

FROM THE NCSM PRESIDENT... KATEY ARRINGTON

## NCSM IS WORKING **SMART** AND **HARD** FOR LEADERS IN MATHEMATICS EDUCATION



KATEY ARRINGTON

### NCSM MISSION

NCSM is a mathematics education leadership organization that equips and empowers a diverse education community to engage in leadership that supports, sustains, and inspires high-quality mathematics teaching and learning every day for each and every learner.

### NCSM VISION

NCSM is the premiere mathematics education leadership organization. Our bold leadership in the mathematics education community develops vision, ensures support, and guarantees that all students engage in equitable, high-quality mathematical experiences that lead to powerful, flexible uses of mathematical understanding to affect their lives and to improve the world.

*Dear NCSM Members,*

You are invited to the inner workings of NCSM! The Board of Directors recognizes that, as an organization of leaders, our most important asset is our members. With that in mind, we wish to provide more insight into how the organization operates, the decision-making processes we use, the goals we aim to achieve, and the structures we employ to support you and all BOLD leaders in mathematics education. Research tells us that organizational transparency serves to better engage members and build trust, so we are working hard to build awareness of what is happening in our organization, to invite you to communicate with us about your needs and wants for how we provide services, and to explicitly express that we trying to work hard and smart to provide an inclusive and supportive community.

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## About the NCSM Board Structure

The heart and driving force behind NCSM are mathematics leaders who are not only working to create positive change in their school systems, but also to support colleagues and educators who are working to do the same across the continent and even some across the seas. Our all-volunteer board is the decision-making body for the organization. Most of our board members have full-time jobs as mathematics leaders and dedicate time outside of those jobs to build our community for educators to connect, learn, and grow in their leadership. I am overwhelmed with gratitude for how much these enthusiastic leaders do for our members. And this year, we are more determined than ever to invite you to join us in, as Dr. Uri Treisman might say, a “joyful conspiracy” to increase engagement in our community.

[The NCSM Board of Directors](#) is designed to have enough consistency to sustain operations in meaningful ways, but also to allow enough change that new ideas and perspectives are regularly entering the room. The organization’s 35-member board is made up of 13 elected and voting members including the President, either a President Elect or Past President on alternating years, a 1st and 2nd Vice President, and Directors for each of NCSM’s nine regions. The other 22 positions on the NCSM Board are appointed by the President. The appointed members serve to provide meaningful services and resources to the membership, and they are *essential* to NCSM operations. These positions include editors for publications, professional learning designers and facilitators, communications and social media specialists, affiliate and membership coordinators, etc. Those in appointed positions are not voting members, but the entire board is included in discussions about board work as we feel diverse perspectives help us to make better decisions.

All board members have their own roles and responsibilities and serve on both a governance

committee and an initiative team. Governance committees serve as an ongoing, consistent foundation for the work of the board. The governance committees rarely change as they are essential functions of the organization. The standing governance committees are finance, conference, membership, communications, nominations, and awards. Initiative teams are key to meeting the needs of leaders in mathematics education right now. Initiatives and the teams working on them change regularly based on the current context, focusing on what leaders are encountering in real time and what they require from NCSM, allowing the organization to be responsive and agile enough to work on pressing issues when they are relevant.

Together, the elected and appointed members represent you in the organization and strive to be the community that supports you and all mathematics leaders in being the best leader you can be.

## 2024–2025 Strategy

Over the last year, our board has deeply listened to both our current and potential members about why they join and continue to be members of any organization, as well as what NCSM can do to better serve the community through surveys and focus groups. We have used that information to concentrate our work in 2024-2025. Early this spring the board created a driver diagram (Hall & Hord, 2019) which is a way of engaging in research-based strategy planning that increases the likelihood of creating change.

The first step of creating a driver diagram, like other strategy planning processes, is to clearly articulate the aim of the organization for a specific time period to ensure actions are planned deliberately to meet that aim. Next, before moving directly to action planning, this process intentionally pauses to articulate the drivers of change for the

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organization. The leadership thinks collaboratively and carefully about the areas of work that will affect significant change. They ask as a group “What are the levers that we anticipate, if energy is spent moving, will push us toward achieving the aim?” or maybe “What are the levers that, if we don’t effectively move, will keep us from achieving the aim?” Once drivers are defined, then the members use care and consideration to brainstorm actions the organization might take, aligning these actions to the drivers outlined previously to ensure no one driver is getting more/less attention than is needed. Additionally, each action item is analyzed for the level of effort it will require and the level of impact expected. This deep consideration and strategic action planning produce a plan that gets the most “bang for the buck.”

The NCSM Board identified this aim statement: By October 2025, NCSM will grow membership by at least 10% with an intention to build inclusivity and belonging and ensure organizational membership and leadership that reflects student populations nationwide. We will do this by providing quality services and resources that are relevant and responsive to diverse leaders in mathematics education.

Our drivers, or the big ideas that help us focus efforts to increase the likelihood of success in reaching our aim, are:

- Build an Inclusive Community with Networking Opportunities
- Create, Update, and Increase Access to Relevant and Useful Resources
- Engage Members in Meaningful Opportunities for Professional Learning
- Engage Members in Meaningful Opportunities for Professional Contributions
- Employ Effective Communication and Marketing
- Practice Continuous Improvement

Now we are in a phase of planning and enacting activities and actions that are aligned to drivers and are moving forward with our aim in mind.

Some of these actions are continuations of wonderful work started by previous boards, some are new and different from what we have done before, and some actions previously taken have become lower priority based on this analysis.

### NCSM Working Structure 2024–25

The structure we are using to support this work is similar to and different from previous configurations. The governance committees that support the ongoing, foundational work of our organization are all continuing their work, though maybe utilizing new approaches. The one big change is that we found we were missing a foundational element in our governance structure, which is a laser focus on ensuring we are working every day and in explicit ways to address issues of equity. To ensure that we bring attention to these issues in all the work we do, we formed **The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee**. The last several boards have increased efforts and attention to equity issues through initiatives, considering it as a key present-day issue. The current board felt that it is time that these important aspects of our work be considered a foundational element, explicit across all NCSM does. The DEI Governance Committee will help the board to learn and grow our efforts to be inclusive and serve for justice in mathematics education, in an ongoing and deep way.

The Initiatives that surfaced as the ways the board needs to focus for today’s context are as follows:

### **The Professional Learning and Resource**

**Development Initiative:** The team leading this initiative is dedicated to designing and facilitating professional learning and networking for our members around the current responsibilities and issues that leaders face in mathematics education. We listened to members about current needs and have plans to provide learning opportunities, in varied formats, that support areas of how to best utilize artificial intelligence and adopting and

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implementing high-quality instructional materials. We hope that many of the leaders in our membership will not only engage in learning but will help contribute to building and leading in this work and identifying future areas of focus as well.

**The Creating Connections Team:** This initiative team will work toward growing our network in several ways to ensure we are meeting the needs of diverse leaders. NCSM wants to provide every leader the opportunity to grow and learn as well as contribute to our network, no matter their background, geography, or lived experiences. We want to connect better with mathematics leaders who are a part of their local or regional affiliates and who have great influence and context-specific expertise. We want to connect to mathematics leaders who may be in non-content specific leadership roles but still have a great impact on mathematics programs, so they realize what they might do to better support the educators and students in their systems in mathematics. We want to support those leaders who maybe haven't yet obtained a leadership role but want to grow their leadership identity and skills. If you have a desire to impact mathematics teaching and learning for the better, we see the leader in you and want you to find support for your goals at NCSM!

