OAME 2008 Report

Presented by Connie Quadrini & Gina Micomonaco
Conference Co-Chairs

Introduction

It was three years ago at one of our OAME board meetings that I was chatting with one of my fellow directors. I'll never forget the words that I uttered…"At some point, I would LOVE to be a part of hosting an OAME Annual Conference." Within the week came the invitation to be the co-chair of the OAME 2008 Conference. The moral of this story…make sure you are willing to chair if you utter those words!

I quickly thought about who I would want to co-chair with me….Gina Micomonaco was the first person who came to mind. I drew on one of my famous lines, "What an amazing opportunity I have for you!" With trust in me, she willingly said yes. Little did we both know that we were in for the ride of our lives!

Conference Overview

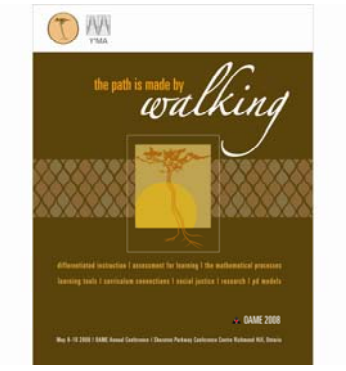
OAME 2008 was hosted at the Sheraton Parkway Toronto North Hotel & Conference Centre in Richmond Hill, just north of Toronto. During their stay, delegates had an opportunity to enjoy comfortable guestrooms and suites, dine at Crave restaurant and enjoy a beverage at the Spirit Lounge and Starbucks coffee bar. Many delegates took advantage of the indoor pools and fitness club. Some even made it to the spa! Complimentary internet access was provided to delegates to keep them connected.

Conference Data

It is with great pride that we report that we hosted 1021 delegates, including 185 presenters. 233 sessions were offered, spanning the eight different paths. It was the team of 28 organizers and 25 volunteers who ensured a smooth start, successful transitions between sessions, exciting evening events, and a memorable close to the conference.

Conference Theme

Our theme, *The Path is Made by Walking*, honoured the many and various paths that we, as educators, take on our different journeys in mathematics education. During the conference delegates explored numerous paths including differentiated instruction, assessment, the mathematical processes, learning tools, curriculum connections, research, professional development models, and a new thread social justice. It was these paths that made our vision come to life, and supported and encouraged delegates in the journey.



Keynote Addresses

Dr. Marian Small – Differentiated Instruction

As a committee, we recognized that local board and provincial action plans focused on supporting teachers in the area of differentiated instruction. Without question, we identified Dr. Marian Small as the ideal speaker for our conference. Her long-standing and internationally recognized work in this area convinced us that differentiated instruction would be a *path* worth highlighting. She was a natural choice for the keynote address for meeting the needs of all learners and how to create an inclusive mathematical learning community.



Dr. Small's message focused on creating an inclusive mathematics learning community. Delegates were challenged to consider how to make tasks more accessible for all students. She was funny, thought-provoking, and very authentic. A classroom teacher at heart, who pushed delegates to envision a learning environment that has high standards for all students, and honours each, and every learner. Delegates walked away with new insights, a new attitude and a few new strategies to try when they return to school!

Marc Keilburger – Social Justice



In 2005, I saw the video, *World on Fire* (www.worldonfire.ca) by Sarah McLachlan for the very first time. This video, which revealed the need for world changing actions through compelling images of tragedy and poverty in the world, overwhelmed me with emotion. As a teacher of mathematics, I couldn't believe how these powerful images coupled with numeric, pictoral and symbolic representations of data, moved me as viewer. I was convinced. Every mathematics teacher needed to see this video!



And so began our journey. As part of the conference, we needed to provide delegates with the opportunity to explore how mathematical literacy can guide acts of social responsibility. There was one person who we knew could move, inspire, and motivate teachers to return to their classrooms and empower students to make a difference in the world…Marc Keilburger.

