

Greater Birmingham Mathematics Partnership Teachers Respond Enthusiastically to Summer Mathematics Courses

The Greater Birmingham Mathematics Partnership (GBMP) exceeded expectations in June and July 2005 when it held its summer sessions. Instructors from the Mathematics Education Collaborative (MEC) led the class, entitled "Patterns, Functions and Algebraic Reasoning." The nine-day course focused on mathematics content taught in a way that modeled best practices for developing mathematically powerful students. The GBMP team invited teachers from partnership schools, parents of school children, IHE faculty and pre-service teachers to participate. So many people were interested that three more sections had to be added to the originally planned four sections.

The courses made largely similar impressions on the attendants, who were of diverse specialties. Among them were 114 in-service teachers of grades 5 – 12, 11 mathematics education students from Birmingham-Southern College (BSC) and the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB), and 14 BSC and UAB faculty members from the mathematics, education and engineering departments. In a follow-up questionnaire, participants indicated the impact that the courses had made on them:

- 86% strongly agreed; 12% agreed that "This course improved my mathematical skills and understanding."
- 97% strongly agreed; 3% agreed that "The instructor was knowledgeable and effective."

Participants were also asked to express their own thoughts on their experiences. The following comments are representative of the majority of impressions expressed from the respondents:

- *"This course was such an enlightening and beneficial experience. I look at math in a new light. It makes so much more sense now."*
- *"The teacher provided a life-changing curriculum framework as she modeled applications, questioning, management, and analyses in an engaging environment."*

Because of teachers' requests, grade-level specific follow-up sessions were offered in November with Ms. Patty Lofgren of MEC. Most of the teachers who attended had participated in the summer courses and were implementing some of what they had learned in their classrooms. In the follow-up sessions, Ms. Lofgren addressed questions about changes teachers were trying to make in their classrooms. She also worked on Number Talks and using purposeful problems in sequences which should help students become mathematically powerful.

With the successes of the past six to seven months, the GBMP team is looking forward to offering more of these kinds of experiences to more teachers. Additional grade-specific follow-up sessions are planned for March and April. This summer, GBMP plans to hold nine sections of summer courses which will include "Patterns, Functions and Algebraic Reasoning," "Numerical Reasoning," and "Probability and Data Analysis."

From the Summer Courses 2005

