



AMTRA Newsletter

President's Message

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Some of us are new teachers trying to find our way in this profession while completing grad school and studying for certification exams. Some of us are trying to balance the time we spend with "our kids" in the classroom and our own children at home. Some of us are once again fitting book groups and date-nights into our schedules because the kids are finally off at college. Some of us are figuring out how to work full-time and take care of a family member in need.

While we are all performing different juggling acts, I know we have one common professional goal for this year – becoming more effective at meeting the needs of our students and more efficient in how we do that.

Many of us work towards this goal through quick conversations with our peers over the copier, in the hallway, or during lunch. "I want my students to be able to....how do you do it?", or "Hey – that looks like a great activity, can you tell me more about it?" When I was

student teaching my mentor told me that the best teachers were the best thieves – I didn't get it. Now, after being in a classroom for a dozen years, I understand. I have observed that effective and efficient teachers understand collaboration makes us all better.

We design learning activities

where kids have to work in groups and explain concepts to each other because we know they will produce higher quality work than if they worked in silence on their own. The same

theory applies to teachers. We create more effective learning activities when we get to bounce ideas off each other, question each other's methods, and really think about and explain exactly why that particular activity is the best way for our students to learn. It also helps us become more efficient. Why create the

wheel on your own when someone down the hall has already started it rolling?

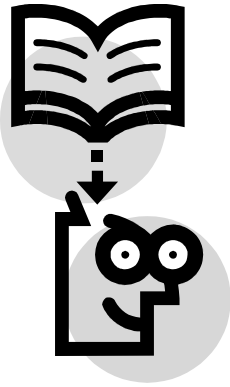
I always look forward to our Annual Spring Conference because it gives me the opportunity to collaborate with effective and innovative teachers who I don't get to see on a regular basis. Whether I am attending a workshop given by someone new to AMTRA, or by a favorite presenter that I make sure to see at any opportunity, I always pick up something new that makes me more effective or more efficient in my own classroom.

Come join us in March – together we will learn new ways to simplify our juggling acts!

Carrie Gunther



From the Editor



Last newsletter, I was inspired by Anne Marie Stocklader's reviews of the books she'd read over the summer break. It got me thinking about my own reading habits and professional growth. I am a PD junky. I attend every professional development opportunity I am able to. It truly had never occurred to me that I could or should be reading about Math, though.

This summer I was in a chain book super store in Pittsford, NY looking at books with my daughter who is 6. I decided to bargain hunt in the used book section and stumbled upon the science section. I don't know why, but I was surprised by the number of Math books there were. I scanned the titles and decided that most of the books were above my ES/MS math comfort level, at least right now. Two titles caught my eye: [The Number Devil: A Mathematical Adventure](#) by Hans Mangus Enzensberger and a book on the history of Mathematics.

[The Number Devil](#) is a whimsical walk through Mathematics. Advanced Math concepts are

presented in a straightforward way through a series of dreams of a young boy who hates math and believes that he'll NEVER understand it. As I read, I was reminded of students who have passed through my classes and are frustrated by Math.

I recommend this book to Math teachers of any level. It is available through the Monroe County Library System or at a bookstore near you.

I am ashamed to admit that I am still working through the history book. I am determined to finish it, but I find that it is harder to pick up. As an Elementary trained teacher who extended into Middle School, I

never had to take History of Math in any of my Undergraduate or Graduate Classes. I guess I took for granted that there were people out there who came up with the Math that I love so much. This book is giving me an appreciation for the struggles that those people went through to bring us to the math we have today.

Virginia Kuryla

AMTRA Newsletter Editor
AIS Math Teacher
Williamson Central Schools

"I don't know why, but I was surprised by the number of Math books there were."

AMTRA Updates

AMTRA has updated our web presence with a new website and Facebook page.

www.amtraonline.org is the place to go to find information about AMTRA. The website is

still under construction and the AMTRA Board is working on adding new content.

We also have a new page on Facebook. Come join us as a fan and comment on our wall.

A Call For Help — Future Newsletter Submissions



Do you have a great trick that you always share with your student teachers or the new hire in your building?

AMTRA would love to publish your thoughts in our next newsletter. You are welcome to submit a quick tip or a feature article.

Email your submissions to newsletter@amtraonline.org

Do you have a question that you'd like answered?

Email your questions to vkuryla@amtraonline.org

Questions will be collected and brought to future AMTRA board meetings to be answered by a group of veteran Math teachers. You will receive an email response. A selection of questions and answers will be printed in our next newsletter.



Helping Students Be Successful on Tests

There are so many reasons kids fail a Math Regents or score 1 or 2 on a 3-8 State Assessment. It appears from reading many posts to this listserve [AMTNYS HSMath listserve] that many teachers believe the only thing tested is math.

When working with poor performing students, especially when preparing for a Regents Exam or NYS 3-8 Test (where you have old questions with which to work), it is important to have students read the question out loud and ask them what the question is asking.

You will be amazed at your good math student who can't interpret the question. Thanks to Title I and other similar programs, many students have good — even excellent — decoding skills. They can pronounce the words, but have little or no comprehension. These students have very good compensatory skills that enable them to complete a task satisfactorily, without doing it in the expected manner. Some of these students wait for you to answer your own question. They wait for you to ask a leading question. They wait for you to start them on each problem they are given. On a test, those skills are useless.

