

# Critical Math Drop Podcast Season 2 Episode 1 Back to School

transcribed with Otter.ai, please excuse typos

**Michelle** 00:00

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**Kari** 00:20

Hi everyone, and welcome back to the critical math Job Podcast,

**Michelle** 00:26

season two. Season Two.

00:27

Season two

00:28

with

**Kari** 00:30

your favorite math teachers, Kari

**Michelle** 00:32

kokka and Michelle Cody.

**Kari** 00:35

We're excited to be recording today.

**Michelle** 00:39

Yeah, yeah. I feel like we kind of play people like, I don't know, like a prime, like a prime, you know what Prime you have in their episodes or their series? And you'd be like, Oh, I'm gonna watch this thing. Oh

**Kari** 00:51

my gosh, yes. And

**Michelle** 00:54

it'd be like, season two. You'd be like, yes. And they'd be like, coming in in 197,000 years, like a year and a half later, and he might wait. I don't even remember what the show is about, so if that's you, you should go back and listen to our other episodes, just to refresh your minds.

**Kari 01:13**

Mandy told me. Mandy told me that she's been listening to all of our episodes.

**Michelle 01:21**

Okay, you always gotta have one friend. Thanks, Mandy girl, to all of them. First of all, I want to start this episode by saying, happy Latino heritage month for all of our different brown folks around the world. Even though 30 days is not enough. We want to make sure that we honor and celebrate you. So for all of y'all inside the classroom, take a moment to highlight some mathematicians, highlight some experiences, highlight some opportunities where your students can see themselves and other students can see the brilliance among brown folks around the world, and that's brown with a big B, because we're talking about a people. And I, I get really excited back in the days when I used to teach math, this is early in the year, so I would do, I do a lesson on opposite opuestas. And so in order to kind of like celebrate Latino heritage, I so the unit I used to teach was about opposite numbers, because it's part of the greater number sense unit. And so what I did was I created these opuesta cards that look like lotoria, and then I love that regular dealing cards, and the kids would have to so if I put if it was a black two on their card, they would have to look for a negative two. And then when they finish, they be like, Opuesta. And they would have to read, in a number sense, it's like, you know, my negative two is the opposite of your positive two. My negative King is the opposite of your positive King. My positive queen is the opposite of your negative King. So we talked about developing language for our sixth graders be able to make that connection, and then celebrating like a like a like a time honored, like activity. And so we will watch this video that talked about, like Lotteria and the history and the importance of it, and then they connect. So yeah, so again. Happy Latino heritage month, celebrating from September 15 to October 15.

**Kari 03:38**

Thank you, Michelle. Thank you. Thank you. I Yeah, on when I teach class this Thursday, I'm going to share with my students this website. We've talked about this before on the podcast the [www.lathisms.org](http://www.lathisms.org) website where Latina mathematicians are highlighted. So it's L, A, T, H, I, S, M, s.org, so that's another great resource and website to check out. And for this episode, we really wanted to focus on back to school, because it is September 2024 and many of us have already been back to school for a while. Been back, been back people. I know that people in higher ed who are in the quarter system, I think, haven't started their

**Michelle 04:33**

Hi Lianne. I had dinner with Lianne last last night. It's really funny because, like, she's here down in the city for a couple days. First of all, she's driving, which is unreal to me. I know she is a grown woman. I understand that, but the fact that she was driving

**Kari 04:55**

remind everyone when you first met her and how long you've known her.

**Michelle** 04:59

Here. Oh yeah, I've known Lianne since, well, I feel like I met her briefly when she was in fifth grade, because her siblings were at my school as sixth graders. But then I got attached at the hip to Lianne when she turned sixth grade, when she's in sixth grade, and now she is a sophomore in college, um, and, yeah, so, like, so she we were texting back and forth about, like, Oh, I'm coming down. And what I appreciate about Lianne is it's like, you know, um, she keeps me aggressive what's happening in her life. She like, sometimes she sends me like, uh, Lianne updates and long like essays that I print out and I read with coffee, because she's such an amazing writer, and it's so cool that she still thinks enough of me to like want me in her life, and I really appreciate that. So anyways, we had decided that we were going to meet up on Sunday, and after I had a fundraiser yesterday for my school, and I was like, Yeah, let's meet up. The fundraise is over, like, five, 530 and she was like, Okay, well, I'm meeting another friend so can meet up at I was like, okay, meet up at six, 630 and she's like, Oh, actually, commit later. I said later. She was like, Yeah, I was like, seven. She's like seven. I was like, she's like 715 I was like, girl, you know, I'm old man. I'm like, seven in the PM. Okay? And I think that honestly, had I not just worked this event the day, like that day, I probably been like, Girl, yes, make an A but we were at dinner at Le Monde, and I was just like, listening to her tell me what was going on in her life. And I was just like, I'm so tired right now. And I was just like trying to figure out, like, how do I stay up as I'm listening to this amazing little human tell me about her life and what's going on, and I was like, I'm just old. It's cool, you know, you

**Kari** 07:13

know you always say that I'm close to AARP, so you know, you're still younger than me. I am. I'm three years away from official AARP,

**Michelle** 07:24

I don't think so. I think AARP now starts when you're 21 AARP, 1818,

**Kari** 07:29

actually, you can join when you're 18.

