leave it on a post-it: Tweet it:

#nwmc2019 @jkjohnsonbell

Come tell me!