**The Continuous Improvement Team:** This initiative team is charged with helping us to have a better understanding of our member and potential member needs, to measure how well we are doing with providing relevant and meaningful engagement opportunities and resources, and what impact that is having for leaders, educators, and students. The information they find and the

processes they design during these two years will have a vital and lasting impact on NCSM's ability to serve a diverse leadership community well.

While we won't always get it right the first time, we strive to do the best mathematics education leaders and potential leaders in our membership, and for all of the educators and students they serve. I hope you see great intentions and deep consideration in the planning and decision-making processes we have employed to set a path for these two years of work.

I appreciate you giving your time and consideration to this overview of the NCSM structure and current strategy. I extend an invitation to you to get more involved! There are many ways:

- We will be asking for feedback regularly, and I hope you will provide your thoughts to help us shape our future actions.
- You can volunteer to be a part of a working group, or to review materials for publications, or even write a publication! [Fill out this volunteer form](#) to find an option that might interest you in or suggest something we haven't thought of yet.
- Are you registered yet for the conference in Chicago? I hope so! [Sign up for a volunteer post during your time!](#)
- Communicate with board members about what is happening, particularly with your Regional Director! [You can find our contact information on the NCSM Website.](#) We would love to hear from you! 🌸

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# REFLECTIONS ON FOUR YEARS OF LEADING NCSM

By Paul Gray, Jr. | NCSM Past President (@Dr\_PaulGray)



PAUL GRAY, JR.

IN MY LAST PRESIDENTIAL ARTICLE IN *NCSM INSPIRATION!*, I wanted to take a moment and reflect on some of the things I've learned in four years of presidential leadership at NCSM.

In 2020, as the world was shutting down in the pandemic, I was pronounced NCSM President Elect in a virtual experience, instead of during the 2020 NCSM Annual Conference. I then was pronounced NCSM President in 2021 during a Zoom meeting instead of what was supposed to be our annual conference in Atlanta. Outgoing president Mona Toncheff passed a gavel to her right on a Zoom screen, and I accepted a meat tenderizer from my left, because that was the closest thing I had in my house to a gavel.

In 2023, at our Washington, DC conference, I handed the reins over to our current president, Katey Arrington. And in 2024, at the end of our Chicago conference, I will vacate the board position of past president and applaud wildly as Brian Buckhalter formally becomes our president elect. A lot has happened in those four years. And as I think back, there are some takeaways that percolate to the surface. If you'll indulge me, I'd like to share them with you.

## TAKEAWAY 1:

### COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP MATTERS

In any leadership role, you need a thought partner. It has been said that everyone needs a coach. In March 2024, I attended SXSWedu in Austin and attended a superintendents' panel. These were superintendents of large, urban school districts such as Dallas, Memphis/Shelby County, and Louisville/Jefferson County. One thing that each one of them said was that even as superintendent, they needed a coach and they needed thought partners.

When you're the lead dog in the pack, as president of NCSM or superintendent of a school district,

you're it. You're the only one in your organization with that job function. So, to get those thought partners and to get those coaches, you must look both inside and outside your organization.

### *Looking Inside My Organization*

NCSM has a really powerful model for continuity of leadership. When a new president is elected, it's a four-year commitment. You serve one year as president elect alongside the current president, then two years as president: one with the same president who was your successor (who becomes the past president) and one with the incoming president elect. Then, in the fourth year it flips and you become past president supporting the new president. Thus, you serve closely for two years with the same person. We've set the model up so that, when it works well, you co-lead with the same person for two years.

My first two years were spent alongside Mona Toncheff. I met her when I joined the NCSM Board in 2016 as the Southern 2 Regional Director and she was our vice president and the program chair for the 2017 conference in San Antonio, my home state.

My second two years were spent alongside Katey Arrington, whom I have known for decades since we were mathematics leaders in Texas at the same time. She was a mathematics leader in Pflugerville Independent School District on the north side of Austin and I was a mathematics leader at the Region 4 Education Service Center in Houston. Over time, our professional trajectories evolved and now I am a consultant and author, and she

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serves as a director at the Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin.

I could not have asked for two better thought partners. The NCSM President makes a lot of decisions. I cannot tell you how much I appreciated having someone to turn to that I could trust and bounce ideas off of. Sometimes, I have really good ideas. And sometimes, those ideas aren't so wonderful. I could trust both Mona and Katey to help me figure out if an idea was good or bad. They would help me flesh it out and game out some possible outcomes. And they both trusted me to do the same for them.

### *Looking Outside My Organization*

NCSM does not work in isolation. We are embedded within the larger mathematics education community, so it's important that NCSM collaborates with other organizations with similar missions and visions. Our closest sister organization is NCTM, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. We also work very closely with AMTE, the Association of Mathematics Teacher Educators, and ASSM, the Association of State Supervisors of Mathematics. During COVID, the presidents of these organizations had to make decisions about conferences together. Both 2020 and 2021 Math Week (the constellation of conferences for ASSM, NCSM, and NCTM) were interrupted and transformed into virtual events because it was unsafe to call our members together for a physical gathering. Because decisions from one organization impacted the others, we realized that we needed to coordinate our plans—comparing notes and thinking through things together. This collaboration-by-necessity was tremendously helpful! So, we asked ourselves what other ways we could work together to support all of our members. We produced a few pandemic-specific resources, *Moving Forward* in 2020 and *Continuing the Journey* in 2021, to support leaders in making good decisions about their mathematics instructional programs. The presidents continue to

meet monthly in order to stay current with emerging trends in the field, coordinate their responses to issues that pop up and might affect our teachers and students, and plan future collaborative projects.

### **TAKEAWAY 2: REPRESENTATION MATTERS**

Walking the hallways of our 2023 Annual Conference in Washington, DC, if you listened carefully, you got the best attendee feedback. One African-American woman commented to her colleagues that she finally felt like she belonged at a mathematics conference. When I heard this, I was overjoyed because we worked hard to create an environment where people feel like they belong.

Belonging is important in creating a community. Sure, groups of people can gather. But for a real community to form, there has to be a shared sense of common interest and common values. To be a part of a community, you have to feel like you belong. By belonging, I mean that you feel like you are in a safe space where you can just be you without having to look over your shoulder. You know that there are people around you of like mind. For me, an example of belonging is Provincetown, Massachusetts. As a gay male, I am accustomed to being "the only" in several settings. In our neighborhood, my husband and I often find we are "the only" gay couple on the block. In social settings, we often find ourselves "the only" gay couple in the room. It's not tiresome, and there are certainly other ways that we feel like we belong in our neighborhood or that social setting, so we've just learned to live with it. But, Provincetown has the highest per-capita rate of same-sex couples in the nation. When we are there, we are not "the only" gay couple anywhere. We are one of many. In our neighborhood, at the grocery store, or walking around town. To me, I feel a sense of belonging and community that I don't feel anywhere in Texas.

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People from marginalized communities need spaces where they feel like they belong. They also need to see people who look like them doing mathematics and leading mathematics. One of the first tasks I had after becoming president elect in 2020 was to assemble my board of directors. Our members choose 9 regional directors and 2 vice presidents but the president gets to appoint the remaining 20-ish positions. When I did so, I was looking for both talent and representation—do we have a balance of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, demography, and geography? It was important to me that no one would be “the only” whatever in the room. The diversity was also important because I have learned that when you have a deeply diverse room of decision makers, you get more perspectives in the discussion and better decisions.

