

Mathematically Connected Communities Leadership Institute for Teachers







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MC²-L1FT

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National Science Foundation

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MC²-Leadership Institute for Teachers

The Mathematically Connected Communities-Leadership Institute For Teachers (MC²-LIFT) project is a dynamic partnership between New Mexico State University (NMSU) and southern New Mexico school districts. MC²-LIFT is collaboratively designed by mathematics and education faculty, teachers, and school district leaders to develop two cohorts each of about 30 mathematics teacher-leaders who will have a deep conceptual knowledge of K-12 mathematics, as well as the knowledge, skills and dispositions to facilitate growth in mathematics teaching and learning environments in schools or districts.

MC²-LIFT provides participating teachers with a two-year cycle of coursework involving intensive summer study as well as a follow-up academic year program that includes application of their learning in their school or district setting. Each semester and during the summer, pairs of courses are designed and team-taught by NMSU mathematicians and educators, blending mathematical concepts with knowledge and skills in pedagogy and leadership.

Teacher-leaders come from elementary, middle, and high schools and gain a new lens for learning mathematics by studying how concepts are vertically articulated within the K-12 continuum, connecting within and across grade levels. Institute participants are developing a deeper understanding of mathematical concepts by understanding these connections. Then, by developing a range of models and strategies to represent mathematical ideas,

MC²-LIFT GOALS

- Increase Teacher Leaders' Knowledge of K-12 Mathematics
- Expand and Enrich Pedagogical Practices
- Develop Intellectual Leaders
- Implement Institute Learning in School Environments
- Sustain Partnerships between Mathematicians, Education Faculty and Districts

teacher-leaders are able to support mathematics teachers throughout K-12 levels to differentiate their instruction and meet the needs of diverse learners in mathematics classrooms.

The structure of the MC²-LIFT research project includes four teams: Development (institute development), School Support (onsite support), Research (project analysis) and Management (logistics). Each of these teams has several common members for communication and knowledge sharing across the project.

The Development Team designs and facilitates the institute courses. This team includes both mathematics educators and research mathematicians who collaboratively create and facilitate courses for LIFT K-12 educators. The Development Team relies on feedback from the Research Team and the School Support Team to assess and monitor progress towards teacher-leader and MC²-LIFT course goals. The Development Team also utilizes ongoing feedback from MC²-LIFT cohort members to modify content or instruction. The Development Team meets weekly to analyze feedback,



assess progress, and design the classroom learning and leadership experiences.

The School Support Team works with MC²-LIFT teachers in their classrooms during the academic year, helping them apply what they are learning in their Institute courses. The School Support Team collaborates with school leaders and connects the teacher leaders, administrators and math coaches as a team. The School Support Team includes mathematics educators and former public school teachers who also participate in Development Team meetings, helping to ensure that what they see

in classrooms shapes the development of institute courses.

The MC²-LIFT Research Team gathers, analyzes, and shares data regarding the actual changes in LIFT cohort teacher's classroom practice and teaching knowledge that result from the coursework and school-based support. The Re-

search Team includes an internal evaluator, statisticians, mathematics educators, and researchers. The Research Team provides ongoing data for other MC²-LIFT teams to use in decision-making.

The Management Team attends to logistical concerns and includes members from the Development, Research, and School Support Teams. Each of these teams requires feedback from each other to know how to move forward and how to assess the current state of the courses and research efforts.

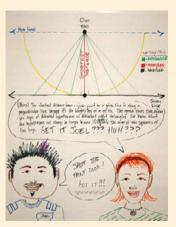
Leadership is a central focus in the MC²-

LIFT project. Principals engage in professional development in MC²-LIFT, gaining an understanding of how to foster a culture of professional learning in mathematics education on their campuses. Principals, teachers and school support teams provide essential connections between the school and university. Principals and teacher-leaders collectively develop a vision for the teacher-leaders' roles on school campuses or in the districts.

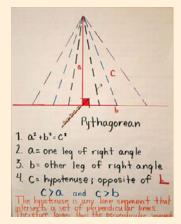
Through involvement in the MC²-LIFT project, the graduate program in mathematics education at NMSU is undergoing institutional change to include integrated coursework and application of learning in partner schools, with mathematics and education faculty collaborating to improve coursework for pre-service undergraduate teachers.

