

NCSM Conference 2016

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The 2016 NCSM Conference was held from April 11-13 in Oakland, California. As a math leader in my district, I knew the value of attending this conference, and the opportunity that I would have to share my new learning and impact the instructional practices of teachers in my district. With the location being so far from my home, I would not have been able to have this experience were it not for the Iris Carl Travel Grant offered by NCSM.

My focus throughout this conference was to pull resources and ideas that would most benefit the teachers I work with. My time at NCSM began with a keynote speech from Keith Devlin sharing his work with online games to support student learning. His resources to help build computational fluency with students included *BigBrainz*, *TimesAttack* and *Wuzzit Trouble*.

A session with Jo Boaler about the latest brain research provided me with valuable information needed for me to help teachers inform their instruction. Her online resource, *youcubed.org* also has a wealth of information about effective math teaching and developing a growth mindset with students. She discussed changing the way we assign homework and de-tracking students. Some of the most interesting research that she presented included research about finger counting. Her work shows that we often push kids towards not using their fingers, but that we should actually encourage students to use finger representations as a physical support for learning arithmetic problems.

Meeting Dan Meyer and seeing his passion in building meaningful student engagement was a powerful reminder about our need as teachers to constantly reflect on our teaching and our abilities to improve. He shared several examples of problems that initially provided too much guiding information, but peeling away

some of the details quickly made the task interesting and open-ended. He talked about having students ask questions about the question, and to start a “fight” (or debate) around the task.

Greg Tang, author of many children’s books about math, shared his Kakooma puzzles, an engaging way to have students build math fluency through games and logical reasoning. His online resources also focus on elementary games that build procedural fluency and conceptual understanding of mathematics.

The luncheon provided to honor the Iris Carl Grant recipients allowed me to network with international math leaders. My home state of Vermont also had a strong showing in attendance, and networking with them allowed me to learn about new professional development opportunities in my own area of the country as well.

I thank NCSM and those that contributed to the Iris Carl Travel Grant. I look forward to sharing my new learning with my colleagues. I am also looking forward to building a team of math leaders in my district in the hopes of bringing them to an NCSM conference to have them experience the professional growth that I had the opportunity to engage in.