

# ***FORT ZUMWALT SCHOOL DISTRICT***

## **Professional Development and Curriculum Center**

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*Honored for "Distinction in Performance" by the State Board of Education*

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*Tony Scoles  
Secondary Mathematics  
Curriculum Coordinator*

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To Whom It May Concern,

It is with much appreciation that I find myself in a position to recommend Mr. Robert Kaplinsky for staff development in mathematics. I was fortunate enough to bring Mr. Kaplinsky in for a one-day session with more than thirty of my secondary math teachers in the fall of 2014. I've attended many professional development workshops as a teacher and my current role as Secondary Mathematics Curriculum Coordinator has afforded me the opportunity to both work with consultants on another level and witness the impact they have on my teaching staff first hand. It's fair to say that Mr. Kaplinsky has placed himself at the top of my list of consultants both for the sheer ease of working with him at the district level to bring him to Fort Zumwalt and more importantly for the high-level work he managed with my teachers in one six-hour session.

From our initial conversation it was quite clear that Mr. Kaplinsky thinks deeply about mathematics education, has the experience to draw upon both as a teacher and teacher leader to "sell" his ideas to at times skeptical teachers, and his presentation skill set had my teachers engaged through the full six hours and eager for more at the end of the day. With a dose of humor he had my teachers at ease all day, easily allowing what could have been moments of difficult self-reflection on current practices on the part of my teachers to go off without a hitch. Not only did he acknowledge the current realities we're faced with as math educators he provided actionable ideas that my teachers loved and implemented, as soon as the following school day, to further their work on the shifts we all must make to ensure long-term success under CCSS-M.

Perhaps the best evidence I can offer is support of your consideration of Mr. Kaplinsky as a staff developer in your district is the nearly immediate implementation of many of his ideas by my teachers and their sustained interest and effort in the two months since. We made it to our scheduled lunch break before the first teacher pulled me aside and I asked if I would observe a lesson *the week after* our Friday session together to be planned around the ideas and resources Mr. Kaplinsky presented. Her enthusiasm was so great that I am convinced it only took until lunch because the session would have been interrupted had she done otherwise. I did observe the lesson the following week in two distinct classroom settings and spoke with the teacher about a third that I did not witness first-hand. What I witnessed and heard from her was nothing short of fantastic, even more so given this was only a first attempt at incorporating many of Mr. Kaplinsky's ideas in this classroom. Our reflection together was not solely filled with awe and wonder and how great things went however, there were a few places to tighten the lesson up a bit and some student difficulties to address the next time around but the resolve to try again was present in each and every thought. This fact alone left me with no doubt that he had prepared my teachers well by first selling his message and more importantly then equipping my teachers to handle the inevitable bumps in the road during implementation in their own classrooms. I don't know that it needs stating but this is unfortunately atypical relative to many of the professional development opportunities teachers are provided. At the department meeting in the same building a few weeks after this the same teacher shared her experiences implementing the lesson, its impact on student understanding and engagement, and the few things she would do differently next time around. She also shared the numerous free, online resources Mr. Kaplinsky had offered with the department and felt confident enough to offer her support and encouragement to her colleagues as they worked to incorporate the ideas into their practice. This is only one example of course but is representative of the enthusiasm and preparation my teachers walked away with as well as their persistence in staying the course and eagerness to share with colleagues.

If you're looking for professional development for your math teachers, now or in the future, I highly recommend you start and hope that you'll end your search with Mr. Kaplinsky. You'll be thrilled with the results if you do.

Sincerely,  
Mr. Tony Scoles