This National Science Foundation funded project is in its third year. The second cohort of teachers with the LIFT team is beginning their educational journey. The project has learned a lot through the efforts and reflections of the initial cohort of teacher-leaders. These thirty-one excellent educators are truly leaders and they share their lessons learned and personal insights into their experiences of participating in MC²-LIFT in this book.

"L" Stands for "LEADERSHIP"









The "L" in LIFT stands for "Leadership". Leadership by teachers is essential in supporting learning for students and schools, and the broader profession. During our two-year journey towards understanding "teacher leadership" we kept asking each other the following questions: What is leadership? What is teacher leadership? What do teacher leaders do? Why do we have teacher leaders? While we don't have specific answers to the abovementioned questions, we did arrive at shared understandings and mindsets about teachers as leaders. We – instructors and teacher leaders - learned together that there are many paths, facets, and definitions of leadership. We learned that teacher leaders influence

change, both inside and outside the classroom. Specifically, teacher leaders learned to design quality lessons that promote student achievement inside the classroom, and collaborative teaching practices through Professional Learning Communities outside the classroom. The most significant learning for all of us was that communication and building relationships is the key to building any professional learning culture supporting both teacher and student learning. After two years, LIFT teacher leaders now have the confidence and competence to influence change as a data coach, resource provider, instructional specialist, classroom supporter, mentor, and school team leader.



In Their Own Words



Ray Munoz

"The leadership aspect of this cohort was one of the reasons I decided to participate in the program."

Not only did I feel that this was something that I was weak in, but I also felt it would have a big impact on student learning and equality at my school. Being around like-minded educators and studying purposeful content and instruction in cognitive and leadership training made a huge impact on my ability to facilitate a high quality, functional PLC. I feel that this was the most worthwhile experience for lots of reasons, but mainly because it allowed

me to grow the most as a professional. My own personal growth, then in turn, led to the buy in of all stake holders in my department and helped us all in being involved and providing equitable experiences to all learners.

I now know that the greatest impact on a student happens every single day. I mean it just like that: the "greatest impact on student" is when someone who is knowledgeable in terms of content and pedagogical choices leads them, day in and day out. The cohort gave us the tools to be that person: tools that are research based, from great learning experiences, to learning the importance of support from each other.





"Going into the program I was very skeptical about my ability to do math."

I was even more uncomfortable teaching it. Now I can say that math is my favorite subject to teach and I believe that it shows through my facilitation as well as through my students and their achievements. I have made so many amazing friends and I will always hold them close to my heart, without all of the facilitators, as well as all of my new friends I would not be the teacher leader I am today. There will always be room for me to grow as a teacher leader and I will continue to learn and lead by example for the rest of my career.

Being a LIFT member has taught me to believe that all of my students can learn and have the ability to be successful. My students know that I have faith in them. Showing or even hinting to a student that they will never master a skill is just not an option. In order for students to have their chance as



Felicity Valle

success I believe that differentiating instruction is the only way that all students will get an education that will fit their needs. As an educator I have tried my best to get to know my students. Not only their skill level, but I ask them what their likes and dislikes are, what they want and need in order to make learning fun and engaging for them. Just because a student completes their assignments everyday does not mean that they have a complete understanding of the concept they are being taught. I will continue to stand by what I have said in the past, if students do not believe that you care about them as individuals there is no way students will believe that you care about them as students. It is important to find out if there are any cultural differences, language differences or ethnic differences so that each student is receiving instruction that meets their individual needs.

Being a member of LIFT has opened the door to so many opportunities and has taught me to be more confident not only as an educator but as a person. I have become an advocate for my students as well as my beliefs.



Christina Parra

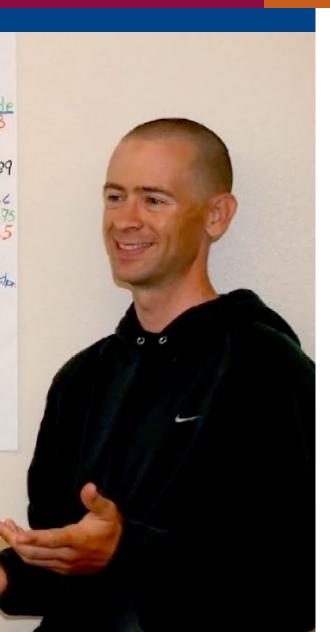
"Prior to LIFT I only knew my students had misconceptions, not necessarily how to address them."

