

Coaching Chronicles

News and Events for EMC Project Participants

In This Issue:

- Clare Heidema Retires This Month
- Meet Two of Our Participants
- Your EMC 2014 Events Calendar
- Some Resources You Can Use

The PI's Corner: EMC Enters the Home Stretch

BY ELIZABETH BURROUGHS

Happy New Year to our EMC Project coaches, teachers, and administrators! All of us at EMC hope that this January finds you refreshed (and invigorated by the cold) and looking forward to the second half of the school year.

This is the fifth spring of our five-year study, and we're nearing the finish line. We'll be in your classrooms to conduct our final visits in the coming months. Sometime in late February or March you'll hear from your EMC district coordinator about scheduling our annual classroom observation. As always, we are so grateful for your allowing us to observe your classrooms. We always enjoy being there while students are engaged in mathematics! I have grown so much as an educator as a result of the many hours I've spent in EMC classrooms, and I know I speak for all of the district coordinators when I say *thank you* for letting us learn from you and your students.

One thing that becomes clear as we near the end of

the EMC Project is our finding that *time spent in the coaching process matters*. When coaches and teachers spend time together, working on the classroom goals that they set together as a partnership, positive changes in teachers' classrooms result. That idea may seem intuitive, but until now, there were no large-scale, quantifiable research results to back it up. Of course, time is a precious commodity to all of us, so our EMC research team is glad to reassure you that the time you spend working on the coaching process makes a real difference. We encourage you all to keep up with at least monthly coaching sessions through this school year. Thank you for all of the efforts you make to schedule those sessions.

Finally, what happens from here? After we conclude this spring's data gathering—that last round of observations and surveys—our research team will work through the summer and fall to finalize our analysis, submit our report to the National Science Foundation, and



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

complete papers for publication in peer-reviewed journals. We'll maintain the EMC website indefinitely, and we hope you'll continue to visit it to keep up with project results. We'll also be presenting at some national conferences, including NCTM in New Orleans this spring (please stop and say "hi" if you're there too). And we're looking at ways to package and continue offering our professional development for mathematics coaches, so feel free to let us know of individuals or districts who might be interested in coaching PD.

Thanks again for all you have done, for all you're doing now, and for everything you will contribute in these final few months. ▲



University of Idaho



Celebrating Clare Heidema's Storied Career

By Dr. John Sutton
EMC Co-Principal Investigator
RMC Research Corporation

After a long and rewarding career in mathematics education, Clare Heidema recently announced her retirement, effective at the end of January 2014. Most recently Clare has worked as a senior research associate at RMC Research Corporation in Denver. She has been a member of the EMC Project staff since the study's beginning in 2009.

I have had the good fortune to work with Clare since 1991, and I am honored to include her in my community of friends and associates. She has taught me so much, and she has made many contributions to mathematics education over the years through the Comprehensive School Mathematics Program (CSMP), the National Diffusion Network, and the Eisenhower Regional Consortium, and by authoring *Teaching Reading in Mathematics*, *Algebraic Thinking*, and numerous other articles and publications.

Clare has been involved in mathematics education re-

search and development work through a number of organizations and efforts, beginning in the mid-1970s as part of the development team for the CSMP, originally at Southern Illinois University, which then moved to the Central Midwest Regional Education Laboratory in St. Louis. Clare became the director of CSMP in 1979, moving the program to the Mid-Continent Regional Educational Laboratory in 1984, where she remained director until 2003. Since joining RMC Research in 2003, Clare's work has focused on offering mathematics content workshops and facilitating Lesson Study for several MSP projects in North Dakota, Wyoming, and Colorado; developing materials for the Doing What Works website for the U.S. Department of Education; working with the Mathematics and Science Research Alliance for the Central Regional Education Laboratory; and providing professional development and engaging in research for the EMC Project.

As part of her significant contributions to EMC, Clare worked with project coaches

as an instructor at all seven professional development workshops offered in mathematics content and coaching knowledge during the four summers of 2010-13. "Clare was such an important part of developing and delivering EMC's groundbreaking professional development," says EMC Co-Principal Investigator Beth Burroughs, "and I know she made a lasting impact on the careers of our coaches who were part of those remarkable learning communities."

