



Coaching Chronicles

News and Events for EMC Project Participants

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University of Idaho



The PI's Corner: Classroom Visits Enrich More Than Just EMC

BY ELIZABETH BURROUGHS

Welcome back, EMC Project coaches, teachers, and administrators! All of us at EMC hope you had a wonderful holiday season, and we wish you the very best start to 2013.

It's already that time of year again when we anticipate our annual project visits to EMC teachers' classrooms. Sometime in March or April you will hear from your EMC district coordinator about scheduling a classroom observation. These visits are an important part of our research in coaching as we observe how your classrooms are affected by your continuing work with your mathematics coach. (See "Teacher Observations: What Are They For?" in the [Fall 2010 edition](#).) We are so grateful for your ongoing invitations to spend time with you and your students—and experience the dynamic environment that is K-8 mathematics!

But our gratitude goes

beyond the goals of the EMC Project, important and far-reaching as they are. Our time spent in your classroom also enriches our *entire perspective* on the work we do with K-12 teachers. In addition to the research we do in coaching, our classroom observers are also professional developers, consultants, and teachers of pre-service teachers. What grounds us in these other aspects of our careers is the time we spend in K-12 classrooms. Our experiences in real classrooms, with real teachers (like you!), give us credibility when we talk to our future teachers or in-service teachers in other districts about what they need to know to be successful at teaching math in schools. It gives us firsthand evidence about what mathematics concepts students struggle with, and it lets us target our activities for professional development.



Dr. Elizabeth Burroughs
EMC Co-Principal Investigator
Montana State University

But most of all, our time spent in your classrooms keeps us connected to the thing that brought us to this profession in the first place: our love of kids and our desire to understand and influence the ways that we teach students mathematics to give them the most opportunities to be critical thinkers, problem solvers, and compassionate and productive adults.

So before we even start this year's classroom visits, we send to each of you our sincere thanks for so generously sharing your classroom with us. It makes us better at what we do. See you soon! ▲

EMC Moves Into Eighth State

The EMC Project leaped eastward this fall when a coach's relocation to Atlanta, Ga., created a unique opportunity to establish the study there. Rebecca Roesener, formerly an EMC coach in Idaho Falls, Idaho, moved to Atlanta last summer and began in the fall as a fifth-grade teacher at Warren T. Jackson Elementary in the Atlanta Public Schools district. As part of her new job, she also coaches the school's teachers in mathematics one day a week. (See our profile of Rebecca on the following page.)

"Rebecca approached us with the idea of continuing her EMC work with three teachers at her new school, and we gladly pursued the opportunity," says Project Director James Burroughs. "We're all very excited about working with the team at Jackson Elementary for the project's final two years."

The new arrangement makes Georgia the eighth state where EMC operates. The other seven states are Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Washington, and Wisconsin. ▲

Related News in School Mathematics

A new report from the Conference Board of the Mathematical Sciences titled *The Mathematical Education of Teachers II* highlights the role of professional development and acknowledges the work of elementary mathematics specialists, such as coaches, in the mathematics education of teachers. This represents a significant evolution from the report's first edition, published in 2001, which focused more on the preparation of new teachers.

From an EMC Project perspective, the report is a welcome affirmation that our study and its research questions on the effectiveness of coaching are focusing attention on all the right places, particularly in the context of the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics.

Although the 100-page report is intended primarily for mathematicians, administrators, and policy makers, anyone can download it at www.cbmsweb.org/MET2. ▲

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EMC TEACHER PROFILE: TROY GIBSON

Name: Troy Gibson

School: Morris Schott Elementary, third grade mathematics and science; Wahluke School District, Mattawa, Wash.

EMC participant since: November 2009

EMC coach: Linda Achondo

Principal: Missy Stevenson

Family: "I just celebrated my 10th anniversary with my beautiful wife, Mae-Anna. She has been hugely supportive in my life and career. In fact, she is one of the reasons I got into this profession. I am also surrounded by educators. My dad was an art and P.E. teacher. Mae-Anna's brother currently teaches fifth grade, her older sister is a teacher, and her dad retired a few years ago and was a math and science teacher—like me!"

Years as a teacher: 9

What do you find most rewarding about being a mathematics teacher? "That moment in a student when they can look at a math problem and realize, 'I can do this!' They overcome 'the fear' and are able to use a number of strategies to really look at a problem. Sometimes it's a struggle, but when it happens there is nothing better."

What's one way that your coach has helped you in your mathematics classroom? "Linda has been positive in all aspects; I'm not sure what I would do without her sometimes. She always gives me constructive feedback about my lessons and the students' engagement and learning. She also provides me with clear data to use that drives my instruction."

What, in your opinion, is one of the biggest challenges that we face as mathematics educators today? "Probably my biggest challenge—and I have a feeling other math educators feel the same way—is getting students to overcome the crippling feelings of disliking, fearing, and 'not getting' math. That's the first step. The other problem I face, especially in a population of ELL students, is how to read and break down a story problem. Many seem to get hung up on words that they've never heard of before and then shut down."

Favorite pastimes away from school: "I love Washington with all my heart. It's perfect for all of my favorite things: camping, hiking, swimming, looking at wildlife, and traveling, for example. I am also a huge fan of baseball. My wife and I try to catch as many Seattle Mariners games as we can. Our goal last summer was to attend one game for every month during baseball season. We almost had it! We were not able to go to one in October. Next year, I guess."

