

Kate Belin



When did you first start to love mathematics? Sometimes I wish that I hadn't always loved mathematics. Then, when my students are frustrated and telling me that they will never love it and never get it, I could share my story about how I came to love

it. But the truth is that it's always made sense to me. When I was younger, I thought it had something to do with numbers. But that didn't make sense to me, since I've never been particularly good at multiplying or dividing long numbers in my head. It wasn't until I was a math major in college that I realized it was my reasoning, sense-making, just simply being a logical person that has helped me grow to love mathematics.

What was your favorite math topic in high school? I'm not sure what my favorite math topic in high school was. I liked the classes that challenged me the most. I didn't like it when teachers watered it down to much or made it too easy.

What is the greatest challenge you face at work and how have you met that challenge? My greatest challenge teaching comes from students often thinking that they are bad at math because they can't remember all the formulas. When they realize that there are hardly any formulas to memorize in my class, they think it's not real. It is difficult to get their idea of what mathematics is.

Howard Stern



When did you first start to love mathematics? I don't know that I ever "loved" mathematics, but it has almost always come relatively easily for me.

What was your favorite math topic in high school? High school was so long ago. I don't recall individual topics. But I do remember my eighth grade teacher, Eugene Thompson, was very skilled at making class enjoyable.

What is the greatest challenge you face at work and how have you met that challenge? I constantly struggle with students' lack of motivation. I haven't found a perfect solution.

Is there something else special about yourself that would look interesting in a blurb about you as a role model? (a prior career, a particular approach to teaching . . .) I'm fluent in Japanese, which given current pop culture fascination with manga and anime sometimes gives me a unique way to pique student interest.

Courtney Ferrell



When did you first start to love mathematics? Seventh grade, when I struggled with Algebra, got tutored and then was soooooo excited and proud when I finally had a breakthrough.

What was your favorite math topic in high school?

Geometry (I love proof!)

When did you decide to become a teacher? I decided in my second semester of college. I originally was a Psych major but truly missed taking math classes and doing math. I didn't want to be an accountant or anything "boring," and I wanted other people to enjoy math the way I do. So I decided to teach.

What is the greatest challenge you face at work and how have you met that challenge? I am deeply concerned with how NYC schools think the bare minimum - especially where Math and Science courses are concerned - is acceptable. The majority of students in my school are well aware that only three years of Math are required to graduate and jump at the chance to have a short schedule senior year. I talk about college expectations consistently and reference how the current material will be explored in more depth when they get into college. I also talk about how the topic studied is used in various careers or everyday life.

Why did you join MTTI? I want to further my leadership experience and abilities. I hope to be an AP or teach a math education college course in the future.



Teaching Geometry MATHEMATICS TEACHER TRANSFORMATION INSTITUTES (MTTI)

Public high school teachers in New York State have risen to the challenge of teaching a new rigorous geometry course complete with proofs on the state exam. At MTTI, a mathematics teacher leadership institute funded by the National Science Foundation's MSP program, we have provided a geometry class designed around the New York State curriculum. The MTTI program consists of math content, classroom inquiry and leadership courses.

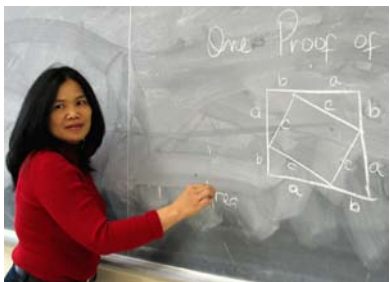
Here six of our many dedicated geometry expert teachers speak about mathematics, teaching, and MTTI.

