

*38<sup>th</sup> Annual NCSM Conference, St. Louis, Missouri*  
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***The Spirit of St. Louis was lively, jazzy, and very informative from the Monday morning opening session through the Wednesday luncheon.*** I felt very privileged and honored to have the opportunity to attend the 38<sup>th</sup> NCSM Annual Meeting. I want to thank the membership and leaders of NCSM and NCTM for creating and supporting the Iris Carl Award so that I could gain insights from all the dynamic and diverse leaders in mathematics education.

***The national meetings offer a broad perspective. Often when one is dealing with the daily work, one forgets the larger picture.*** The meetings offered resources, policy statements from the leadership to support good educational practices, and perspectives on national trends that help improve mathematics education locally and nationally.

***One thread, which was evident in all sessions, was that good mathematics needs to be offered to all students.*** Consistently in the sessions, it was stated that all students need to be offered the opportunity to have meaningful engagement in the learning of mathematics. Good problems are those that can be solved in multiple ways. Students need to write their solutions to problems, have the opportunities to share their solutions, and gain multiple ways in solving problems. This is an asset for strong math students. Students that have many strategies to solve a problem, will score as well if not better than students who only learned one strategy. This is the daily challenge in planning and implementing our school's SIMMS mathematics curriculum.

***Arlene Hambrick and Asta Svedkauskaite offered activities and a CD to help teachers, administrators, and learning communities develop a common vocabulary and knowledge base in order to implement strategies to help students close the "achievement gap".*** This theme continued in Linda Fulmore's and Bob McDonald's session on the NCTM achievement gap position paper. They modeled activities that can be used to help schools and districts come to agreements in addressing equity and the achievement gap as it relates to cultural, racial, or economic subgroups. The TODOS group, a new affiliate to NCTM, will provide more meaningful discussions and strategies in dealing with equity issues.

***Alan Schoenfeld offered wonderful words of wisdom and support for doing the "right thing," especially when "tests" seem to be driving too many of the current practices in education.***

***The networking and renewing of friendships are very special bonuses of attending national meetings.*** The world has allowed people to move and work all over the country, but for a week we come together to share common experiences related to our passion – mathematics education.

***On Tuesday, the day started with breakfast and a reunion meeting of colleagues from the Woodrow Wilson Workshop 20 years previous.*** Next came a reunion with my math methods college professor, Melfried Olson, when I was an undergraduate 29 years ago. Melfried Olson and Mary Pat Sjostrom modeled ideas on how to get students thinking about their understanding of math problems. What a special treat! The recognition and honor of receiving the Iris Carl Award along with David Erickson and Kathy O'Sadnick kept me floating on air all day.

***My school's improvement goals are problem-solving, reading, and mathematics.*** Wednesday was a day to learn new things related to these goals. Clare Heidema and Arlene Mitchell presented reading strategies that can help all students improve their comprehension and understanding of mathematics. The new field of virtual manipulatives was presented by Jeanine Haistings. The research on these manipulatives is coming from doctoral dissertations. No longer are a book, paper and pencil enough for the mathematics classroom. The environmental and budgetary needs of the math classroom are much greater today to help educators "mind the gap" by offering physical and virtual hands-on manipulatives.

***Again, my thanks to the membership and leaders of NCSM for supporting the Iris Carl Award which made it possible to attend this national meeting.*** Many special memories, thoughts, and ideas were carried back to Wyoming to be shared with the teachers in my school, district, and at the state meeting.