### **TAKEAWAY 3: PUSH THE BOUNDARIES**

People, and I am no different, make assumptions. We all know that stereotypes are unproductive models yet we all use them as an initial filter in the world. When a white male from Texas walks into a room in, say, Massachusetts, people make certain assumptions about his beliefs and things he will say.

Imagine their surprise when said male begins talking about how essential culturally relevant instruction is or how pervasive white supremacy is and how we must all commit to fighting it. In one presentation, I drew a direct line from *Plessy v. Ferguson* and *Brown v. Board of Education* to school segregation and tracking as a structure we use to enforce segregation in desegregated schools; hence, the moral imperative to immediately cease that practice that actively harms children. I did not mince my words. A few people left the room. If they were disturbed by that; they needed to be.

In another presentation, I showcased how culturally relevant instruction is one of the best tools in our toolkits that we can use to dismantle racist structures that exist in our classrooms and schools. In a debriefing conversation afterwards, one of my valued colleagues made the comment that she, as a Black woman residing in California, never thought she would hear those words come out of a Texan’s mouth. And she said it was powerful to see and hear it.

A few folks have observed that equity work tends to be driven by people of color and content work tends to be driven by people who are melanin-deficient. I see that as an artifact of white privilege. As a general rule, white males in the United States and Canada do not have to think about equity. Women do. People of color do. Multilingual people do. LGBTQ+ people do. Immigrants and newcomers do. And it’s high time that white males do also. We have a responsibility to take down the structures and barriers our ancestors created that deny people access to powerful mathematical experiences. Opportunity is not pie. When someone else gets more, it doesn’t mean we get less. Instead, as President John F. Kennedy once said, a rising tide lifts all boats.

Let’s push the boundaries. Nudge them a little. Break them down when appropriate. If we all push together, in the same direction, big movements are made. If each of us tinkers around the edges a little, those small changes add up to big changes.

### **FINAL THOUGHTS**

It has been both an adventure and a privilege to serve as NCSM President from 2021 to 2023. When I think about organizations and leadership, I view things in terms of continuity and how ideas flow from one leader to the next through time. One of my favorite Isaac Newton quotes is, “if I see farther than anyone else it is because I stand on the shoulders of giants.” If you look at the NCSM

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*From the Past President* (CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)

Website, you can see the list of giants on whose shoulders I stand. And you'll see the next few giants I am lifting up so they can see farther than I did. Our world is changing. It's changing rapidly and either that speed is increasing or I'm just getting old enough to feel like it is sometimes getting out of control. Perhaps it was always out of control. After all, didn't each generation before us bemoan "kids these days..."? And we turned out okay, didn't we?

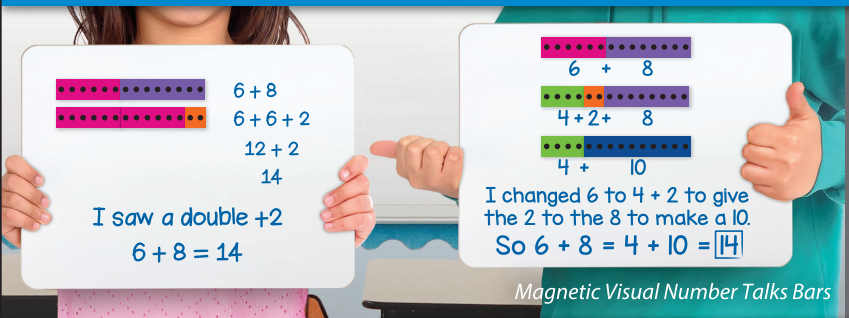
That's why I have strong faith for the future. Yes, we live in an uncertain time right now. But I have a lot of faith in NCSM and our members who steadfastly cling to a commitment to do right by kids and the teachers we are committed to serving. We do an

exceptional job dampening some of the shock waves that are aimed at our teachers and students. And we will continue to do so. As we learn more about how modern technologies help support teaching and learning, we embrace them. As we learn more about how students in the 21st century construct knowledge, we change our instructional strategies to support them. That's what we do in the curriculum and leadership world. There is no place else I would rather be.

I thank you, my fellow NCSM members, for the opportunity to be a small part of the leadership of our organization. Together, we can, and we will, make the world a better place. 🌸




Our recently expanded family of modeling manipulatives now includes activity cards for students and teachers!



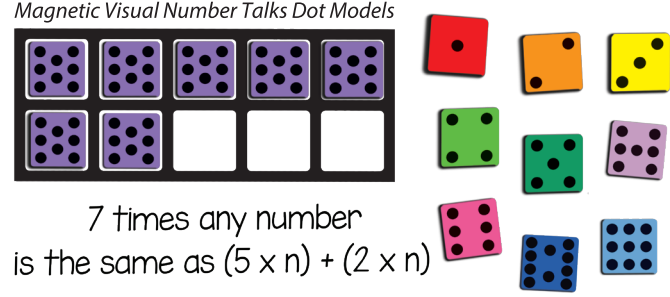
Magnetic Visual Number Talks Bars

NEW activity cards for FALL 2024!



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7 times any number is the same as  $(5 \times n) + (2 \times n)$

Bar Models

Two-thirds of what number is 14?



$14 \div 2 = 7$

$\frac{2}{3} \times = 14$

$3 \times 7 = 21$

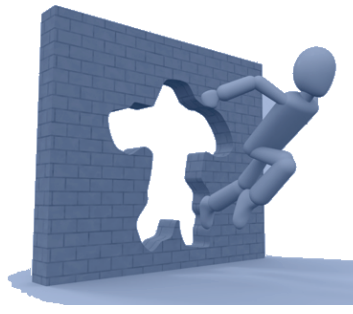
Over 15 NEW activities and manipulatives to choose from!  
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## REGIONAL REPORTS

# BREAKING BARRIERS WITH BOLD MATHEMATICS LEADERSHIP

NCSM Regional Directors from US Eastern 2, US Central 2, and US Western 2 share ways to break barriers with bold mathematics leadership.



*Karen Riley Jeffers*, NCSM US EASTERN 2 REGIONAL DIRECTOR

## BREAKING BARRIERS IN MATHEMATICS EDUCATION: ONE DISTRICT'S STORY

*Working to break barriers in mathematics education* may feel like tackling a brick wall due to vast, deeply rooted issues involving diversity, equity, inclusion, race, teacher retention, attendance, low achievement scores, negative mathematical mindsets, and building teacher capacity in mathematical content and pedagogy, to name a few. When the desired results of the aforementioned issues are not produced, feelings of frustration, doubt, and overwhelmingness may rise to the forefront, creating yet another barrier to overcome. Thus, breaking barriers requires strategic efforts that impact lasting change over time.

Begin by adopting an improvement process protocol such as [Data Wise](#), the [Plan-Do-Study-Act](#), etc., to support the efficiency of the anticipated work. Follow the protocol to plan and organize collaborative work to establish structures and teams (Boudett, Dillman, & Lockwood, 2017). For example, during the 2023 NCSM Annual Conference, coaches and specialists from Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS)

Elementary Math Office in Maryland, shared how they organized for collaborative work by first building community and learning about their strengths individually as well as collectively, using Gallup Strengths during their presentation entitled, *Empowering All Through Educational Communities: A Multi-Level Approach to Supporting Student Achievement*. They used this information to develop collaborative teams. Then they honed and revised their mission and vision to ground their focus.

