



# California Mathematics Council Community Colleges

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## President's Report

*James Sullivan, CMC<sup>3</sup> president, Sierra College*



As I sat at my desk to write this article for the summer edition of our CMC<sup>3</sup> newsletter, the spring term was coming to an end and the summer break was about to begin. I reflected on what we had accomplished this year (there were many) and on what we are working on for next year (plenty more still). Then I asked myself, "What message do I need to share with you (the members of CMC<sup>3</sup>)?" My answer to that question was "Thank you!". Thank you for being a member of CMC<sup>3</sup>. Thank you for attending our conferences. Thank you for taking the time to read our email messages and our informative newsletter (Speaking of which, be sure to read all the articles in this edition, especially the ones informing you on our return to an in-person conference in Monterey this December, Leslie Banta's journey to become a Mendocino College

mathematics faculty, and CMC<sup>3</sup>'s efforts and partnerships with FACCC, ASCCC and AMATYC to challenge and amend AB 1705). And thank you for being a caring, supportive, dedicated, professional community college mathematics instructor. Your invaluable efforts and selfless hard work on behalf of California community college students is commendable and worthy of recognition and praise.

We have all endured a difficult and demanding past couple of years. Yet, there are still challenging times ahead. I hope you are all able to have the opportunity to refresh and recharge this summer. You earned it. I look forward to seeing everyone at our Fall mathematics conference in Monterey where we plan to come together and "Reconnect & Recharge". I encourage you to submit a proposal to give a presentation at our Fall conference. We all have something special to offer, and we all can benefit from learning what you have to share. CMC<sup>3</sup> is a community of mathematics faculty who come together to support and inform each other. I appreciate each of you and your contributions to our organization. Thanks and have a wonderful summer break.

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This CMC<sup>3</sup> newsletter wants to know how your school is doing! Our community is always proud to see developments in other departments and campuses across Northern California, but unfortunately, this editor has been unable to contact anyone interested in writing up what has been happening on their campus recently. I would love to share how campuses are moving as we head into this new era of teaching. Please email me at [rhodesj@smccd.edu](mailto:rhodesj@smccd.edu) if you are interested in being featured in your usual "What's Happening" article so we can all take a look at the magnificent progress we as a Mathematics teaching community continue to make.

# CMC<sup>3</sup> Foundation Report

*Ekaterina Fuchs, City College of San Francisco*



The CMC<sup>3</sup> Foundation is gearing up for what we hope will be a great conference in 2022! Being the 50th anniversary of CMC<sup>3</sup> we hope to be able to contribute to an excellent conference!

In particular, the Foundation is excited to announce that we are bringing the “Poster Contest” to the 2022 Conference, but with a virtual option for students for whom travel to Monterey is difficult. Please encourage your ex-

ceptional students to take advantage of this special opportunity and considering mentoring a student for a contest entry!

We will continue to offer travel stipends for students who are able to make the trip to Monterey, and those students will be able to showcase their posters live during the conference. However, students for who attending live is not possible will be able to upload a video to a virtual platform, and those videos will be accessible for conference attendees to watch during the conference as well.

Student presentations will be evaluated by an independent panel, and cash scholarships up to \$300 will be awarded to the highest ranking entries. Please visit [this link](#) for more information on presentation contest guidelines. Criteria will be independent of whether the student presented their poster live or virtually!

The winners of the Poster Contest will be announced during lunch on Saturday, December 10.

Presentations can focus on any topic belonging to the fields of pure mathematics, applied mathematics, mathematics history, or mathematics education.

Please feel free to share [the flyer](#) for our Student Presentation Contest widely!

**To celebrate our 50th anniversary, the Foundation is setting a fundraising goal of \$5000! We hope you can help us reach that goal!** The CMC<sup>3</sup> Foundation is able to offer scholarship opportunities such as the Student Presentation Contest, to our students thanks entirely to the generous donations and support of our members like you. If you are interested in donating to the Foundation but have not yet had a chance to do so, it is never too late! [Click here](#) to go to our donations page – there are multiple ways to contribute, from making CMC<sup>3</sup> Foundation your charity of choice on Amazon Smile, to a one time check or PayPal donation, to monthly donations through PayPal.

