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**"If people do not believe that mathematics is simple, it is only because they do not realize how complicated life is."**  
*John von Neumann*

# AMTNJ News

Association of Mathematics Teachers of New Jersey

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## 2020 - From Challenges to Opportunities

*The 2019 Max Sobel Annual Award recipient, Jay Schiffman, said during last year's ceremony, "We have many challenges in math education, but we have many opportunities." This quote has been the inspiration for the work AMTNJ has been doing this year.*

*There is no doubt that teaching has always been challenging and demanding. It became even more so in 2020. In a short period of time, teachers had to shift focus to learning new technological tools to deliver content, motivate, and provide emotional support to our students in an alternate environment. Through this process teachers have shown resilience, creativity, and strength. This year, we are all teachers and learners. We have a unique opportunity to experience and model what it means to be a learner. Learning happens through perseverance. Mistakes are a part of the learning process. Don't hesitate to ask for help.*

*AMTNJ started 2020 by planning traditional conferences, contests and meetings. Business was as usual. However, a few months later, we had to address the challenges that the pandemic imposed upon education by making necessary adjustments to our plans and at times, introducing new initiatives. Throughout the pandemic, we have proudly continued supporting NJ educators. AMTNJ responded by providing multiple virtual PD sessions, free of charge, and facilitating the first AMTNJ virtual Math EdCamp to encourage collaboration and networking. For High School math teachers, we have posted a collection of enrichment re-*

*sources. The Middle School contest was given a complete make-over: instead of a traditional test we are offering a more creative and accessible task for all middle school students that is focused on real-world mathematics. A big thank you to all AMTNJ members who have been a part of this year's transformations!*

*AMTNJ proudly continues celebrating NJ math educators. Join us on December 3rd to celebrate this year's Max Sobel Annual Award recipient, Norma Boakes, Professor of Education at Stockton University. If you have success stories you would like to share, please let us know. Now, more than ever, we need each other's support and inspiration.*

*The things we have learned during the pandemic will change the ways we teach, assess and communicate in the future. We are not just surviving. We are building new structures and embracing new practices that will benefit our students and the educational system in NJ for years ahead. Thank you for all your hard work supporting your students. We know this goes beyond designing lessons, assignments, and tests. As we continue to navigate unprecedented challenges, celebrate your accomplishments, celebrate the accomplishments of your students and find time to enjoy your family, and friends! Take care of yourself.*

*Admiration and gratitude from AMTNJ to all educators!*

*Sincerely,*

*Jelena Komitas*

*AMTNJ President - 2020*



# AMTNJ Fall Virtual Sessions

## Keynote Speaker

Dr. Trena Wilkerson, NCTM President

Thursday December 3, 2020

7:00pm



"A Vision for Catalyzing Change in Math Education Today to Support Equity and Access"

Trena Wilkerson is a mathematics education professor at Baylor University where she teaches graduate and undergraduate mathematics education courses and conducts professional development and research. Trena taught high school mathematics for 18 years, and she loves teaching and learning mathematics in support of current and future mathematics teachers and leaders.

*Also featuring the presentation of the Max Sobel Award*

## Featured Speakers

Dr. Deidre Richardson, State Mathematics Coordinator

at New Jersey Department of Education &

Mrs. Melanie Harding, K-5 Supervisor of Mathematics of Long Branch Public Schools



"Promising Practices in Early

Mathematics I"

December 2, 2020

"Promising Practices in Early

Mathematics II"

December 9, 2020

For all sessions visit <https://amtnj.org/conferences/>

Registration is free. Register [HERE](#)

# Meet the 2020 Max Sobel Award Recipient, Dr. Norma Boakes

By Dianna M. Sopala & Lena Komitas



Throughout Max Sobel's 50 year career in mathematics education, he taught, mentored, and inspired mathematics teachers around the world. After numerous awards and accomplishments including being president of the both the Association of Mathematics Teachers of New Jersey and the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, Max Sobel himself received the first Max Sobel award in 1990. Every year since 1990, a new Max Sobel award winner is announced. There are two recognition prerequisites to be nominated for the Max Sobel award:

- The educator must have been involved in mathematics education in New Jersey for a minimum of 20 years.
- The educator must have made extraordinary contributions to the advancement of mathematics education in New Jersey.

Max Sobel always believed that math should be fun and wanted teachers to inspire others to enjoy mathematics and the beauty of mathematics as he did. In 2011, Max Sobel donated enough money for the next one hundred Max Sobel award

winners to receive a "fun" mathematics book.