Secondly, acknowledge all the barriers that impact the work of your district. The presenters of this session demonstrated one way to do this by having participants brainstorm all the factors that create barriers and write each one on a Post-it note. Then participants reflected on the factors produced by the brainstorm and looked for commonalities. Next, they sorted their post-it notes, categorized the factors into groups based on those commonalities, and decided which factors were within their purview to determine a barrier of focus. For



KAREN RILEY JEFFERS

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## 2024 NCSM BOARD

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*Karen Riley Jeffers*, NCSM US EASTERN 2 (CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)

this elementary mathematics office, the focus was building the capacity of multiple educational partners. Using qualitative and quantitative data, they further described how collaborative teams developed structures of professional learning sessions for teachers, school-based mathematics leaders, and administrators.

Lastly, monitor the progress of the established systems and structures to evaluate their effectiveness. This district captured attendance and concluded each professional session with an evaluative survey to gather participant feedback. The data revealed that although systems and structures were created to support multiple educational partners and those who attended found great value in them, low attendance and no touch points that followed attendees back to their schools and classrooms left the effectiveness of the structures in question. Therefore, restructuring would occur during the next school year to address these gaps, and a new cycle in their improvement process would ensue.

Breaking barriers in mathematics education is like breaking through a brick wall, best illustrated by Tim Robbins' character Andy Dufresne in the movie *Shawshank Redemption* (1994). Using a rock hammer, he steadily chipped away at his wall to create a tunnel that ultimately led to his freedom nineteen years later. To penetrate a barrier, a force greater than its strength/weight has to be exerted to cause a crack, fracture, or break. Thus, the work we do today may not result in the shattered pieces we would like to see immediately. However, each productive, concerted effort resulting in positive progress is the force needed to steadily chip away at the barrier to ultimately lead to our desired goal.

Join us for our 56th NCSM Annual Conference in October to hear more stories about this district and others as they work to break barriers in mathematics education. 🌸

*Susie Katt*, NCSM US CENTRAL 2 REGIONAL DIRECTOR

## MIGHT YOU JUST TRY IT?

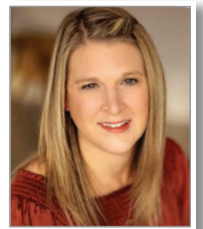
*The definition of bold is "showing an ability to take risks; confident and courageous."*

**Bold leadership in mathematics can appear in many forms.** It might be leading a state initiative that comes with some resistance, being a representative on a district-wide curriculum implementation and having to make difficult decisions, or co-chairing a committee within a building to tackle the real issues inhibiting progress made toward a school improvement goal. Bold leadership also includes the little things leaders do to overcome challenges they face within their routine work. I share a story from a building mathematics coach, a bold mathematics leader, to illustrate the little things mathematics leaders do can make a big difference.

"Four years ago, we found ourselves in a unique situation due to the pandemic. Teachers were

tasked with teaching children mathematics who were in their homes instead of classrooms. Among these efforts were creating lessons via slide decks to teach via Zoom. This was a "pandemic way" of communicating with students who were learning by way of an electronic device.

Our school has mostly returned to "pre-pandemic," ways. One might occasionally find a large bottle of hand sanitizer on a counter or a student in a mask. However, one remnant of pandemic teaching remains in several classrooms in our building: lengthy slide decks used to teach mathematics.



SUSIE KATT

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Susie Katt, NCSM US CENTRAL 2 (CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)

Our teachers at School X put a great deal of time and energy into creating slide decks while working remotely. They've held onto these as they are 'ready-made tools.'

Experienced teachers share the slide presentations with their newly hired teammates each year, as they see it as a way of supporting them during a time that can often be overwhelming. The new teachers appreciate having one thing "taken off their plate."

I recognized the use of premade slide decks was resulting in lessons that failed to utilize effective teaching practices for mathematics. The teacher's thinking often overshadowed and dictated student thinking. Students were "following along" rather than crafting mathematical ideas and understanding on their own. I knew if I didn't address this issue, I was silently supporting the use of lengthy slide decks.

During an individual meeting with a new teacher who was relying heavily on slides given to her by a teammate, I asked, "Might you just try teaching your lesson with only a couple of slides instead?" The teacher agreed to try and together they chose the four slides to use as supports for the lesson. Soon

thereafter, the teacher reached out to me and told her how "freeing" it was to teach mathematics with only a few slides. She said she could focus more on the lesson and worry less about the technology. The teacher also said she was putting more time into planning and thinking through the lesson than revising premade slides. The teacher has stayed the course and student learning has improved in her classroom."

This mathematics coach exhibited bold leadership as they were willing to address ineffective practices within the building. This intentional move made a difference not only in student learning but also in teacher practice. Getting one teacher to make refinements toward more effective practices is a big win as other teachers are likely to follow once they see how the change impacts teaching and learning mathematics.

I share this story of School X, as you may be experiencing a similar issue in your own context. But the overuse of slides isn't the only educational barrier that impacts mathematics teaching and learning that we face as leaders. Take a moment to think about your own work. When might you be a bold leader and ask, "*Might you just try it?*" 🌸

Sean Nank, NCSM US WESTERN 2 REGIONAL DIRECTOR

## WHY NOT?

*As I walked from my hotel to the Denver Convention Center on an unusually warm spring day in April 2013, one thought came to mind, "What exactly is NCSM and why am I presenting at a conference I never even attended!?"* But as soon as I walked through the doors to the registration area I felt an energy unlike any other conference. Don't get me wrong, the energy at educational conferences magnetically draws me in and fills me with the fortitude and resources to do what I need to do as an educator. But this was different. The offerings of presentations, topics, actionable and theoretical

conversations on leadership, and the ways conversations shifted in these moments from being a teacher to being a leader of teachers profoundly permeate who I am as a mathematics education leader to this day. So why not walk through those doors?

Looking toward the 2024 NCSM conference in Chicago, I am propelled by two powerful emotions. The first is that we have come full circle post-covid. Four and a half years after all the loss of interactions we experienced in 2020, we get to



SEAN NANK

(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

go back to my hometown of Chicago as we continue to reconnect with each other, shedding the residuals of an isolation we never knew was coming. Reflecting on what could have been in the spring of 2020, I am reminded that life is too short and time is too precious to stall or sugarcoat the work we need to do as mathematics leaders. So why not embrace the moments we will have together this September?

Our themes for the coming conference include disrupting the status quo, overcoming challenges, eliminating barriers that have strong roots in our educational system, and coaching as a means to break through barriers and support change. For me, these four themes point to one truth desperately needing to see the light of day which is that there is a diversity of diversities, and we will never truly disrupt, overcome, or challenge anything until we realize the power of our siloed conversations uniting with the fortitude of social justice to ensure the disruptions reach every single leader, teacher, and student. NCSM is a place to think about this diversity of diversities for our students. These include any aspect of who they are that may be used against their success including gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disabilities (including hidden disabilities) and all the discriminatory identifiers and practices we as educators have allowed to trickle and flood into our schools, classrooms, and communities. So why not talk about this diversity of diversities?

NCSM provides a space to remind us that as leaders we are responsible for the people who are responsible for our students (Sinek, 2016; Sinek, 2017). What this means in terms of our conference themes is taking the time to reflect on our challenges and status quo as it relates to the diversity of diversities within our teaching community because true and consistent change

occurs when we authentically treat our teachers as we want them to treat our students. So why not realize who, given our current role, is immediately in our charge?

