



KENTUCKY CENTER FOR MATHEMATICS

Good News from KCM Coaching 2008-2009

Good News from Raceland-Worthington Schools

Math Coaching Journey

By Denise Justice, Senior Math Coach



What would make anyone who has 28 years teaching even think of changing jobs?! I could retire, I must be crazy. When I saw the application for the new math coaching positions for the state of Kentucky I thought this was something that our district needed. Did I think that I would have a chance at this position? Crazy me.

I took this application to our superintendent at the time and explained this was something we needed in our district. We are a small school district that has a family atmosphere. I knew that I taught junior high and that students were coming to me without the math skills I wanted them to have before they would go on to high school. I had also taught high school math, so I knew where they needed to go. The superintendent thought this was something our district needed. So he asked if I wanted to do this. I knew there were others in the district who would want to do this. I left it in his hands.

After school was dismissed for the summer I was called into the superintendent's office and told congratulations I would be the math coach for the entire district. I was overwhelmed with this and I would do this for half of the day and teach for the other half. I left his office with a sense of pride that he thought so much of me as a teacher leader. I was always the one who opened my mouth and said what I thought.

While on vacation I received a phone call asking me to teach a class of gifted students two days a week and I could have the rest of the time to coach in the district. Yeah, that would be easy.

Because of family plans I chose to train in Bowling Green, almost 4 to 5 hours away from home. There was no one I knew. I was the only person from our area who was going to coach and I was little scared—a lot, I think I should say. The Drury Inn was my home for a week and then on Friday evening I traveled back home and then back to Bowling Green on Sunday afternoon after church. Two long weeks.

As I write this tears fill up my eyes as to all I learned and experienced. The first week was good—we had Marilyn Burns training—but the Cognitive CoachingSM changed my life.

I thought of myself as a good teacher but the coaching training took me to a place where I listened to people and students. I mean I really listened. I learned how to communicate with others. Sometimes communicating is not the correct word but for teachers to have someone who THEY can talk to and not repeat their thoughts to others is a benefit anywhere.

My door is always open; sometimes people just come in and sit. It takes awhile for people to start talking. These conversations were about life,

school and any problem them had.

Granted I know that math coaching should be about math but sometimes personal problems or life gets in the way of teaching and sometimes students' learning. I have found myself using coaching questions on my principals, superintendent and sometime others I am involved with outside of school. Coaching has given me the ability to read what people want to say and help guide them to make their own decisions.

The first week of Cognitive CoachingSM training was just the icing on the cake—more training would help me tweak my skills. Yes, I was the one who cried part way home after the meetings because Cognitive CoachingSM made me a better person.

I have friends and fellow teachers that say something has changed in me because I would get mad at some of the things that would happen. Today I look back and think how stupid I was. Life is about being comfortable with yourself, cleaning out your boat and living each day as it was your last. Each of the follow up meetings is always a time for me to recharge.

Granted I am not yet the best at coaching conversations and I am still learning to follow the maps as we were taught but the skills I learned are invaluable.

The first year of coaching was probably the hardest because teachers did not know what I was to do. Am I a spy that was sent from central office or what? It took till Christmas of the first year until teachers were comfortable with me. If I were observing their classes I could not write anything down because I would take it and show someone. After Christmas of the first year things started to change teachers would let me into their room to work with students, ask for different teaching techniques and let me do some modeling with their classes. Was I afraid? You bet ya.

The second year teachers were very comfortable and principals wanted me to be in their buildings more. Sometimes they would seem offended that I

was not spending time with their teachers. Being with the whole district is quite a job. Of course it did not hurt that their math scores came up and they attribute that to me. I cannot take that credit I was not in the math classes that much, but I can say the teachers talked math. The superintendent relied on me more and more to help make changes in the schools like making sure one elementary school purchased a good math series for their building.

The third year in I love what I do, not that I have not but this year I have started focusing on children. My meaning of this is to make sure every morning each child gets a HELLO and a smile. Here is our future. Granted I am doing more coaching conversations with the teachers and more profes-

sional developments but our children are my concern. This school district is my home. I could retire yes, but I love the teachers and the children.

If just listening to one teacher or student will change the way they feel or help with a problem everything I did, every tear I shed in learning how to do Cognitive CoachingSM has been worth it. If today I would have to go back into the classroom I would do it with a smile. These 3 years have been difficult at times but I would not trade them for anything. I thank my superintendent, school board and the teachers of our district for letting me be the Math Coach of the Raceland Worthington School District.



