



# Wahpe Woyaka pi

## ( Talking Leaf )

South Dakota Council Teachers of Mathematics Newsletter

### Presidential Ponderings

Happy New Year!

I hope that all of you enjoyed a well-deserved break over the holidays. I suspect that you are feeling the same way I am, and that the next couple of weeks will be a rude awakening for many of us.

As we are preparing for our annual conference in Huron, I hope that if you have not yet registered, you will consider doing so. We are using a new platform this year to see if it will help streamline things for Sheila. This new site is [SD STEM Ed \(SDCTM/SDSTA JPDC\) - SD STEM Ed Conference 2026](#). When you register for the conference, you get free membership to both SDCTM and SDSTA!



The Register button is on the bottom left of the screen. Before you click on it, please review the Ticket types on the left side to determine which one is most suitable for you, such as 2-day Registration or Friday-only Registration. Then be sure to use the correct letter for your ticket when you register. You will need to pay right away with a credit card when you register.

And again, I cannot really write a column without mentioning the Proposed K – 12 Math Standards. The next hearing is after the SD STEM Ed conference ([Monday, 2/23, in Pierre](#)), and we are having 2 sessions at the conference for you to come and talk with grade-level groups about the proposed standards. We hope that you can attend one or both of those sessions—Friday (2/6) at 1:10 PM in Salon; and Saturday (2/7) at 2:40 PM in Dakota A.

One thing that we feel is currently important is that Elementary Math Teachers give feedback and make comments. Because you are all so busy, I would suggest that you pick a grade level that you feel very comfortable with and go through the [proposed standards](#) and compare them to what you know. Once you have a list of things that you like or don't like, please submit your comments using the Dept of Education [feedback form](#). If you feel comfortable testifying, it would be great to have others testify in Pierre, either in person or on Zoom. If you want to do that and would like some guidance, please reach out to me, [south.dakota.ctm@gmail.com](mailto:south.dakota.ctm@gmail.com).

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Winter 2025-2026

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### Calendar Reminders

<i>SD STEM Ed Conference Speaker Proposal Deadline</i>	Oct. 28
<i>Public Comments Deadline for Proposed Standards February 23rd Hearing</i>	Feb. 10 (9 AM)
<i>SD STEM Ed Conference</i>	Feb. 5-7



## Presidential Ponderings (*continued*)

We are not the only state where the mathematics standards are being rewritten, and it seems that the math wars are alive and well, according to a [recent article in USA today](#). I don't know if any of you subscribe to [Mathematics Education SmartBrief](#), but I have gotten a lot of great information from that source. It comes every weekday. The latest one shares information about a [quantitative study](#) that states, "Students randomly assigned to teachers who used more mathematical vocabulary in their previous classrooms scored higher on standardized tests of mathematics. This implies that teachers who expose their students to more mathematical vocabulary are more effective teachers of mathematics." However, the authors noted that "this study does not indicate that teachers' modeling or encouraging more mathematical vocabulary causes higher test scores, only that the teachers who do these things are, on average, more effective at improving student test performance." One clear issue with the proposed mathematics standards is the removal of much of the mathematics vocabulary, which I talked about in [my last column](#). This seems to be moving South Dakota in the wrong direction!

I think that it is best if we can all stay informed about what is happening in our state and elsewhere. I will do my best to share information and to advocate for all SD math teachers!

Thank you for all that you do for Mathematics Education in South Dakota!

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### **Proposed K-12 Math Standards**

### **Current K-12 Math Standards**

Voice your concerns & make suggestions  
about the proposed  
SD K-12 Math Standards  
[here!](#)

**SD Board of Education Hearing Schedule**  
February 23, Pierre, TBD, 9 AM  
May 4, Rapid City, TBD, 9AM



## Elementary Highlights

### Math Jokes

When school started I had a class of little 4-5 year olds excited and ready to learn. I still have that same excitement along with students who understand a little more how to be in a classroom....but somewhere along the way the older kids taught them 6-7. They have no clue what it means...nor does anyone...they just want to be like the older kids.

