



Coaching Chronicles

News and Events for EMC Project Participants

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The PI's Corner: Common Core, Change, and the EMC Project

BY JOHN SUTTON

On behalf of the EMC PIs and project staff, I am grateful that I have the honor of welcoming all of our EMC participating coaches, teachers, and administrators back to the 2011-12 school year.

This past summer, as part of its research agenda, the EMC Project conducted two separate week-long professional development workshops for half of our participating coaches. These workshops focused on eight domains of coaching knowledge and provided participants with numerous opportunities to share their experiences and deepen their understanding of approaches to coaching. Of course, it is also our hope that these events will help participating coaches better support the teachers they work with and enhance student learning opportunities in mathematics.

As you may recall, the research emphasis for the EMC Project is, in part, to determine *how specific types of knowledge may change a coach's effectiveness in helping teachers with their mathematics instruction*. We believe the summer workshops allow coach participants to refine their understanding and skills related to the types of knowledge, while allowing the EMC Project to move the research agenda for-

ward with quality data for analysis. On that note, we thank all of our coaches and teachers for your continued commitment to completing surveys and online instruments.

While we work diligently to try to control conditions related to the research, there are, as you may well imagine, numerous "impacting variables" that present challenges to our researchers—such as changes in personnel at schools and districts, and modifications in roles and responsibilities for both coaches and teachers. In addition to these institutional variables, there are other initiatives underway within states and nationwide that we must also recognize and acknowledge as impacting the environment in which each of you are working—and the research we are conducting.

One of the most important of these, and clearly one that is influencing policy and practice at the national, state, district, and school level, is the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics (CCSSM) and the accompanying assessments. [Forty-four states](#) have to date adopted the CCSSM, launched in 2010 by the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices. Of the seven states in which



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EMC participants work (CO, ID, MT, NE, ND, WA, and WI), all but two (MT and NE) have adopted the CCSSM. (Montana is currently in the public comment phase of the state's process in considering adoption.)

As I am sure you are aware, the U.S. Department of Education has funded two consortia to develop assessment instruments for CCSSM: the [Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers](#), or PARCC, and the [SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium](#), or SBAC. All but one of the states with participants in the EMC Project (Nebraska) are working with either the PARCC or SBAC assessment projects, or both. Both consortia have released draft assessment frameworks or

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Professional Development Report: Inside “Coaching Knowledge”

Twenty-nine EMC coaches traveled to Bozeman, Mont., in July for their first EMC professional development workshop—an important component of the project’s research goals. During two separate five-day workshops, coaches from all seven project states received instruction and engaged in group discussion in Coaching Knowledge.

“The workshop included

EMC research objective: determining what types of knowledge, and in what combination, make a coach most effective in shaping a teacher’s mathematics knowledge and use of standards-based practices.

This summer’s first workshop was held on July 18-22 and was followed by an identical workshop on July 25-29. The five-day events covered



(Clockwise, from lower right) Coaches Becky Berg, Jill Sanders, Eileen Zombro, and Liz Ramsay review a recent article from the coaching literature.



One daily activity for coaches attending EMC workshops is the preparation of coaching action plans for the coming school year.

reading coaching cases, watching coaching and classroom video shorts, and examining participating coaches’ individual needs,” says Beth Burroughs, EMC co-PI and one of the workshop’s instructors. “This provided for a rich environment that allowed us to delve deeply into important issues and choices that coaches make.”

Over the five-year study, EMC will offer two types of professional development to all project coaches: Mathematics Content and Coaching Knowledge. These PD workshops form the heart of the

topics including how teachers learn, student learning and teacher practices, “how to talk and how to listen,” and relationships and leadership.

“It was a lot to digest this week, but all of it was so beneficial,” said one coach (in an anonymous evaluation) who attended this summer. “I will be rereading, organizing, and using everything you’ve presented and all that I’ve learned.”

Another coach added, “[The workshop] really helped me feel confident in my own coaching abilities.”

According to the project’s research design, coaches were sorted randomly at the start of

the project into two PD groups. Group 1 received its first professional development in Summer 2010, in Mathematics Content, with its second PD session (in Coaching Knowledge) already scheduled for next summer. Those coaches recently confirmed their plans to attend.