For more information:

<http://comet.lehman.cuny.edu/mtti>



Celia C. Cruz



When did you first start to love mathematics? I knew I already loved mathematics even before I went to school. I remember doing 2-digit addition and subtraction as early as five years old. My

sister would write addition and subtraction problems on the ground soil (we could not afford to buy paper then). I remember how glad she was when I could give the answer really quick, like I had a calculator in my head. When I first went to school in the first grade (I didn't have an opportunity to attend pre-school and kindergarten), I remember representing my school in the district and division levels in a Math Olympiad. I won first place in the district level and fourth place in the division level. I never had a teacher-coach then. I represented my school every year thereafter until fourth year high school.

What was your favorite math topic in high school? In high school, I took algebra and geometry. My favorite then was Algebra because even though we didn't have books in school, and my math teacher taught traditionally, I could figure out strategies for different algebraic processes by myself. Back then, I was using the working backward approach extensively without knowing it was a problem solving strategy. Sadly though, my teacher would not give me credit for my work because I didn't follow her traditional way.

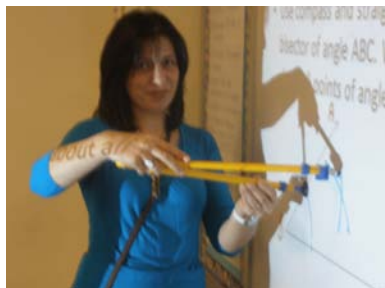
When did you decide to become a teacher? My mother was a Math and English teacher. I would imitate her and pretend to be like her when I was five years old. At such a young age, I already imagined myself as a math teacher.

What is the greatest challenge you face at work and how have you met that challenge? The greatest challenge I faced at work here in NYC is getting students to learn mathematics conceptually. I knew that a lot of students learned mathematics algorithmically, which makes it so hard to introduce them to a constructive teaching approach. They think that when the teacher makes them discover or figure out a pattern, the teacher is making the teaching hard. They always want the shortest way to solve a problem without

learning the essence of such a short cut. They always beg for a formula. Up to now, such a situation remains a challenge for me especially when I am teaching 12th graders who have a lot of misconceptions and poor mathematical skills. I thought that the same content was taught to them the same way every year since they were in the middle school. What I try to do now is to make problem solving and pattern searching central to my curriculum. I always plan my lessons in a constructivist approach where students will have to discover the rule or generalization by themselves. Students must always work in collaborative groups and must present their output to the whole class.

Why did you join MTTI? I joined MTTI because I hope to further my knowledge and understanding of content and pedagogy and see both in the American way. I was schooled in a country outside US so I knew this MTTI experience would widen my horizon in terms of seeing teaching in a different context and perspective.

Alma Xhafa



When did you first start to love mathematics? Math was my favorite subject since I was in first grade. I went to school in Albania and we had to use ink for writing

and pencils for math. I loved writing with a pencil and worked on math problems and numbers where I was allowed to use a pencil.

What was your favorite math topic in high school? My favorite "topic" was a trigonometry course I took in my junior year.

What is the greatest challenge you face at work and how have you met that challenge? There are so many challenges each one different from the other.

Why did you join MTTI? I joined to meet teachers from other schools and share experiences with them.

Joseph Danquah



When did you first start to love mathematics? As one of many elementary (primary) school going kids in my household, I always wondered why

I could easily divide and subtract numbers but struggled with adding and multiplying numbers. The converse was true for the other kids. This is possibly the first time I wondered about mathematics.

What was your favorite math topic in high school? Additional mathematics (AddMaths) was by far my favorite subject in secondary school, and mathematical induction was my favorite topic in AddMaths.

When did you decide to become a teacher? Tutoring my mates in basic math and business math became an important part of my secondary school days. The satisfaction that came with teaching my fellows a new idea was very fulfilling and that's possibly why I leaned toward teaching as a profession.

Why did you join MTTI? MTTI was a chance to better and improve my content knowledge in geometry in order to best prepare my geometry students for higher level work.

I am a firm believer that everyone can learn mathematics and should learn enough math until he or she begins to see the phenomena of this world through math. That every student that passes through my class can learn enough math so that he or she can perceive the phenomena of this world via mathematical logic is the reason I became a teacher.