**Who is Dan Neaton?**

Hello!

I’m Dan, and I’ve taught mathematics at the middle school, high school, community college, and university levels for the past 40 years. What struck me at all levels of teaching was how those who struggle with math have holes in their basic skills foundation.

I became a math teacher at age 26 and absolutely loved discovering how to help a wide range of young people understand and appreciate mathematics. I began teaching at a large middle school where the students were not grouped by ability. As a new teacher, I learned to focus on each student and how to individualize their instruction. I embraced teaching to mastery. I’m always eager to sit down and talk about how demanding, time-consuming, and wonderful it was to engage kids using an individualized instruction model.

My experiences have led me to set a goal for myself: to develop a program that uses 21st century technologies to effectively engage any student between 10 and 60 in the acquisition of a solid foundation of fundamental math skills.

Why does this matter? Too many people are blocked from reaching their goals because they exit our schools with a proverbial fish in hand but no fishing pole. My goal is for my program, Number DNA, to change that paradigm.

I earned my BA in economics from the University of Michigan in 1973, and 3 years later obtained my teacher certification from the same institution with a major in mathematics and a minor in economics. I began teaching 7th and 8th grade math to heterogeneously grouped classes at Clague Middle School in Ann Arbor, Michigan, devising and implementing a hybrid 8th grade math and Algebra 1 course for 8th grade students. I was also the math representative for the school at district math meetings. In 1983, I earned my masters in mathematics from Eastern Michigan University.

After 10 years at Clague, I accepted a position a few miles south at Huron High School, where I taught for a further 18 years. During my tenure there, I designed and implemented a 2-hour math/science course that emphasized the contributions of African Americans to the fields of math and science. This course was an attempt to improve outcomes for black students who had historically underachieved in our high school math and science classes. I was awarded a plaque by the Huron High School Black Parents Support Group for my efforts to improve academic outcomes for all students.

I also devised and implemented a 2-hour Algebra class that allowed students who failed 1st semester Algebra 1 to get back on track and take Geometry the following year. The previous practice had been for these students to wait until the next year to retake Algebra 1.

It was during this time that I had the privilege to join a group whose members included professors from the University of Michigan School of Education and teachers from Huron High School, a group we called IRG, which stood for Informal Research Group. Our focus was the discussion of issues pertaining to students ‘held in low regard’ and then to identify and implement best practices that improved student outcomes.

In 2004, I joined Community High School in Ann Arbor, “a rigorous academic college preparatory magnet school which encourages students to use the entire community as a resource for study and fosters the development of independent learners who practice personal and social responsibility as they prepare for their post-secondary experience.” In the 5 years I taught there, I co-wrote an Algebra 1 handbook that consisted of 12 single lightweight bi-fold pamphlets and implemented a mastery learning approach for Algebra 1 students. My final position as a high school teacher began when I was selected by the Ann Arbor Schools to lead and develop the mathematics program for the newly built local high school, Skyline.

We were charged with creating an innovative 21st-century high school. As a part of this initiative, I visited innovative schools in Arizona and California. Our efforts lead to the launch of a 1600-student high school divided into 4 small learning communities along with four magnet programs. I lobbied strongly for and was instrumental in initiating a teaching-to-mastery ethic that was central to our school-wide teaching philosophy. During this time, I was also involved in an initiative called Green Math. This involved writing curriculum that focused on sustainability. We shared our work at workshops both in the U.S. and Ireland. I remained the lead math teacher at Skyline until my retirement in 2014.

But despite the depth of my involvement in my home schools’ programs, I began in 1995 to lecture for both Washtenaw Community College and University of Michigan. As an occasional lecturer for Washtenaw Community College (1995–2015), I had the opportunity to teach self-paced remedial math classes. Most students in these classes had a difficulty with fractions and percents that was rooted in their weak recall of basic multiplication, division, and factoring skills. Students with these math skill deficits had great difficulty completing their associates degrees.

At the University of Michigan, I lectured for the summer bridge program for 7 summers, an experience that brought me into contact with incoming freshmen who needed to recharge their math skills before enrolling in a for-credit university math class.

In addition to working on the Number DNA project, I love traveling with my wife Marie. We have recently visited France, Ireland, Norway, The Tetons, and Olympic National Park. I am the proud father of three sons and one daughter with two grandchildren added into the mix. I have enjoyed backpacking, running, and coaching ice hockey. I began skating at age 8, and to this day, I enjoy playing in my old guys hockey league in Chelsea, Michigan. The league is officially called the Platinum Masters Hockey League (PMHL). It’s a blast!

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