IMI leaders develop teacher leaders

by Donna McLeish

Leadership: management, guidance, direction; synonyms for leadership, but to the individuals who lead the Indiana University/Indiana Mathematics Initiative Math Science Partnership grant it means much more. The leadership team saw as its goal the creation of a web of teacher leaders who could help insure the continuation and success of the professional development and teacher enhancement begun with the grant. Little did they realize how successful the program would be!

Dr. William Frascella of Indiana University South Bend, an original principal grant writer, left us in early 2003 to work with the National Science Foundation in Washington, D.C. Bill has since returned to Indiana and retired from IU. Dr. Daniel Maki of IU Bloomington, who served as project director, has furthered the grant life with careful budgeting that led to a one-year extension, allowing support for the districts and teachers to continue until November 2007. Dan retired from IU in summer of 2006, and has joined the NSF staff. Dr. Maynard Thompson, also of IUB and the Director of the IMI Pre-Service Component, will be the project director for the remainder of the grant. F. Steven Stults is the K–12 Director of Administrative Awareness and Teacher Components. A retired Indiana teacher and administrator, Steve supervises all the components of the program.

A key feature of the elementary program has been the use of the internet to provide teachers ready assistance, with, for example, the weekly log system and the IMI Forum. Also, all documents produced by the grant are online, thanks to John LaMaster, IPUFW, who is Technology Coordinator.

Members of the IMI staff, although from various parts of the state, have worked together since the previous LSC middle school grant. Carolyn Bronson (Pike Township), Frances Jackson (East Chicago), Donna McLeish (Vigo County), and Bob Trammel (Fort Wayne), were District Coordinators during the LSC grant and at the beginning of this MSP grant. Since that time, all four have retired from their respective school corporations and serve as IMI staff, presenting workshops, coordinating committees, writing documentation, and generally keeping the ball rolling. Carolyn is coordinator for the Secondary Liaisons, who help implement professional development and leadership capabilities at the middle schools and high schools in the nine districts. She is also Regional Director for Pike and Decatur Township schools.

Frances, Regional Director for East Chicago and Hammond schools, coordinates the Select Cadre, teachers from every grade level PreK–6 who are the teacher leaders in their districts. Donna is the Curriculum/Standards coordinator and Regional Director for Vigo and Bartholomew schools. Bob, Regional Director for Fort Wayne, Anderson, and Elkhart schools, is also School Administrator coordinator. Leadership is the primary focus of each of these groups.

Success in the nine districts required the cooperation and participation of the District Coordinators. Partnership in this grant has added considerably to their work load, but their willingness and support have proved invaluable. Representing the nine districts are Angie Kelich, Anderson Community School Corp.; Dale Nowlin, Bartholomew Consolidated School Corp.; Wes Sanders, MSD of Decatur Township; Maria Dalhoumi, School City of East Chicago; Dr. David Benak, Elkhart Community Schools; Debra Maddox, School City of Hammond; Kathy Sharpe, MSD of Pike Township; and Gail Artis, Vigo County School Corp. Lynn Black, Monroe County Community School Corp., former District Coordinator at Anderson, has continued to work with the IMI staff and fellow district coordinators.

And if you wonder how this all fits together, look to Mary Stults, who coordinates the planning and implementation for our meetings and workshops. She also handles paperwork for well over two thousand project participants.

We are the IU/IMI leadership team. We develop teacher leaders who will continue improving mathematics teaching and learning in Indiana far into the future.
Vigo liaisons and librarians link learning

By Gail Artis

The Vigo County School Corporation has five outstanding mathematics educators and IMI members who serve as full-time liaisons. Pat Youman works with middle school students and teachers through the MSP program. She models lessons in both general education and special education classrooms that utilize cooperative learning, manipulatives, and alternate algorithms to solve problems with real world applications. Students and teachers alike report a greater degree of confidence in problem-solving and a renewed enthusiasm for mathematics thanks to Pat Youman’s direction.

