

43rd Annual NCSM Conference, Indianapolis, IN.
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Attending the 43rd NCSM Annual Conference: On Track for Student Success: Mathematics Leaders Making a Difference, was an integral part of my professional learning this year. My time with NCSM leaders and members at last year's NCTM Annual Conference left me hungry for a conference that would apply directly to me – a math coach in an urban district working with teachers to impact and improve learning for themselves and all of their students. As I worked to acquire funds, I spent time on the NCSM website reading through the sessions and contemplating a learning path. Applying for and receiving the Iris Carl Grant made attending this conference possible, and I am grateful to NCSM and the grant contributors for the opportunity.

Professional Development (PD) to Effective Teacher Development (ETD)
– That was the concept to ponder as I began my days at my first NCSM Conference. Working as a math coach for the past five years, it was hard to hear from Steven Leinwand that “typical professional development has very little impact on teacher knowledge, teacher behavior, or student achievement.” Even when doing typical PD well, we can't seem to initiate change in teacher practice and subsequently increase student learning. As I digested the research results, I was reminded that my practice is about effort-based learning and a growth mindset. We have to learn from our mistakes and misconceptions and move forward. We must become, as Mr. Leinwand says, “smart risk takers” moving towards ETD that encourages innovation, effective math instruction and purposefully planned collaboration in a very public atmosphere.

So, with one challenge on my plate, I move to the next – the Common Core State Standards. My anticipation about the CCSS is grounded in long-term frustrations around making sure to “cover” all the content listed in the state standards. The quarter of a century long talk about depth over breadth, yet the continued push to “get through” everything before the state test always left me feeling exhausted and ineffective. Diane Briars, Phil Daro and William McCallum spoke of standards that are NOT a mile wide and an inch deep and include the Standards of Mathematical Practice. I walked away from several presentations focused on the CCSS with a sense of focusing on big ideas and unit planning. I walked away knowing I needed to spend significant time reading and working through the CCSS as a learner. It is promising that my district is already planning for such study before the school year ends.

Seeing Lucy West and attending her session with Jane Kise “Addressing Difficult Issues in Coaching Conversations” was a priority and thank goodness it was scheduled before I had to leave on that last day. Information that had overwhelmed me was streamlined into coaching issues, coaching tools and coaching styles. There was so much that resonated with me that it was comforting to find that I was not alone in my quest to figure out how to be a more effective coach. As Lucy West said, “No one's ever had a comfortable revolution.” I appreciated the push to remember specific things about my work with teachers. It is important to understand that a teacher-coach conference can feel like an interrogation if the teacher is not used to questioning his/her

work. But if as a coach, you're not doing something that's moving somebody's practice, you're not gaining credibility. It's about having the discipline and stamina to stay focused on instruction.

Up to this point my reflections about my experiences at NCSM have been about my

learning as applied to my role as a coach. But I also want to include the excitement for my own learning during Peg Smith's and Gabriel Stylianides' session regarding Teachers' Knowledge About Reasoning-and-Proving. Engaging in their succession of tasks as a participant invigorated me. Being sucked in to reexamine my own beliefs about how I understand proof has sent me on a new path of discovery that I want to share with whoever will listen. Knowing the case we studied is the first in a series makes me want to go further.

In closing, my original motivation for attending an NCSM Annual

Conference was the feeling that it would apply directly to me. But as I reflect, I realize that all the things I was able to take with me are connected to so many others. I plan to make better use of my NCSM membership by promoting what NCSM has to offer, and I hope to attend future NCSM Conferences and bring along some new faces to the growing strength of mathematics education. Thanks to NCSM and the Iris Carl Grant for this unforgettable experience.