If Max Sobel were on the committee to select a winner for his award, he would look for someone who has made extraordinary contributions to mathematics education in a fun and meaningful way. For example, he may look for someone who uses origami to help develop some difficult mathematical concepts. Our Max Sobel award winner, Dr. Norma Boakes, often does her presentations at conferences involving origami to engage people in mathematical concepts.

Dr. Norma Boakes is a Professor of Education and the Program Coordinator of the Teacher Education Program at Stockton University. During her time at Stockton University, she has been the coordinator of a significant number of the educational programs and has supported the development and offering of several mathematics-related programs including,

- the establishment of several degree paths that lead to teacher certification including a BA in Mathematics with Education Concentration;
- the creation of a series of content courses in mathematics to support mathematical content knowledge of preservice teachers including: Praxis Mathematics, Elementary School Math Geometry, & Elementary School Math Data Analysis, Probability & Statistics;
- the revision and instruction of a methods of teaching mathematics course for all preservice elementary teacher candidates (Methods of Teaching Elementary School Mathematics).

Dr. Boakes has also served as a lead faculty member on the establishment of a partnership on mathematics education with National Chiayi University. This partnership provides Stockton preservice mathematics teachers with the opportunity to teach in Taiwan. Dr. Boakes regularly mentors pre-service teachers and through the Building Teacher Leadership Capacity to Support Beginning Teachers Grant, Dr. Boakes worked directly with local K12 schools on their mentoring practices.

Dr. Boakes has received recognition of excel-

lence at her previous high school position and current university. She was a finalist for the Princeton Prize for Distinguished Secondary School Teaching in 2000 by Oakcrest High School.

Dr. Boakes has been a long-standing member of the Board of AMTNJ. She has served as a Member-at-Large from the South, an Assistant Editor of the AMTNJ Journal and the Student Volunteers Coordinator for our Two-Day Conferences for many years. In 2015 she was the Program Chair for the NCTM Atlantic City Regional in 2015.

## *Congratulations Dr. Norma Boakes!*

**Join us to congratulate Dr. Norma Boakes on her accomplishments in math education on December 3rd at 7pm. To attend, please register [HERE](#)**

**Click on the image below to visit Stockton University Origami Showcase 2020 by Dr. Norma Boakes & the students of GNM 2257**



## AMTNJ Invests in Potential New Math Teachers Through Renewing Scholarship Awards

By Joan J. Vas, Executive Coordinator of AMTNJ Scholarship Program

Each year AMTNJ provides scholarship money to high school students who wish to pursue a career in mathematics education. AMTNJ encourages members to sponsor a scholarship applicant. Scholarship applications are accepted from December through March and the committee makes its final decisions early in the spring. Our sincere THANK YOU to all our members

**Renewal Awardees:** Four candidates received \$1,500 each for their AMTNJ Scholarship renewal for 2020-2021. They were Marless Butryn, Samantha Cohn, Jacqueline P. Metz, and Karen Villagomez.

**Karen Villagomez** is entering her junior year at Rider University where she is majoring in elementary education and mathematics. She will continue to work as a math tutor in two programs at Rider. One of the programs is through the Student Support Services. She helps students to prepare for the test to surpass a remedial course. I am very proud to announce that Karen will be graduating this coming spring. She will have completed this program within three years. She is the first recipient in twenty five years of this scholarship program to ever complete the course of study within three years!

**Samantha Cohn** is entering her sophomore year at the University of Connecticut where she is majoring in mathematics and teaching. During her spring semester she joined a tutoring club that traveled to a local middle school. She tutored students for seven weeks. This program allowed her to get back in a classroom and make connections with students, her favorite part of teaching.

**Marless Butryn** is entering her second year at Mon-

mouth University where she is majoring in mathematics and secondary education. As a freshman she was recommended for a position in the university's Math Learning Center where she was able to tutor students in any course involving math. She quickly began to realize how much she loved helping others and seeing them become excited when they understood a particular topic in mathematics. This experience helped solidify her goal to become a mathematics teacher.

**Jacqueline Metz** is entering her sophomore year at Pennsylvania State University where she is majoring in mathematics and secondary education. In the fall she will be taking a curriculum instruction course that will be her first course involving methods of teaching which will involve tutoring students and observing classes. This will reinforce her high school internship program and give her more real-world experience. She says every course she has taken makes her more and more confident that she wants to be a mathematics teacher.

