

## Convention Stuff – What to do?

You went to 10 sessions at the recent math convention. You used your phone to take pictures of slides and received handouts and links to presentations. You even took notes (typed or handwritten). You have a folder with everything you collected. You even have literature from the vendor booths and things you would like your school district to buy. Now what?

If you are like most people, you may have one specific idea that you implement during the school year. Maybe you integrate a new calculator routine for solving quadratic equations. You have given the pamphlet about flash cards to your department chair. What happens to the rest?

It is not unusual to leave a convention with a multitude of ideas, with a brain stimulated for changing instruction and learning. But then you have to check out of your hotel, drive home, and catch up on all the work you left behind. The folder is placed on a table to look at later when you have time to make sense of it. And then the school year starts and the folder is still on the table at home.

This may not be you. Maybe you go to so few conventions that you make great use of the resources you find. But invariably there will be ideas and possibilities you never get to explore. You tell yourself, “Well, that is what I can do next school year”.

I do not have the answer to how you integrate all the cool things you see. I do have some suggestions that have worked for me though.

1) Create a notebook. The spine of my book says ‘Refreshing’. I go to it for those times when things have slowed down, relatively, and I would like some inspiration. I hole punched the handouts that were important and the pamphlets of things I want to buy. I have some notes with things circled that I would like to try. It is not organized. It does not have to be. I flip through it and see what inspires me to pursue. It is not a folder on my table at home. It is on my shelf at school and comes home with me in the summer.

2) Integrate ideas into lesson plans. Remember lesson plans? The thing that every administrator wants to change or monitor to prove that they are on top of instruction? Years ago, I typed a template for my lesson plans in Word that I can adjust as needed (but that is another topic). When I have a specific calculator activity, project idea, presentation enhancer, I type it directly into my lesson plan. It is a nice memory jogger when I come to that lesson.

3) Pick a few things to try. You cannot do everything. Pick the things about which you are most excited. Again, find a place in your curriculum to insert it. Even if it is something that could be used numerous times, just doing it once is a good start.

4) Have a focus. I like going to math conventions but now I go with a specific focus. I had wanted to utilize Desmos more so, one year, I sought out all the workshops that dealt with Desmos. It was what I needed to integrate it into my teaching.

5) New does not mean better. A lot of times, you have ideas for things to do that seem wonderful. However, they will have to supplant what you are already doing so that you can stick to your timeline. In the end, you may decide that what you are currently doing is already good and choose not to implement the new idea.