

46th Annual NCSM Conference, New Orleans, LA
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All of my classroom experience did not prepare me to serve in the role as K-12 Mathematics Coordinator for my district. After fourteen years in the classroom, I thought I was equipped and had the skills to serve the teachers in my district. After a few months in this newly created role, I realized that enacting change in my classroom or at the school level was easier than trying to inspire an entire district consisting of 16 schools. I enrolled in an online class with Jo Boaler offered free through Stanford University. I was introduced to concepts and ideas that amazed and humbled me. I realized after the course, that I needed more. I am grateful to NCSM and the Iris Carl Travel grant for allowing me the opportunity to attend what I hope will be the first of many NCSM Conferences. Mike Schmoker, in the opening session, reminded me that as educators and leaders, that less is often more and we need to focus on the basics of a great lesson. He stressed the importance of clarifying, practicing, and mastering first things. The most effective strategies that a teacher and school can implement are curriculum, cold calling, and 90-120 minutes of purposeful reading and writing. This session reminded me to encourage and maintain the basics while trying to implement the CCSSM.

Cynthia Callard, Jane LaVoie, and Stephanie Martin offered a session on using the Progressions of Common Core State Standards to Deepen Teachers' Content Knowledge. While I have read the Progressions and used them while developing curriculum maps, I had not considered using them in a professional development setting with teachers. One of my goals in my new position is to create Professional Development modules to be utilized in Professional Learning Communities to introduce units of study to teachers and initiate the planning stage. Through this process, I would like to help teachers solidify and deepen their content knowledge. After this session, I will incorporate the Progressions into this planning.

I had the honor of hearing Cathy Seeley speak and was very excited to receive her new book upon arriving at NCSM. She reminded the attendees that all math students need to understand, do, and use mathematics. The understanding is making sense of mathematics, while the doing consists of facts, skills, and procedures. When a student uses mathematics, they are modeling, reasoning, and thinking. The mathematical habits of mind require students to perform thought experiments. While the habits of mind were not new to me, the reminder to focus on them was much needed.

One of the highlights of my time in New Orleans consisted of hearing Marilyn Burns speak on Linking Formative Assessments to the CCSSM. While I had been exposed to the Mathematics Reasoning Inventory site before, to have her explain the process and anecdotes around building this project was invaluable. I am excited about bringing this resource back to the teachers in my district. I see how

important it is to incorporate Math Talk into our daily routines and to ask students to explain their reasoning. According to Marilyn Burns, students who lack understanding of a topic may rely on procedures too heavily. True understanding comes from explaining and critiquing the reasoning of others. The moment that inspired me the most was hearing Jo Boaler speak on Erasing Math Inequality. Dr. Boaler's work in the field of mathematics education is motivational and encouraging. She presented five barriers to high and equitable math achievement. I am sad to admit that I and my district are guilty of creating some of these barriers for children, and one of my missions is to remove these obstacle so all students can achieve. Dr. Boaler encouraged us to change our beliefs regarding students and their ability to do mathematics. She stressed that we are harming our students by placing them in ability groups and creating a fixed mindset. I also see the need to encourage our teachers to look beyond one dimensional mathematics and to teach math and not calculation. We can do this by encouraging sense making in mathematics. I was convinced to try and remove timed mathematics testing from our district. Dr. Boaler's research shows that timed tests create math anxiety at an early age. Math should not be associated with speed. Jo Boaler speaks with such conviction while offering encouragement. I left her session with a clear mission, determination, and a desire to enact change.

The opportunities for networking and collaborating were invaluable. Being outside of the classroom and in a leadership role can be isolating at times. I am so thankful to NCSM and the Iris Carl Travel Grant for this opportunity to attend such a valuable conference. I am returning to my district renewed and impassioned to be a catalyst of change and a resource to the teachers and students whom I serve.