As an opening to Marc's keynote address, delegates saw the *World on Fire* video. The stage was set. Marc shared very moving personal stories of his visits to the world's most underprivileged people, and how these experiences empowered him to speak out on a variety of social issues. Using powerful

images of data, he captivated delegates and had them consider how mathematical literacy could empower students to make a difference in the world. Using references to the mathematical processes, Marc provided delegates with real world examples of problems and tasks that could be used in classrooms to raise awareness of issues related to social justice.
At the end of the keynote address, delegates were asked to consider, "What will your legacy be as a mathematics teacher?….Will it be algebra? fractions? polynomials? or empowering students to use mathematical literacy to make a difference in the world?" One thing that we knew for sure, delegates walked away with new insights, and perhaps a new perspective of the important role that mathematical literacy in the supporting social justice.

Program & Speakers

Given the site for the OAME 2008 conference, we were limited to the number of workshop sessions that could be run per time block. The program & speakers committee spent many hours reviewing session proposals, approving those that best reflected the conference theme. Although we struggled with the MCIS site intermittently during this time, speakers were patience and understanding, and continued to offer their support throughout the process. Many speakers willingly volunteered their time and expertise on Saturday. Numerous delegates commented on the caliber of the workshops and knowledge of the speakers. We are indebted to the speakers for their contributions to making our conference such a tremendous success. We were pleased to provide each speaker who presented a single workshop with a free conference registration, two free buffet lunches, a snack bag, and a gift certificate for Second Cup.

Our conference format is shown below:

Thursday	
8:30 – 9:45am	Session #1
10:00 – 11:15am	Session #2
11:15 – 11:45am	Exhibitor Displays
11:45am – 1:45pm	Lunch and Keynote Address
1:45 – 3:00pm	Session #3
3:15 – 4:30pm	Session #4
4:30 – 5:00pm	Exhibitor Displays
Friday	
8:30 – 9:45am	Session #1
10:00 – 11:15am	Session #2
11:15 – 11:45am	Exhibitor Displays
11:45am – 1:45pm	Lunch and Keynote Address
1:45 – 3:00pm	Session #3
3:15 – 4:30pm	Session #4
4:30 – 5:00pm	Exhibitor Displays
Saturday	
8:30 – 9:45am	Session #1
10:00 – 11:15am	Session #2
11:30 – 12:45am	Session #3

The keynote addresses included with the common buffet lunches were well received by delegates and speakers. They enjoyed being together as professionals and having time to discuss the morning's events. Two very important messages would be conveyed during the keynote addresses, and we wanted to ensure that all delegates and presenters had a chance to hear them.

Promotions

As we spent considerable time clearly defining our theme, so the need to create a logo and program cover that would truly capture the vision that we had for the conference. Although we did try to run a contest logo with students, the quality of work fell short of what we had envisioned. We quickly found a graphic designer. She researched the African proverb representing our theme, and used her research to explore African patterning, colouring and textiles. After several interviews, and a few prototypes, the birth of our logo and program cover came to be. We used several portions of the program cover to design our promotional items, including pencils, notepads and t-shirts.



Promotional flyers (11"x17") were professionally created and distributed with the December Gazette. OAME2008 was the first conference that did not print a hard copy of the program booklet. An electronic version was made available to delegates on-line. In lieu of the hard copy, we printed large 2' x 3' promotional posters and sent one copy to every school in the province for posting in department workrooms and staff rooms. Although some missed the hard copy, we were pleased with the look of the poster, the monies saved to print and mail program, and the many trees saved!



The chocolate brown conference messenger bags were a new look, and fancied by all who attended the conference. (Rumor has it that they are being spotted at local malls and in popular oversea travel spots around the world!)

Hospitality Events

The hospitality events were organized to highlight some of the many local attractions in York Region.



The Cocktails and Conversation event held at Marlowe's on Thursday May 8th, sponsored by McGraw-Hill Ryerson Publishing, attracted over 100 delegates. Delegates enjoyed the ambiance of the restaurant, and seized the opportunity to connect with colleagues and relax after a day at the conference.



The shopping excursion to Vaughan Mills shopping centre attracted some very dedicated shoppers willing to make the trip across town. Delegates had the opportunity to visit the NASCAR SpeedPark, Lucky Strike Lanes, and shop at the many outlet stores.