For most, when hearing the term teacher leader positions such as department head and team leader come to mind. However, being a teacher leader is not necessarily about being in a position as department head or team leader; being a teacher leader means you are in the classroom everyday working with children. It means you challenge your teaching and continually ask yourself what you can do in order to better serve the needs of the children you work with. It is seeking out information from your colleagues and sharing

your knowledge. In doing so, teacher leaders help to cultivate a culture of collaboration which can only lead to success for students.

LIFT has given me the tools and the network in order to turn this approach into reality. As my mathematical knowledge has deepened I am able to understand more of the subtle misconceptions my students may have. Prior to LIFT I only knew my students had misconceptions, not necessarily where these misconceptions came from or how to address them. I truly appreciated LIFT addressing my mathematical knowledge in conjunction with how to plan lessons and how to analyze student work. I feel that having one without the other would not have had the same impact on my students.

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"My classroom has become a dynamic setting for learning."

In my classroom, I have evolved from being a lecturer to being a learning facilitator. Such change in me has also positively impacted the way my students learn. They now demonstrate ownership of their learning, are inquisitive and eager to explore, communicate their math thinking with more confidence and feel safe to talk about their points of confusion as well. Their involvement in class activities has become authentic as opposed to being ritualistic the way it was two years ago. Especially in my inclusion/ELL classes, my special needs students and language learners no longer hesitate when asked to lead their group during activities, nor get intimidated when asked to present their group work in front of the class. On occasions, I even have



Manuel Tomenbang

students volunteering to lead the class in solving their bell ringers and practice problems. During my annual performance evaluation meeting, my administrator made a comment about how my class has been the best example of student collaboration and group work on campus. Such statement is an indication of how much of my cohort learning has influenced my practice. In summary, my classroom has become a dynamic setting for learning.

Modesty aside, I have earned the respect and recognition as a trusted advisor among some of my co-teachers. As learned from the cohort, I listened and carefully asked questions to help those who have confided in me towards self-analysis and probable solution recognition. I have used SAVI quite a few times in redirecting discussions that could have otherwise turned unproductive if not destructive. In my department, I am also recognized as a resource person. During department meeting, my colleagues have asked me to facilitate our discussion on NCCSS Standards of Math Practices.



MC²-LIFT Teacher Leader Cohorts



Teacher Leaders

Cathy Anazao-Johnson



"I learned ... to empower students to learn and discover for themselves without giving them the answer. This is hard for me. I want to just tell the students what to do and how to solve problems when

I see them struggling. Now, every time we play a game I ask my first graders who will win. They always say in unison, "Whoever learns the most wins."

School and district Oregon Elementary Alamogordo Public Schools Years teaching 18 Years

Alice Anderson O'Dell



"The LIFT experience has taught me to no longer be passive about my educational beliefs. I have become more perceptive of students and how they want to learn by involving them in the assess-

ment process. I listen to my colleagues more than in the past to hear what they believe in. My journey has provided me the tools and motivation needed to find a shared vision with my colleagues that will benefit all of our students' success."

School and district Sierra Middle Las Cruces Public Schools Years teaching 30 Years

Linda Bird



"I have experienced tremendous personal growth over the past two years as a result of my involvement in the Lift institute. I am a more confident teacher, and feel that my teaching reflects not only research based pedagogical theo-

ry, but my own individual strengths, values and beliefs. I now embrace the opportunity to help other teachers, and look forward to collaborative work to improve education for our students. This is due equally to the valuable education I have received and the supportive environment in which I learned."

School and district Mt. View Middle Alamogordo Public Schools Years teaching 4 Years

Linda Duran



"I am not the same teacher as the one who began the institute. I approach instruction differently; my collaboration with teachers, administration, and parents is much more effective. I have a deeper appreciation for math and ... I see

the importance of vertical alignment and feel that this knowledge is the key to supporting students in a collaborative effort k-12. This is paramount to educating students because ... we all need to become familiar with and understand the journey our students will be taking as they become competent in mathematics."

School and district Loma Heights Elementary Las Cruces Public Schools Years teaching
18 Years

Valorie Edmister



"The LIFT journey has transformed me into a more fruitful learner, educator, facilitator, leader, colleague and human! The program's design and professors have presented me with a deeper

experience and clearer understanding of the philosophy that ALL can learn and ALL are valued in the world of mathematics."