I don't let them say it but have shared a few number jokes with them instead. I don't know that it is any better hearing the same joke several times each day, but at least it is something that makes sense.

The kids' favorite joke is: Why is 6 afraid of 7? Because 7 ate 9!  
They also love to do a magic trick to turn an S into an 8. It took a little explanation but they also like the joke: What did 0 say to 8? I like your belt!  
Maybe if you use some math jokes in your day, you will quit hearing about 6-7!

I looked up a few more to get you started:

- Which tool is best for math?  
The multi-pliers.
- Swimmers love one kind of math more than all others, what is it?  
Dive-ision!
- Once there was a hen who counted her own eggs.  
She was a mathemachicken!
- What do the moon and a dollar have in common?  
They both have 4 quarters.
- Who's in charge in a pencil case?  
The ruler.
- Why can't your nose grow to be 12 inches long?  
Because then it would be a foot.
- Do you know the trick for making time fly?  
Throw a clock out a window!
- If you're cold, go to the corner of the room.  
It's 90 degrees there!
- Why shouldn't you ever argue with a 90 degree angle?  
They're always right!

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*"Maybe if you use some math jokes in your day, you will quit hearing about 6-7!"*

### Did you know?

In July, approximately 25 South Dakota educators met in Pierre to determine the alignment between the ACT test (planned for all 11th-grade students this year) and the SD Standards. Teachers and ACT facilitators broke into groups to assess the match between live ACT questions and SD Content as "fully aligned," "partially aligned," or "no alignment." This information will be used by SD DOE in conjunction with the spring 2026 ACT assessment taken by all juniors.



It's time to **register**  
for the conference.



**SD STEM Ed**  
February 5th, 6th, & 7th  
**2026**

Conference registration includes FREE one-year membership in both SDCTM and SDSTA.		
<b>Early Bird Registration - Ends December 1st</b> Payment must be RECEIVED by 12/15 to qualify for early bird discount		
	1 Day Registration	2 Day Registration
Participant	\$125.00	\$150.00
Student	\$50.00	\$75.00
<b>Pre-Registration December 2nd - January 10th</b> Payment must be postmarked by January 10th or online payment completed by January 10th		
Participant	\$175.00	\$200.00
Student	\$50.00	\$75.00
<b>On-site Registration (After January 15th)</b>		
Participant	\$200.00	\$225.00
Student	\$70.00	\$80.00

**SD STEM Ed**  
**BANQUET**  
**\$35** February 6th  
6:30 - 9:00 pm

**Includes**

- Speaker
- Awards
- Meal
- FRIENDS

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## 6-8 Highlights

Happy New Year!

I hope everyone had a great break and is ready to start a fresh new semester. I am guessing that many of you have already planned out some changes for the rest of the school year, but I have a few more ideas to share, just in case! The list below tells you about ways I updated my classroom teaching in August and how I plan to adjust even more in January.

In August, I started using learning logs with my students. They were forced to reflect on a topic from the week and write **WITH WORDS** about the topic. For example, they had to explain the three different methods of solving systems of equations, when to use them, and which one they prefer. I did this electronically, so I didn't have to worry about handwriting or spelling but then came AI.

In January, we are moving to physical journals. I worry a little that students will switch to drawing examples instead of using full sentences, but their sentences were getting weaker as the weeks went on, so maybe a refresh is all they need. I am also adding in writing in full sentences to their daily work. I tell students that answer forms should match the question form. If the question is in fractions, the answer should not be in decimals. I am taking this a step further and telling them that if the question is in words, the answer should be in words. My students will have to answer all word problems with a full sentence. Nothing too serious, but if the question is "How many people fit in the car?" they need to answer, "8 people fit in the car." I am hoping that this will encourage thinking and prevent answers that are illogical.

In August, I started taking attendance by having students answer the question, "What was the hardest question on the homework last night?" Students correct the previous day's assignment while I take attendance, so they can answer a question they got wrong or a question that they knew took a lot of time or effort. They know they are required to answer, so many of them have their question number ready before they even come to class.