What are you reading right now? "*The Hobbit* by J. R. R. Tolkien (again!) in preparation for the film version that's out. I'm also reading *Jackie Robinson: A Biography* by Arnold Rampersad."

One goal for the new year: "Well, considering I now have that 'math fear' myself of the Common Core, I want to go into next year knowing as much I can." ▲



EMC COACH PROFILE: REBECCA ROESENER

Name: Rebecca Roesener

District: Atlanta Public Schools, Atlanta, Ga.

School: Warren T. Jackson Elementary School

EMC participant since: September 2009

EMC teachers: Hillery Hogan, Diane Preiss, and Stephanie Shumacher, all at Jackson Elementary

Principal: Dr. Lorraine Reich

Family: Married with two adult children and four grandchildren: a 3-year-old granddaughter, Isabel; a 2-year-old grandson, Chandler; two 1-year-old grandsons, Eli and Hunter; plus a fifth grandchild on the way. All children and grandchildren live in Idaho Falls, Idaho.

Years as an educator: "This is my 19th year as a professional educator. I spent

15 years in the classroom and taught all grades K-6, mostly as a multi-age teacher. I was an instructional coach for Idaho Falls School District 91 for three years, coaching teachers in all subjects, K-12, before I moved to Atlanta last summer. Here I teach gifted and talented fifth graders in an all-day, one-day-a-week pull-out program."

You've set up a new coaching program at your school, on top of your classroom duties. How does it work?

"When my principal found out about my math coaching background, she immediately adjusted my schedule so that I teach students Monday through Thursday and have Fridays available for coaching the teachers in my school. I've been working on establishing a relationship with the teachers in a couple of ways. First, for two weeks in a row in October, I went to the weekly grade-level planning sessions for grades 2-5 and provided math in-service training, engaging the teachers in math activities and introducing them to models students can use for solving math problems at their grade level. In the midst of that, I also provided a school-wide in-service training session on place value and on number sense and subitizing. From that, teachers have begun to ask for



my help with resources, planning, and coaching. In addition to the three teachers I'm coaching for the EMC Project, I also coach several kindergarten teachers on a weekly basis, and I've coached several other teachers on a less formal basis."

What do you find most rewarding about being a coach? "My favorite part of my job is coaching. The teachers here are very professional and are always looking for ways to improve instruction. They've been extremely receptive and positive about what I have to offer as a math coach. What I find most rewarding about coaching are the stories teachers share with me about how excited their students are about math now that they've made some changes in the way they teach. A kindergarten teacher told me that when her students were writing a class letter to Santa, instead of asking for toys or candy they asked for 'more math activities with harder numbers.'"

What, in your opinion, is one of the biggest challenges that we face as mathematics educators today? "I think one of the biggest challenges is the commonly held opinion that it's OK to not understand math. In our society, few would openly admit that they're illiterate, but it's socially acceptable to proudly announce that one is not 'good at math.' I think that sends the message that math isn't important or particularly useful."

You moved to an entirely new region of the country. Any culture shock that you've had to adjust to? "In moving to Atlanta, there was less culture shock than I expected. Atlanta is very cosmopolitan and doesn't feel 'Southern.' I love that there are people from all over the world living here and representing their various cultures in fun and intriguing ways."

Favorite pastimes away from school: Family, travel, working crossword puzzles, exploring Atlanta.

One goal for the new year: "Bringing the EMC Project to Atlanta was one of my goals, but another goal of mine this year is to bring the Developing Mathematical Thinking/Mathematical Thinking for Instruction program [based at Boise State University] to Georgia. I hope to be teaching the MTI class to my faculty by February at the latest. My long-term plan is to help [Director] Jonathan Brendefur bring the whole program to my district and then to the state." ▲

Your EMC Calendar for Spring and Summer 2013

Here is a quick summary of EMC Project activities for the last half of the 2012-13 school year. If you ever have questions, just send us an e-mail or check our Web site.

Coaching sessions continue: Project coaches are well on their way to completing a total of *eight* three-part coaching sessions with each project teacher during the 2012-13 school year, or about

one per month. (See "*Your Coaching Sessions This Year: Eight Would Be Great!*" in the [Fall 2012](#) edition of the newsletter.) At least four of these sessions should cover content focused on number and operations. Coaches: be sure to keep notes on your sessions, which will help you fill out the EMC Coach Reflection and Impact Survey in May.

Teacher observations start in March: This spring, project staff will again contact all teachers to arrange a class-

room observation at each teacher's convenience. (See "*Teacher Observations: What Are They For?*" in the [Fall 2010](#) edition of the newsletter.) Teachers who joined the project last fall will be observed *twice* this year: once at the time they joined and again this spring.

Assessments for teachers return in April and May:

Like last spring, project teachers will take all four of their annual online assessments near the end of the school

year. The usual stipend will apply.

Professional development for "Group 2" coaches: Coaches in Group 2 (PD 2011/2013) have already received and confirmed their assigned dates for their second and final EMC professional development workshop, this time in Mathematics Content. The workshop will be held in Denver on July 15-19, 2013. Information about travel and other workshop details will be available in the spring. ▲