School and district Ruidoso High Ruidoso Municipal School District Years teaching
15 Years

Victoria Franks



"We have learned so much through our LIFT training that can be applied immediately in our buildings. Whether it was the SAVI training, cognitive coaching, understanding and disseminating data, reflection practices, and on

and on -I was able to share these learning's with my colleagues who then were able to able to try new things in their classrooms. ... I'm talking about trying new ways of teaching so that they could have better impact on student learning."

School and district Sierra Middle Las Cruces Public Schools Years teaching 13 Years

Alan French



"The cohort has afforded me the opportunity to share my perspectives and learn best practices from other teacher leaders. ... I am proud of the work my students and I are doing on a day to day basis, as a shared vision of our goals and how we will know we have achieved

the planned objectives. The Master Facilitators of the LIFT Learning have empowered me to create a pedagogical style and depth in content that directly reflect my personal philosophy and freed me to concentrate on the needs of the learners that pass through the classroom doors."

School and district Ruidoso High Ruidoso Municipal School District Years teaching 25 Years

Lesli Gomez



"What I valued from being a cohort member in LIFT was the tools it has provided me to be a more effective leader and giving me the confidence to "talk math". ... This is the beginning of continuing to push for a

math-enriched learning environment at our schools. It is the beginning of working together to see that our children learn math in such a way that there is a deeper understanding of how the math works."

School and district Loma Heights Elementary Las Cruces Public Schools Years teaching
10 Years

Allison Henry

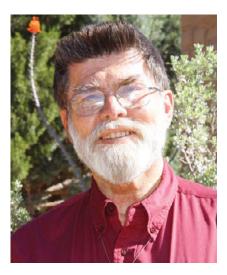


"By applying my
LIFT learning into
my own classroom, I
have seen the impact
on student learning
and achievement. ... I
have maintained high
expectations of all of
my students, in turn
they have developed
self confidence and a
belief in themselves
that is indescribable.
My students get

excited about learning and about their successes however small they may be. ... It has been through this positive outlook in our classroom that my students have in the end achieved so much more. As educators one of our most important roles is to collaborate and work together for the betterment and successes of our students and that is exactly what being a LIFT cohort member is all about."

School and district Loma Heights Elementary Las Cruces Public Schools Years teaching 6 Years

Michael Holsten



"In my experience in LIFT these two years I have found an open and accepting atmosphere, caring fellowship, excellence in expectation, growth and experience in leadership, variety in resources, vitality in Com-

mon Core standards, usefulness in alignment, practical use of educational theory, and stimulating and creative mathematics. It has been a wonderful, growing experience."

School and district Legacy Christian Academy Years teaching
17 Years

Jennifer Johnson



"This experience has been an opportunity that I will never forget. ... I am a more competent, understanding leader within my school who wants to help others achieve success for their students. ... I have grown the most in

understanding my role in this profession. I now understand that I am there as the facilitator. I need to use formative assessments, guided questions, data, healthy PLC's, and well thought out lesson that go deeper with mathematical practices and common core standards."

School and district

White Mountain Elementary School Ruidoso Municipal School District

Years teaching 15 Years

Katherine Mackmiller



"By facilitating math PLCs, I have helped fellow math teachers to focus on what we can do to better help students.
This has created discussion about strategies used in the classroom and allowed teachers to observe other teachers at

different grade levels. I have also been able to be a part of the leadership team at my school where I have been able to share ideas and strategies that can be implemented in other teacher's classrooms."

School and district
Zia Middle School
Las Cruces Public Schools

Years teaching
10 Years

Kenneth Melendrez



"The role of teacher leader has given me the opportunity to restructure and improve my teaching to help all students. The cultures of the classroom and of students on campus have greatly improved as a direct result of

what we do in the classroom. As teacher leaders we reflect and try and improve what we do in the classroom every day."

School and district
Zia Middle School
Las Cruces Public Schools

Years teaching
13 Years

Rey Munoz



"A term that is often thrown around by educators is "lifelong learner". This term is referenced both in terms of educators desire for themselves to be lifelong learners, and in terms of wanting that for their

students. ... Simply put, the MC²-Lift cohort experience did just that for the participants involved ... but more importantly for the students we as educators have the one of a kind opportunity to inspire and affect."