In January, I am adding a "question card" to their unit review. When they are working on their study guide (practice test), they will fill out an index card with a question from a past assignment that they want to review together. I did this with my high school students to study for finals, and it was great. I took their cards and wrote the question on the whiteboard, and they cycled through them, working with partners. Some students wrote down questions they never truly understood, and others wrote down questions they had just forgotten how to do.



*"Hopefully, you see some ideas that you can incorporate in your classroom this year."*

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## 6-8 Highlights (*continued*)

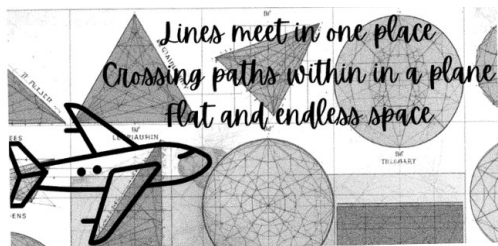
My last change is something that I tried on a semester test with my Algebra 2 class, and I loved it so much that I want to use it on all of my tests going forward. I am sure most of us have heard of a test question asking students to tell you something they know that isn't on the test. I love this question, but I added another question to get them to show me even more. I asked my students to pick a question on the test that they aren't sure they got right. They had to tell me what parts they were confident about and which parts they were not. This digs beyond giving them points for showing their work and into why they chose the work they did. Of course, middle school students will need some extra coaching on acceptable answers, so they don't tell me they got them all wrong because they guessed on everything, but I am hoping to get them to highlight the things they DO know, even if they struggle with math.

Hopefully, you see some ideas that you can incorporate in your classroom this year. If not, don't forget about the wonderful ideas that are shared in February in Huron. Hopefully, I will see you there!

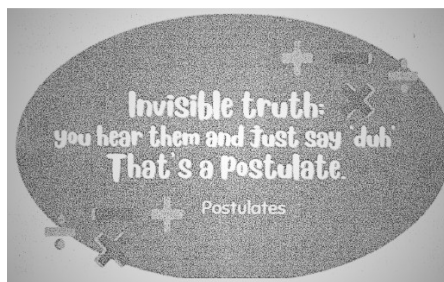
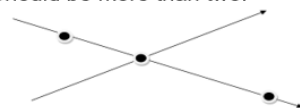
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### Geometry Haikus

Courtesy of Montrose High School Geometry Students  
(Submitted by Cindy Kroon)



**Collinear points:**  
All points are on the same line.  
Should be more than two.



Perfect little "L"  
Corners form ninety degrees  
Right kind of angle





## NCTM Representative Tips

Looking to stay in the loop with national math trends? Here are a few highlights from NCTM's latest releases that caught my eye. You can find links to all these resources at [kevindsmith.org/nctm](http://kevindsmith.org/nctm).

### New Position Statement: Universal Screeners

NCTM just released a formal stance on Universal Screeners. If you haven't used them, think of these as a "routine check-up" for your classroom. They are brief assessments for every student—not just those who are struggling—to identify potential learning gaps before they become major hurdles.

The statement provides a great roadmap for using these scores to support students rather than just labeling them.

### Advocacy Infographics (Procedural Fluency)

The NCTM December *Advocacy Quarterly* newsletter included some great infographics. They're perfect for sharing with counselors, admins, parents, or students who might be curious about our shifting standards.

I really like the ones on Procedural Fluency. As we discuss new math standards, it's vital to remind our community that "procedural fluency requires conceptual understanding." You can't truly have one without the other!

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### Save the Date

Conferences are a huge lift for any teacher's schedule and budget, but if you can make it happen, these three are great opportunities to recharge and collaborate:

- NCTM Spring Conference (Indy): Feb 11–13, 2026
- NCTM Spring Conference (NOLA): March 16–18, 2026
- NCTE-NCTM Joint Conference (Charlotte): Aug 3–5, 2026(*Focuses on Elementary Literacy and Math!*)
- NCTM Annual Meeting (Denver): Oct 28-31, 2026

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*"Here are a few highlights from NCTM's latest releases that caught my eye."*



## Classroom Highlights

### Travel Plans

At the end of last semester, I was looking for a project to do with my consumer math class. We had finished the unit on banking. One portion of the unit was on writing a check. While many students in my class have a checking account, not very many of them have ever written a check; most use their debit card.

