

Math Notes

Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative

January 2011

AMSTI Update

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Can it really be January? This school year is flying by, and it doesn't seem as if I have had the time to savor the moments. That may be because my oldest son is a senior in high school this year, and this last year with him at home is going by much too quickly.

My days at work seem to be flying by as well. Between meetings and workshops, it doesn't seem like I've been able to be in schools as often as I would like. I am now serving 40 schools, and I have been to all of them at least once and many more than once. If I haven't made it back to you yet, I am working on it!

Please let me know if you need anything. My schedule is nearly full for January and February, but I still have lots of open days in March, April, and May.

We were able to offer training this fall to newly hired teachers and those who needed training on a different grade level. We took our traditional 10 day training and turned it into four longer days (including one Saturday). Instead of participation in group presentations, each teacher trained this fall is receiving twelve hours of embedded coaching as they teach from the AMSTI units. I am excited about spending

extended time in their classrooms! I always learn from working with other teachers.

We are planning some type of training this summer, but dates and guidelines have not been finalized. We are not taking on any new schools again, but we want to keep your faculties fully trained as new teachers are hired and as teachers change grade levels.



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Prayer Request

<http://www.caringbridge.org/visit/joycewaid>

Many of you may know my dear friend, Joyce Waid. She is the director of the AMSTI site at Athens State University. She taught at Locust Fork High School before becoming an AMSTI Math Specialist at UNA. She also trained 6th grade math for

us for several years.

She was recently diagnosed with lung cancer. She is currently at MD Anderson in Houston to explore treatment options. Please keep her and those who love her in your thoughts and

prayers. If you would like to keep up with her progress (and be inspired by her amazing attitude), she has set up a Caring Bridge site at the link above.



THOUGHT FOR TODAY

Good teaching is an act of hospitality toward the young, and hospitality is always an act that benefits the host even more than the guest.

from
The Courage to Teach
by
Parker Palmer

Common Core Standards

In November, the Alabama State Board of Education adopted the Common Core State Standards in math and English. The standards were created by the Common Core Standards Initiative, a coalition created by the National Governor's Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers. There has been a lot of debate and controversy about the standards.



The following statement from the Common Core Standards website (<http://corestandards.org/frequently-asked-questions>) answers the question “**Why do we need educational standards?**”

We need standards to ensure that all students, no matter where they live, are prepared for success in postsecondary education and the workforce.

Common standards will help ensure that students are receiving a high quality education consistently, from school to school and state to state. Common standards will provide a greater opportunity to share experiences and best practices within and across states that will improve our ability to best serve the needs of students.

Standards do not tell teachers how to teach, but they do help teachers figure out the knowledge and skills their students should have so that teachers can build the best lessons and environments for their classrooms. Standards also help students and parents by setting clear and realistic goals for success. Standards are a first step – a key building block – in providing our young people with a high-quality education that will prepare them for success in college and work. Of course, standards are not the only thing that is needed for our children's success, but they provide an accessible roadmap for our teachers, parents, and students.

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The Alabama State Department of Education website has some information about how this adoption will affect our state.

- Dr. Morton's recommendation concerning CCS <http://tinyurl.com/4cj9875>
- Draft version of the proposed Alabama Common Core Standards <http://tinyurl.com/4rbw9jq>

This is a long document (124 pages), but there is a one-page overview of the standards for each grade.

As more information becomes available to me, I will pass it on to you.

eLearning Courses Spring 2011

(info from Tom Dreilinger)

Courses begin February 2nd and you can enroll now through STIPD. Last semester we offered 85 sections of 45 different courses to over 1,500 teachers and hope to do even better this coming semester – but that will be determined, in large measure, by you!

We are offering some new and some revised courses that you might be interested in:

[Differentiating Instruction to Accom-](#)

[modate Learning Styles](#)

[Finding the Best Educational Resources on the Web](#)

[Data-Driven Decision Making](#)

[Classroom Assessment Enhanced by Technology](#)

[Smart Board-You Have One, Now What Do You Do With It?](#)



We also try to offer at least one course for elementary school teachers in ELA (Vocabulary this term), math (measurement) reading, and science (life) as well as at least one course for middle/high school teachers in the same disciplines.

For more information and other courses, go to

<http://elearning.alsde.edu/>

Small Groups—Not just for elementary any more!

It's funny how life works out sometimes. Right before Christmas, I was visiting schools and someone asked me for help setting up small groups in their classroom. The next place I visited was Monrovia Middle School; and as I looked around Cortney Owen's classroom, I noticed posters on her wall organizing her small groups! I asked her to tell me how she set hers up, and she credited her mother, a second grade teacher, with helping her create a plan.

She begins class with a mini-lesson, then as students begin working on their new task, she and her inclusion teacher each pull a group aside to work with at a small table.