Last, but by far, not least, I would like to recognize the AMTNJ Scholarship Renewal Review Committee for 2020 whose dedication and commitment to excellence in mathematics education has been the driving force in student selection. They are as follows: President Lena Komitas, Past President Tom Walsh, Julie Norflus-Good and Joan J. Vas, Executive Coordinator, AMTNJ Scholarship Program.

Your contributions in support of this program should be mailed to AMTNJ, 111 Third Avenue, Belmar, NJ 07719. Checks should be made payable to the AMTNJ Scholarship Program. Remember that AMTNJ is a tax-exempt organization, (501C3), and your contributions are fully tax deductible.

# Staying Focused During COVID!

**Dr. Julie Norflus-Good**



The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly wrought havoc to our economy, medical world, social structure and our educational system. In particular, since mid March 2020, administrators, teachers and related service providers around the country have rushed to pull together distance learning educational programs. For some, it was rather easy, for others it was a challenge. For those that were working with students with exceptionalities the challenge was daunting!

The significant dilemma is how do educators maintain attention and keep students focused? How does one virtually tailor the individual needs of those with attention issues? This concern is not just for individuals with exceptionalities, it can also be for those who are not classified and have attention issues!

The following suggestions are strictly guides and need to be correlated to the students' specific IEP/504 Plan and or I&RS plan. Some of these ideas are just good teaching strategies and will successfully work for all students! Here are some effective strategies:

- Teachers need to be organized and have all of their material organized and ready to present. It is a good idea to make sure that the material is sent home ahead of time so that the student would have it available when you are ready to teach. When necessary, provide the parents with details on how to print, coordinate and even collate the information. In addition, there should be a list of supplies that the student may need. If possible, place the student in charge of gathering and organizing the material prior to the start of the lesson. Sometime a detailed bulleted sheet is

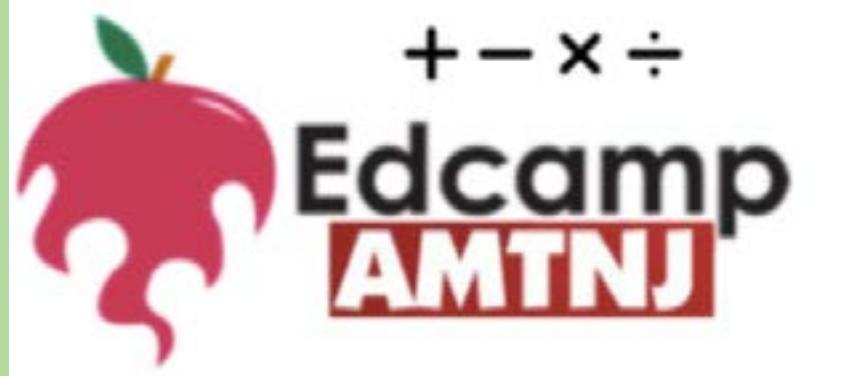
perfect! This prep work ahead of time is crucial in planning and executing a successful lesson.

- Some kids with attention issues can't sit at a desk for long periods of time. Instead of forcing them to do so, create activities to let them move around. They can lie on the floor, stand, walk around the room, sit in a different chair, run or jog in place. Many students cannot sit in one location for long periods of times! (Even as adults we get fatigued just sitting in one location!!)
- Teachers can also incorporate mini yoga and/or aerobic exercises. A quick jumping jack game, stretching, or mindfulness minute can boost a kids' mood and focus. Students will also enjoy a quick dance competition with music or a game of Simon Sez. Teachers can also create activities that include scavenger hunts. Something as simple as asking them to find (2 x 2) toys to reinforce the multiplication table. (Afterwards, remember to have the students put the toys away.) This can be done at different intervals during the day.
- Don't forget to build in hydration breaks. Staying hydrated is good for your body, and many people don't drink enough water. Eight glasses of water a day should be recommended. Just note that the student will have to take more restroom breaks, which builds in additional movement.
- Make sure that the student puts away their cellphone and other electronic devices until class is over. They can be encouraged to put their phones on a do not disturb setting. Teachers and/or parents can block access to distracting websites. To block and monitor activity on a school issued Chromebook, teachers can use GoGuardian. Parents can use Google Chrome extensions to block access to distracting websites. When giving a test on Google Forms teachers can enable a testing mode to prevent students from using Google Chrome and searching other websites.