School and district
Picacho Middle
Las Cruces Public Schools

Years teaching 13 Years

Jacqueline Parenti



"I take my skills back to the district with a greater knowledge of how to teach math, and also, how to collaborate and work with others to bring about strong solutions. I am more confident in my strengths

as a person and a teacher. I am also not afraid of my shortcomings. I realize that we cannot know it all and it is true wisdom to have the ability to admit that and to say 'I don't know, but let's work on that.'"

School and district
Nob Hill Early Childhood Center
Ruidoso Municipal
School District

Years teaching 22 Years

Christina Parra



"LIFT has given me a set of tools to use in the wide spectrum of a teacher leader. I have tools for understanding the mathematics that students need to learn; tools for planning lessons, delivering those lessons, and ana-

lyzing student understanding; tools for facilitating a PLC as well as being a member of a PLC being led by someone else; tools for communicating with administrators, parents, community members, and colleagues not just from within my school or district, but from many districts spanning all grade levels."

School and district
Picacho Middle School
Las Cruces Public Schools

Years teaching
6 Years

Piia-Kim Pehap



"Through the past two years I have gained professional knowledge and a greater proficiency in mathematics, its instruction and leadership. ... My students grew in mathematical confidence as I learned to ask them to talk about their mathematical knowledge. This simple

strategy of inquiry made the most dramatic change in students' attitude towards mathematics. My students became more proficient in mathematical terminology, execution, demonstration and gained in their ability to write about their mathematical thinking. My excitement about my students' growth and the strategies I used was infections with my building peers."

School and district Oregon Elementary School Alamogordo Public Schools Years teaching 6 Years

Linda Pehr



"We studied and practiced observations, lesson study, data analysis, action research, facilitation of lesson delivery, cognitive coaching, SAVI-grid conversational moves, peer-editing. All of these opportunities increased my repertoire of

skills and broadened the scope of impact on the teachers I coached. ... The opportunity to experience content progression and the Common Core was priceless. The math practices didn't become "real" for me until they were tied to mathematical problems and reflected upon. ... I value the learning progressions designed for us and the support provided when teachers reached the upper limits of their zone of proximal development."

School and district
Alamogordo Public Schools
Professional Development
Coordinator

Years teaching 28 Years

Maricela Rincon



"I value the relationships LIFT has fostered to create a community where teachers across grade bands connect and collaborate to make learning more meaningful, more challenging, and more effective for our students. The diversity in the

cohort ... has been instrumental in understanding how to support our students as they progress through the grade bands. The sharing and collaboration ... allowed us to gain a greater sense of awareness of the concept of alignment. ... This understanding allows me to prepare my students for the skills they will use in middle and high school."

School and district Monte Vista Elementary Las Cruces Public Schools Years teaching 9 Years

Ricardo Rincon



"I complete this program with much more than what I had when I started it two years ago. I owe this to our MC²-LIFT program facilitators who envisioned a learning environment where students' knowledge and experiences

were valued and integrated as part of the expected outcome for each lesson. ... I value the camaraderie, friendships, and networking hubs we all have been able to develop throughout the past two years."

School and district Monte Vista Elementary Las Cruces Public Schools Years teaching 10 Years

Wendy Rios



"Being a member of the LIFT cohort has made realize the importance of being knowledgeable about not only the mathematics involved at my grade level but how important a role I play in developing a foun-

dation for life. Being a member of LIFT has helped me become a facilitator who can promote change to increase student achievement."

School and district Chaparral Elementary Gadsden Independent School District Years teaching 5 Years

Gema Salcedo



"What I valued the most from being a member of the LIFT cohort is the learning experience I received in both math and leadership. These two experiences have made me a better teacher for my students and a better colleague

at work. I was able to take back my newly acquired knowledge and experience to the math department [at my school] as department head. Once we all had ownership of the ideas as a department we saw yearly increase in our NMSBA math scores. Our enthusiasm has infused the students to the point where math is no longer a gatekeeper."