Therefore, I invite our NCSM members to fully embrace the limitations of our individual epistemologically privileged positions, calling on the bravery of all educators to tell their story while those who outwardly have zero strikes against you (cis white males) listen and ask yourself in every session, "How can I truly be an ally in this work while forsaking a white savior complex?" Let us truly disrupt the status quo by overcoming our personal challenges so we can eliminate barriers for educators who are in our charge so we can support systemic and perpetual change. The only way we can do this is to use our stories as empathetic gateways (Nank & Murawska, 2024) so we can be connected with our shared story, linked with the threads of meaning so we can weave together a tapestry of protection as we embrace those who truly wish to change the educational system for the better. So, why not embrace our fellow leaders who truly wish to support our teachers to fundamentally change what it means to be a student of mathematics?

So, why not speak our truth? I encourage us all to push through the pause where we are on the verge of saying what we truly feel so we can find our allies come September and have our voices be heard, echoing with a passion that can only be felt through unity in the common goal of ensuring every voice matters. Because we will never truly value all student voices until we value all teacher voices, and we will never truly value all teacher voices until we value all leader voices. We often regret words unspoken, so why not push through the pause and speak the words that have the potential to change everything? 🌸

Nank, S., & Murawska, J. (Eds.) (2024). *Empathetic storytelling volume 1: Igniting change in education*. Critical storytelling series, volume 12. Brill Publishers.

Sinek, S. (2016, November 2). Most leaders don't even know the game they're in [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RyTQ5-SQYTo>

Sinek, S. (2017). *Leaders eat last: Why some teams pull together and others don't*. Portfolio/Penguin Publishing.

# NCSM BOARD

NOMINATE AN NCSM MEMBER NOW!

SELF-NOMINATIONS WELCOME.

NOMINATION PERIOD: OCTOBER 15–NOVEMBER 15, 2024

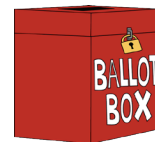
## NOMINATION PERIOD OPEN



### *Attention all mathematics education enthusiasts!*

Are you passionate about making a difference in NCSM and advancing mathematics education? Now is your chance to take action! Consider running for an open Board position or nominating someone who would be an incredible asset to the team. The open positions are:

- **Second Vice President**
- **Regional Director for Central 1** (Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, and Ohio)
- **Regional Director for Eastern 1** (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont)
- **Regional Director for Southern 2** (Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Tennessee, and Texas)



By stepping into these roles, you'll have the opportunity to shape the future of mathematics education, collaborate with like-minded professionals, and create meaningful change.

*To learn more about the open positions and how you can contribute,*  
visit <https://www.mathedleadership.org/election-candidates-2024/>.

Discover the incredible potential that lies within these positions and find out how you can be part of this transformative journey. Together let's make a lasting impact on NCSM and the world of mathematics education! The nomination period runs October 15–November 15, 2024 for the 2025 election cycle. #BeTheChange



Link to Call for Nominations Form:

<https://bit.ly/NCSM25-Nominations>

### *Candidate Eligibility*

Members eligible to be placed in nomination must be in good standing as of November 15, 2023 (one year prior to the nominations deadline). If you need to prepare yourself for next year's election: [Join or renew now.](#) 🌸

## NCSM AFFILIATES NEWS

NCSM IS PROUD TO SUPPORT OUR AFFILIATES AND THEIR MEMBERS IN THE IMPORTANT WORK OF BOLD LEADERSHIP IN MATHEMATICS EDUCATION. If you are a group of at least 15 mathematics education leaders in your state or region and are not yet affiliates of NCSM, we invite you to join and capitalize on the wonderful benefits of affiliate membership. You can learn more about current affiliates on the [Affiliates Page](#), including the [benefits of being an affiliate](#), and an [application for affiliate membership](#).

*If you have not already done so*, please complete the [Spring 2024 Affiliates Survey](#) to help the NCSM team better understand the strengths and needs of your affiliate. This information will help guide learning opportunities, collaboration efforts, and additional resource development to ensure that your affiliate is thriving and having an impact in your local community.

*Thank you* to those who joined the Summer Affiliates Virtual Meetup on July 31, 2024. This opportunity was a great opportunity to connect with other affiliate leaders across the country to share ideas, network, and learn about what's working for other affiliates.

*Finally, if you have not already done so, be sure to register* for the affiliates-focused pre-conference session at the 56th Annual NCSM Conference in Chicago. [Breaking Barriers to Effective Affiliate Leadership](#) is scheduled on Sunday, September 22 from 1–4PM and will feature inspiration, learning, and collaboration specific to the needs of affiliate

leaders. Current affiliate members can receive four free registrations to this pre-conference session, so bring a team and learn alongside us in September!

• • • • •  
*Need help* applying to be an affiliate or updating your officer information on the NCSM Website? Need a discount code for free registration for the Affiliates' pre-conference session? Feel free to email your 2023–2025 Affiliates Coordinator, [Joanie Funderburk](#), with any of these questions or others. 🌸

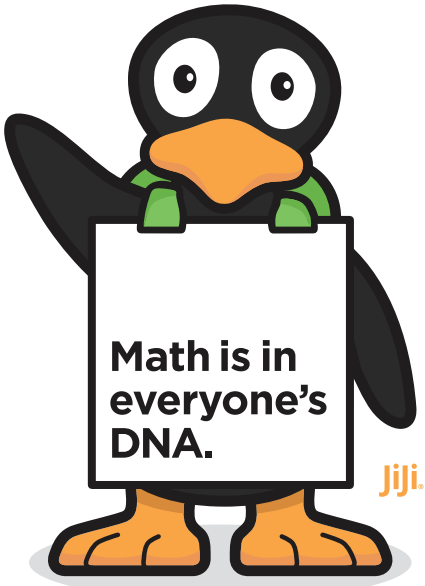
Joanie Funderburk | NCSM Affiliate Coordinator (2023–2025)

### WANT TO GET INVOLVED IN NCSM?

WE LOVE OUR VOLUNTEERS AND NEED VOLUNTEERS! CLICK HERE TO SEE ALL THE WAYS YOU COULD GET INVOLVED.

*Interested in joining NCSM?  
Need a Membership Application?*

Go to: [mathedleadership.org/membership/](https://mathedleadership.org/membership/)



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# UNLOCKING CONNECTIONS: NETWORKING AT THE NCSM ANNUAL CONFERENCE

As the countdown begins for the [NCSM Annual Conference](#) in Chicago this September, mathematics education leaders are gearing up for an event that promises not only professional growth but also meaningful connections. This year's conference, happening September 23-25, 2024, brings together mathematics education leaders from across the country, and the networking opportunities are nothing short of exciting.

## *Leadership Exchange: Where Insights Collide*

Imagine a space filled with seasoned mathematics education leaders—each with a wealth of experience, innovative ideas, and a passion for transforming mathematics instruction. The Leadership Exchange sessions provide precisely that. Here, participants engage in focused discussions with some of our major and spotlight speakers, including Dr. Peter Liljedahl, Dr. Timothy Kanold, and Dr. Juli Dixon. Whether you're a district supervisor, a curriculum coordinator, or a teacher leader, this is your chance to connect with like-minded professionals who share your vision. This is your time to ask questions and get connected to others interested in similar focus areas.

## *Pre-Conference Sessions: Dive Deeper*

Before the main conference kicks off, attendees have the opportunity to participate in specialized [pre-conference sessions](#) on September 22. These sessions go beyond the surface, delving into specific topics, research findings, and practical applications. Picture yourself in a small group, interacting with facilitators who are at the forefront of mathematics education. It's a chance to learn, ask questions, and build relationships with colleagues who share your interests. Workshops include:

- Breaking Barriers: Bold Leadership for High-Quality, Equitable Mathematics Teaching and Learning;
- Breaking Through Barriers: Coaching as a Lever for Supporting Change;
- Cultivating Mathematics Educator Wellness for Leading a Thriving Life; and
- Breaking Barriers to Effective Affiliate Leadership.