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## I Remember Why I Love Teaching

*Hal Huntsmen, Antelope Valley College*



I don't think I'm alone in feeling that, over the last two years, our jobs have become a little overwhelming. Dealing with the effects of COVID on an institutional, classroom, and personal level, along with learning new teaching modalities, has left me feeling drained at the end of each day and exhausted at the end of the week.

As the Spring term began, I was anxious and looking for ways to sustain myself, despite the stresses. To

make matters more uncertain, along with many of my colleagues I was signed up for fully in-person courses for the first time since the onset of the pandemic – who knew if there would be an outbreak of COVID in class or in the

college?

The good news is that, while some of my students have missed class because of COVID, the vast majority have been able to be present, and they are glad to be there. What's more, this semester has been a huge reminder of why I became a teacher and why it continues to be my passion. Even with masks on, I am able to see so much more about what is going on for my students as they learn together than I could in Zoom, whether folks have their cameras on or not. It also gives me so many more opportunities to learn about my students in casual moments before or after class. We can converse in normal human ways. We get to know each other in ways that are difficult or impossible in the virtual world. I can see more easily where they are struggling and I can provide hints and sometimes a mini-lecture on an area they need help in. Even in just the first few weeks, I already knew my students more and better than I did in a whole semester online.

The joy this brings my heart is hard to express. Knowing my students and supporting their success through knowing them is a huge part of why I do what I do. Remembering this joy feels like getting well after a long illness, that feeling of not even knowing how bad you felt until you

feel better again. I had forgotten the joy and satisfaction of working with my students in-person. Now it comes back to me with a deep gratitude for them and what I learn from them.

In addition, I am reminded of a book I read over the holiday, *Choosing to See: A Framework for Equity in the Math Classroom*, by Pamela Seda and Kyndall Brown. In addition to being one of the best books I've read on equity in math, ever, Seda and Brown lay out the ICUCARE equity framework, in which the "U" stands for "Understand your students well . . . Learn about your students, their families, and their communities for the purpose of improving instruction (not making assumptions)." It is about "intentionally looking beyond what you typically see in a math classroom, to notice the things that motivate, bring joy to, and intrigue your students, so you can leverage them in the math classroom." They go on to make concrete suggestions about things like math autobiographies, student interest surveys, journaling, and team-building that can help teachers understand our students.

While I did some of those things in the virtual environment, it's so much more natural and powerful in person. What's more, their point about using what we know about our students to improve instruction deserves more emphasis. Too often, as we get to know our students, and see the things they don't know or remember (e.g., fractions,

binomial expansions, solving rational equations – take your pick), we lament the gaps in their understanding and blame them for what they don't know. If we're generous, we blame the teachers and schools that came before us. Instead, we need to recognize that as community college teachers, those are exactly the students we are here to serve. We have to use what we learn about our students to make our teaching better.

And that is exactly what I rediscovered as I worked with my students this spring. Unlike the virtual classroom, they cannot help but reveal themselves as we work together in class on challenging and interesting problems. By paying attention to what they are showing me, I can tailor what I'm doing to what they need. I can also ask questions to learn more and to improve my teaching. The feedback loop continues naturally. I used to take this for granted, but now, coming back to working with my students in-the-flesh, I see more of what I was missing in the virtual world.

The pandemic is not over. It has had many costs, and there will probably be more. But, as we slowly, haltingly return to in-person teaching and learning, let it remind us of the joys of being with our students and learning from them, and let us recommit ourselves to their success.

Questions? Comments? Want to connect? Reach Hal at: [shuntsman1@avc.edu](mailto:shuntsman1@avc.edu).

