

Conference Summary

National Council of Supervisors of Mathematics, April 15 - 17, 2013

This summary captures my 3-day experience at the 45th NCSM Annual Conference, Reaching the Peak of Mathematics Leadership: *Guiding Teaching to Support Student Learning*. The major focus of this year's annual conference included every aspect of implementing Common Core curriculum and assessment. Additionally, sessions addressed four content strands: Practices that Support Coaches, Equity for Each Learner, Assessing What Counts, and Knowledge for Leaders to Support a Strategic Infrastructure for Student Learning.

Summary of Sessions

Before attending the conference, I spent some time perusing the online brochure and determining which strands and sessions would best meet the needs of my districts. We have a new leadership team this year, and I wanted to be sure to bring back ideas and resources that would support our mathematics leaders and create opportunities for growth. I chose to focus on Equity for Each Learner, and Knowledge for Leaders to Support a Strategic Infrastructure for Student Learning. That said, I also wanted to squeeze in sessions on Assessing What Counts.

Even though I narrowed my focus, with approximately 300 sessions from which to choose, the content was overwhelming. In the end, I was able to attend 13 sessions, plus hear inspiring speakers at meals.

On Monday morning, my first sessions, and in the end, two of my favorites were called "**What does an Exemplary Math Teacher Look Like?**", and "**What is Fluency? and Why Is It Important?**". Marguerite Mason, and Rachael Cofer shared a rubric in the first session that was created by their teachers, administrators, and other leaders. The purpose of the rubric was to define what good mathematics instruction looks like and to aid their administrators during evaluations. Very often administrators are using generic evaluation tools, but this gives them specific look-fors! I especially appreciated that the facilitators guided us in brainstorming activities, and will use our input to guide their work. I plan to share and adapt this tool at one of next year's leadership meetings and host a "bring your administrator" day.

At the second session regarding fluency, Francis "Skip" Fennell and Kay B. Sammons shared a wealth of information about research. We worked together to define fluency as it is intended in Common Core documents. They then shared research about how to (and how not to) evaluate fluency in K-8. There are several districts in our county who are working on the fluency piece, so this gave me immediate activities and information to share. If you are interested in taking a look at Skip and Kay's information, go to sites.google.com/site/emstionline/presentations.

Over two and a half days, I was able to attend 12 sessions! Each of them had great information and resources to share with my staff. The final session was the icing on the cake: **The Exciting Odyssey of Helping to Turn Around a Math Department in One Year** with Steve Leinward. Steve was realistic, genuine, and inspiring. His main points included: we need to do far more than tweaking at the margins, we need to think systemically, and there is no magic bullet, among others. I will definitely share his presentation with my leadership staff!

The Social Experience

Another wonderful benefit of attending this conference was the collaboration between participants. I was able to meet curriculum directors, department chairs, math specialists, retired NCTM and NCSM presidents, and math coaches, and collaborate with them at meetings, meals, receptions, and hot topic conversation cafes. Each of these professionals realize that we cannot implement the CCSS-M and prepare our staff and students for standardized assessments unless we work together. I walked away with a number of business cards and look forward to collaborating with them again in the future.

Concluding Thoughts and Recommendation

If you are fortunate to attend this conference in the future, consider attending with colleagues who you collaborate with from your local schools and districts. That way you can “divide and conquer” when selecting presentations to attend. I will definitely push to attend next year with as many department chairs as possible from my county! Also, sign up for tickets to all of the meals/keynote speakers. This was an extremely valuable experience, unlike anything I have ever attended.

I cannot thank the Iris Carl Travel Grant enough for providing this opportunity.

Linda