My class is split between juniors and seniors. I decided to have them plan a vacation for their family. I presented the project to the class as they were planning a graduation celebration trip that only their parents and they were going on, no siblings. Depending on their family makeup, it would be 2 or 3 people keeping it realistic to their family.

The first day, I had the students use paper and pencil only. They were to answer these questions:

1. Who is going on the trip, and how many people total?
2. Where would you like to go? It can be anywhere in the world. What are you going to see/do?
3. How long will you be gone, from the time you leave your house to the time you get back?
4. Make an estimated cost list for: travel, lodging, food, souvenirs, entertainment, extras.

Their answers varied from a 3-day trip to see Mount Rushmore to a 15-day Mediterranean cruise. I then told them their budget for this trip was the total estimate that they gave me from question 4. They had to do everything on their list. I was not going to grade them on being confined to their budget or itinerary, because when you plan a vacation in real life, those things can change. I was going to grade them on their planning ability and, most importantly, their ability to write checks and keep their register.

Over the next several days, they were given their technology, and I instructed them to create a slideshow using any format they preferred (PowerPoint, Keynote, or Canvas).

The slideshow needed to include:

- Day one info
- A detailed list of their itinerary: what they spent, and what they did.
- Air travel: screenshots of airline ticket costs. Travel arrangements: Uber/Taxi/Subway/Rental Car costs. Road trips: Gas mileage and how often they would need to stop for gas (map of their route and when they will need to stop for gas, how much they are putting in each time, and what the cost is)
- Amusement park/movie/entertainment: screenshot of the website's entrance fees.
- Food: screenshot of restaurant menus, what they ordered, and the total bill.



*“I decided to have [students] plan a vacation for their family.”*





## Classroom Highlights (*continued*)

They had to have their whole trip planned out. The end of the slideshow needed to compare their initial estimates of cost and itinerary to their actual cost and itinerary. To tie it all into our banking unit, the students needed to complete the project with a check written out for every expense along the way and a record of the check in a check register. For some of the expenses that you would prepay for, airline tickets, cruise tickets, things that one would buy online, I let them use their “debit card” and skip the check on that part, but the record still needed to be in their registry. Their beginning balance for the register was their estimated budget for their trip.

Watching them over these few days was great fun. I learned so much about the kids and their interests. Some of the students had a very good grasp of what things cost and ended their trip under budget. Others underestimated every item, and their register went in the red by several thousand. These are some of the comments I heard while they were working.

- ⇒ “Do people actually do this before taking a trip?”
- ⇒ “Traveling is too expensive; I am never going anywhere!”
- ⇒ “I am so glad my parents are paying for this.”
- ⇒ “Ms. G! Is this hotel really \$3500 a night!!!? I can’t even afford to sleep.”
- ⇒ “Oh, I need a passport to go here. That is another expense I didn’t think about.”

When they were all done, I had them present the project to the class.

Two students picked New York, but they had completely different experiences while in New York. One went to a ball game and a Broadway show, and one went to many of the tourist locations (Statue of Liberty, Times Square, Ground Zero). They were comparing notes at one point and discussing the cost of travel and lodging. One of them wanted to stay in the center of the action; it was more expensive, and they also flew first class. The second was trying to convince the first, “If you go out a couple of blocks, the cost of hotels drops to half that rate. I’m right by the subway; it will only add a few more minutes to get anywhere. I can ride a lot of subway for the money I’m saving on the hotel.”

The student on the cruise found what dates their cruise left, but it was cheaper to fly in three days earlier, even with the extra hotel cost. So, they had a few extra days to tour Florida before they left for their cruise.

Toward the end of the project, I went to our home basketball game. One of the parents stopped me and asked about the assignment that I had the kids doing. Their child came home and shared about what we were doing in class. They said that didn’t happen very often. This parent loved the project and loved talking with their student about it. Another parent stopped and said that their student also talked about this project at home. This is a project I will definitely do again!

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