Connecting Student Responses

Peg Smith: Connecting is the practice of making connections between different strategies that have been discussed, and making connections between specific strategies, and key mathematical ideas that are driving the lesson.

The point of connecting isn't to see how many different ways there are to do a problem, but, rather, to see how one solution may be connected to another solution strategy, and that that may not be immediately visible.

The other thing is to make sure that, in every solution that you discuss, it's clear, in the solution, what the important mathematical ideas are, so that students understand what the contribution of a particular strategy is to the mathematical idea that's on the table for examination.

So one of the key things that needs to happen during connecting is the teacher is not the one who should be making connections. The goal is to try to engage students in making connections. So, here, the teachers questioning is critical. Asking the students, "How is this solution related to this one? How do you see the thing that you identified here, how does that appear over here?"
It's also important that these questions not be directed just to the students who actually made the presentation, but rather making sure that all of the other students understand those themselves, by framing questions to the class, "How is this related to this? What do you think about what he just said? Does that make sense? Could you use another number? And, how would that solution work?"