

Reflections from the NCSM 49th Annual Conference
Engaging in the Mission of Mathematics Education Leadership:

High Quality, Meaningful and Relevant Mathematics for All

San Antonio, Texas

April 3-5, 2017

Informing! Transforming! Validating! These three words jump to the forefront of my thinking as I reflect on my first time experience at the 49th NCSM Annual Conference. Right from the opening welcome by the president, John W. Staley, it was obvious the three days were going to be exciting and engaging.

Informing- Since beginning my consulting position five years ago, I had heard about the value of attending this conference; I was not misguided. Whether attending a session, enjoying a luncheon, or wandering among the vendors, I picked up a variety of worthwhile ideas that I can immediately incorporate into my practice. New resources, such as NCTM's *Taking Action* series, are debuted at the conference. I attended the middle school session with Margaret Smith and Mike Steele. Having utilized Principles to Action in much of my own work, I was excited to hear about this "next step" resource which actually puts those principles into action. Another resource that I can immediately utilize is *The Mathematics Improvement Network* website. Valerie Mills and Mary Bouck introduced the site which offers nine free downloadable tools that promote more effective efforts for change in critical areas such as Designing Professional Development, Lesson Study, and Observing Mathematics Lessons.

In addition to the sessions, many networking opportunities existed to meet colleagues from around the country who shared similar roles and my passion for mathematics education. I especially enjoyed Wednesday morning's mingle activity that got us up and moving to chat about a set of focus questions.

Transforming- One of the main reasons for attending a nationally sponsored conference is the multitude of renowned speakers all under one roof! Leaders in the

mathematics education field were accessible each day. A few of my stand-out sessions included Steven Leinwand on Numerical Fluency; Jo Boaler's keynote session; and Dylan William on Embedded Formative Assessment. Each offered new views that changed the way I think about my work and will impact it for the coming years. Skip Fennel's session which introduced the newly published *Formative 5* is sure to be a frequently referenced resource in my upcoming work.

Focusing the conference sessions in five strands was extremely useful. Our intermediate school district is making a bigger commitment to coaching. I was able to select sessions that corresponded to my district's specific needs. One session that stood out was on embedded coaching with Denise Brady and Arjan Khalsa. Besides walking us through a model that they utilized, each participant walked away with the tools, questioning stems, and rubrics to use in their work. Diane Briars also spoke regarding how coaches can help teachers develop their students' procedural fluency and conceptual understanding through strong leadership efforts. Finally, April Strom and Mona Toncheff presented an amazing session on sustainability of professional learning and shared their observation tools and rubrics. The willingness to share work was evident in all the sessions I attended.

Validating- Although I went to the NCSM Annual Conference looking to be informed and transformed, I had the unexpected pleasure of feeling validated as well. I left each session knowing the work I am currently doing aligns with the work that NCSM is promoting. The resources referenced quite often were those that I use each day in my efforts to improve mathematics education in my area. Often in our local focus, it is easy to lose sight of the bigger picture. However, it is uplifting to learn that my efforts align with the efforts of experts around the country.

I close with a reference to my biggest "why", my grand-daughter! Addy is the apple of this Nana's eye and it is because of her that I want to be instrumental in changing the landscape of mathematics education for all current, and future, students. As one of the recipients of the Iris Carl Grant, I am so appreciative of this opportunity to have participated in three days of extraordinary professional learning that will be a highlight of

my consulting career. Thank you again to NCSM's Board and the 2017 Iris Carl Grant Selection Committee.

Respectfully Submitted,

Judith L. Falk
Math Consultant, Char Em ISD
Charlevoix, MI
2017 Iris Carl Grant Recipient