The OAME Awards Banquet held at Premier Banquet Hall was a wonderful success! Entertained by an enthusiastic secondary school jazz ensemble from Brother Andre Catholic High School, guests enjoyed a lovely meal and celebrated achievements in mathematics education. This year, the recipients of the elementary and secondary creative mathematics teacher awards were each surprised with a Smart Board for their classroom! Congratulations to Shawn Perry from YRDSB and Sandra Jean Price from DDSB!



Unfortunately, a less popular social event was the Nine & Dine Golfing event at Maples of Ballantrae in Stouffville. Perhaps delegates were leery about the weather. Conference planners should seriously consider whether or not they want to host an outdoors event during the month of May.

Exhibitors

Although we experienced great challenges with MCIS exhibitor registration, we are pleased to share that we had 28 exhibitors participating in the conference. This year, although exhibitor fees were higher this year, exhibitors enjoyed the two common buffet lunches with delegates. Snack bags were also provided. Exhibitor time was allotted during the day for delegates to peruse materials and resources. There was certainly excitement in the air! We thank those exhibitors who provided door prizes, and free materials for delegates.

We were very fortunate to have received sponsorship from a variety of exhibitors. Texas Instruments, our major sponsor, provided us with a $10000 stipend for the T³ Conference, as well as many door prizes for our lunch draws. In addition, Smart Technologies made a $2500 sponsorship, and graciously donated two Smart Boards to our elementary and secondary creative mathematics teachers. Nelson Education Ltd. was the sponsor for Dr. Marian Small's keynote address, and Pearson Education Canada made a $1000 donation.

MCIS

Greg Clarke, OAME website coordinator, provided training for team members on two occasions. Although there were intermittent problems throughout the conference planning with the MCIS website, we were very fortunate to have Greg's support and guidance.

Registration

Sue Hessey, Executive Director for OAME, provided us with a great deal of support in dealing with MCIS' inability to process credit cards. Sue worked very closely with our treasurer to ensure that payments were processed in a timely manner.

There was certainly a buzz in the air in the conference registration area! Although a very busy area, the organizing committee quickly helped delegates and presenters find their materials and move to their workshop rooms.

We had a considerable number of walk-in registrations, and a limited number of pre-registered and unpaid delegates. There were a number of laptops available for on-site registrations, and support for those individuals who were in need of guidance. Thanks to those committee members and volunteers for making the registration desk run so smoothly.

We thank the York Catholic District School Board for their support of our conference. Over 80 teachers and system-level staff were sponsored by the board to attend the full conference.

Facilities



The Sheraton Parkway Toronto North Hotel provided us with 22 breakout rooms, 1 committee office and 1 student volunteer office. Two of these rooms (Richmond A and Richmond B) were designated as computer labs, and two were assigned to Texas Instruments (Markham A and Markham B).
York Region District School Board's AV department provided personnel support for set up of AV equipment as well as support during the keynote addresses. In addition, the York Catholic District School Board provided technology equipment and IT personnel support free of charge.
The organization of room allocations and equipment was organized using a spreadsheet. This provided the chair with the opportunity to sort based on equipment needs, student volunteer assignments, same divisional sessions, etc. This system provided the team at large with a great deal of direction and support.

Volunteers

Our student volunteers consisted of students from Brother Andre CHS in Markham and OISE/UT and York University's Faculties of Education. Students in the faculty of education were assigned locations, often based on their divisional interest. Students reported to Student Volunteers Central where they were able to check in, be reassigned, if necessary, and provide presenters with support related to set up and distribution of materials.