July’s participants, Group 2, will attend their second EMC

workshop, in Mathematics Content, during the summer of 2013. And continuing this fall, all coaches in both Group 1 and Group 2 will take part in their online Moodle forum for support and discussion during the year as a supplement to the summer sessions. (See “EMC Coaches to Step Up Online Interaction This Year” in this newsletter.) ▲

Our thanks to the 29 coaches who attended professional development:

Linda Achondo Mattawa, WA	Angie Lee Idaho Falls, ID	Julle Schmalz Grand Junction, CO
Ruth Baardseth La Crosse, WI	Shannon Loree Meridian, ID	Wristine Senecal East Helena, MT
Becky Berg Billings, MT	Liz Matthews Gallatin Gateway, MT	Robin Wacha Fargo, ND
Tammy Bevel Meridian, ID	Jane McGill Papillion, NE	Edl Wagner Browning, MT
Susie Bollinger Mattawa, WA	Karl Moscon Pocatello, ID	Abe Wallin Coeur d’Alene, ID
Krista Campos Pocatello, ID	Robin Nansel Lame Deer, MT	Linda Wieland Grand Junction, CO
Michele Carney Meridian, ID	Liz Ramsay La Crosse, WI	Angel Zickefoose Billings, MT
Gay Lynn Erb Meridian, ID	Rebecca Roesener Idaho Falls, ID	Liz Zitterkopf Grand Junction, CO
Carla Haas Grand Junction, CO	Jill Sanders Billings, MT	Eileen Zombro Bozeman, MT
Danielle Inserra Papillion, NE	Casey Schlenz Meridian, ID	

EMC COACH PROFILE: JOHN NIELSON

Name: John Nielson

District: Bozeman Public Schools, Bozeman, MT

EMC Teachers: Kristi Gaines and Kelly Hayden, Hawthorne Elementary; and Kathi Tullis, Irving Elementary.

Family: Wife, Rochelle; son, Joren (4); and daughter, Sena (“oh so close to 2”)

Years as a teacher: 13 in public schools

Years as a coach: 4, including this year

What do you find most rewarding about being a coach? “I am always amazed by the humanity of teachers—how much they care and how hard they work for kids, families, their colleagues, and friends. So it is the relationships that I make with those people that are absolutely the most rewarding. I also treasure the look on teachers’ faces, not unlike the kids in the class, when they learn something new or see the impact of some objective come to fruition. It is a truly satisfying and amazing job that I feel lucky to have.”

Favorite pastimes away from school: “Top of the list is kid time. Being a dad is the very best thing. I also have a need to be outside—skiing, hiking, camping, backpacking, paddling, biking, throwing or kicking a ball around. My kids and wife feel the same, and therefore spending time with them is really my favorite pastime.”

What are you reading right now? “I used to laugh at that question and say, ‘I don’t read books; I have little kids!’ But I have recently read books for myself like *The Last Stand: George Bird Grinnell, the Battle to Save the Buffalo, and the Birth of the New West* by Michael Punke. Professionally, I have just read one from my favorite neurologist gone middle school teacher, Judy Willis: *Teaching the Brain to Read: Strategies for Improving Fluency, Vocabulary, and Comprehension*.”

One goal for this school year: “This is the year to take the relationships that I have and push my teachers to more meaningful and impactful coaching visits. My schools and teachers are ripe for this.” ▲



Your EMC Calendar for 2011-12

Here’s a quick look at what’s coming up in the EMC Project for the entire 2011-12 school year. If you ever have questions related to the project, just send us an e-mail or check the “Participants” page on our Web site.

“We’re so grateful for the time and effort that our coaches and teachers put into their EMC participation,” says EMC Project Director James Burroughs. “We want to thank everyone in advance for another successful year.”

Coaching sessions begin now: Project coaches should plan now to complete a total of *eight* three-part coaching sessions with each project teacher during the 2011-12 school year, or about one per month. Four of these sessions should cover mathematics content focused on number sense and operations. Remember, a single coaching session is made up of a pre-observation conference, an observation or model lesson, *and* a post-observation conference. Coaches: Be sure to keep notes on your sessions, which will help you fill out the EMC Coach Reflection and Impact Survey at the end of the school year. Questions? Contact us at emc@math.montana.edu.