Four mathematics liaisons serve the eighteenth elementary schools of Vigo County: Diana Allen, Janis Kluesner, Sharon Kramer, and Sandy McFarland. Much of the success of the Everyday Mathematics program in the Vigo County School Corporation belongs to these talented math educators. They are always available to address concerns that administrators, teachers, parents, and students may have. They model lessons in classrooms, conduct Family Math Nights, and provide extensive opportunities for professional development.

Another exciting development has been the formation of a working partnership with the Vigo County Public Library. While visiting the library during the summer of 2006, elementary students were eager to play Everyday Mathematics games online, just as they had at their home schools during the school year. The library was anxious to oblige. So mathematics liaison personnel provided training to the library staff, and the library made the computer modifications necessary to accommodate the online games. Three Everyday Mathematics game kits have been donated to the library, where they will be used as a part of a highly successful tutoring program. We extend our thanks to the following Vigo County Public Library staff members who see to it that learning doesn’t stop at the end of the school day for the children of Vigo County: June Dunbar, Youth Services Coordinator; Margaret Korenski, Young People’s Liaison; and Cindy Rider, School Liaison Program Librarian.

Mathematics substitute teacher Lucas Snyder offers strong support for the goals of IMI

By Julie Sigmund

Pike Township has found a creative way to make use of IMI funding for use of a math substitute teacher. This full-time substitute is employed for the entire school year. His job has been to travel among each of the nine elementary schools in Pike Township to offer support for both students and teachers. This year the support will expand to include our three middle schools and freshman center. The support covers everything from making copies for teachers to working with groups of students to releasing a teacher for an observation. The help of the math sub has enabled teachers to have a continual support person who helps to ensure full implementation of the Everyday Mathematics program. The help of the math sub has also given students another support as they are expanding their understanding of mathematics.

For the past two years, this position has been held by Lucas Snyder. Mr. Snyder can often be found working with a group of students. He may be playing a math game or working on math boxes, but no matter where he is, he is encouraging a love for math. Students have been able to establish a relationship with someone who loves math. Their enthusiasm for the subject is often a direct result of their interactions with Mr. Snyder. Teachers are also very appreciative of the support Mr. Snyder has been able to offer. He is always willing to copy homework, to make transparencies of math boxes, or to make games. Students and teachers have been able to build a relationship with Mr. Snyder because he is in buildings every day. Therefore, he is able to support the expectations established by the teacher and is welcomed as a staff member. The support that Mr. Snyder has provided in Pike Township has set the stage for a strong implementation of Everyday Mathematics and a strong support for the goals of the Indiana Mathematics Initiative.
Elkhart educator lauds benefits of IMI

By Jodee Shaw

Valerie Priller, an assistant principal for Elkhart Community Schools, has a personal connection to the Indiana Math Initiative. Her father, Bob Trammel, helped create it.

Yet even without the personal ties, Priller insists she would be just as enthusiastic about the developmental math series that focuses on the way kids learn. “I got on board in 2002 because, as a classroom teacher, I was looking for something different,” Priller explained. “I immediately fell in love with IMI’s *Everyday Mathematics* curriculum. I loved what it did for kids and what it did for me as a teacher.”

What it did, she continued, is put math instruction in an authentic venue our kids can easily understand and relate to. It also provided her with teaching strategies to reach a variety of learning styles. “Its approach of differentiated instruction is based on years of research on how kids learn,” Priller emphasized.

*Everyday Mathematics*, she explained, wraps around the basic math concepts, revisiting these concepts again and again throughout the school year, even as newer content is added. If a student is having difficulty grasping a particular concept, the teacher can work backwards and find out what skills need to be reinforced.

But it’s so much more than basic math facts, Priller continued. “Our students are gaining better number sense and problem solving skills.”

It’s also more fun to teach, Priller added. “Before, I used to dread teaching math,” she said. “With my IMI training, I looked forward to math class because I knew what to do. I had excellent training. It was my favorite curriculum ever.”