Finance

Close budget monitoring took place during the conference planning. In support of this, specific committee budgets were created, tracked and aligned to the financial template. Considerable savings were made, specifically related to lack of program booklets and their mailing, access to board supports at minimal / no cost, additional bargaining with Sheraton Parkway Toronto North Hotel, etc. We are very please to share our financial picture:

OAME FINANCIAL PLAN AND REPORT		
	BUDGET(DATE)	**ACTUAL, as of Sept 22 08**
REVENUE		
Y4MA Loan	**$5,000.00**	$10,000.00
Registration Fees	$171,500.00	$220,836.74
OAME Membership Fees	$12,000.00	
Exhibitor Fees	$24,200.00	$27,500.00
Donations/Sponsors	$10,000.00	$13,730.00
Advertising	$3,000.00	
Special Hospitality Events	$2,500.00	$3,000.00
Bank Interest	$0.00	$27.00
Other (Please specify)		
TOTAL REVENUE	$228,200.00	$275,093.74
EXPENSES		
Y4MA Loan	$5,000.00	$10,000.00
OAME Membership Fees	$12,000.00	$9,200.00
OAME Delegate Fee	$24,500.00	$24,960.00
Registration Costs	$1,768.00	3185.18
Exhibits	$3,320.00	$895.45
Special Hospitality Events	$44,250.00	$5,504.56
Promotions, Publicity	$11,700.00	$21,232.66
Program Booklets	$10,800.00	$2,667.35
Organizing Committee Expenses	$7,300.00	$5,445.91
Parking, Buses	$0.00	$193.73
Refreshments, Catering	$16,000.00	$51,664.75
Facility Rentals	$1,100.00	$0.00
Equipment Rentals	$6,500.00	$9,402.90
Supplies, Office Costs, Postage	$11,750.00	$2,895.25
Bank and Credit Card Charges	$4,077.00	$2,475.89
Gifts, Workshop Speaker Expenses	$16,250.00	$5,088.65
Keynote Speakers	$28,000.00	$7,026.14
Student Helpers	$2,000.00	$22.34
Other (Student/Teacher Showcase)	$1,100.00	$72.39
TOTAL EXPENSES	$207,415.00	$161,933.15
TOTAL PROFIT	$20,785.00	**$113,160.59**
OAME share of profit	$10,392.50	**$56,580.30**
Chapter Share of Profit	$10,392.50	**$56,580.30**

The OAME 2008 Conference Profit is $113,160.59, which provides OAME and Y4MA each with a profit share of $56,580.30! How exciting!

Conference Feedback

We are very pleased to report that we received very positive feedback on the conference from MCIS. Following is the summary of the conference ratings, based on 95 raters:

Conference - Registration	88%
Conference - Session Selection	86%
Conference - Facilities	84%
Conference - Hospitality	90%
Conference - Overall Evaluation	89%

Some of the favorable comments made by delegates and speakers:

- Evidence of theme of conference in all events
- Lunch topics were relevant, connected, while different
- The student volunteers were extremely professional, enthusiastic and helpful!
- Quality of presentations was outstanding, great presenters and phenomenal organization
- Lunches in ballroom with keynote speakers and everyone all together
- Speaker and exhibitor snack bags and great shoulder bag

Some of the areas of concern presented in the feedback:

- [Some] missing the hard copy of the program
- Congestion in the exhibitor's display area
- More tables needed at lunch
- Intermittent problems with MCIS
- Lunch line ups

Top Ten Secrets to Running a Successful Conference

10. Feed your committee members well!

9. Consider aligning board professional learning plans to conference themes and/or paths (e.g. differentiated instruction)

8. Communication, Communication, Communication!!!

7. Canvas for sponsorship, donations in kind – start early and leverage your committee contacts

6. Enlist support from local boards of education for supply time, conference registration, AV & technology equipment, IT support, secretarial assistance, etc.

5. Closely track expenditures, and check alignment to budgets

4. Co-chairs, marry your conference timeline! (Consider a life-size poster version to use with committee members at meetings.) Closely monitor committee work. Provide committee members individual committee timelines.

3. Recruit committed and dedicated committee members

2. Acknowledge the generosity of volunteers, board personnel, family, community services, and math leaders often during the journey.

1. Work closely with Executive Directors by keeping them abreast of your progress!

We thank OAME for the opportunity to host the OAME 2008 Conference, and leave you with these final words:

Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision; the ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results.

Andrew Carnegie

Teams are successful when they are focused, have a short cycle time, and are supported by the executives. ☺

Tom Bouchard