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## Another Wonderful CMC<sup>3</sup> Virtual Spring Recreational Math Conference

*Larry Green, Lake Tahoe Community College*



for all CMC<sup>3</sup> members and college students. We then

had a chance to join breakout rooms to chat about what we are doing at our colleges and other items of interest. Although we were not able to be in the same physical room to have these casual conversations, chatting online in Zoom rooms was the next best thing. Our next speaker was Maureece Levin who showed us how mathematics is an integral component of archaeology. She explained how the field used this to fully understand the time at which ancient civilizations did what they did. After the morning keynote and during lunch, Katia Fuchs gave us a full lesson on how to bake bread. That was a relaxing way to enjoy our break time. Our final keynote speaker was Javier Arsuaga who presented on how math is useful to understand the genetics of COVID-19 and other diseases. It was wonderful to see how mathematics can be applied to such important areas of science. I sincerely give thanks to the CMC<sup>3</sup> board who worked together to put this informative conference together. Although having an online conference has its benefits, I am crossing my fingers that all will go well and we will be able to have our future conferences, both fall and spring, in the face to face setting.

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## Equity, Choice, and the Community College Mission

Leslie Banta, Mendocino College



I consider myself a community college success story. I began my journey at a small, rural, community college as a returning student and 37-year-old mother of two children (not unlike many of the students I have had in my classes). I had decided to attend college to seek a degree in Mathematics after having positive experiences volunteering in my children's classrooms, where I was usually assigned to the math table. Seeing the children's faces light up when they understood a math concept in a new way got me hooked.

Despite previous academic success years before, I was nervous when I took the first steps to enroll at my local community college. I signed up for the placement testing and did better than I thought I might after years of primarily using math in a bookkeeping capacity. I was actually excited that I could take Intermediate Algebra (a class I had previously had in high school more than 20 years before). Because I wanted to teach math, I did not want to miss the opportunity to understand the concepts (not just the algorithms I remembered) and I chose to enroll in Elementary Algebra. From there, I worked my way to transfer level math and, eventually, a degree in Mathematics.

Had AB705 been in place at the time, it is highly unlikely that I would have pursued a math degree. Even though I had a decent background in mathematics in high school, that was many years before and I would not have had the confidence to enroll in a precalculus course (let alone a Calculus course as mentioned in recent revisions to AB1705), even if a support course was available. It is highly unlikely that I would have been successful because that automatic placement would have been enough to keep me from enrolling. Some would have us believe that "those students would not be successful anyway" but this outlook comes from a deficit mindset that discounts the unique interests, goals and abilities of the individual students we serve. Had AB705 been in place when I returned to college, there would have been one less woman in STEM, one less mentor for other women pursuing STEM degrees, and one less community college success story.

When I read the [Community College Mission Statement in Ed Code](#), I see myself. "The California Community Colleges shall, as a primary mission, offer academic and vocational instruction. . . for both younger and older students, including those persons returning to school. . . In addition to the primary mission of academic and vocational instruction, the community colleges shall offer instruction and courses to achieve all of the following: The provision of remedial instruction for those in need of it. . ." If you have not read the mission statement in a while, I encourage you to do so. It is beautiful in its inclusivity and its vision.

**AB1705**, a bill that has now been heard and forwarded to the Assembly by the Committee on Higher Ed and has the support of the Chancellor's Office, is designed to further restrict the availability of math courses that best fit a student's goals (especially those other than transfer), interests, and needs, has me feeling discouraged. In our classrooms, to promote equity, we are encouraged to give students choice and agency over their own learning. At the same time, our institutions are working to restrict choice and agency for our students. This is not an equitable solution. Arbitrary metrics and directives that result in community colleges no longer offering classes below transfer level have a negative impact on our students and our communities.

I am now a tenured faculty member at the same community college where I started my journey. It is a dream

come true. I get to teach, encourage, and mentor students from diverse backgrounds who have equally diverse goals for themselves. When I think of my students who would likely have been negatively impacted by AB705, I think of Jake, who was a returning student. He had turned his life around and wanted to create a new start for himself. He completed Elementary and Intermediate Algebra with me and his degree allowed him to get a job that supports his family and includes benefits and retirement. He also benefitted from doing something he never thought he could do – algebra.

Jonathan, a young Latino, left agricultural work to attend college. He enrolled in pre-transfer math courses for a CTE certificate in Sustainable Technologies, fell in love with math and is now a graduate of UC Davis and a civil engineer turning creative ideas into physical structures. Maria enrolled in Elementary Algebra so she could help her children with their math homework. She would study when they were in school so that she would be ready to answer their questions in the evening. Together, they built a successful learning community.