Teacher Needs Inventory surveys ready for use: Project teachers took the “Teacher Needs Inventory” last spring as it pertains to this school year. Coaches already have received one-page summary reports of the surveys, so now is a great time for coaches and teachers to use this important tool as a starting point for planning the year’s sessions.

Online coaches’ forum continues this fall: Coaches

in both professional development groups will continue activities this year as part of their EMC online community, offering support and discussion as the year progresses. (See “*EMC Coaches to Step Up Online Interaction This Year*” on page 4.)

Assessments for coaches currently in progress: Earlier this month, coaches began their latest round of three annual online assessments. Their fourth, the Coach Reflection and Impact Survey, will again go out to coaches at the end of the school year. The usual stipend will apply.

Teacher observations start in March: Next spring, project staff will again contact all teachers to arrange a classroom observation at each teacher’s convenience. (See “*Teacher Observations: What Are They For?*” in the [Fall 2010 edition](#) of the newsletter.) Please note that teachers just joining EMC will be observed *twice*: once this fall before most of their coaching begins and again near the end of the school year.

Assessments for teachers return in April and May: Like last spring, project teachers will take all four of their online assessments near the end of the school year. The usual stipend will apply.

Professional development for “Group 1” coaches: Coaches in Group 1 (PD 2010/2012) already have received and confirmed their assigned dates for their second and final EMC professional development workshop, this time in Coaching Knowledge. Information about travel and other workshop details will be available in the spring. ▲

Did You Know?

The EMC Project has participating teachers in more than **80 schools** across seven states?



EMC Coaches to Step Up Online Interaction This Year

This year all of our EMC coaches will again be interacting online using the Moodle discussion forums. Group 1 coaches who attended their Mathematics Content workshop in 2010 will continue participation on their dedi-

ated site, while Group 2 coaches who attended their workshop this summer in Coaching Knowledge will begin more extensive interaction on their site.

Coaches in Group 1 explored different approaches to a mathematics problem during this online discussion last winter.

EMC staff members Beth Burroughs and Clare Heidema will facilitate the Group 1 activities, with continued opportunities for coaches to examine the teaching and learning of number sense and operations, as well as to consider coaching scenarios that will prepare them for next summer's PD on Coaching Knowledge. Jennie Luebeck will facilitate the Group 2 site, where coaches can further explore the craft of coaching and get advice from project staff and peers.

Last year's Moodle activities for Group 1 provided a wide range of ways to engage with number sense and opera-

tions. Coaches read and responded to articles, discussed situational coaching dilemmas, and solved math problems. "These activities will continue this year in both Moodle groups," Luebeck says.

"Every month we'll launch a new topic, problem, or scenario with reflective questions to motivate the discussion."

Three-Part Support

The Moodle site offers three distinct support services: monthly activities, Q&A discussions, and resources.

The monthly activities generate ongoing discussions designed to extend a coach's knowledge base. "We'll use coaching and mathematics articles, realistic dilemmas, and real-life situations that our coaches provide as the basis for these discussions," Luebeck explains. "We'll also return to our summer workshops as a source for good material. For example, coaches this summer spent a short time reviewing the results of their Teacher Needs Inventories. As the school year progresses, coaches may want to talk more about the

differences between teachers' and coaches' perceptions of teacher needs."

The second level of support is all about answering coaches' questions. There is a Moodle discussion dedicated to asking questions—and providing answers—as they unfold over time. "Perhaps you wonder if one of your colleagues has a good method for scheduling pre-observation meetings, or for effectively using e-mail to do this," Burroughs says. "Important strategies like these that were touched on during the summer can be explored more thoroughly on Moodle."

For even more immediate needs, there is a "Just-in-Time" discussion where coaches can ask questions of the "Help!" variety, seeking quick feedback. Everyone in a coach's

Moodle group will be subscribed to this discussion, which means that more than 30 people will be able to see each question and offer whatever help they can. "This is a powerful feature of belonging to a supportive online group," Luebeck says.

Moodle is also a great resource clearinghouse for information on mathematics and coaching. The resource sections contain references to materials used in the workshops and in monthly discussions, uploaded articles and tools, and blogs where

coaches can add their own favorite items and Web links.