## *Regional Meetups: Connecting Locally*

Mathematics education leaders often face unique challenges based on their geographical context. That's where the regional meetups come in. Attendees from the same region can gather, exchange stories, and discuss strategies tailored to their specific needs. These meet-ups foster connections that extend beyond the conference. Who knows? You might find a mentor, a collaborator, or a lifelong friend. The regional meetups will happen the morning of Tuesday, September 24.

## *First-Time Attendee Orientation: Breaking the Ice*

Attending a large conference for the first time can be overwhelming. That's why NCSM offers a dedicated [orientation session for newcomers](#). Here, you'll learn the lay of the land, discover how sessions are organized, and meet fellow first-timers. You might even meet your Regional Director! It's more than just an icebreaker—it's an opportunity to form bonds with others who are navigating the same conference maze. So, if you're feeling a mix of excitement and nervousness, rest assured that you're not alone.

## *Volunteering: Giving Back, Connecting Forward*

Volunteering isn't just about lending a helping hand; it's also a chance to connect with your peers. Whether you're assisting with registration, ticket-taking, or helping at the membership table, volunteering puts you in the heart of the action. As you contribute to the conference's success, you'll engage with other participants, share stories, and build relationships. Plus, it's a great conversation starter: "I was part of the team that made this conference happen!" You can [sign up to volunteer here](#).

So, mark your calendar, pack your curiosity, and get ready to network. The NCSM Annual Conference isn't just about sessions and keynotes—though we're all excited for those! But it's also about forging connections that will shape your mathematics education journey. See you there—and if you [haven't yet registered](#), there's still time! 🌸



# JOURNAL OF MATHEMATICS EDUCATION LEADERSHIP

[HTTPS://WWW.MATHEDLEADERSHIP.ORG/PUBTYPE/JOURNAL/](https://www.mathedleadership.org/pubtype/journal/)



The Journal of Mathematics Education Leadership connects current research to practice on topics related to mathematics education leadership. Current and back issues are available open access at the link above.



## CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

The journal is looking for new content! All manuscripts undergo a double-blind, peer reviewed process. Manuscripts should be submitted to:

<https://forms.gle/QVNHyc4Yknp1Vkxx6>

Submissions should follow the most current edition of APA style and include:

1. A Word file(.docx) with author information (name, title, institution, address, phone, email) and an abstract (maximum of 120 words) followed by the body of the manuscript (max. 12,000 words)
2. A blinded Word file (.docx) as above but with author information and all references to authors removed.

For more information, check out the link to the journal's homepage above.

### Check out the Fall/Winter '23 Issue:

*Using Visual Representations: How Using Visual Representations May Provide Teacher Leaders with a Tool for Supporting Sustained Teacher Learning*

~By Nicora Placa, Karen Koellner, & Nanette Seago

Professional learning that focuses on representations can anchor teachers' sustained learning of mathematical practices. Learn more about a targeted intervention to support teachers' development of ambitious teaching practices.

*Math Teacher Learning Patterns: Characterizing Mathematics Teacher Learning Patterns Through Collegial Conversations in a Community of Practice*

~ By Joseph DiNapoli, Amy Daniel, Helene S. Leonard, Youngjun Kim, Victoria D. Bonaccorso, Eileen Murray

Noticing isn't just for teachers. This article highlights a research study that examined the role that collegial conversations play in supporting teachers' learning about ambitious mathematics teaching practices.



# PROFESSIONAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES AND UPDATES

## *Thank you to Mini-Conference Presenters:*

The expertise and knowledge played a pivotal role in the success of NCSM's first mini-conference. We would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to our presenters:

- Rachel Lou
- Yolanda Parker
- Lou Matthews
- Amy Lucenta
- Grace Kelemanik
- Jon Wray



Your contributions were invaluable and greatly appreciated.

We would also like to thank the participants who attended NCSM's mini-conference. Your engagement and enthusiasm helped make the event a resounding success.



## *Fellows Program:*

In 2023, the NCSM launched its new Fellows Program. During this pilot year, three emerging mathematics leaders were paired with three experienced leaders in mathematics education. The program began with a special pre-conference onboarding session at last year's annual conference in Washington, DC, where the Fellow-Mentor pairs were announced. Throughout the year, the entire group of Fellows and Mentors met virtually every other month for collaborative learning, while each Fellow-Mentor pair also held individual meetings to stay connected. As a stipend for their participation, NCSM covered the annual conference registration fees for both Fellows and Mentors for two years.

Thank you to the 2023–2024 pilot cohort for making this program a success:

- John Fischer (Fellow)
- Nancy Smith (Fellow)
- Johnny Stitts (Fellow)

- Dr. Rebecca Angus (Mentor)
- NCSM Past President Dr. John Staley (Mentor)
- NCSM Past President Mona Toncheff (Mentor)

Selection for the 2024–2025 Fellows Program cohort is currently underway, with over 20 applications received! If you are interested in becoming an emerging Fellow or serving as a Mentor for the 2025–2026 school term, please visit [mathedleadership.org](http://mathedleadership.org) for more information and application links.



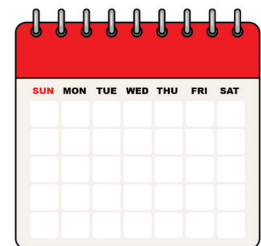
## *Virtual Coaching Labs:*

We are excited to announce the third year of our Virtual Coaching Labs! These sessions provide leaders and coaches with opportunities to hear from featured speakers, connect with peers, and practice their coaching skills. The labs will run from November 2024 through February 2025. Stay tuned for more details!



## *Coming Soon:*

NCSM is excited to announce the upcoming launch of our new learning management system (LMS). We understand that educators have demanding schedules, so our goal is to provide flexible learning opportunities that you can engage with at your convenience. Be on the lookout for upcoming asynchronous sessions tailored to accommodate your busy schedule. More information will be shared soon! 🌸



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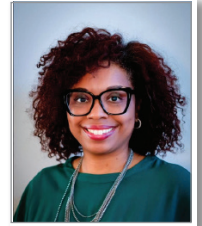


## LEARNINGS FROM LEADERS

NCSM Regional Directors from Eastern 2, Canada, and Central 1 have found leaders in their regions to discuss what motivates them, their mathematical leadership journey, their most memorable moments or mentors, and impactful professional development.

### US EASTERN 2 REGION

*Joneida Nelson-Generette* has been with Prince George's County Public Schools for 26 years. Her journey began as an elementary classroom teacher, where she dedicated eight years to teaching students in both the comprehensive and Talented and Gifted (TAG) programs, spanning grades 2nd through 6th. Driven by a passion for mathematics education, Joneida transitioned to the role of Math Specialist and TAG Coordinator refining her pedagogical approach and inspiring students to excel in numeracy and critical thinking. In 2012, Joneida embarked on a new chapter by joining the Elementary Mathematics Office as a Resource Teacher, supporting colleagues and enhancing instructional practices across the district. Her commitment to holistic education led her to briefly serve as an Instructional Specialist with the Literacy Office, broadening her perspective and skill set. Today, Joneida serves as Instructional Supervisor for the Prince George's County Elementary Mathematics office. Her vision and dedication to educational equity continue to drive positive change, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to thrive and see themselves as a mathematician. Read more about her dedication to mathematics below.