A current student, who is living with disabilities, has no desire to transfer but set a personal goal to get through Intermediate Algebra. They successfully passed Prealgebra and they are thrilled to be learning Elementary Algebra. They are dedicated to their studies and are learning more math than they ever thought they would. Sadly, they will

not reach the goal they set for themselves because we will not be offering Intermediate Algebra in the fall. AB705, AB1705, and arbitrary directives that do not take into account a student's personal goals have put this student's dream of passing Intermediate Algebra just out of reach. The gathering of data for analysis, when properly done and looked at from multiple perspectives (such as not just those who pass but also those who don't), can help us to make informed decisions about best practices. The trouble with big sets of data, however, is that the individual

is generally lost. When we impose our own definitions of student success on our students (such as the assumption that all students should take transfer-level math and would benefit from it), we take away our students' choices and their agency. We place on them our own definition of success and silence their voices in defining their own goals and paths. We essentially say that they are not qualified to make these decisions about their own lives and that we will tell them what is best for them. I do not see equity in that.

If you would like to join the Faculty Association of California Community Colleges in opposing AB1705 in its current form, please [complete an action alert](#). We still have an opportunity for this legislation to be revised to better serve our students and their diverse educational goals.

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## We Can Do It: What is Deep Reading?

Jeff Anderson, Foothill College



One of the most powerful habits we can develop to deepen our teaching practice is that of reading. Reading is one of the most magical activities designed by the human mind. The written word provides a time travel machine in which ideas that exist in an author's brain can jump across space and time to invigorate the brain of the reader. Reading also al-

lows us to accelerate our learning by leveraging the expertise of the author. A good author might spend hundreds or even thousands of hours over multiple years researching, synthesizing, drafting, editing, publishing, and revising their work. That literature might be built on a whole collection of other writings that represent tens of thousands of hours from other authors. When we read, we leverage work that was created on a time scale measured in years for a cost that can be measured in hours. This article is the first of a three-part series designed to support you in developing your reading habits to support your personal growth and professional development.

### Types of Reading

The English verb "to read" is vague. The sentence "I am reading" communicates the general idea that you are sitting in a space with your eyes focused on written words. But this sentence does not capture what is happening inside your brain. The imprecise nature of the verb "to read" reminds me of the similarly ambiguous quality of the verb "to exercise." When you say "I will exercise today," I understand very little about what you actually plan to do. It is much more definitive if you were to say "At 4pm today, I will run 3.0 miles at a pace of around 7 minutes per mile as part of my training routine for my upcoming half

marathon." This second sentence is much more precise because you specify the type of exercise you will perform, and you contextualize this activity within a larger set of goals for your physical health.

I find the comparison between reading and exercise instructive because it highlights some deficiencies in the English language. When speaking about exercise in English, you have a ton of clarifying verbs that you can use to classify the type of physical activity you are doing. For example, each of the following verbs constitute a type of exercise: walk, run, sprint, jump, lift, throw, catch, play, swim, stretch, climb, etc. When you use these more specific verbs, the listener gets a concrete picture of what your body is doing and what the activity looks like.

In contrast, when speaking about reading, the English language lacks more precise phrases to describe different types of reading that you might engage in. Let's highlight this point by considering a fun question from a fictional standardized test: "Exercise is to running as reading is to what." This question highlights the idea that we don't often talk about subcategories of reading. As far as the English language is concerned, all reading is described using the same verb "to read." That verb is insufficient to describe the different types of reading you might do and the distinct goals you may have while you read.

Just like particular forms of exercise are appropriate for specific contexts, the type of reading you do likely depends on your desired use for the information that you plan to decipher. From that perspective, I define and categorize at least six different types of reading that I do on a daily basis. I hope you find these categories useful as you build and refine your own reading systems to accelerate your learning.

