The new Mathematics Education Leadership PhD cohort began in September. Thirteen students are currently enrolled in the first class. They bring a diverse set of experiences from pre-school to community college mathematics. Among them are K-12 classroom teachers, school district leaders, and community college instructors. This diversity of experience and mathematics knowledge should encourage better vertical articulation of mathematics understanding and sharing of rich experiences from a variety of settings. Their coursework in mathematics education is beginning with the foundations of research about mathematics learning and will continue with teacher professional development next year. They will meet once a month for the next four years to complete their coursework in mathematics education as they are working through the rest of their PhD coursework. The goal of the cohort experience is to provide a built-in support network for PhD students as they work through their coursework and into their dissertations. The students should also leave with a strong foundation in mathematics education research and prepared to take on leadership roles in academia, school districts, professional organizations and other settings. We have already had inquiries about our next cohort and more information will be coming soon. Contact Dr. Margret Hjalmarson for more information.

Dr. Margret Hjalmarson Named Program Coordinator of Mathematics Education Leadership and Director of the MEC:

Dr. Hjalmarson has filled the position to coordinate Mathematics Education activities at George Mason. In this role, she will be directing activities in the Mathematics Education Center and coordinating the Master’s and PhD programs in Mathematics Education Leadership. She has been working primarily with secondary mathematics education advising students and teaching classes for teacher licensure since she came to Mason in 2004. She has also taught EDCI 645 (Curriculum in Mathematics Education) for the K-8 Mathematics Specialist Leader program as well as two courses in the Ph.D. program.

MEC Director Accepts Position at USU

After 5 years as Director of the Mathematics Education Center, which she founded, and Program Coordinator for the Mathematics Education Leadership (MEL) Master’s and Ph.D. programs, Patricia Moyer-Packenham stepped down to accept a position as Professor of Mathematics Education in the College of Education and Human Services at Utah State University. At Utah State University, Moyer-Packenham will pursue her research interests on virtual manipulatives with the faculty team that created the National Library of Virtual Manipulatives.

During Moyer-Packenham’s leadership, the Mathematics Education Ph.D. program was redesigned to better prepare doctoral students as scholars and leaders for today’s mathematics education challenges. In 2005, the MEL programs launched a new concentration called the Math Specialist Leader K-8. Moyer-Packenham recruited 24 students to begin the first Math Specialist courses on campus, and this was followed by three years of increased applications for the campus program. In 2007, the first off-campus cohort of Math Specialists began with 30 teachers in the Fairfax County Public Schools. Prior to her departure, Moyer-Packenham recruited an additional cohort of 25 students for an off-campus cohort in the Prince William County Schools. At a critical time in our nation, when the need for mathematics educators is at an all time high, George Mason has over 80 students enrolled in the MEL master’s program and over 20 students enrolled in the MEL Ph.D. program to fill this need.

Congratulations Patricia! We thank you for your vision, commitment, and dedicated service that have brought the MEL programs this far.

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Dr. Patricia Moyer-Packenham
Suh NCTM Classroom Research Grant

Jennifer Suh, Assistant Professor of Mathematics Education, along with Kerri Fulginiti, 4th grade teacher at Westlawn Elementary School, worked with 18 rising 4th, 5th, and 6th grade students at Westlawn Elementary School for three weeks during the summer. The focus of the summer school enrichment program was fostering authentic mathematical learning in diverse populations.

Fulginiti, in collaboration with Suh, was awarded an $8,000 Classroom Research Grant from the Mathematics Education Trust, in conjunction with the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics.

New Faculty and Staff in the Mathematics Education Center

As of August, 2008, Patricia (Trish) Kridler joined the Mathematics Education Center as part-time instructional faculty for the Mathematics Education Leadership program. Her main duties include teaching two courses each semester. During the Fall, 2008 semester, Trish teaches two sections of Mathematics Education Leadership for School Change. In the Spring, Trish will teach the Advanced Secondary Methods course, as well as a Math content course for the Fairfax Cohort of the Math Specialist Master’s program.

Trish is currently a Ph.D. candidate in Mathematics Education. Her main area of research is curriculum reform and how teachers implement curriculum. Welcome to the Mathematics Education Center, Trish!