Since the project's beginning, Clare also has provided teacher and coach orientations, and conducted annual classroom observations, among dozens of EMC participants in school districts in Aurora, Colo.; Grand Junction, Colo.; and Atlanta, Ga. Despite her retirement from day-to-day work, Clare has graciously agreed to complete her final

EMC classroom observations this spring.

Clare's work has influenced mathematics education internationally as well as across the



Clare Heidema was an instructor at all seven EMC professional development workshops.

United States, helping teachers and students deepen their understanding of mathematics content and connections across multiple domains in every context in which mathematics is taught. Her depth of knowledge, passion, and advocacy for high-quality mathematics teaching and learning will be greatly missed. We wish Clare the very best in her retirement. ▲

Your EMC Calendar for Spring 2014

Here is a quick summary of EMC Project activities for the last half of the 2013-14 school year. The invaluable contributions of our 200+ project participants will officially end with the conclusion of this school year! If you have any questions related to the project in these final months, just send us an e-mail or check the "Participants" page on our

Web site. Thank you in advance for your time and hard work as we bring EMC to a successful close.

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 2013-14 school year, or about one per month. (See "*Your Coaching Sessions This Year: Eight Would Be Great!*" in the [Fall 2013](#) edition.) At least four of

these sessions should cover mathematics content focused on number 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 (CRI) this spring.

Teacher observations begin in March: This spring,

project staff will contact all teachers to arrange their final classroom observation at each teacher's convenience. (See "*Teacher Observations: What Are They For?*" in the [Spring 2013](#) edition.)

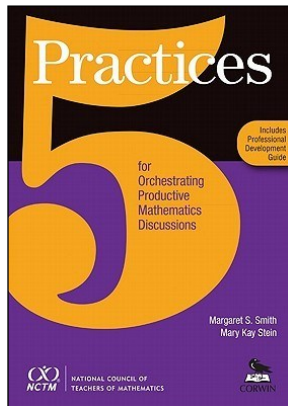
Assessments for teachers return in April: Like last spring, EMC teachers will take all of their annual online assessments near the end of the school year. This year all assessments will go out on April 1. The usual stipend will apply. At the same time, coaches will complete their final round of the CRI. ▲

Recommended Resources

Here are two books about mathematics teaching that I'm enjoying and finding valuable. Both give great examples of

what standards-based mathematics teaching can look like in classrooms.

—Beth Burroughs



- *Minds on Mathematics: Using Math Workshop to Develop Deep Understanding in Grades 4-8* by Wendy Ward Hoffer (2012). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- *5 Practices for Orchestrating Productive Mathematics Discussions* by Margaret S. Smith and Mary Kay Stein (2011). Reston, VA: NCTM and Corwin Press. ▲

EMC TEACHER PROFILE: KRISTI GAINES

Name: Kristi Gaines

School: Meadowlark Elementary, Grade 2; Bozeman Public Schools, Bozeman, Mont.

EMC participant since: October 2009

EMC coach: John Nielson

Principal: Sharon Navas

Family: “My husband, Eric, and I have been married for 13 years. We have a 9-year-old son, Keelan, and a 6-year-old daughter, Kenna. We also have a 13-year-old Australian Shepherd named Tucker.”

Years as a teacher:

“I’ve worked for the Bozeman School District for 13 years. I’ve worked in special education, kindergarten, first, and—new this year—second grade.”

What do you find most rewarding

about teaching mathematics? “I’ve started each of the last four school years with a student interest inventory, including a question about their favorite school subject. Of those 80-some beginning-of-the-year questionnaires, only 3 students have reported math as their favorite. When we repeat this inventory in the spring, the number of students who report math as their favorite subject is always noticeably higher. There’s nothing more rewarding to me than helping young students discover a love for math!”

What’s one way that your coach has helped you in your mathematics classroom? “John Nielson, coach extraordinaire, is wonderful at helping me with self-reflection in order to create better lessons and more authentic assessment tools. He coaches like we all strive to teach—focusing on the positive.”

What, in your opinion, is one of the biggest challenges that we face as mathematics educators today? “I find that educating families about the changes that are happening in math education can be difficult. They are used to repetitive worksheets coming home from class, as well as for homework. Our shift to math games for homework is receiving some resistance since parents need to be hands-on with these activities. We are keeping communication lines open to help them understand these changes, and many are now seeing the benefits of these activities that reinforce math talk and deep thinking.”