Working remote is certainly a challenging experience! I am hoping that these ideas can help us begin to look at ways to help students focus during the lessons. I empathize with all as I wish there was a simple solution. As educators our task can be challenging as we are staying focused and attempting to give it our all! Please feel free to reach out to me if you need to brainstorm. Here is my e-mail address [jgood@ramapo.edu](mailto:jgood@ramapo.edu)! Together we can make a difference!

Sending everyone strength and optimism, best regards, Julie, AMTNJ Special Education Liaison.





10 Topics  
112 Responses

54 Replies

3294 Views

82.5 h of Engagement

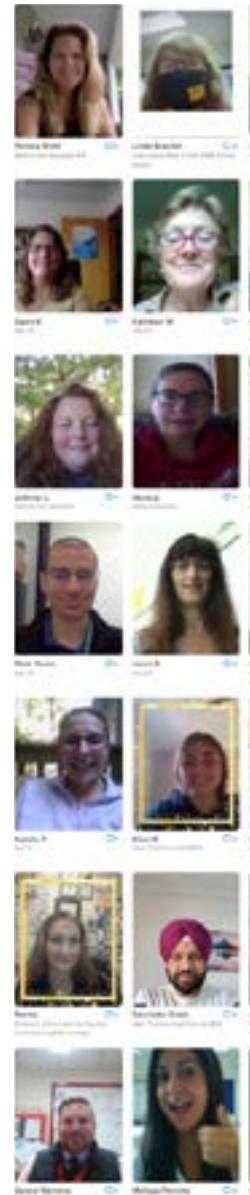
### Fun Fact:

The participants have 3 days and 10.5 hours of engagement! That's how long it took for the Apollo 11 to reach the moon!

Our first ever Edcamp AMTNJ was a big success! We had over 166 educator-prepared videos submitted to our virtual Flipgrid as part of our week-long conversation. The hallmark of an Edcamp is that there are no "presenters," but rather a professional dialogue around topics of interest. Participants enjoyed lively discussions of timely topics such as hybrid teaching and learning in K-5 and 6-12, equity and social justice in mathematics, virtual whiteboards, flipped classrooms, course sequencing, and more. We had mathematics educators attend from New Jersey and beyond, all offering diverse and unique perspectives at our event. We also enjoyed some publicity on Twitter and new connections being made both in and out of state.

On the fifth day of our EdCamp AMTNJ, we raffled off a number of virtual door prizes courtesy of Screencastomatic, Gimkit, ClassroomQ, BreakoutEDU, Big Ideas Mathematics, and AMTNJ. The feedback we received was very positive, and we hope to run a similar event again in the future. Special thanks to the AMTNJ members who volunteered to host a topic over the course of the week. They were instrumental in advancing important conversations.

Our Flipgrid remains open to the public for anyone who would like to access it! Check out <https://flipgrid.com/edcampamtnj> to see our event.





**Engage your  
students in  
solving  
real world  
problems!**

## **AMTNJ Middle School Math Contest 2020-2021**

Due to the current uncertainties around schooling structures, our traditional timed middle school contest has been replaced by a more flexible, creative and accessible to all schools during this time contest. Open to NJ parochial, public, and private institutions.

**Registration deadline: January 15, 2021**

**Project submission deadline: March 15, 2021 REGISTER**

**Registration fee per school: \$30.00**



**Contest description and rules are available on our website:**

**<https://amtnj.org/contests>**

**Questions? Contact contest coordinators:**

Lisa Crammer - [lisa.crammer@pequannock.org](mailto:lisa.crammer@pequannock.org)

Kara Teehan - [teehank@middletownk12.org](mailto:teehank@middletownk12.org)

Lena Komitas - [lenakomitas2@gmail.com](mailto:lenakomitas2@gmail.com)

Coshetty Vargas - [totowavargas@yahoo.com](mailto:totowavargas@yahoo.com)

### **Attention HS Math Team Advisors!**

Check out our suggested enrichment resources on <https://amtnj.org/contests/> to engage students in exploration and new learning at the school level. Consider a choice board with two or more of the provided resources. Individual students or small groups may be asked to use a short video, a presentation, or an essay to communicate what they learned. We hope that you and your students find these engaging!

**Become a member of AMTNJ!**  
**Join a team of passionate math educators to promote  
quality teaching and learning of mathematics.**

**To learn more about membership benefits and join AMTNJ visit**

**<http://amtnj.org/membership/>**

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**THANK YOU to the authors who shared their knowledge  
and experience to make this newsletter possible.**



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