### TYPE 1: TRANSACTIONAL READING

*Transactional reading* is short, focused reading to accomplish a specific goal and complete a transaction. For example, if I am at the DMV and I want to apply for a new license, I have to complete paperwork. Littered all over those forms are a ton of words that I have to read in order to get that work done. The same is true when I get a jury summons with a ton of information I need to know in order to report for duty. Other types of reading in this

category include travel directions to a new destination or filling out paperwork at any place I do business on a daily basis, like a library, bank, or post office. The same can be said about research I do to buy a new item or any receipts I collect as I make purchases. All of this reading is surface-level and does not permeate deep into my soul. When I read transitionally, I use written words to make decisions about how I should act to accomplish specific tasks with concrete deadlines.

#### **TYPE 2: ENTERTAINMENT READING**

*Entertainment reading* is reading for pleasure, joy, or leisure. This type of reading is similar to watching a movie, chatting with a friend, or engaging in recreation. The point of this reading is to enjoy oneself. When I read for entertainment, I have no particular goal in mind other than to have fun with whatever story I'm reading.

#### **TYPE 3: INFORMATION-COLLECTION READING**

*Information-collection reading* is reading I do to stay informed about current events for topics in which I am already interested or reading I do to expose myself to ideas that may spawn new interests over time. This type of reading usually involves newspaper or magazine articles, radio segments, podcasts, or YouTube videos (at the end of this post, I explain why I consider listening to podcasts or watching YouTube videos to be forms of reading). To finish information-collection reading for a single piece of work may take anywhere from a few minutes and no more than two hours. These reading experiences are not deep dives into specialized subjects but instead updates that I can dissect quickly. The point of this information-collection reading is to stay informed about the world around me. I don't always come away from information-collection reading with concrete action items or specific ideas I want to try. But, I keep the information I collect in the back of my mind as I navigate life and use this information to guide future decisions. I usually do not have a concrete goal or specific timeline in mind for the information that I collect during this type of reading.

#### **TYPE 4: EXPLORATORY READING**

*Exploratory reading* is reading I do to dive deeper into specialize topics. This type of reading usually involves audiobooks, digital kindle books, and peer-reviewed journal articles. To finish exploring a single piece of work may take me anywhere from two to ten hours, depending on what I am reading. When I do exploratory reading, I have some specific goals in mind. In addition to broadening my own awareness about the world around me and probing ideas in a specialized realm of knowledge, I also want to make a decision on whether or not I feel this work deserves a larger time commitment in my future. As discussed below, the most intense and meaningful type of reading I do is deep reading. Over the course of a year, I am lucky if I can deep read four books. Because I am limited by the 168-hour rule (there are only  $24 \times 7 = 168$  hours each week), I find that the older I get, the more judicious I need to be about deciding what I commit to read deeply. Exploratory reading is designed to vet potential candidates for deep reading. When planning my exploratory reading,

I focus on topics that I have a well-developed interest in pursuing. By the time I am doing exploratory reading on a subject, I have already been interested in that topic for many months or years.