JONEIDA NELSON-GENERETTE

—Karen Riley Jeffers, E2 Regional Director

#### *What motivates you to be a leader in mathematics education?*

My motivation for being a leader in mathematics education stems from a deep belief in the beauty and power of mathematics. Mathematics is the language through which we understand and interpret the world around us. It serves as a critical tool for unlocking insights across numerous disciplines, from ecology and astronomy to biology, technology, economics, history, politics, art, and sports. Ultimately, my motivation lies in the belief that mathematics has the power to transform lives and shape the future. By equipping students with the skills and knowledge needed to navigate our current realities, I hope to contribute to the development of innovative thinkers and problem solvers who can make positive contributions to society. Through effective leadership in mathematics education, I seek to inspire curiosity, foster critical thinking, and instill a lifelong passion for learning.

#### *What model of professional development have you provided for teachers?*

The model of professional development I have

provided for teachers involves classroom coaching sessions that emphasize collaborative planning, observation, and analysis of student work. In these sessions, elementary mathematics teachers and administrators from across the district come together to plan a mathematics lesson, observe its implementation in a classroom setting, and engage in an examination of student work. The goal of this professional development experience is to facilitate a deeper understanding of content among teachers while equipping them with instructional strategies that provide opportunities for students to reason and make sense of mathematics. By having teachers engage in hands-on learning, the aim is to provide them with actionable insights and skills that they can apply in their own classrooms. Throughout the coaching sessions, emphasis is placed on fostering collaboration and reflection among teachers. By working together to plan and analyze lessons, teachers are able to draw upon their own expertise and knowledge. The inclusion of classroom observation provides teachers with the opportunity to

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## LEARNINGS FROM LEADERS (CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)

witness the implementation of instructional strategies in real time. This allows teachers to see firsthand how these strategies impact student learning, engagement, and achievement. Following the classroom observations, teachers examine student work to assess student understanding, identify areas for improvement, and inform next steps for instruction. Overall, this model of professional development is designed to be interactive, collaborative, and student-centered, with a focus on supporting teachers' knowledge, skills, and confidence to provide all students access to grade level content and increase achievement in mathematics.

*Who, if anyone, has served as your greatest mentor? Describe how this person has provided support and/or guidance.*

My greatest mentor, without a doubt, was my former supervisor, the late Judith Russ. Her dedication to mathematics education and her commitment to ensuring equitable access for all students left a profound mark on my professional journey. Judith's passion for mathematics was infectious, and it fueled her tireless efforts to advocate for high-quality instruction and resources for every student. As a role model, Judith showed me how to navigate the challenges of supporting a large district, balancing the needs of diverse stakeholders while staying true to our shared vision of equity. She emphasized the importance of engaging stakeholders at all levels, from teachers and administrators to parents and community members, in collaborative efforts to improve mathematics education. Through her mentorship, I grew not only in my abilities to support the district with mathematics education but also in my understanding of the broader implications of our work. Judith instilled in me a deep sense of responsibility to advocate for the needs of every

student and to work tirelessly to dismantle barriers to learning.

*What is the most important issue for leaders in mathematics education today?*

The most crucial issue confronting leaders in mathematics education today is the need to provide equitable access to high-quality mathematics instruction for all students, regardless of their background or circumstances. As mathematics leaders, we must recognize that underserved groups, including Black, Brown, and economically disadvantaged students, have often been disproportionately denied access to rigorous mathematics education. Such disparities perpetuate systemic inequities and deny opportunities for academic and professional advancement. At the heart of this issue lies the myth of "math people," which falsely suggests that mathematical ability is innate and predetermined. This harmful stereotype undermines the confidence and potential of students who do not conform to traditional norms of mathematical achievement and continues the cycle of inequitable teaching practices. Everyone is a "math person" and leaders must demonstrate that mathematics is a skill that can be cultivated through effective teaching and learning practices. By fostering a deeper appreciation for mathematics, leaders can empower individuals to not only excel academically but also to develop a deeper understanding of the world and make meaningful discoveries. Illuminating the richness of mathematics, showcasing its relevance and applicability in all aspects of life is critical for mathematics leaders to ensure that every student has the opportunity to develop their mathematical potential and thrive. 🌸

Interview by Karen Riley Jeffers | NCSM US Eastern 2 Regional Director

## CANADA REGION

**Richard DeMerchant** started teaching in 1994 in the Canadian Arctic just as residential schools were closing. He began working as a mathematics leader as a Territorial/Provincial mathematics curriculum coordinator in Nunavut, British Columbia. In 2011, he decided to return to the classroom as a mathematics middle



RICHARD DEMERCHANT

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school teacher in Victoria, BC. He is on the executive of the British Columbia Association of Mathematics Teachers (BCAMT), a Provincial Specialist Association which provides professional development and mentoring of teachers in our province. Currently, he is a school-based leader, a provincial mentor and a writer and instructor for a Queen's University Course for Teachers.

—Deanna Brajich, Canada Regional Director

*Richard, what motivated you to become a leader in mathematics education?*

When living in the Arctic, I was shocked when I encountered a pervasive belief that some of the indigenous students were incapable of learning higher-level mathematics. These comments frustrated and motivated me to seek opportunities to create change and promote equality for all learners. Students are my largest source of satisfaction and the reason I began my journey as a lifelong learner. This led me to work with the governments of Nunavut, Alberta and British Columbia revising the Western and Northern Canadian Protocol (WNCP) curriculum. This curriculum focused on mathematical processes which was a precursor to the competency-based learning now found as the central component of all British Columbia curricula.

*What are some of your strengths and challenges as a leader in mathematics?*

One of my greatest strengths is examining past and current research relevant to teaching and learning, and then incorporating it into my classes. Reflecting on my 30 years in education, I have seen many changes. Grounding my own journey in learning from experts in our field empowers how I teach and mentor others. Including important research while writing and instructing the *Leadership in Mathematics* course for Queen's University's Courses for Teachers has allowed me to mentor more teachers online. Staying abreast of current research enriches the workshops, book clubs, conferences and Math Circles I help organize and facilitate. There are so many issues for educators to consider nowadays. Equity encompasses a lot of different aspects: educators must consider equity in all that they do. For many people, the difference between equity and equality is not clear or can be seen as equivalent. Guiding teachers to reputable

research in light of their practice can be a catalyst for change.

On the flip side, the greatest challenge has been trying to make sense of all of the research in mathematics education over the past 20 years. The field has exploded with research that can contradict other published information. The chance to speak with other mathematics leaders such as colleagues on the BCAMT has been invaluable in my personal development and helps me look critically at other educators' assertions and beliefs. People can be too quick to state, "research says" without checking out their sources. As educators, we have a responsibility to not only use our personal experience but also to look beyond it and dig into the research and experiences of others to be life-long learners.

*Which initiative is your passion at the moment?*

The Math Circles approach to professional development provides educators an opportunity to grow their content knowledge in a safe and problem-based learning environment. I organize an event where educators from many districts come together for a meal, and to network and collaboratively work on a series of mathematical tasks. The official Math Circles network is based out of the United States. While we are not an official part of the network, we have been able to use the materials and develop a local group which comes together every couple of months. The approach works to explore Peter Liljedahl's *Building Thinking Classrooms* model of problem-solving.

