



Wahpe Woyaka pi

(Talking Leaf)

South Dakota Council Teachers of Mathematics Newsletter

Presidential Ponderings

First of all, we are still accepting registrations for the 2026 SDCTM Summer Symposium in Mitchell on July 14th, with Jessica Strom on Building Thinking Classrooms. If you still want to come, please register ASAP so we can plan for food. We'd love to see you there!

Secondly, we have new Math Standards in South Dakota. They passed unanimously, and the teachers of South Dakota will start using them in the fall of 2027. I still have so many questions, mostly about using the Smarter Balanced assessment for Grades 3 through 8. I am also curious about the Department of Education's plan for the rollout.

I went on LinkedIn and found this post by Erma Anderson that still really captures my concern about the new standards and the removal of a lot of mathematical language. I cannot say what she said any better. She has been an independent math and science education consultant for over 20 years.



Erma Anderson • Following
Curriculum Design | Instructional Coherence | Mathematics Education | Helping ...
2d •

What if the real problem in mathematics classrooms isn't what we're teaching—but how students are expected to make sense of it?

If mathematics is a language, then the Mathematical Practices are more than tasks students complete.

They are ways students learn to use the language of mathematics.

Students are expected to:

- Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them
- Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others
- Model with mathematics and use appropriate tools
- Attend to precision
- Look for and make use of structure and regularity

None of these are possible without language.

Students must interpret vocabulary and symbols. Connect representations. Communicate reasoning. Justify conclusions. Critique ideas.

In other words, students are not simply learning mathematics.

They are learning to speak, reason, and communicate mathematically.

Summer 2025-2026

Wahpe Woyaka pi

<i>Elementary Highlights</i>	3
<i>Member Recommendations</i>	4
<i>Desmos Updates</i>	5

Calendar Reminders

SDCTM Summer Symposium Jul. 14

(continued p. 2)



Presidential Ponderings (*continued*)

Yet when mathematics achievement becomes a concern, the response is often a new strategy, a new resource, a new program, or a new initiative.

Perhaps before introducing something new, we should ask:

What support have teachers received to understand how students learn the language of mathematics?

Because when we don't understand that learning, every new strategy becomes another thing to do.

When we understand that learning, strategies become tools we can use intentionally.

#MathEducation
#MathematicalLanguage
#NCTM
#InstructionalCoherence
#StudentThinking
#TeachWhatCounts
#EducationLeadership

It is important that we support each other as we navigate the adoption of the new standards and reach out when challenges occur. Working together will make the transition much smoother!

Sharon Vestal
President—SDCTM
Sharon.Vestal@sdstate.edu

THE MATHEMATICAL PRACTICES

Mathematics is a language. The practices are how students use that language.

THE MATHEMATICAL PRACTICES (NCTM)		LITERACY IN MATHEMATICS (The language of mathematics)	
1	Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them	→	Interpret meaning and understand mathematical text
2	Reason abstractly and quantitatively	→	Use mathematical vocabulary and symbols to reason
3	Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others	→	Communicate ideas, justify thinking, and critique arguments
4	Model with mathematics	→	Represent situations and express ideas mathematically
5	Use appropriate tools strategically	→	Select and use tools and representations purposefully
6	Attend to precision	→	Use precise vocabulary, symbols, and notation
7	Look for and make use of structure	→	Recognize relationships and make connections
8	Look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning	→	Identify patterns and generalize mathematically



Reference: National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM). (2014). *Principles to Actions: Ensuring Mathematical Success for All*.



Elementary Highlights

Most teachers spend parts of their summer coming up with ideas to make their classroom better. One thing on my mind this summer has been math centers.

Math centers can be one of the most effective ways to engage students in meaningful, hands-on learning—but only when they are well organized and intentionally planned. I want to use centers more effectively in my classroom. They seem overwhelming at first but with clear routines and expectations I have found success in the classroom and students really look forward to them.

A few reminders I have come across while reading, planning, and researching that you may find helpful and encouraging as you plan your upcoming year

- The key to successful math centers is consistency. Before introducing academic activities, spend time teaching students how to rotate, use materials, and clean up.
- Keep center activities familiar rather than introducing a brand-new concept. A time to practice!
- Games, task cards, manipulatives, and math journals can all reinforce learning while encouraging collaboration and critical thinking.
- Limiting the number of students at each center allows every child to participate.
- Using visual rotation charts or color-coded groups makes transitions smoother and helps students know exactly where to go.
- Not every center has to change each week. Keeping some activities consistent while rotating only one or two new tasks saves time and allows students to become more independent.