#### **TYPE 5: FILTER READING**

*Filter reading* is reading I do to filter every word in a particular work into one of two categories. The first category, which I call *substance*, are ideas that I believe will lead to desired learning. The second category, which I call *fluff*, are passages that I do not find very interesting or contain ideas that I have already mastered. I usually engage in filter reading after exploratory reading but before I begin my deep reading processes. When I filter read, my goal is to decide on which excerpts may lead to lasting changes in my life. To filter read, I re-read every word of the book for a second time and ask myself a series of questions including: • What comes up as I read this passage? • How do I imagine I can use this passage to transform my current understanding of the world, improve my performance at home or work, or change my world view in significant ways? • How do I feel as I read this this passage: excited, uncomfortable, curious, happy, sad, etc.? • What ideas do I find novel or interesting here and why do I feel this way? Not all parts of a particular work I am reading strike me as substantive. Published authors are good at selling book. To do so, they often add a lot of narrative and support work to make their work palatable to the largest possible audience. However, when I engage in deep reading, I usually have some specific outcomes that I want to achieve. Moreover, depending on my recent diet of exploratory and deep reading, I often have expertise that makes many parts of particular work redundant for my purposes. The goal of filter reading is to isolate the parts of a book that I find most relevant for my own future growth. As a rule of thumb, I expect that any work that I filter read has at least 30% - 60% of its content that catches my attention for a deeper dive. Because I use exploratory reading as a precursor to filter reading, I usually already have a good idea of the ideas I care most about as I sift through the work. I use filter reading to pinpoint the exact passages that I want to focus my prolonged attention on as I progress in my deep reading processes. Note: In the early stages of developing expertise on a subject, I may feel compelled to process 100% of a book. In this case, I skip filter reading and dive directly into deep reading. When I was a younger man, this was how I learned mathematics. For a selection of mathematics textbooks geared for upper-division and graduate-level work, I would re-write every word in the book in my own language and solve every single practice problem offered in the back of each section. My goal was to create detailed notes on the subject. When applicable, I would also combine ideas from multiple sources as I decipher the author's work., I did that work under the assumption that I had relatively little expertise in the given subject. As my expertise level grew, I didn't need such a deep dive in future readings. Instead I could be much more discerning when reading books on the same topic. This is what filter reading is designed for: to help me determine which parts of a book are most interesting

to me as I deepen my learning.

## TYPE 6: DEEP READING

*Deep reading* is reading that I do on a subject that leads to lasting changes in my thoughts, beliefs, attitudes, and actions. If I do my deep reading correctly, these changes endure for years into my future. I do deep reading at my home office in a special ritual space. When I read deeply, I minimize all distractions and set aside focused, uninterrupted work time. I usually deep read nonfiction books, peer-reviewed journal articles, or textbooks. To finish deep reading a single work might take me a minimum of 10 to 30 hours. Depending on my commitment level, I am willing to deep read some books for hundreds of hours over many years of my life. When I read a piece of work deeply, I spend many, many hours analyzing that work and deconstructing the author's ideas in ways that make sense to me. By the end of a deep read, I usually have my own customized notes on the work. While the author's original work provides a foundation, I embellish my notes with many ideas not provided by the author. One of the ways I judge my own deep reading habits is to ask myself a series of questions: • How is my life different now compared to when I first started deep reading this book? • What changes have I made to my thoughts, actions, or beliefs because of this book? • What evidence have I created to demonstrate how I've used this book to enhance my life? • How can I systematize the knowledge I am constructing from this deep reading so that I can leverage this work for years into my future? • If I were to think about creating a portfolio of work to document my learning journey with this book, what would that look like? How could I use that process to become more effective in the areas of my life that I care most about? During my deep reading processes, I strive to produce meaningful answers to each of these questions and to build a body of work that documents my transformations. Because this is a fun and intense process, I limit the number of books I deep read each year. My upper bound for deep reading each year is at most four nonfiction books.

### Expand Your Definition of the Verb "to Read"

I have a feeling that after you read the definition of information-collection reading that I offered above, you might have thought: "Wait! Listening to podcasts or watching YouTube videos is not reading." I sympathize with that perspective. However, I encourage you to reconsider your definition of the verb "to read." You might start by looking at [Merriam-Webster's definition of the word "read"](#). The first few entries are: • to receive or take in the sense of (letters, symbols, etc.) especially by sight or touch • to

utter aloud the printed or written words of • to learn from what one has seen or found in writing or printing Each of these definitions refers to processing information in printed form. However, that same definition of the word "read" also offers the following entries: • to recognize or interpret • to attribute a meaning to • to receive and understand (a voice message) by radio • to acquire information from storage

That last line "to acquire information from storage" is by far my favorite definition of the word "to read." I find that particularly relevant for 21st century life. I believe that one of the reasons that the common use of the word "read" is so closely tied to written symbols is because prior to the 20th century, the written word was the most effective form of storing information that could transcend space and time. Starting in the early 1900's to present day, we've had an explosion of information storage and transmission technology that has fundamentally shifted the way human beings acquire information. This includes radio, television, movies, internet, podcasts, YouTube videos, and so many other mediums. Because the English language has been slow to catch up, I like to re-purpose the word "to read" to describe my desire to acquire new information. From that context, I believe that podcasts and YouTube videos are perfectly valid forms of reading.

