



A Balanced Approach



ACTIVITY

Each section begins with a 2-page **Activity** that is introduced by an **Essential Question**.

- Deeper
- Dynamic
- Doable
- Dazzling



LESSON

After the concept has been introduced with a full class period **Activity**, it is extended the following day through the **Lesson**.

- Key Ideas
- Examples
- “On Your Own” Questions



EXERCISES

After students explore the concept in the **Activity** and extend it in the **Lesson**, they can practice it with the skills and applications in the **Exercises**.

- Vocabulary and Concept Check
- Practice and Problem Solving
- Fair Game (Cumulative) Review

For over 50 years, mathematics education in the United States has been embroiled in discussions over two seemingly opposing approaches to teaching mathematics: A *constructivist approach* in which students discover concepts, or a *direct instruction approach* in which students are taught concepts.

Each approach has its champions, strengths, and weaknesses. With a pure constructivist approach, parents can be frustrated by the lack of “how to do it” examples in the textbook. Teachers can be frustrated by pacing guides that seem to assume that there are 365 teaching days a year. With a pure direct instruction approach, students can be frustrated by being given answers to questions that they have never pondered.

Big Ideas Math is a revolutionary combination of both approaches—constructivist and direct instruction—using a Focal Points curriculum. This results in fewer topics (which allows for a realistic pacing guide), activities that provide deeper understanding, and lessons with complete stepped-out examples.