Activity sheet

# Activity: Conservation activities (From Castle and Buckler, 2021: 124‒5)

## Activity: Conservation of mass

 You will need access to children in the 2‒7 year old and 7‒12 year old age group. Try this task with a wide range of children so that you can collect some real data on conservation. This will help you to build up a clear picture of conservation within your sample of children.

 You will also need two equally sized pieces of clay, or plasticine.

 Place the two balls of clay in front of the child and ask if the balls contain the same amount of clay (which of course they are). Now, roll one of the balls into a ‘sausage’ shape in front of the child and ask if they still contain the same amount of clay. Children who have acquired conservation of mass will tell you they still contain the same. Children who have not acquired conservation of mass will tell you that one has more clay (usually the ‘sausage’ shape).

 It is worth trying this with a 12-year-old child, just so that you can watch them look at you as if you have gone mad, when they think ‘of course the pieces have not changed....you idiot!’

## Activity: Conservation of number

 Use the same children from your sample population as for conservation of mass.

 You will also need ten counters or buttons.

 Place the counters in two equal rows in front of the child and ask if the rows contain the same number of counters, which of course they do. Now, space the counters further apart in one of the rows, in front of the child and ask if they still contain the same number of counters. Children who have acquired conservation of number will tell you they still contain the same. Children who have not acquired conservation of number will tell you that the ‘longer looking’ row contains more counters.

 As they did with conservation of mass, the 12-year-old should again look at you as if you are stupid!

## Activity: Conservation of volume

 Use the same children from your sample population as for the previous conservation tasks.

 You will need three beakers. Two must be the same size and the other must be taller and narrower. You will also need some water.

 Pour equal amounts of water in the two same-sized beakers and place them in front of the child. Ask the child if the beakers contain the same volume, (you should perhaps use the word ‘amount’) of water, which of course they do. Now, pour the water from one beaker into the taller, narrower beaker, in front of the child and ask if they still contain the same volume (or amount). Children who have acquired conservation of volume will tell you they still contain the same. Children who have not acquired conservation of volume will tell you that the taller, narrower beaker contains more water.

 As they did with the previous two conservation tasks, the 12-year-old should react similarly.