

41st Annual NCSM Conference, Washington, D.C.

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This conference represents the presentation of some of the best research and practices currently available to administrators, leaders, and teachers. To have the experience to attend a conference such as the NCSM Annual Conference is invigorating and thought-provoking. In line with all of the wonderful learning that takes place, are the conversations in the hallways, at lunchtime, and on the walks to and from the hotel. Everyone at the conference is motivated by learning and excited to share. I had the wonderful opportunity to work in the volunteer stations starting on Sunday and my NCSM collegial relationships began there.

The focus of this conference was on learning and leading together: It's Prime Time as the conference title reads. The opening session with Kati Haycock led the way for many future discussions at the conference. She spoke of closing the achievement gap, as well as the opportunity gap. She said, "When we really focus on something, we make progress," and provided data to support how consistent progress is the indicator for this focus. Improving achievement, according to Haycock, can be accomplished by doing things like focusing on what you can do or change, not dwelling on what you cannot; taking students from where they are when they enter, and go from there in giving teachers supports through resources, and information on what high expectations are for assignments and lessons; setting goals high for students as far as challenging courses and placement into these courses; and having administration (leadership) that is ever-present to guide the staff development.

Carole Greenes, in The Incredible Hulk and The Shrunken Kids, provided a host of examples on how proportional reasoning is the "key focus to success in Algebra." Her lively presentation entertained us as we worked through examples and she described the embedded relationship of proportional reasoning and algebra. Greenes also showed the need for math in the appreciation and understanding of other subjects such as art, science, and literature. "Math, by itself," according to Greenes, "has no meaning. It needs to be understood as a represented relationship in another topic." There were a number of sessions on Professional Learning Communities and On-Site Collaborative Work. Specific sessions such as the *Mathematic Professional Community*, showed how a particular school initiated and carried out the goals for a successful professional learning community. Some sessions, such as James Hiebert's *Guaranteeing Improved Classroom Teaching in 20 Years: What Should We Do?* showed what his research tells leaders to do to ensure collaborative working groups succeed. This presentation was awe-inspiring as he described the setting for successful on-site collaborative work. One key point he made is: "leaders need to have access to new ideas and bring these to the group." I kept thinking back to this statement as I carried on with the rest of my week.

Sessions describing and using PRIME enabled us to delve deeply into specific facets of the PRIME leadership document. With the support of NCSM leaders, groups were able to discuss and analyze pieces of the document in order to develop a richer understanding. These sessions were fabulous as we could discuss the meaning of indicators and their transference to student learning with members from all over the globe.

The technology sessions were also of interest to me. From *TI-NSPIRE* to the *Pearson Dimension-M* software to the *CASIO* presentation on learning mathematics through natural settings, the technology presentations had many new ideas for leaders to bring back to their workplace, as Hiebert had said. The NCSM luncheon with Anthony Harradine provided us with some great examples of how math occurs naturally and, because of this, can be embraced in the classroom for more formalized and individualized instruction. And who, from this NCSM luncheon, will ever forget the "cup snake?" Collaborative group work at its finest was displayed with the aid of this humorous and engaging speaker.

A clear focus throughout the conference: we are, as an entire group, working together for the *success of math for all students*. With this focus in mind, NCSM offers us a way to visualize and experience the latest in research, technology, and ideas in order to continue "providing a meaningful and viable curriculum for all students." NCSM provides us with not only a learning group but also a

cooperative, collaborative, teaching group. I was thrilled to find that everyone thought we all had something important to share. As I went from sessions to caucus meetings to luncheons, discussions were always inclusive with pure interest in each other's contributions. I did not feel this was just another conference, but rather that I was attending a function with 1600 of my math friends and acquaintances. I say, "thank you," for this great experience to the Iris Carl Committee and all the members who contributed to the Iris Carl Fund. The NCSM conference is one all leaders (administrators and lead teachers, coaches, mentors, and others) should attend to witness the vision of mathematics education and to understand what needs to be done to achieve this vision.