Christopher Johnston joined the Mathematics Education Center as the Mathematics Education Leadership Program Office Specialist in July, 2008. His main duties include registering cohort classes, providing support to the full-time, part-time, and adjunct faculty for Mathematics Education Leadership, as well as basic office duties. In addition, Chris is a graduate research assistant for Drs. Jennifer Suh and Debra Sprague.

Chris is currently a Ph.D. candidate in Mathematics Education. His main area of research is pre-service elementary teachers’ design of lesson plans using technology. He is currently collecting his dissertation data, and he hopes to defend his dissertation no later than this May.

ExxonMobil Math Specialist Award

For many years ExxonMobil has been a strong supporter of Virginia’s Math Specialist initiatives by providing funds for mathematics specialists throughout the state of Virginia. This year marks the first time that an award has been given directly to a George Mason University Math Specialist Student.

The student selected for the ExxonMobil Math Specialist Excellence Award demonstrated a strong commitment in her pursuit of the Math Specialist Master’s degree and has an excellent academic record in coursework and program activities.

This year’s recipient of the ExxonMobil math specialist Award was Laura Oyhenart. Laura received $1,000 from ExxonMobil for the award.

Stay tuned for information about the Spikell Award in Mathematics Education!
Suh Awarded State Council of Higher Education for Virginia Grant

Jennifer Suh, assistant professor of mathematics education in the College of Education and Human Development, and Padhu Seshaiyer, associate professor of mathematical sciences in the College of Science, worked with an elementary mathematics specialist and middle school Algebra I teacher from Fairfax County on a project called ACT NOW in MATH: Algebraic Connections and Technology in Middle Grades Math. The project is funded by a grant from the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, in the amount of $73,000.

The main goal of the project was to support teachers in transforming their teaching styles to bring more algebraic connections to what they taught in middle grades mathematics. Other goals were to help teachers re-examine the existing curriculum and bring out the algebraic reasoning that was embedded in the arithmetic they already taught.

The project targeted teachers from schools with a low-income and diverse student population. The first phase, completed in August, involved 41 teachers who participated in a two-week institute that focused on making algebraic connections at all levels of elementary and middle school mathematics, with an emphasis on integrating technology.

"Throughout the two-week program, teachers were immersed in a problem-solving environment and learned how to put themselves in the shoes of a student," says Suh. "The experiences they had working together built up their confidence and helped them develop a positive and productive attitude toward mathematics that they can pass on to their students."

During the second phase, which will take place this fall, the teachers will undertake lesson studies in their respective schools, then share their experiences and analyze student work.

In addition, teachers will attend the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C., in April 2009 to share their experiences.

—Article written by Catherine Ferraro for the Mason Gazette.

New Math Specialist Cohort in Prince William County

The Math Specialist concentration of the Mathematics Education Leadership (MEL) program started in 2005. During that fall, the program admitted 24 students to begin the program. Over the past three years, the program has continued a trajectory of steady growth. In Fall 2007, MEL admitted 30 Fairfax County Public School teachers in its first off-campus cohort program.

In Fall 2008, the MEL Program is proud to announce the addition of its second off-campus cohort of teachers in Prince William County Schools. A total of 24 teachers began the program in September 2008. The teachers will complete a 2 and a half year cohort program, taking one or two classes each semester and during the summers. Teachers will attend classes at a Prince William County school site making it easier for them to make the commute to class.

We welcome these 24 teachers to George Mason University!

Master’s & Outstanding Math Education Program Graduates

Graduation is a time to celebrate our students’ accomplishments. During the May 2008 graduation ceremonies, six students graduated with Master’s Degrees as Math Specialist Leaders. This year Courtney Baker was honored as the outstanding graduating Master’s Degree student. Congratulations Graduates!!

(left to right) Frank Ondish, Lori West, Jennifer Flora, Judy Healy and Courtney Baker

(left to right) Courtney Baker and Dean Jeff Gorrell
The Mathematics Education Center (MEC) is located in the Graduate School of Education in the College of Education and Human Development at George Mason University, Fairfax, VA. The MEC conducts mathematics education research, provides professional development, and designs instructional materials. The MEC works in collaboration with the Mathematics Education Leadership programs at George Mason University to support the scholarly research and professional development of PhD and Master’s level graduate students enrolled in the programs.

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MEC Faculty and Staff