It is worth saying that my intention for the activity matters. I recently watched the movie [Marshall starring Chadwick Boseman](#). He passed away a few months ago and I remember really enjoying that movie when it first came out. I would not categorize this activity as reading. My intention for that viewing experience focused on entertainment reading: I wanted to enjoy the story, feel inspired, and remind myself of Boseman's talent. On the other hand, I also recently re-watched the [Netflix documentary 13th](#) (directed by Ana DuVernay). That viewing was my third and I would categorize that experience as information-collection reading. While I watched, my intention was to collect specific information about the structure of racism within the democratic system in the United States and to gather ideas about future reading that I plan to do. The distinction between these two viewing experiences lies in my intention. When watching *Marshall*, I intended to enjoy and did not pay special attention to any features of the movie. I just watched. When viewing *13th*, I set my focus on learning more about the [American Legislative Exchange Counsel](#). I also tried to find connections between this documentary and [some recent books I have read](#) on the same subject. I took notes on the content, re-watched special segments multiple times, and did follow-up research on some of what I learned.

## Community Challenge

1. Develop your own understanding of what reading means to you. What types of reading do you do? What books have you read that have fundamentally influenced the way you see the world, your work, or your life? Why? What lead to those changes? When do you find that the reading you do has the biggest impact on how you live your life? 2. Create a public reading list to track the reading that you do. Share your reading list with people you trust. Make your reading part of your social life so that others in your communities know about your reading habit. If you're interested, here is mine. 3. Build reading into your work habits. Most jobs demand our labor without explicitly creating space or time for continual professional and self-directed learning on a weekly basis. To counter act this institution-centered

approach to labor, begin to create your own demands for the type of learning you want to do in your work. For example, in any given week, I expect to do at least 4 hours of exploratory reading and at least 4 hours of deep reading. At this point in my career, I focus heavily on developing my identity as a White antiracist, on developing a modeling approach to linear algebra, and on re-designing my approach to grading. In the past, I spent many years focused on improving my productivity systems and on developing expertise in the science of learning. In all this work, I focus on topics that I believe will make me more effective at my job and will help me re-invigorate the sense of purpose I create in my work. I demand that any place I work at allow me the type of autonomy that I need to engage in this type of life-long learning. If you could develop your own demands for your work, what would those be? What are you interested in learning more about in your job? Why is this important to you? If you were to design your own degree to help make you more effective and happier in your work, what topic would you study? Why? How many hours of reading would you like to do each week dedicated to this type of learning?

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## Mentality, Mindset, and Math

*Joshua Rhodes, College of San Mateo*



As the Spring Semester closed, I was left thinking about the many new parts of teaching math over the last 2-3 years. While I am sure that many of you have done the same, I still feel like it is worth mentioning how much we have had to adjust our courses, lifestyles, and expectations during

this time. Once I had the opportunity to instruct my students face-to-face again (or at least eyes to eyes), I had noticed that the expectations of the classroom had changed, and I sought to find out what new expectations and views students had that made the experience different than before. In what ways did the mindset of myself and my students adjust to cope during lock down and how does that interface linger into in-person instruction?

First, speaking from my own perspective and expectations, I was quite excited to return. To put things brief, the pedagogical expectations for what is my optimal way to teach math had developed with a face-to-face instruction. There were many compromises I had made while teaching online that, while they suited the format, I did not think were producing the same level of understanding I had become accustomed to – or at least I had thought so initially. I had come into the virtual classroom with a mindset that was not producing the results I desired, so I, like all of my colleagues, made changes in how we interface with students. I had to adjust my expectations of what students will be able or willing to do, when they can do a meeting or an assignment, and most importantly, I found that flexibility was a dangerous tightrope to walk. I know I have a lot left to learn, and every student requires a different approach, but it was difficult to balance allowing students to turn in work later and changing deadlines against having students take advantage and utilize the flexibility in exchange of pushing themselves to learn the material more thoroughly and on schedule. Students that were given leniency ranged from productive semesters and putting in more work and time in office hours to understand the

material, to other students now setting a lower bar for themselves and struggling to find their previous work flow and productivity. This experience had made me come into my face-to-face classes with a mindset that was unsure about how to engage students.