Note: Some students have such excellent compensatory skills that they are never screened for

learning disabilities, etc.

Next try reading a question out loud to the student and ask them to explain it to you in their own words. Some students have auditory problems or auditory processing problems that cause them to misunderstand what they heard. Check student notebooks to see what notes they took in class. Check to make sure their commas and decimal points are not interchanged.

Many students who struggle with language benefit from the use of concept maps. One type of concept map, the T-table can be used to compare/contrast frequently mistakenly interchanged concepts.

The two topics that pop into my head immediately when thinking of T-tables are the Pythagorean Theorem and Trig Ratios.

Again, be careful not to do the T-table for them...Be careful what "help" you give them.

Many, if not most students know how to make concept maps, they just never thought to make them in math. Many schools have a school license for software such as Inspiration or Kidspiration. If your school has these programs they can help students make concept maps quickly.

Each one of these students, many of whom are spend hours after school with their teachers and/or tutors, has a unique reason he/she does not pass. Just remember it's not always the math!!!

Eleanore Vollweiler
Retired Math -Special Education Teacher
George Junior Republic Union Free School District



“These students have very good compensatory skills that enable them to complete a task satisfactorily, without doing it in the expected manner. ”

Pythagorean Theorem	Trig Ratios
-deals with right triangle	-deals with right triangle
-deals with 3 sides	-deals with two sides and an angle
-identify and label the hypotenuse	-identify and label the hypotenuse
-identify and label the legs	-identify and label the given angle
	-identify and label the opposite side
	-identify and label the adjacent side
-write the Pythagorean "equation"	-write the trig identity
-carefully substitute in all known values	-carefully substitute in all known values
-solve for the unknown	-solve for the unknown

This submission was reprinted with permission from a post on the AMTNY HS Math Discussion Group (Listserve). For more information or to subscribe to one of the AMTNYS listserves go to www.amtnys.org and follow the discussion groups link on the left hand side.

AMTRA/T³ Regional Conference Friday March 19 and Saturday March 20

Come join us at the Annual AMTRA Conference that is being held on March 19 & 20. This year we are fortunate to have teamed up with Texas Instruments and are happy to host the regional T³ Conference.

We are looking forward to our Keynote Speaker Scott Flansburg, better known as "The Human Calculator". In addition to providing the Keynote Address on Saturday morning, Scott has agreed to do two workshops later in the day that are targeted toward specific age levels.

This year we have added two featured speakers to our agenda. Author Stuart Murphy is presenting at the elementary level on Friday evening. His

books will be for sale to take home and use in your classrooms on Monday morning. Local favorite Dr. Tim McNamara is presenting on Saturday for the secondary level. He has presented for AMTRA many times in the past at both our Annual Conferences and our Winter workshop series.

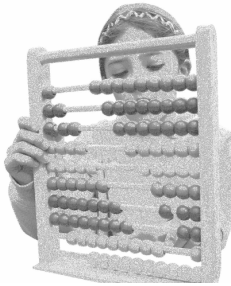
In addition we have an impressive lineup of new and veteran speakers presenting on a wide variety of topics at all grade levels.

Be sure to bring your TI-technology with you. Not all workshops will use them, but there will be workshops on incorporating Scientific and Graphing Calculators at all levels.

Question: If a pizza is in the shape of a disk, with thickness a and radius z , what is the volume of the pizza?

If you know any other teachers who might be interested please feel free to copy the registration form or send them to our website. www.amtraonline.org

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"Scott Flansburg believes everyone has the ability to be good at math and enjoy it, but that most people have not learned to do math in a way that works for them."



Keynote Speaker—Scott Flansburg

"The Human Calculator" has been teaching math and entertaining people with his astonishing math skills for more than 20 years. People challenge him almost every day to calculate large math problems in his head-and he loves each challenge!

Guinness World Record Holder and best selling author Scott Flansburg is "The Human Calculator" — a nickname given to him by television star Regis Philbin. Scott earned this nickname because of his remarkable math skills that allow him to add, subtract, multiply, and divide

(even do square and cube roots) all in his head with amazing speed and calculator accuracy.

In his 20-plus years of teaching math, Scott has appeared on several talk shows including Oprah, The Tonight Show with Jay Leno, The Ellen DeGeneres Show, Dateline NBC, ABC's Good Morning America, Coast to Coast AM with George Noory, Larry King Live, Howard Stern, The 700 Club, Primetime America, Regis & Kathy Lee, CNN Day Watch, How'd They Do That?, ESPN's World Series of Poker, and

USA Today Radio Network. He has given hundreds of interviews around the world and is also a best-selling author.

Scott Flansburg believes everyone has the ability to be good at math and enjoy it, but that most people have not learned to do math in a way that works for them. The Human Calculator is dedicated to helping students and adults to overcome their math-related fears. Scott is the global patron for World Math Day and Mathletics.com.

ASSOCIATION OF MATHEMATICS TEACHERS OF THE ROCHESTER AREA

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**Don't forget to register for the AMTRA T³
Regional Conference on March 19-20.
Registrations must be postmarked
by February 13, 2010.**