0.1 Staying on task

The less you have to reprimand here, the better. Make sure that when you tell them to get into groups they know exactly what they're supposed to start working on. Make the rounds quickly at the beginning so they don't start chatting, and keep an ear out for it later on. If a group continues to be bad about this, you can watch them, visit them more, chastize them humorously, make sure they don't get grouped together next time, etc., but if the whole class is bad, you should examine what you're doing that promotes doing something other than the math. You could be leaving them in small groups too long, while the slow groups finish. You could be joking with them too much during class time. I do also use reprimands, but sparingly - on Day 3 this year I was in an impatient mood so I reprimanded the two groups that took more than a minute to form their groups and start working. I said "Sounds interesting whatever you're talking about, but you've got to get started on problem 1 - time's short this week!"