

2018 NCSM Conference Experience

By

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Attending my first National Council of Supervisors of Mathematics of Supervisors of Mathematics conference met all of my expectations. I had the opportunity to listen to and learn from national mathematical leaders and get reacquainted with a few leaders I had not seen in a long time.

Prior to attending the 2018 NCSM conference I established three personal mathematics leadership goals and two information acquisition goals. Each of these are discussed in full.

Personal Mathematics Leadership

My first expectation was almost a selfish one. I set the goal that I would expand my network of knowledgeable friends who would provide guidance as I strive to strengthen my local mathematics program. I knew the minute that I met Cathy Chaput from Guelph, Ontario that I had met a kindred spirit seeking to assist her fellow teachers in her role as a mathematics leader. Upon visiting with her, I learned how valuable it is to nurture the relationships we have with our immediate supervisors. I also met a fellow Park City Mathematics Institute alumni, Gloria Brown Brooks, who shared with me that she is an enthusiastic supporter of the Iris Carl Travel Grant. I am thankful for her unselfish example. Because of this, I have looked for ways to support and serve all with whom I am privileged to lead.

I set about seeking the most current literature to fulfil my second goal. I was able to accomplish this when I attended Gail Burrill's Six Strategies to Help Teachers Make Connections that Support Learning. In her presentation, she emphasized the role that multiple representations make in connecting old ideas to new. Due to her generosity, I was able to receive a copy of her PowerPoint and several other articles that she has authored – all supporting teachers as they encourage students to organize their learning for understanding.

I was able to fulfil my third goal: obtain confirmation and/or direction for the work I am doing trying to strengthen Iron County's mathematics programs. I attended Words of Wisdom from the Monograph Authors. Here I learned about the history of problem solving from Zalman Usiskin, that wimping out was not an option from Steve Leinwand, Gary Bitter's comparisons of phone and school evolutions, my job is navigating relationships from Francis (Skip) Fennell, from Susana Davidenko I learned that achievement gaps are not score gaps, getting pushback was part of my job from Jo Boaler, I am making a difference says Ralph Connelly, Tim Kanold reiterated that clarity always precedes competence, and Cathy Seeley summed it up by reminding us to give

away credit. This, I must say, was the highlight of my conference attendance. I just sat in awe.

Knowledge Acquisition

As a mathematics learning community, Iron County is striving to encourage and assist teachers in the unpacking of mathematics standards. From Creating Professional Learning Experiences to Build Teacher Content Knowledge I receive confirmation that when teachers unpack the standards themselves, it helps them to internalize and make personal the mathematics that they are teaching. Doing the tasks ourselves was reiterated. I was reminded that intentional learning and the use of graphic organizers are not only useful tools for my students but for my colleagues as well.

Tracking and Equity in Mathematics was the presentation by Jason Zimba that helped me to achieve my goal to learn more about the detriments of tracking and the research supporting change. I learned that unfinished learning is not a reason to back up and that grade-level work will always resurface misconceptions. Grade-level work is a place to use data to determine if our teaching efforts are being successful. If they are not, we can make changes and provide assistance at that point.

I am very humbled to have been chosen as a recipient of the Iris Carl Travel Grant. I came away from the conference with reinforced determination to keep striving for a mathematics community that provides meaningful and enjoyable mathematical experiences for each and every child in my district.

Thank you very much for this wonderful experience.