

Got Cred? (Or Why Would Anyone Be Interested in What This Author Has to Say?)

Because this math teacher/educator/author believes that when it comes to evaluating a math program, the resulting student achievement associated with that program isn't just an important factor, it's the only important factor. In the final analysis, what students understand about mathematics, what they can do within the field of mathematics and how they feel about the discipline are the only things that count (pun intended). The latest and most expensive technologies do not ensure the highest levels of student achievement, nor do learning labs, modeling, individualized learning, small group learning, project-based learning, block scheduling, interventions, tutorials, etc., etc., etc. Just as a stockpile of quality ingredients doesn't guarantee an excellent meal, the individual components of a math program do not guarantee a math program characterized by consistent student proficiency.

So, let's turn this analysis around and look at it from the opposite direction. Let's look at a math program that has resulted in students achieving at the highest possible levels not just year after year without exception, but decade after decade, and let's examine what components are associated with that achievement.

My teaching career at the Great Salt Bay Community School (GSB) began in 1975 and ran through the 1997-98 school year. GSB is a typical Maine K – 8 public school with a population of about 450 students. During that time, I was the sole math teacher for all students in grades 6 – 8, with classes averaging about 40 – 50 students per grade level*. Using conservative estimates, I taught well over 20,000 math classes during my tenure at the school. And while I am truly grateful and humbled by awards and recognition that I received across my teaching career, I'm most gratified by the achievement of my students during my time at the school.

In 1995, I received the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST). As a result of that award, several news articles were published both locally and statewide. In an article published in The Maine Sunday Telegram, the coordinator of the Maine state assessment program at the time, Dr. Brud Maxy, states that after the first 10 years of state testing, my 8th grade students scored at the highest possible level every single year - and that our school was the only school in the state to do so. Additionally, during this same timeframe, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the nation's report card, showed Maine's 8th grade student scores to be at the very top of all US states. Further, my 6th – 8th students consistently garnered awards from the Central Maine Math League, The New England Math League and the MathCounts program. The latter two programs known for the rigor of their mathematical challenge. My students' work was used as examples of proficiency in the national New Standards portfolio project.

I provide these findings only to document the consistently high achievement of my math students across many years, and that achievement was based on the materials and methods detailed within the complementarymathematics.com website. Schools, teachers and students who fully understand and implement the materials and philosophies which comprise the website will realize similar student results.

*During my final three years at GSB, I taught only 7th and 8th grade math classes and was a half-time school administrator.