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I am so appreciative of the opportunity provided me by receiving the Iris Carl Grant Award. Attending the 2013 NCSM conference in Denver was an amazing experience. I was an elementary teacher in North Pole, Alaska for over 14 years and had recently moved to my present district Elementary Curriculum Coordinator position 2 years ago. While I still consider myself a teacher, being a curriculum coordinator comes with new challenges and a different way of thinking of instruction, best practices and teacher support. Attending the NCSM conference gave me so many tools to use and share with our district's teachers and support staff.

While I have always had a "big picture view" of teaching the daily reality is that I was in MY classroom in MY school. Our district is a large one in area with a diverse population, a diverse make-up of school populations and size and also a district in a state climate with extreme temperatures, which lends itself to being isolated in the winter months. Taking the Elementary Curriculum Coordinator position made me look at the role and support of teachers on a much bigger canvas. I had to see how to support teachers in instructional focus, best practices, guaranteed and viable curriculum and implementing new standards in their various locations and with their various classroom and building populations.

The sessions I attended provided me with many techniques to help support our teachers. I had the privilege to hear Cathy Seeley in her session, *Smarter than we Think* and have an impromptu lunch with her! Hearing her speak about the role words play in our student's math discussions and problem solving strategies was a vital part of what I took away from this experience. "Key words are distracting from what is really important in the math problem" (Seeley). This quote is a paradigm shift from what so many teachers have taught for so many years. We need to re-teach teachers - they are teaching how they were taught. Our world has changed and we need to show teachers that it is okay for them to change also.

The session led by the NCSM president Suzanne Mitchell, *Reaching the Peak of Mathematics Leadership by Transforming Teacher Practice* on leadership skills was also one I took away many important tools.

- A leader influences often and well
- A leader is responsible for and can influence others
- There is a difference between leaders and leadership
- Leaders never stop learning
- Leaders never stop growing
- Leaders recognize the importance of staying ahead.

Other sessions, *The Look and Sound of the Standards for Mathematical Practice: Climbing the Peak* presented by Christine Moynihan was also beneficial. It was wonderful to go to her session, sit next to her in a session and then sit with her at lunch. This type of networking was so inspiring. I was able to take knowledge from authors and then also sit with them at informal settings and learn from them. How inspiring to make connections with experts in their fields of study while also thinking of myself as someone who might be able to write or share my passions in education.

I was also able to participate in the NCSM regional leaders meetings and the caucus meetings for the Western 1 Regional. By meeting Mona Torcheff, regional leader and others who are math leaders in their states was again a wonderful opportunity to network and learn from colleagues.

The highlight of my NCSM experience was at the Wednesday luncheon and the presentation of the *Ross Taylor / Glenn Gilbert National Leadership Award* to Kay Gilliland. What an amazing inspiration to teachers and educational leaders. She gave so much of herself and showed her intense desire to always be learning and being a maverick in educational equity in the somewhat inequitable world we live and teach in. I left wondering what would be my lasting impact on education?

Thank you for allowing and providing me this professional opportunity. Being able to network with other education professionals as passionate about making sure teachers and students are successful each and everyday was a tremendous experience provided me by the Iris Carl Grant Travel Award. I am thankful for this opportunity and I intend to "pay it forward" so others may have this opportunity.