

41st Annual NCSM Conference, Washington, D.C.
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This was my first time attending the NCSM conference and I will certainly plan to attend again. There are many reasons for this: networking with others from across the country; the ability to focus on math with others who are passionate about teaching math; finding out what is happening across the nation; and the new knowledge gained from the presenters and presentations given.

There is no way in this short reflection that I can share with you all of the information I gained from attending this conference. The area I tried to focus on was that of coaching since this was our district's first year to undertake the idea of instructional coaches. It was great to see that we were doing many things right. Our focus on supporting all teachers to be the best they can be instructionally was emphasized in every session. Having a good mix between actual classroom time observing and modeling with time for outside professional development seems to be a model many of the presenters found to be beneficial for their staffs.

One of the ideas with coaching that intrigued me and that I have brought back to my district came from the presentation by the staff of the Aurora Colorado School District. They talked about having various levels of "lead" teachers in their districts from instructional coaches to teachers who were staffed in demonstration classrooms. We are attempting to provide this same kind of idea by asking lead math teachers to open their classrooms to others in their buildings to observe and discuss what good math instruction looks like.

Another idea that I am attempting to implement came from the presentation given by Pam Warrick and C. Neelie Dobbins from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. They presented the idea of backward planning. This idea is that you look at student achievement, decide what students will need to succeed, which then translates into what teachers will need to do. If we know what teachers need to do to help students to be successful, then I as a coach should be able to determine what it is I can do to help give them the tools necessary to provide that quality instruction. Throughout this continuum, the administrator is looking at how they can support each of these steps. These two presenters also discussed the idea of journaling with teachers who a coach might work with to help alleviate that issue of not having enough time to sit and reflect on the instruction that just occurred. I will be working on how I could implement this idea with the teachers I will be working with.

One of biggest ah-has I took away from this conference is the diversity of schools and districts we have in this nation and how each of us is working to find the best way to effect student achievement in math. I realize how lucky I am to be a part of the Sioux Falls School District. While I come from a part of the nation that most people would have to look up on a map to know where it is, we truly are staying on the cutting edge of math instruction and are focusing on how we can get that information to the people that need that information the most, our teachers. Our district has stayed focused on the idea that the teacher in the classroom is truly the one who has the most effect on improving math achievement so we need to be getting to them the latest and greatest in math research and instructional implementation. Our focus on CGI methods and philosophy as well as a model of creating teacher leaders, is one we as a state and school district can be proud of.

I came away from this conference becoming a true believer that math literacy is as important as language arts literacy and that most districts do not emphasize this enough. We have not placed enough emphasis on educating teachers in the area of quality math instruction and it shows in our

students' scores on national, state, and local tests. I have come away from this conference working hard to advocate the need to educate all staff who work with students in the area of math and continue to look at what the latest research says about quality math instruction. If we stay focused on that idea, I truly believe we can have all students feel like they are "good" at math and be successful at any math test given to them.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to attend this conference. I will be back!