



# Math in the Middle

November 2007



## Math in the Middle -- Important Dates

### Winter Course Dates:

Friday, January 25, and Saturday, January 26

### Summer Institute Dates:

Cohort 3: June 9-13 - MATH 808T

June 16-18 - Capstone Course

July 9-11 - Capstone Course

Cohort 4: June 9-13 - MATH 805T

June 16-20 - MATH 806T

July 7-11 - STAT 892



During the NCTM conference, Gary Furse (Cohort I) had the opportunity to meet one of the three scientists who developed the first hand-held calculator for Texas Instruments 40 years ago.

## NCTM Conference, October 25-26, Kansas City, MO

The following reflections on the NCTM conference are from Janet Schlattmann (Cohort 1). She has offered to share material she gathered and information she learned with any one who might be interested.

“I recently attended the regional NCTM conference in Kansas City. As with every conference I attend there are good ideas. I attended one session on connecting music and math. It explained how translation, dilation, and reflection are all a part of music. It was very interesting and would make sense not only to my stu-

dents who read music but also to those who listen to music.

I also went to two sessions on problem solving and found more critical thinking ideas for my classes. One idea used the game rock, paper and scissors to look at fair and unfair games.

One algebra session I attended gave us activities that could be adapted to any classes. They call it a math lab and use the activity-based class as a second class for those students who are not making it in the regular algebra class. I have already used one of the activities with my algebra class.

Ruth Heaton, Gary Furse, Karen Hillen and I presented our research at the last session on the last day. I feel that the conference was a good experience for me.”

Karen Hillen (Cohort 1) recalls her time spent at the NCTM conference.

“Being asked to present my action research project at the NCTM Regional Conference in Kansas City was an honor that also gave me an opportunity to experience a magnitude of knowledge and teaching strategies that I have already put to use in my classroom since returning from the conference. As I paged through the program trying to schedule my route and time so as to be able to attend as many sessions as possible, I noted that there were at least three other presentations similar to what I had done on discourse in the classroom. Though I was only able to listen to one of these presentations, I was pleased to see that their research findings concurred with mine.

In a news release, NCTM President Francis Fennel stated, “the regional conference provides teachers with opportunities to grow as learners and help their students become the best that they can be. The conference also provides an opportunity for both new and experienced teachers to share ideas, develop new ones, and think creatively about how to support mathematics



learning for all students.” I certainly came away from this conference feeling as if those expectations had been met, and I would highly encourage others to attend conferences such as this if they have the opportunity.”

Gary Furse (Cohort 1) recounts his experience at the conference.

“Our presentations were based upon our Master’s theses for Math in the Middle with updates that included where we have gone from graduation nearly 15 months ago. Each of the three of us (Janet, Karen, and I) had focused our research on what practices work best for our kids. Mine in particular focused on the impact that student self-assessments had on their motivation and performance. Those who attended our presentations seemed quite interested in our research topics and asked many insightful and though-provoking questions.”



Tom Harrington from Madison Middle School (Cohort 2).

## Teaching Tips

The following teaching tips have been provided by some of our Math in the Middle participants who, through their experience, know first-hand that these strategies have been successful for them.

“Have some activity or exercise ready for students to do when they walk into the room, either on the board, in a folder, or on the overhead. It is valuable teaching

time; it helps eliminate behavior problems and gets class started immediately.”

-- Joan Brethouwer, Crete Middle School (Cohort 3)

“Every day I have my fifth grade math students solve a problem of the day. I invite one student each day to illustrate his or her solution on the overhead in front of the class and explain the steps. Then I ask if anyone had a different way of solving the problem, and they verbally share the steps they took to solve the problem. There are usually 2 to 5 different ways the students solved it. It is very interesting to see the different thinking strategies, and the students love to volunteer to come in front of the class and show off their solution. The students also see that there are several different ways to solve a problem.”

-- Karen Schur, LPS (Cohort 2)

“At the beginning of the year, to show my 5th and 6th grade students how to write out lessons with the correct format on the page, work problems, label answers, and check work, I write out Lesson 25 exactly how I would like the students to do the lessons. I tell the students they must keep Lesson 25 to use as an example for the lessons they do. If they can hang on to the lesson until we get there, they do not have to do Lesson 25. We have a party then, with math board games and snacks. If the students happen to lose the lesson, they have to do it over on their own to be able to participate in the party. Then I tell them we will have another party when they get to Lesson 100, but they will have to do Lesson 100. Throughout the year, it gives the students something to look forward to and to work toward.”

--Geri Steinbrink, Arapahoe Elementary (Cohort 4)

“When I use my overhead, I don’t use Vis-a-Vis pens. I buy fine tipped dry erase markers, and they just wipe off. It beats having to clean the overhead all the time!”

-- Amanda Stark (Cohort 3)

*To Teach is to  
Touch a Life Forever*



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