"With this variety, Moodle has something for everyone, regardless of your experience and time limitations," Luebeck says. "And we always welcome comments and ideas to make the Moodle sites more user-friendly and informative. We want our coaches to view their Moodle experience not as a chore, but as an opportunity to access a whole network of educators who are interested in what they do and who share their concerns."

So ... let's get started! Facilitators will keep a low profile throughout September, allowing coaches to complete their online EMC assessments. But watch for the launch of the first monthly discussion in October, and please ask questions, share resources, and

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GETTING THERE: The EMC Moodle sites can be found at <http://moodle.math.montana.edu>. Coaches are pre-enrolled in one of the two "EMC Professional Development" courses (ignore others). Your original username was your e-mail address; your password was your last name with the first letter capitalized. If you've changed your login but have forgotten it, follow instructions on the Login page to request any forgotten item. ▲

The PI's Corner

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content specifications worthy of investigating for insight into how CCSSM might be assessed.

What this means for the EMC Project, and the schools and districts in each of the seven EMC states, is that changes are coming. There is potential in these initiatives to bring about changes in curriculum, instruction, and assessment, whether your state has adopted CCSSM or not. For many, the way we look at instruction is changing. Michael Shaughnessy, president of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), recently put it this way:

“With respect to instruction, implementing CCSSM’s Standards for Mathematical Practice will call for engaging students much more in such processes as:

- problem solving;
- communication of mathematical ideas in meaningful classroom discourse;
- making connections across topics and to contexts;
- reasoning about and justifying solutions;
- developing a positive disposition toward mathematics;
- creating and sharing multiple representations of mathe-

matical concepts and procedures; and

- modeling mathematical processes.”

(From “*CCSSM and Curriculum and Assessment: NOT Business as Usual*” in the May 2011 edition of NCTM Summing Up.)

This is an exciting time to be actively engaged in mathematics education, coaching, and work with coaches.

Coaches in the EMC Project are in a great position to provide the guidance, insights, and strategic recommendations to assist teachers in modifying instructional approaches to better engage students in the mathematical practices identified above. Those instructional approaches contribute significantly to the research that EMC is conducting on coaching knowledge and its impacts on teaching practice. So I hope you will continue to embrace changes taking place within your schools and districts, as well as statewide and nationally, as we all strive to help our students be successful in developing mathematics knowledge and skills.

Thank you in advance for your continued commitment and hard work during the coming year, and please let us know at any time how we can support you in the outstanding work you do. ▲

EMC TEACHER PROFILE: JAMIE REED

Name: Jamie Reed

School: Carriage Hill Elementary, Grade 3; Papillion–La Vista Public Schools, Papillion, NE

EMC Coach: Jane McGill

Principal: Kelcy Tapp

Family: “I’m a newlywed. My husband, Kenny, and I got married on July 31, 2010. We just celebrated our one-year anniversary with a weekend in Kansas City.”

Years as a teacher: 2, including this year

What’s one way that your coach has helped you in your mathematics classroom? “Jane is there for me when-

ever I have a math

question or concern. She has given me great feedback on how I can improve as a math teacher—for example, by being more of the facilitator by asking questions and letting the students be the ones leading and showing examples. She has also taught me to become more reflective as a math teacher. She has shown me ways that I can get my students to use multiple strategies in math, and how to teach my students to become better communicators on how they solved a problem.”

Favorite pastimes away from school: Being with family and friends, scrapbooking, playing sports, and traveling

What are you reading right now? *Today I Made a Difference*, edited by Joseph W. Underwood. “It’s a collection of stories from teachers who go that ‘extra mile’ to make a difference in their students’ lives. It’s a positive, uplifting book, especially on those days when you need a pick-me-up.”

One goal for this school year: “One professional goal for me this year is to have 95 percent of my students proficient in math and reading before moving up to fourth grade. I’m a strong believer that if your students aren’t where they should be, then as a teacher I’m not doing my best, and there is always room for improvement.” ▲



Have You Moved?

We send you several important e-mails throughout the year. Please be sure that our e-mails make it to your in-box and not your junk mail! (It may help to add emc@math.montana.edu to your address book.) And PLEASE, if you ever have any changes to your e-mail address, your name, your school location, or especially your home mailing address (where we send your stipends), please send us a quick note to let us know. *The Post Office will NOT forward or hold stipend payments.* ▲

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