School and district
Santa Teresa High
Gadsden Independent
School District

Years teaching 10 Years

Christy Jo Serna



"Being able to see the progression that takes place, ... to witness and experience it, is a life lesson that will stick with me. ... I give students the foundation and we build the concept from there hoping they come up with multiple ways

to get to a solution. My thoughts are more focused on student's understanding instead of a grade they get. Students talk with one another and explain the thinking that is going on instead of shutting down and wanting me to give the solution. "

School and district Camino Real Middle Oñate High Las Cruces Public Schools Years teaching 11 Years

Erika Soltero



"As a teacher leader I am also able to share with my colleagues what I have learned from the Cohort so that they can also implement these strategies in their classrooms and in PLCs. I ... shared with my

colleagues the LES/S model and how it looked. This has made a great impact on our school because now many of our teachers are using this strategy to guide their instruction."

School and district Loma Heights Elementary Las Cruces Public Schools Years teaching 6 Years

Tess Summers



"I have valued the opportunity to work along side 30 fellow teachers from varying grade levels and several districts who share the same goals of improving their math content knowledge, understanding

of pedagogy, student performance, and professional development among colleagues. Each cohort member came in with their own expertise and knowledge, and we were given opportunities to share these with the rest of the cohort."

School and district Camino Real Middle School Las Cruces Public Schools Years teaching

Manuel Tomenbang



"I see myself as the teacher leader who would continue to promote stronger collaboration within my department. ... I will be the model and the catalyst for such positive change on campus. In the classroom, I have evolved from be-

ing a lecturer to being a learning facilitator. Despite all these positive transformations in my classroom, I still view myself as a continuing work in progress. After graduation, I will consider my campus as an extension of the cohort where I will continue to learn and share with my colleagues."

School and district Santa Teresa High Gadsden Independent School District Years teaching 10 Years

Jennifer Trantham



"My experience with the MC²-LIFT cohort has been life changing; ... for me, it was a metamorphosis. ... The LIFT program has made me more aware of myself, my own set of strengths – and weaknesses – allowing me to grow into a leader. For now, I see myself as the teacher

leader who would continue to promote stronger collaboration within my department and at the same time find ways for such collaboration to permeate to other departments as well. I realize change takes time so until "good has become better and better has become best", I will be the model and the catalyst for such positive change on campus."

School and district Sunrise Elementary Las Cruces Public Schools Years teaching 10 Years

David Ubinger



"As a teacher leader, I have had the opportunity to use protocols for collaborative lesson planning and reviewing student work learned in LIFT as a springboard for professional learning at my school. Using the SBA Item Analy-

sis tool has lead to data driven decisions throughout my school. Individual students are aware of their specific deficiencies and are able to write their own action plans to improve on their biggest struggles. As a department we are able to use data to identify vertically (grades 9-12) specific strands of deficiency and collaboratively create an action plan to target those strands."

School and district Chaparral High School Gadsden Independent School District Years teaching 10 Years

Felicity Valle



"When first starting my journey as a Cohort Member I lacked a lot of confidence in my ability to create change. ... However... I have become an advocate not only for myself as an educator but for the students in my classroom and the colleagues I collaborate with. ... As a teacher leader I have

learned to communicate my core values in my everyday work and I foster a school atmosphere that is all inclusive in the decision making process, emphasizing/improving core values and creating a shared purpose not only with my colleagues but with my students as well. "

School and district University Hills Elementary Las Cruces Public Schools Years teaching 4 Years

Jana Ward



"LIFT has supported and heightened my success as a teacher. My confidence in implementing a true mathematics learning environment has grown immensely, and I feel much more confident and prepared to support my

students. I no longer worry that I am doing more harm than good when it came to my math teaching, and it has truly become my favorite subject to teach."

School and district
Rio Grande Elementary
Hatch Valley Public Schools
Hillrise Elementary
Las Cruces Public Schools

Years teaching 3 Years

Jacki Wiley



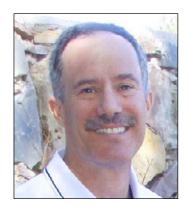
"I am excited for the future. This has been a unique opportunity, for which I am eternally grateful!!! I am fired up and ready for new challenges!!! You have changed my life and I will pay it forward. I am not the same person I was 2 years

ago, I am not the same teacher, I am not the same math thinker, I am so much more!"

School and district Camino Real Middle School Las Cruces Public Schools Years teaching 22 Years



MC²-L1FT Development Team



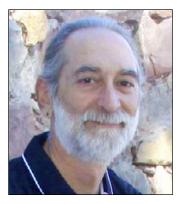
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