

To: Classroom Teachers and Principals

From: Instructors in the Mathematics for Elementary School Teachers Program, Mathematics Department, University of Utah

Re: Classroom Visits by Preservice Elementary School Majors for the purpose of observation and small group teaching experiences

The Mathematics Department of the University of Utah offers a two-semester sequence of courses in Mathematics for Elementary School Teachers. These courses (Math 4010-20) are required for the Elementary School Teaching Major. They were designed in collaboration with the Mathematics Department and the Teaching and Learning Department and their content is consistent with the recent guidelines published by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM Standards).

In this sequence of courses, K-6 preservice teachers are provided with a conceptual framework for mathematics, especially for those aspects normally experienced in primary and elementary school. The sequence of courses examines the conceptual background of the K-6 mathematics curriculum. Through a combination of mathematical content and pedagogy, preservice teachers develop the skills needed to provide strong mathematics programs in elementary schools.

In order to provide a connection between the theory and the practice of teaching mathematics, students in this sequence of courses are expected to spend six hours each semester visiting an elementary school classroom, observing an experienced teacher for three hours and teaching a small group of pupils for three hours. The lessons presented to the pupils are based on the topics developed in the Math 4010-20 sequence. These are:

Math 4010: Numbers and Arithmetic Operations

Math 4020: Geometry and Measurement, Probability and Statistics

In the past, the opportunity for students in the Math 4010-20 sequence to have some practical experience in discussing mathematics with elementary school pupils has made a valuable contribution to the student's understanding of the need for effective communication, precise development of mathematical ideas, ability to handle pupils' questions and deal with differing levels of comprehension. While these classroom visits in no way replace the student-teaching experience, which is undertaken later in their university program, this practicum provides a very useful introduction to the classroom experience for prospective elementary school teachers.

The course instructors are extremely grateful to the classroom teachers and principals who have allowed the students in the Math 4010-20 sequence to visit their schools. The opportunity you provide the university students is a highly valued contribution to the professional development of the next generation of school teachers.

We appreciate your willingness to be involved in this program. If you have any questions or comments concerning this program we would be delighted to hear from you.

Sincerely,

Rev. Michael A. van Opstall (281-5560/585-5435) opstall@math.utah.edu