

LOTTO Simulation

I asked if the kids knew anything about the California Lottery (They were 7th graders), and we pieced together basically how it works - you choose 6 numbers from 51 and if the lottery folks choose the same 6, you're a millionaire.

So I said that I would run a lottery in the class, but 51 numbers seemed a little high, and I'd just use 12. The kids each picked 6, and anybody who got the same 6 that were later picked out of a bag would win \$20. (I guess I said that multiple winners would split the \$20, just as we do in California.)

Of course, the students were all certain that they were going to be rich (after all, all they had to do is pick 6 of 12 - what's that? a 50% chance of winning, maybe?).

With a class of 30, you, as teacher, are running a slight risk - you do get a winner 1 time out of 924, so you'll lose in one class out of 30 or so, so you're basically paying 60 cents per time to play the game.

Of course, when everybody loses, I ask, "OK, the first game was free but how many of you would pay me 25 cents to play again?" Almost all the hands go up, and you're off to a great class.

I told a friend about the excitement in the class when I did this and told him that I felt a little left out since the kids were all so excited, and for me the threat of losing \$20 didn't quite churn up the same amount of adrenalin. My friend suggested that next time I make it \$100 - then the drawing would be exciting for me as well!

Teacher's hint: collect the kid's choices BEFORE you pick the winning numbers - the kids aren't idiots, you know.