NCSM Affiliates by Carol Matsumoto, Affiliates Group Coordinator

At present NCSM has twenty affiliates. Each of its affiliates has a page on the NCSM website (under Membership) and each affiliate's page has a link to its website.

An NCSM Affiliate is spotlighted in each issue of the NCSM newsletter. In this issue the affiliate, Ontario Mathematics Coordinators Association (OMCA) is spotlighted. OMCA became an affiliate in 2014. The questions below were answered by OMCA president, Dan Allen and OMCA Board members for Carol Matsumoto, NCSM Affiliates Group Coordinator.

What is the purpose of your organization?

The Ontario Mathematics Coordinators Association (OMCA) is a collaborative group of math education leaders in Ontario, Canada. OMCA members advocate for and support high quality, research-affirmed mathematics instruction for all learners through supporting each other in facilitating meaningful professional learning for educators. We support educators in ensuring that all learners have math instruction that results in citizens who have the knowledge, thinking skills, confidence and perseverance to participate fully in society.

What are your successes?

OMCA presently has 100 members, representing 27 different school districts across Ontario. Our monthly meetings are well attended and are available virtually via Adobe Connect. Meetings typically consist of round table discussions regarding new learning and problems of practice in mathematics education, sharing of resources, as well as presentations from leading minds in mathematics education. We also have a Twitter feed, @OMCAmath; used to communicate with our members and the public.

What are your challenges?

Geography is challenging, as travelling to meetings hosted by different school districts can be difficult, especially during the winter months. We accommodate members by providing an online meeting space via Adobe Connect and sharing files using Google Docs. Our website, www.omca.ca, doesn't presently reflect our membership and their needs, so we are in the process of revamping the site to make it a space where members can share, collaborate, and stay up to date with recent research and learning in mathematics education.

What events do you host?

We host monthly meetings for our members, at varying locations across Ontario. During those meetings, a guest presenter is often in attendance. Topics of the presentations focus on mathematics teaching and learning through the lens of early years, students with special needs, and First Nation, Metis, Inuit to name a few. In February of each year, OMCA hosts a 2-day retreat where mathematics educators have the opportunity to engage in professional learning and build relationships across our province.

What event/accomplishment as an organization are you most proud of and why?

In February 2015, we hosted our annual retreat in Niagara Falls, ON. We were able to bring in Karim Kai Ani from www.mathalicious.com. Karim facilitated the 2-day event with a focus on how teachers can transform their classes by incorporating engaging, real-world math activities into their math instruction. Members of the Mathalicious team modeled sample lessons, and attendees worked together to identify what makes such lessons work…and where they can go wrong. Attendees had an opportunity to practice teaching high-quality real-world lessons, and developed strategies for coaching and supporting other teachers in successfully and consistently incorporating such lessons into their own classrooms. By the end of the workshop, participants had an expanded definition of mathematics, and a toolset to assist them in creating a classroom environment where students explore, debate, think critically, and make sense of the mathematics that surrounds them.

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