Every time I visit someone's classroom, my sense of hope for our profession is renewed because I see real instances of dedication to individual students and to the profession. Last week I had the opportunity to visit 3 different classrooms to guest teach. After I taught, I discovered that two of the teachers had received pink slips, and the other needs every bit of class time to prepare for the CAT-6 coming up after her Spring break, and yet they took the time to have me visit. The two that had received pink slips were less than certain about their futures at their schools for next school year. And here they were, organizing for me to visit, finding time to plan lessons with me for a half hour at lunch during the previous week, finding time to coordinate for substitutes so that fellow teachers could observe me too, making name tags, designing handouts that we had discussed, spending time debriefing with me after school or during their preparation period. Was that not enough? Moreover, their interactions with their students spoke volumes about how much they cared. Here are but a few examples of interactions that inspired me.

One teacher quietly counseled a student about making good choices.

One teacher shared examples from student portfolios (which they will take with them to high school) showing growth on problems likely to appear on the HSEE.

...continued on page 3.

**Dedication**

By Debbie Stetson

"Spoon feeding in the long run teaches us nothing but the shape of the spoon."

--E.M. Forster
Invitational Institute & You This Summer

If you are interested in the Invitational Institute but are wondering if it is for you, take some time and read the questions and testimonials below. Also, if you are a former Invitational Institute participant and are looking for ways to convince your colleagues to check it out - these are some helpful highlights!

Would you like to learn more about using questioning strategies to:
- increase student involvement?
- check understanding of all students in your class?
- build mathematical connections between skills and concepts in the standards?
- bridge the gaps in understanding for students requiring intervention?

Do you believe children can learn better in a safe learning environment? Would you like to learn some specific ideas about how to create safety in your classroom?

Would you like the opportunity to work with other area teachers as we find ways to address the toughest standards to teach for understanding?

Would you like to learn more about the art of classroom observation and supportive feedback, and to practice looking for subtle interactions between teachers and students in order to detect what works and why it works?

Would you like to attend a professional development activity which models all of the above, in which you will be a learner of mathematics working in cooperative groups in a safe learning environment while being guided through questioning.

Would you like to remember the joys of both learning and of teaching?

Would you like to work with other teachers at your school as a team of peer observers? As part of our follow-up next school year, we will provide school visits for guest teaching and observation in order to support your team.

If you answered yes to any of the above, the 6th Annual CSUSMP Invitational Institute is for you. Please apply. Apply by yourself or talk to your colleagues if you would like to start a pair or a team from your school.

Note: Out of participating teachers’ schools from this institute, we will identify 4-6 schools for which we will provide focused follow-up support next school year in the form of classroom visits for guest teaching using questioning techniques, observing classes noting specific strategies that work, and leading debriefing discussions providing supportive and specific feedback.

Some Testimonials from Previous Summer’s Participating Teachers

Miki O'Toole, 5th grade teacher from Caleb Greenwood Elementary School speaking about reaching students below grade level:
“I was especially interested in the techniques that will help me to overcome a child’s possible lack of previous training. Playing catch up is tough. Unfortunately, this is often the case, even in the most upscale neighborhood schools. It has been one of my personal frustrations. I was so exceptionally pleased by the institute’s attention to this circumstance.”

Cindi Jo Lehman, 1st and 2nd grade teacher at Orangevale Open Elementary School speaking about what the institute gave her:
“This CSUS Math Project Institute has been the most frustrating, exciting, exhausting, invigorating, intimidating and empowering experience of my professional growth training. It has given me an up close view of what excellent teaching and true math learning look and feel like. This Institute has provided a multitude of insights and first that I will strive to reflect in the learning environment that I build for my students.”

David Bories, 7th – 12th grade teacher at Choices Charter School speaking about the Institute experience being beyond his expectations:
“This twelve-day class has been an absolute marvel to me. I came expecting math puzzles that would twist and turn me...But what I didn’t expect was what the Institute really wanted me to understand and take away. I mean the ability to see that there is a Socratic method to teaching.”

Dave Decker, 5th grade teacher at John Still Elementary School, speaking about working with his students next year:
“The questioning strategies are simple and logical, yet so effective in engaging all students. These strategies also provide a comfortable and non-threatening climate for student responses. By far the most powerful component of the institute’s curriculum was the consistent use of positive reinforcement and peer coaching. When I have been validated for my contribution to the class not only by the instructors but also by my peers, it makes the entire learning process much more meaningful. I feel confident my students will benefit tremendously form these instructional techniques.”
Dedication... (continued from page 1)

One teacher greeted her students at the door (as she does every period of every day) setting her expectations and getting them started in a positive way.

Each teacher lit up a child’s face with praise for unusually good work that day. Each teacher praised the class for good thinking and polite behavior. Each teacher had students feeling at ease to ask questions.

This is but a glimmer of the hundreds of moments in just three teachers’ lives, and shows just a fraction of their dedication. I am certain after reading this, you will find yourself saying, “I do that too.” So, thanks to all of you. I am proud and honored to be amongst you as teachers.

Predicting Student Outcomes
By Scott Farrand

The affirmative action case that the US Supreme Court is considering caused me to think a little about teaching practices. Let me explain.

I was thinking about how SAT, GPA, and a student essay don’t say very much about a student’s potential in college. Likewise, the standard information that I receive about a student who starts a class of mine tends to be misleading. A quirk of mine is that I want to know what high school my students attended. A bi-product of this is that I have noticed something over the years – I seem to always have great students who come from what are generally considered to be low-performing high schools.

I even did a little study recently, looking at how a student’s grade in first semester calculus compares with the API scores of the student’s high school. I looked at over 350 students from calculus classes taught by Lisa Taylor, Gary Shannon, and me over the past 8 years. The main result is that there is a negative correlation – our students from high schools with lower API scores tend to do better in calculus. Of all of the high schools that have sent us many students, the five schools whose students have done best in calculus all have API scores of 1, 2, or 3.

There are plenty of reasonable explanations that I could offer as conjectures. Instead I want to reflect on some larger meaning to this phenomenon. Politically, I see this as part of an answer to those who would say that college admissions should be blind to anything but the student’s educational accomplishments. I understand that SAT scores have been used because they do a better job of predicting success in college than high school gpa. But if colleges want to admit the students who are most likely to succeed, then I believe that they need to consider the educational disadvantages that their applicants have faced.

The more personal reflection that I offer on this is what it says to me as a teacher. A student who has experienced adversity, disadvantage, and a lack of success often holds a hidden advantage. That student is perhaps more likely to have strengths that have not yet been exercised. It might be that the most important background a student can have is some experience in overcoming adversity and disadvantage.

The challenge for us as teachers is to offer our students a different educational experience, one that provides access and appropriate challenge. When what we offer is different from what they’ve experienced in the past, we might expect different results. I will use this to remind me to keep changing things and noticing how the results differ. I will try to rid myself of the notion that a student’s future performance is limited by his record of performance. And I will eagerly anticipate the joy that comes when a student’s performance does exceed their past record.