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Educators Gain New Skills to Boost Student Math Scores

250 Teachers Will Attend HCDE/PEF Math Institute

Over 250 Hamilton County educators will gather on Wednesday and Thursday, May 28 and 29, from 8:30 to 3:00 at Chattanooga State Technical Community College for the first annual "Numeracy Institute." This gathering will focus on effective strategies for teaching math from kindergarten through high school and making sure students are prepared for college.

David McKillop, a renowned expert in math instruction and consultant with Making Math Matter, Inc., will be the keynote speaker at 9:00 a.m. on Wednesday morning, and will lead discussion sessions on both Wednesday and Thursday. Other sessions will draw on local experts to share their skills, and will include joint presentations by faculty from UTC, Chattanooga State and Hamilton County schools.

Elementary educators will be encouraged to attend sessions on high school and college, while middle and high school math teachers will visit sessions on elementary math. This will help teachers understand better how their classroom instruction fits into students' overall academic training, K-16.

The math institute is presented in partnership by the Hamilton County Department of Education and the Public Education Foundation, with funding from the Carnegie Corporation. Topics include:

- “Do Math and Reading Really Mix?”
- “Algebra? In Elementary School?”
- “What ARE These Kids Doing? A User Guide for Everyday Math Algorithms”

“We’ve made tremendous progress improving reading and writing in our schools and now we’re going to apply the lessons learned through that work to help us make great strides in our math scores as well,” said Superintendent Dr. Jim Scales. “We have great teachers, great principals, and great students. We can make great things happen in math.”

The math institute is just one element of a multi-faceted strategy that HCDE, PEF and other community partners are using to boost student math scores. Other elements include:

- **Math coaches.** PEF and the school district have placed math coaches in all 16 high schools and 18 elementary schools. These expert teachers continue to teach regular classes during one half of the day, and use that opportunity to demonstrate great math teaching for other teachers to observe. Then, during the rest of the day, they work with other math teachers, offering helpful suggestions and advice.
- **Math Retreat.** Teams of administrators and math teachers from each high school met in April to examine detailed test data (including ACT, state exams, and district-wide end-of-course exams) to consider ways to improve math instruction for their students.
- **Math collaboration with colleges.** Representatives from the school district, PEF, UTC and Chattanooga State are working together to help prepare students for college-level math courses and smooth the transition from high school to college.

- **Math in real life.** This summer, a handful of expert teachers in geometry and algebra will be developing special course content using real-life, authentic tasks to make math instruction more engaging for students.
- **Math networking.** PEF and HCDE hold regular meetings for networks of math coaches and lead teachers, principals, and other teacher leaders. One representative from each school attends each meeting, gaining new knowledge on effective strategies and taking that knowledge back to share with other teachers at his or her school.

“We know there are truly exceptional teachers in every school in the district,” says Dan Challener, President of PEF. “We’re very pleased to be working in partnership with HCDE to help share that expertise with other teachers. We know this is a key to success.”

In addition to the math institute, HCDE and PEF are hosting a similar institute on reading and writing skills. Funded by the Annenberg Foundation and PEF, the 4th annual Literacy Institute will be held at Howard School for Academics and Technology on May 28 & 29. Over 250 educators are expected to attend that meeting, as well.

The Public Education Foundation partners with Hamilton County Schools to help students succeed by offering professional training and coaching for teachers, principals and administrators; human and financial resources to promote research-based innovation; and research that promotes continuous achievement. In the past several years, PEF has helped to bring millions of dollars in supplemental, philanthropic funding to the school system.

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