

45th NCSM Annual Conference (Denver, Colorado)
Conference Reflections from Janet Dodd, 2013 Iris Carl Grant Recipient
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By attending NCSM's annual conference, I hoped to gain insights that would support me as I serve as our district's Instructional Specialist for elementary mathematics while also supporting me as I serve as the President-Elect of TASM (Texas Association of Supervisors of Mathematics). I hoped to gain insights as to how to facilitate processes for changes in curriculum and the accompanying conversations to support the implementation efforts of our state's recent adoption of new standards. I also hoped to gain insights as to how to identify and develop emerging leaders in mathematics education. I also hoped to gain/acquire knowledge that will develop me as a leader in mathematics education as well as develop my content/pedagogical knowledge of mathematics instruction in the middle school grades. The conference provided multiple opportunities to gather insights to support each of these goals, and I was very appreciative of the opportunity to have learned from various leaders in mathematics education.

When I consider insights as to how to facilitate changes in curriculum, one take-away that I gleaned from the sessions was "change is a process". The notes I captured from several sessions highlighted the incremental implementation of instructional or reflective practices. I noted phase-in plans for professional development. I noted phase-in plans for instructional strategies. I noted phase-in plans for reflective practice. My sense of urgency was tempered with the need to consider the varying readiness levels of our collaborating teachers – which I believe was a valuable take-away.

When I consider insights as to how to identify and develop emerging leaders in mathematics education, one take-away that I gleaned from the sessions was the difference between exposing our campus-based mathematics peer facilitators to instructional strategies and to the mathematics content itself. Our MPFs have grown in their capacity to facilitate vertical discussions about engaging instructional strategies and how to use data to inform instruction, though we have yet to collectively explore and engage in higher-level mathematical tasks to develop our own content knowledge and pedagogy. As a result of the conference, plans are in place to engage our teachers and campus-based leaders in mathematical tasks that will encourage us to collaboratively grow in our knowledge of mathematics content.

When I consider insights gained to develop my growth as a leader in mathematics education, one take-away that I gleaned from the sessions was the need to provide opportunities for our classroom teachers and campus-based leaders to "see" what good mathematics instruction looks like ... not just experience it. One of the quotes I captured was, "Teachers cannot change what they have not experienced or cannot envision." While our teachers and campus-based leaders are consistently exposed to engaging instructional strategies, I must take steps to provide them with opportunities to "see" these strategies in place. In making these efforts, I am honoring the needs of the teachers in our district and building my capacity to serve as their leader.

When I consider insights gained to support me as I serve as the President-Elect of TASM, one take-away that I gleaned from the conference was the need to provide focused opportunities during our organization's meetings for our members to network with each other. Whether it was participating in a session where we listened intently to how another leader had implemented a systematic process, whether it was participating in a session where we were prompted to work with a table partner to complete mathematical tasks, whether it was participating in the business meeting and regional caucuses, or whether it was volunteering at registration or during a meal function ... there was one constant to all of these experiences – and it was the opportunity to network and learn from the experiences of those around you. There is power in working together towards a common goal – and I hope to further these experiences in our organization's meetings.

Thank you to Iris Carl and the leadership she provided to the world of the mathematics education, and thank you to NCSM for allowing me the opportunity to honor her legacy and continue NCSM's efforts to support and motivate the teachers and campus-based leaders that make mathematics accessible for our students on a daily basis.