Students, on the other hand, came into our face-to-face setting with a variety of expectations. The semester was met with enthusiasm for a return to person-to-person. Many were engaged and, even with masks preventing the full expression of our faces, students were developing a stronger sense of community inside and outside the class. However, as things went on and the usual mid-semester difficulties encountered students, they were being knocked out the usual flow of the semester and most them were struggling to get back into the a productive rhythm. Some contracted COVID and missed class, and were not able to catch up on material, while others used their time out of class to make up material and came back stronger than before. I found that, in an effort to setup a productive environment, I needed to help adjust some students' mindset for being back in face-to-face classes.

I have found it helpful letting my students know my mindset and expectations for them, both in the classroom and how they display their understanding. I worked hard to remind students of my pedagogical views and how every part of my class is either in service of themselves understanding the math or in service of themselves working at being a better student. I would frequently remind students that homework is purposefully chosen to have them exercise what they learned, and not doing it will mean they enter the next class unpracticed. These types of practices led students to feeling comfortable enough to share what they found helped and did not help. Though we did not always agree (some suggestions were aimed solely to improve their grade instead of their understanding..) I was able to see what the students were worried about, what was preventing their success, and we had productive dialogue to adjust our expectations and even some of our classroom dynamics so that I could accommodate their learning needs while they were given more opportunity to display the level of learning I expect and require from them.

I come away from the semester with a more renewed mindset of how to engage my students. I have always tried to be very clear of what learning material means to me in my classrooms, but now I see the power of having



a discussion with my students on what learning means to *them*. I enter this next semester looking to set up a system where a dialogue of, not only the material, but also the method of delivery, are topics between me and the classroom.

I would love to hear what topics, in regards to classroom structure, any educator has had with your students and what you may or may not have changed from their feedback. Let me know (and if you want to have it shared as a follow up in our next newsletter) at [rhodesj@smccd.edu](mailto:rhodesj@smccd.edu)

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## AB1705 Advocacy Update

*Ekaterina Fuchs, City College of San Francisco*

*Jennifer Carlin Goldberg, Santa Rosa Junior College*

*Cortney Shultz, Santa Rosa Junior College*

After careful consideration, the CMC<sup>3</sup> Board decided to take a position against **AB1705**, a new piece of legislation currently working its way to a vote in the State Assembly. Please take a moment to read [our full position letter here](#). Shortly thereafter, AMATYC issued a letter of concern to both State Chancellor Eloy Oakley and Assembly Member Irwin, the author of AB1705.

Since taking this position, the Board has been engaging with FACCC (Faculty Association of California Community Colleges), ASCCC (Academic Senate of California Community Colleges), and State Legislators, particularly those who serve on the Higher Education committee to share our concerns about this bill.

The bill was heard in committee on April 26, 2022. Though there were some concerns raised by hearing attendees as well as legislators on the committee, the bill successfully passed out of the committee phase with a unanimous vote of approval. The next stage is a vote in the State Assembly.

While we understand that the most likely outcome is that this bill will pass, the CMC<sup>3</sup> Board will continue to work with legislators, especially the authors of this bill, to voice our concerns. In particular we will be advocating for students whose goal may not be transfer, students who are returning to pursue a college education after a long period away, military veterans, and students in traditionally under-represented groups whose goal is a degree in a STEM field. We are also concerned about the impact the bill may have on students with disabilities, a concern well-expressed by CAPEd (California Association for Postsecondary Education and Disabilities).

Of special interest to us is the student voice in this conversation. We have compiled a collection of student testimonials where students describe the importance of access to pre-transfer-level coursework to their college careers. We have the great privilege of working with incredibly articulate and passionate students! If you know a student who wishes to write a letter describing their experience in a pre-transfer-level course, please encourage them to do so! We are compiling student testimonials and sharing them widely. Student testimonials can be sent to [board@cmc3.org](mailto:board@cmc3.org).

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