The training she’s received from IMI relates to so much more than math, Priller stated. “It includes training in assessment, content, leadership—skills that benefit every facet of the educational process,” she said.

Priller, who earned her bachelor’s degree from Purdue University and her master’s from Indiana University South Bend, has fourteen years of experience in education, ten of those as a classroom teacher in Elkhart. She earned her administrative license from IUSB last spring and became an assistant principal at two Elkhart elementary schools this past fall.

Even though she is now an administrator rather than a classroom teacher, Priller feels the training she’s received through IMI is still valuable. “I am serving as a consultant to my teachers,” she explained. “I’m also working with our data teams. It’s a perfect complement to what we’re already doing.

“I have such a good base of knowledge now, I feel comfortable offering advice,” she added. “I’m not just shooting from the hip. I’m providing teachers with research-based strategies that have been proven to work.”

Priller signed on with IMI shortly after it was created in 2001. She still attends IMI workshops three or four times a year, with that same group of initial educators. “It has been a great experience,” she said. “It’s on-going professional development. I learn more every year.”

She is thankful that Dr. Dave Benak, Elkhart’s supervisor of curriculum and instruction, had the foresight to promote the IMI to Elkhart’s staff. “Our initial goal was to have at least one staff member trained from each building,” Priller reported, adding the district now has surpassed that number.

These teachers are now math facilitators, helping their building colleagues with any instructional problems they may be having. “Ninety percent of the problems can be solved in house by the facilitator,” Priller said. “If the facilitator doesn’t have the solution, he or she can contact IMI for help.”

IMI-trained teacher, now assistant principal, Valerie Priller says that Elkhart Community Schools students “gaining better number sense and problem-solving skills” because of IMI.  

Photo: Jodee Shaw

While educators have been bombarded with training options in recent years, Priller said IMI is the one she recommends to her colleagues. “I just feel like each and every time I went to a training session I came away with something valuable,” she said, listing help with ISTEP+ preparation and remediation, and resources for substitutes and for parents as a few of them.

Priller emphasized Elkhart Community Schools has already seen the results of IMI training in the district’s increasing math scores on annual assessment tests, including the ISTEP+.

“We now have believers here in Elkhart,” Priller said.
School City of East Chicago sponsors its 19th semi-annual Parent University

By Maria Dalhoumi and Frances Jackson

The concept and event known as “Parent University” began with a conversation almost ten years ago between Dr. John Flores, former superintendent, and Maria Dalhoumi, Director of Educational Resources. Parent University is planned and held on a Saturday during the fall and spring of each school year. Over the years a strong message has been made to parents that their knowledge, support, and assistance are needed for the success of all students. Parent University attendance has continued to increase over the years.

Sessions with well-known keynote speakers whose expertise will appeal to parents with school-age children are always planned. Other session events are timely, informative, hands-on, and fun for the entire family. Speakers and presenters are able to provide relevant and needed parenting skills.

This fall, School City of East Chicago School held its 19th semi-annual Parent University. The topic was “Education: A Family Affair!” Our keynote speaker was Dr. Thomas L. Williams, founder and CEO of the Institute for Leadership Enhancement and Development, who shared information with parents about money and finances, problems associated with students dropping out of school prior to graduation, obesity in children and adolescents, the negative effect of viewing too much television, and other issues related to raising children. During an “interactive” workshop session with parents, Dr. Williams provided information on study skills designed to help bridge the gap between the home and the school. Each family received a study skills book—Learning How to Learn: The Secrets of Becoming a Successful Student, by Dr. Williams.

At this fall’s Parent University during a breakout session, IMI Select Cadre Lead Teacher Ms. Chris Heredia, a 6th grade EM bilingual teacher at Franklin Elementary, presented hands-on activities using games and math activities from Everyday Mathematics. During this session Chris demonstrated games for parents and did math using materials such as cards, number cubes, markers, and various game strategies.