Hopefully as you plan new centers some of these reminders will ease the process. Once centers are in full swing and going well it will allow you as a teacher to work with individual students and small groups! Students will grow independence, develop mathematical conversations, and become confident problem solvers. It is a win for everyone! Happy planning!

Jodi Neuharth
SDCTM Elementary Liason
Jodi.Neuharth@k12.sd.us



“Students will grow independence, develop mathematical conversations, and become confident problem solvers.”



AI Recommendations

This quarter, members submitted recommendations for AI tools that they have found helpful. Here is what they had to say!

From a teacher's perspective, NotebookLM is a powerful learning tool because it only generates responses from the sources that students upload themselves. Rather than pulling information from the open internet, the AI relies solely on class notes, articles, textbooks, and teacher-provided resources, making responses more accurate, relevant, and aligned with classroom learning. Students can use NotebookLM to summarize information, ask questions, create study guides, and deepen their understanding of content while developing critical thinking and independent study skills in a safe, source-based environment.

Mrs. Megan Wilson
Sanborn Central
HS Math Teacher

One of the AI tools that I used as a teacher was NotebookLM. NotebookLM allows you to upload source documents and then create multiple items from those sources, including quizzes, reports, content maps, slide deck, flash cards and more. My favorite output is the podcast that it creates! It sounds like two real people talking and I think it is a great way to share content with our students in a new format.

Leslie D. Sauder, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Teacher Education
Northern State University

DWU has subscribed the whole campus to Boodle Box. BoodleBox is a collaborative AI platform purpose-built for higher education, workforce readiness, and lifelong learning. It provides students, faculty, and professionals with secure access to multiple premium AI models—such as ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, and Perplexity—within a single, privacy-first format. You can set up your own knowledge base by uploading your own resources, set-up internal chats with students/colleagues, it is FERPA compliant, you have the ability to choose if your searches can be used/or not used to train the bots, and it can help you design your own bots. There is a free version but only 5 prompts a day.

Julie Olson, Ed.D.
Assistant Professor
Biological Sciences
Dakota Wesleyan University



Desmos Update

Greetings! I hope the summer has given you the opportunity to charge your batteries in preparation for the new school year!

As always, the folks at Desmos have been in their lab creating new and exciting toys for teachers. In June, Desmos launched their beta version of Desmos Notebook – an interactive space that “combines text, expressions, sliders, and graphs in a single, dynamic environment, with the power of the Desmos graphing tools built in”. (Source: Desmos Notebook User Guide)

In the limited time I’ve played around with Notebook, I am most impressed with the ability to link student exploration with user-friendliness. I invite you to take a few minutes to play around with this new toy. A great starting point would be this example: Introducing Desmos Notebook. You can also browse their example gallery or check out the user guide.

Happy exploring!

Mark Kreie (@kreiem)
HS Math Teacher
Brookings High School

Research Participation Opportunity

A Montana-based math educator and researcher is studying how algebra teachers evaluate multi-step student reasoning. Given how similar rural and regional grading workflows are across Montana and South Dakota, the hope is to ensure the research reflects the realities SD teachers face.

Schema, a research tool that analyzes handwritten, step-by-step algebra work to surface latent misconceptions, is being developed. To make sure it actually helps teachers rather than just working in a lab, algebra and other secondary math teachers are being interviewed about their daily grading workflows.

These are short, 15–20 minute phone conversations, and a \$30 Amazon gift card is provided to every teacher who participates.

Contact:
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Summit Insight LLC

SDCTM

South Dakota Council
of Teachers of Mathematics

SUMMER SYMPOSIUM



Featured Presenter:
Jessica Strom

MEMBER

\$60

\$120

NON-MEMBER

LUNCH INCLUDED IN FEE

BTC, IMPROVING YOUR PRACTICE

As we continue to work and reflect on our practice, so does BTC. In this workshop, we will explore the recent changes that Peter and his team have made to BTC. We will also explore how to reflect and improve on our practices with self-reflection and observation tools. Lastly, we will address common myths and challenges from across the country.

EVENT DATE

JULY 14, 2026

8AM-4PM

**DAKOTA WESLEYAN
UNIVERSITY,
MITCHELL SD**

Participants are able to earn* Graduate credit from DWU at \$70.

A block of hotel rooms is available at \$110/night at the Quality Inn under SDCTM.

Don't Delay! Registration will be capped at 42 (min 25)
Registration deadline is June 10th 2026

[REGISTER HERE](#)





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