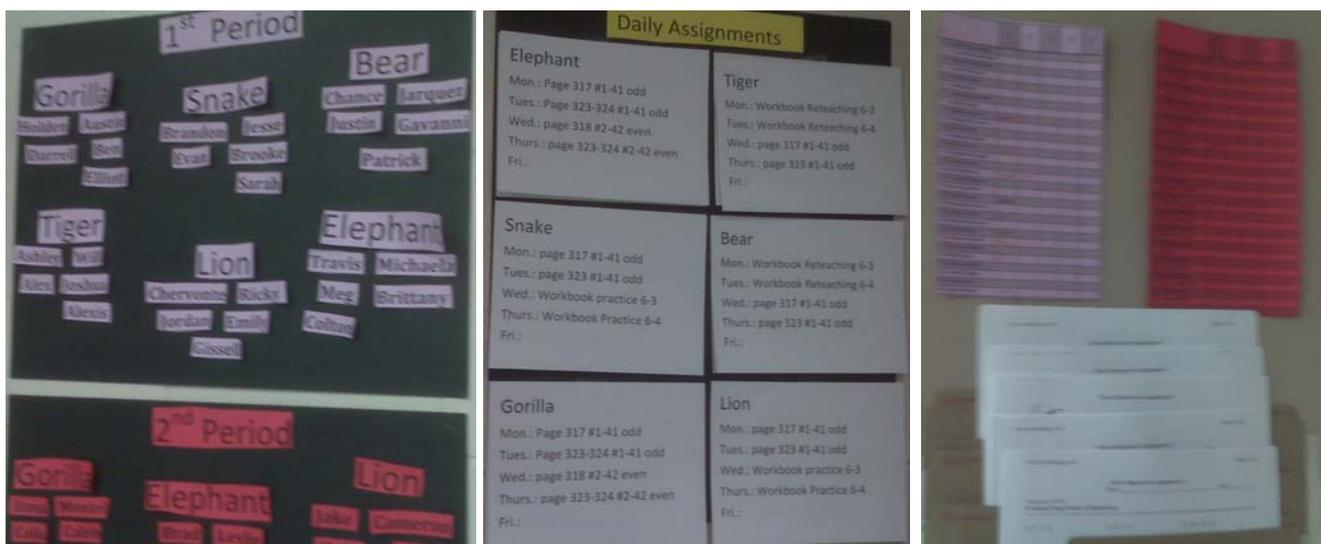
Her small groups are flexible, and she adjusts them regularly after assessments. She said that the students do not know which groups are high or low because they change so often. The picture below left shows how she posts group names. The names have tape on the back so she can adjust as needed.

The center picture shows group work for the week. If the work is completed in class and behavior is acceptable, students do not have additional homework. She says this motivates students to work well at their seats while she is working with a small group. If individual students need extra motivation to stay on task, the left picture shows how she

documents and assigns additional practice.

Students use individual white boards to practice skills in small groups. She says that all students are scoring well on assessments because she is able to ensure through her small groups that all understand each concept.

Cortney started using small groups with her two 8th grade inclusion classes, but they have worked so well that she is now using them in all of her classes.



Upcoming Events

T3 Regional Conference - Cumming, GA

Friday, March 18—Saturday, March 19, 2011
8:00 am—5:00 pm (Eastern Time Zone)
Contact: kprice@forsyth.k12.ga.us

T³ Regional Conferences are open to all middle grades to University educators interested in using educational technology to enhance the teaching and learning in Mathematics and Science. Attendees can count on networking with teachers from across the region; learning from experienced educators; and participating in hands-on and demonstration sessions for new and experienced educators. You'll receive lots of great classroom activities and ideas, along with the latest news on TI technology.



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www.amsti.org

The mission of the Alabama Math, Science and Technology Initiative is to improve math and science education in Alabama so all students develop the skills necessary for success in post secondary studies and the work force.

Lesson Ideas

The recent movie *Gulliver's Travels* may not be a critical success, but the book has several passages that are great for engaging students in math. I recently taught 6th graders a lesson on **scale drawing** based on Gulliver's description of six-inch Lilliputians. Email me if you would like a copy of the lesson!



We have been re-organizing the math warehouse, and guess what we still have...old CMP books! We will not be putting these into new kits, so Rachel has asked us to find them new homes! Now, unlike kittens that no one wants, these books have some treasures in them! We have student

and teacher books of nearly all the old units. If you know which book(s) you want or which concept(s) you would like to find lessons for, let me know and I will see what I can do.

Fundamentals

One of our favorite resources is the Fundamentals Series by Origo Education. This set of books contains games designed to allow students to practice basic skills in a fun setting. For more information and sample lessons, see

<http://www.origoeducation.com/fundamentals/>