The Impact of the KCM Coaching Program

A letter from Frank Melvin, Superintendent of Raceland-Worthington Independent Schools

I believe the addition of the math coach, Denise Justice, has been a definite plus for our District. Her support of our teachers (modeling, math strategy training, etc.) has benefited all the teachers she touches and consequently has accelerated student performance in many math deficit areas. We believe her continued presence, coupled with the energy she brings to the program, will bring about increases in our math index levels at our schools.

Denise has supported our District K-12 and is a member of our District Leadership Team. We meet at retreats and on campus to discuss the needs of our students and to map out strategies to address our needs as demonstrated through data analysis, walkthroughs and staff and student input.

Our Primary students exiting the third grade in the 07-08 school year had an index of 92 on the state test. Denise constructed GMADE walls at

Campbell and Worthington Elementary Schools. These walls were used to mark the gains and/or losses of each of our students in these facilities. The GMADE assessment has supporting libraries that provide assistance to address our each of our students deficits as pin pointed on the assessment. This assessment is used across our district to allow our staff to see the long term affect of our strategies on each of our students. She does the analysis of the data generated by our GMADE assessments and distributes the results to our staff to inform our instruction.

Denise provides training for our math teachers at each of our three schools. She models lessons for our teachers and provides strategies and techniques for our staff to use in their classes. Denise is working with our staff on the development of math open-response questions for our students. Our intermediate school, Worthington Elementary, has benefited from her

training our staff in this important area. She provides activities and strategies for the intermediate teaching staff to use in the classroom. We employ Accelerated Math and Study Island at Worthington to supplement and assist in diagnosing and supporting the students' needs.

We have employed a Daytime ESS teacher at our high school, Raceland-Worthington High School, to assist our students experiencing difficulties in math in the classroom as the concepts are being taught. Denise assists our ESS teacher by providing student data that narrows the scope of need for each of these students. She attends contextual math trainings with our high school math department. These teachers are involved in a three year intensive training via the K-8 Math Alliance. The department attends math academies during the summer and has supporting follow up meetings throughout the year. Carnegie Learn-

ing provides the training to assist the teachers in truly understanding the subject matter they teach.

As mentioned previously, Denise is involved with providing the math training for our teachers K-12. Their earlier reluctance to welcome her into their classrooms has all but disappeared as they have found her to be an important asset to their understanding of math instruction. This year finds her doing planning and reflecting conversations with math teachers at different levels. She has made herself available to parents to assist them in helping their children with their math. I find that Denise is an integral part of this District's future in moving toward proficiency in math.



CATS Scores are on the Rise at Worthington Elementary

A letter from Michael Mullins, Principal

Mrs. Justice has worked with my school for the last three years. In that time, our CATS test scores have gone from 65 to 77, to 83. She has worked with the teachers showing them different ways of presenting lessons; she has modeled lessons for them, and lead profession development sessions for them. In short, as a Math Coach, she has been a tremendous asset to my school and the district. It is my sincere hope that funding will continue for this program.



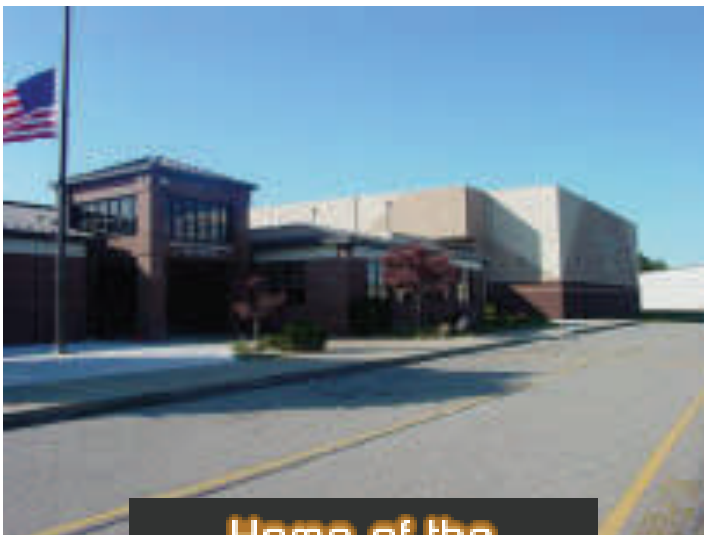
Campbell Elementary School



Worthington Elementary School



Raceland - Worthington High School



Home of the
Raceland Rams