

From the President's Pen

Another school year completed; where do they go? Whether this was your first year, your last year or somewhere in between, I hope that it brought you something new and exciting. One of my students asked me how I could keep teaching the same thing year in and year out. I told her that in 25 years of teaching high school mathematics, I have yet to teach the same thing two years in a row. Every year, our students change and our methodology changes. Whether it is new curriculum, new courses, new grade levels, new schools or just a new question that leads us in a new direction, we are always evolving. Often the newest trend in education is an old favourite with a new label that rejuvenates it and reminds us of things we haven't done in awhile.

The latest new curriculum may not seem that different at the surface level, but the depth of mathematical understanding is critical. Whether you took the opportunity of optional implementation of kindergarten, Grade 1, 4 or 7 this year or will be jumping into it in the fall, please take the time to discuss the changes with your colleagues. Between now and full implementation, in 2012, we must keep talking to each other and drawing on the amazing expertise of Alberta teachers in developing best practices. Whether you attend workshops, summer institutes or conferences, form professional learning communities, or meet informally with colleagues to discuss the changes, it is important that we keep the dialogue open and remain focused on the reasons for change—our students.

Alberta students have always done very well on international mathematics tests because of the guidance of their teachers. We have developed students who are critical thinkers, who can show logical reasoning and follow algorithmic methods to solve a multitude of problems. Through the past 25 years, I have watched the type of student change and have seen a few different curriculums. The topics we teach, the order in which we teach them and the depth to which we teach all change, but our passion for teaching does not. When we watch the light bulb turn on or see the student who has struggled graduate and move on, we know it is worth it.

I have had the pleasure and the challenge of discussing the new curriculum with many people over the past few years. There are many different viewpoints about what is important, what should and should not be in the curriculum and the best delivery methods. Debate is healthy, and at the end of the day we do not have to be happy about all decisions made. Because we are so passionate about our subject, it would be impossible for all math teachers to be happy, but the one thing that I know for certain is that we will all do the best job we can to ensure that our students are prepared for what lies ahead.

Enjoy your summer, take time to bask in the successes of the last year and recharge your batteries for the excitement of the next year. I look forward to seeing you in Jasper in October.

Sharon Gach