CPM EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM / an educational 501(c)(3) nonprofit
Empowering mathematics students and teachers through exemplary curriculum, professional development, and leadership

Project Summary

Students Driving Learning through Enjoyment

Amy Bowden, Brooke Raven Sandberg, Carrie Velasco, Laura Bell, Simon Terrell, ***CPM Teacher Research Corps 8.0****, 2021–22* (See the full report.)

Background

This study focuses on ways to help students find joy in learning mathematics. We look at ways we as educators can facilitate student success with challenging mathematical thinking, leading to more engagement and, ideally, joy in doing mathematics.

Innovations

The innovations we utilized to promote enjoyment in the classroom were:

- building community within student teams;
- reciprocal teaching;
- alternative assessment methods;
- math talks; and
- student choice;
- student reflections;
- student check-ins;
- student-written mathematical biographies ("Mathographies").

Findings

With student and teacher mental health at an all-time low in a post-pandemic school year, finding joy has proven to be a big challenge. It is evident that students find joy in being back in school amongst their peers, and our innovations sought to leverage this in the math classroom. Students have consistently reported experiencing joy in the opportunity to work in math study teams. We have come to realize that joy is a difficult thing to measure and, through student observations and reflections, realized that what students report versus what teachers observe seem to provide different definitions of joy.

Contribution

This paper provides teachers with strategies to increase student enjoyment and engagement within a mathematics classroom. The strategies will support the development of a student-centered classroom, provide students with choice in relation to their learning, and provide teachers with more insight into student perceptions of the classroom.

Disclaimer. CPM is glad to share the promising ideas produced through the work of the Teacher Research Corps. It is expected that teachers will rely on their knowledge of their students, the mathematics they are teaching, and the circumstances surrounding their specific teaching assignment when modifying their own behavior and selecting appropriate instructional strategies. A given strategy may have a positive effect on student learning in some situations and a negative effect in others. Please use your own best judgment as you continue to improve your teaching practice.
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