Favorite pastimes away from school: Running, hiking, camping, skiing (downhill and water), gardening, reading, soccer/football/ballet mom.

What are you reading right now? “I just finished Sandra Brown’s *Low Pressure*. Now I’m on to a professional read: *Putting the Practices Into Action: Implementing the Common Core Standards for Mathematical Practice, K-8* by Susan O’Connell and John SanGiovanni.”

One personal or professional goal for the new year: “They are one and the same: *Balance*.” ▲



Have You Moved?

We send you several important e-mails throughout the year. Please be sure that our e-mails make it to your inbox 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 let us know. *The Post Office will NOT forward or hold stipend payments.* ▲

Did You Know?

About **74 percent** of current EMC Project coaches and teachers have been part of our five-year study since the beginning in Year 1 (2009). More than **82 percent** of our coaches and teachers have participated since Year 2 or before. Now that’s dedication! *Thank you!*



EMC COACH PROFILE: KAROL GUSTIN

Name: Karol Gustin

District: East Helena School District, East Helena, Mont.

EMC participant since: September 2009

EMC teachers: Tracey Rogstad, K. D. Jones, and Katy Hauer, all of Radley Elementary.

Family: “My husband, Jake, and I have been married since 1976. Time flies when you’re having fun! We have two wonderful and humorous young adult sons, Brian and Daniel, and a beautiful and talented daughter-in-law, Kathryn” (*at left of picture, with Brian*).

Years as an educator: “I taught for 18 years—one in my home state of Wyoming and 17 in Montana. The last 11 years I worked as a coach in grades 2 through 5. I started as a reading coach and transitioned to an instructional coach for all subjects.”

You officially retired at the end of 2012-13, though you generously agreed to continue to coach with EMC as a volunteer during our last project year. We’re very grateful for that. So, how’s retirement going? “So far, so good! I enjoy working

part-time as an educational consultant, which leaves me time to read, walk, or go skiing in the middle of the week. Imagine that!”

What do you find most rewarding about being a coach? “The time I spend with the project teachers *reflecting* after a math lesson about student work, student progress, student misconceptions, and teacher effectiveness has been very rewarding. In my opinion, reflective practice has incredible power to improve both student and teacher performance. One other rewarding experience is observing students who share their thinking with one another, offering different solutions for solving problems. I believe we will see more students in the future who *do not* say, ‘I hate math.’”

“On a related note, I would like to thank all who have been involved in the EMC Project. I believe strongly in the effectiveness of professional development, and it helped me improve as a mathematics coach. Students succeed when we continually work

to improve our practice.”

What, in your opinion, is one of the biggest challenges that we face as mathematics educators today?

“One of the biggest chal-

lenges, as one of the teachers I work with has said, is meeting the needs of students with their varied levels of math skills. I agree, and I think we need to pursue different ways we can meet their needs.”

Favorite pastimes away from school: “I am there! I really enjoy gardening, camping, golfing, and spending time with family and friends, and I look forward to exploring this beautiful country—and beyond.”

What are you reading right now? “I just read *The Round House* by Louise Erdrich, a very well-written novel. It’s a powerful narrative, told through the voice of a ‘coming-of-age’ Ojibwe boy, rich with life’s humor, love, injustice, and passion. I also just ordered *Uncomplicating Fractions to Meet Common Core Standards in Math, K-7* by Marian Small. I ordered this book because students struggle with fractions, and I want to become more knowledgeable about teaching and coaching this concept.”

One personal or professional goal for the new year: “As an educational consultant I am hoping to make a difference in the knowledge and practice of writing for students and teachers this year. Students’ understanding of a topic increases when they take time to explain their thinking through writing.” ▲



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On the Web:

www.math.montana.edu/~emc

Contact Us:

EMC Project
Montana State University
Department of Mathematical Sciences
Wilson 2-299 B
Bozeman, MT 59717-2400

Phone (406) 994-3911

Toll-free (877) 572-5032

Fax (406) 994-1789

E-mail: emc@math.montana.edu