*What words of wisdom would you offer someone interested in developing their leadership potential?*

When developing your potential as a leader, find your style. There is no need to mimic someone else as every person is unique and brings their own gifts

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## LEARNINGS FROM LEADERS (CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)

to mathematics education and leadership. The person who quietly supports other teachers in their school is just as important as someone working at the district or the provincial/state level. Indeed, for the teachers in the school, teacher leaders may be the most important. Every educator should be encouraged to explore different perspectives on equity and should work collaboratively to integrate them into their teaching practices.

I remain steadfast in my commitment to improving teaching and learning for teachers and students, and especially in helping create pedagogical change and promoting equality in our classrooms. 🌸

Interview by Deanna Brajich | NSCM Canada Regional Director

## US CENTRAL 1 REGION

*Darshan Jain*, an educator and leader in the field of mathematics education, currently serves as the Director of Mathematics at Stevenson High School in Illinois. With a profound dedication to improving mathematics education for all students and a passion for inspiring teachers, Darshan brings a wealth of experience and expertise to his role. Throughout his career, he has championed innovative teaching methodologies and curriculum development, aiming to empower students with the knowledge and skills necessary for success in mathematics and beyond. Under his guidance, Stevenson High School continues to thrive as a center of learning excellence, known for its rigorous academic standards and commitment to student achievement. Darshan's leadership is marked by a steadfast commitment to educational equity and a vision of mathematics education that prepares students for the challenges of the 21st century. Darshan is never complacent. He is always leading his own learning. As such, he stays ahead and can filter trends or fads to stay focused on quality curriculum, instruction, and assessment. He understands (has a 6th sense for) "what is coming" and is often able to identify what needs to be done collectively to best address the opportunities or challenges ahead.



DARSHAN JAIN

—Nicole Stommel, C1 Regional Director

*What is Darshan's greatest contribution to mathematics education or teachers within the department?*

**TEACHER A RESPONSE:** Darshan's greatest contribution to teachers within the department is his ability to ignite motivation and leadership among teachers. He is attentive to novice teachers and experienced teachers; all can continually learn and develop as practitioners. Darshan's core belief is in the capacity of others. Because of this, all interactions with Darshan are about development. You grow in perspective and capacity. In this, Darshan freely admits that the relationship is 2-way

and he grows with his interaction with teachers and staff.

**TEACHER B RESPONSE:** His contributions have brought coherence to professional development and helped stretch staff to see their skill grow in new initiatives. Some of these over the last decade include adopting mathematical practices as being explicitly teachable, developing common assessments and improving data centered-decision making, collaborating across districts to ensure middle school and high school programs are

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articulated, strengthening ways to improve students' sense of belonging in the classroom, addressing implicit and explicit bias within instruction and curriculum, adopting standards-based grading and reporting practices and centering classroom work on improving students' self-efficacy and agency; he is an instructional and focuses on how students learn and provides spaces to learn practical differentiation, student engagement, etc. There has been significant work around building an inclusive curriculum by de-leveling coursework and expanding opportunities for all students to value, scrutinize, and use data in meaningful and responsible ways.

In addition to the work he does within the mathematics department at Stevenson High School, Darshan is also a leader of the North Shore Mathematics Council (NSMC). NSMC is centered on the belief that leaders have tremendous capacity and talent in the area to improve students' learning experiences in mathematics. Darshan is committed to serving in any way he can to help other leaders grow professionally and achieve their goals. The work within NSMC is satisfying as it allows colleagues to build a collective vision for mathematics education of scale. Members build each other up to do the right work!

*What model of professional development has Darshan provided for teachers?*

The best professional development leverages the skill of teachers who exemplify the intended outcome of learning. PD is often informed by teacher leaders who help co-construct learning opportunities. PD is also within the "zone of proximal development"—it is just in the Goldilocks Zone—it stretches you beyond where you are, but reminds you have the skills and tools to grow.

**TEACHER RESPONSE:** Darshan provides a model of professional development that is focused on the immediate and forthcoming needs of our students. PD is collaborative, relevant, and applicable. There

is also professional development that is individualized for teachers' interests and areas of growth. This is often constructed through goal-setting (and goal progress) and observation feedback, as well as supported through workshops/conferences/continuing education.

*Darshan: What words of wisdom would you offer to someone new in the field or one who is interested in developing his/her leadership potential?*

Do it, but know your why. We all became teachers to work with students and help them achieve their goals. We want to make an impact. Leadership is nothing more than a mechanism to magnify that impact. Know your why and stay steady. Change requires an unyielding positive belief in the capacity of all people (students and teachers). Know that you are not alone. Lean into your network of colleagues and friends—commit to professional organizations to "fuel up" and to be encouraged to stay steady!

*What is the most important issue for leaders in mathematics education today?*

The easy answer is to list off initiatives that need attention (centering literacy in mathematics classes to accelerate the learning of multilingual learners, incorporating culturally relevant pedagogy, leveraging meaningful technology for learning, addressing absenteeism, building inclusive classrooms, establishing post-pandemic curriculum, etc.). There will always be initiatives and projects to work towards. The important question is to what extent are we positioned to address this? Alvin Toffler is attributed to saying, "The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn." Are we positioned to learn, unlearn, and relearn? 🌸

Interview by Nicole Stommel | NCSM US Central 1 Regional Director

## NCSM MISSION STATEMENT

NCSM is a mathematics education leadership organization that equips and empowers a diverse education community to engage in leadership that supports, sustains, and inspires high-quality mathematics teaching and learning every day for each and every learner.

## NCSM VISION STATEMENT

NCSM is the premiere mathematics education leadership organization. Our bold leadership in the mathematics education community develops vision, ensures support, and guarantees that all students engage in equitable, high-quality mathematical experiences that lead to powerful, flexible uses of mathematical understanding to affect their lives and to improve the world.

High-quality leadership is vital to this vision. NCSM is committed to:

### *Developing and Informing Vision*

- Provide leadership to influence issues and policies affecting mathematics education in ways consistent with the mission and vision of NCSM;
- Equip leaders to be critical consumers of educational information, research, and policy to become change agents in their communities;
- Support leaders to develop an actionable vision of mathematics instruction consistent with a view of mathematics as a sense-making endeavor.

### *Ensuring Support to All Stakeholders*

- Develop networking and communication opportunities that connect the mathematics education community, as well as the broader education community;
- Equip leaders with the tools to create and sustain systems that fully align with the vision of mathematics and mathematics instruction promoted by NCSM;
- Equip leaders with the understanding, knowledge, and skills to continue their own personal growth, support emerging leaders, and further develop excellence in mathematics teaching.

### *Guaranteeing All Students Engage in Equitable, High-Quality Mathematical Experiences*

- Provide advocacy and support regarding issues and policies affecting mathematics education in ways consistent with the mission and vision of NCSM;
- Provide resources for implementation of research-informed instruction to ensure students engage in relevant and meaningful learning experiences that promote mathematics as a sense-making endeavor;
- Advocate for each and every student to have access to rigorous mathematics that develops their understanding, skills, and knowledge, along with the confidence to leverage their learning, in order to improve their world.

## ABOUT YOUR NCSM INSPIRATION!

The purpose of your NCSM *Inspiration!* is to advance the mission and vision of NCSM by informing the membership of the on-going activities of NCSM, by providing up-to-date information about issues, trends, programs, policy, and practice in mathematics education, and by promoting networking and collaboration among NCSM members and other stakeholders in the education community. *Inspiration!* is published electronically four times a year—fall, winter, spring, and summer—and is available to NCSM members only via the NCSM Website, as a benefit of your NCSM membership.

*Inspiration!* seeks articles on issues of interest to mathematics educators, especially K–12 classroom teacher leaders. All readers are encouraged to contribute articles.

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