



The Math Forum @ Drexel University

Online Mentoring Project at a Glance

For more details, please visit
<http://mathforum.org/pow/omp/>

The Online Mentoring Project began as an NSF-funded project. Its goal is to create a dynamic online environment for elementary, middle, and high school pre-service teachers, for learning to mentor students through the Math Forum's Problem of the Week (PoW) environment. This is a unique opportunity for pre-service teachers to focus on how students think and communicate about mathematics before facing the complexities of the classroom.

The Online Mentoring Guide is a curriculum tool that exists in Blackboard's Vista platform (formerly WebCT). This self-guided instructional system creates an interactive space where pre-service teachers first try to solve a problem and explain their solution, and then mentor some of their colleagues' solutions. The Guide then moves to a broader discussion of mentoring, encouraging the pre-service teacher to enter into the discussion. Finally pre-service teachers conclude their instruction by mentoring actual PoW submissions.

How is this program normally implemented?

The OMP strives to prepare future teachers to facilitate math problem solving and communication. It typically is integrated as one unit within an undergraduate course in math problem solving or math methods. The OMP could also be used as a module in a graduate course or as inservice professional development for practicing teachers.

What are the faculty instructor's responsibilities?

During the OMG phase, instructors set a schedule of assignment deadlines; monitor and participate in discussions; summarize student input to develop two class-generated documents; lead students through study of the problem they'll mentor and the Expected Solutions and Scoring Grid. During the live mentoring phase instructors are responsible for "approving" their student mentors' replies, which often involves requesting changes from the mentor before the reply is sent to the child.

How much time out of an academic term should I plan to dedicate to this project?

This depends on a variety of factors. The OMG is an asynchronous unit. Faculty members can decide how much class time will be devoted to the work with it. The Vista training module, typically takes about two weeks, given normal schedules, but can be compacted or extended longer. Student mentors spend another two weeks replying to submitters to one of our Problems of the Week.

How are faculty instructors prepared to lead the OMP?

Faculty (Group Leaders) and their TAs participate in a section of the course simulating what their student mentors will be doing. That is about a four week process prior to using it in class. Group Leader training should take place during an academic term prior to using it with your students, so that you can plan for effective implementation.

Interested? The next Group Leader training is scheduled to begin April 28, 2008. Email Claire Mead **by April 21** to participate or ask questions.

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