**Michelle** 07:35

We don't even care anymore. Like, we're not exclusive. I know AARP used to be like, in this like, Oh, we're exclusive. We're an exclusive relationship with only the old people. AARP is like, No, we open now. We'll take anybody, any and everybody.

**Kari** 07:48

I have thought about joining now, to be honest, but they say it's when you're 50. I just want to be able to bust out my AARP card and ask if there's an AARP discount. Let

**Michelle** 08:01

me tell you something. As soon as my dad turned 60, everywhere we went, he was like, Is there a senior discount? Is there there's no senior Okay? Well, no, no, we're not gonna, we're not gonna be here because, oh,

**Kari 08:15**

then he would leave. If there wasn't a senior discount.

**Michelle 08:17**

No, we would still stay. Okay? Yeah, it was just like, that was for dramatic. In fact, Carrie, you weren't supposed to ask that question. No, he loved he loved him some. He loved him some, uh, AARP discounts. You know, he was like, This is it, let's go. So I don't know,

**Kari 08:40**

um, but I have a lot of students that I taught also last year, so that's really fun. It's great to get to see them again and build on the knowledge and relationships that we've built. And because my class is small, I'm able to do assignments where students can do some, I don't want to say, like, mock teaching, but they're basically going to be facilitating activities with us as their students. So I'm excited about

**Michelle 09:15**

what's wrong with you. I did mock I think, I

**Kari 09:20**

guess it just, I don't want them to feel like, Oh, this is like, fake, but it is so it is fake.

**Michelle 09:28**

Yeah, ain't nobody coming in, judging them. Ain't no parents calling and emailing them, right? Ain't nobody asking for grades. It's fake, but it's fine to practice. I think that, like, I think that's one of the problems in United States, like, we don't give people time to practice their craft in an authentic way, so that when they get in front of the classroom, they're able to kill it.

**Kari 09:48**

Yeah, and actually, I'm gonna see a couple of my former students this week. We're gonna get together for coffee, so I'm excited to see them, and I'm gonna be visiting some more. The high schools in Las Vegas, because I really need to learn more about what schools are like here versus New York City or the bay where I'm from. And two of my students perform at football games. One is a dancer and another student is a musician in the band. So I'm going to get tickets to go to a football game at Allegiant stadium. So I'm also

**Michelle 10:29**

interesting about, like, just coming from an HBCU shout out to Howard University, like Bisons right half time? Yeah, we had the bison the halftime show and the dancers and the ULA la girls. And that was the, that was the main thing. That was the main thing, like, like, people, like, people would talk about germline. I was like, I live that. Like, I went to school where that was a thing. Like, folks were actually playing and and Kiki and all this stuff. You know what I'm saying? Mm, hmm,

**Kari 11:01**

yeah. So I'm gonna get to see more they were talking about that. I guess the the dance team has been blowing up on Instagram. I don't follow them, so I'm not sure. I wasn't sure what they were referring to, but I'm excited to get to go to watch.

**Michelle 11:20**

No matter how old you are, you're always excited to see your professor or your teacher come see you.

**Kari 11:27**

I know and my kids were so cute. They were like, Oh, we can get you a ticket, or we can get you a ticket for parking so you can park closer to Allegiant. They're really sweet some. Yeah, I'm excited to see them. What about your beginning of school year, Michelle?

**Michelle 11:51**

Um, so I'm not teaching math this year. Um, lots of tears, lots of tears. Um, like serious tears, like actual from my eyes, um, but I have a new opportunity to teach a literacy class. So, um, so yeah, what's happening with that? Um, I teach a literacy class as a rotation. I teach an ELD class, which is a link English language development class to multilingual learners. And then I'm also going to be doing some reading intervention starting in October. And so, um, the literacy class is, like, it's just different from what I've done before. And so, like, there's this like, sense of like urgency. I'm, like, really stressed out about, like, making sure that I'm doing the class right, but the kids seem to be enjoying it, um, and it's really, I don't know it's, like, really interesting, like we are, I'm pulling on a different part of the brain, which is just as critical with the students, um, but I only get them for eight weeks to 12 weeks, depending on the rotation, and so I feel like every moment is precious in this mind, and I don't want to do like, I'm like, no, like, I get annoyed when it's like, there's a fire drill. It's cool. We'll just burn with the building, because we got to get this work done, you know, um, and we'll see how long I'm going to do this, because I really do miss math. I like, I, I don't know, it's kind of like, I saw a math textbook the other day, and I kind of like, sniffed it like someone's sweater, like you're missing your ex. You're like, let me just what's the smell was the relationship

**Kari 13:44**

video you're doing right now. It's really funny.

**Michelle 13:48**

It wasn't a great relationship. But I still miss, I still miss the way that, um, so we'll see like, um, I'm like, the the fun aunt that comes into town for a couple of weeks. So I think that, because they only had me for a couple of weeks, they're like, really into me. Oh, that's

**Kari 14:09**

sweet. I mean, I'm sure they also like, genuinely like, being in your class, Michelle, you can give yourself some credit.

**Michelle 14:18**

It's, it's a lot. I know they, they're like, it's intense. Like, I'm always like, class is almost over. One of the boys is like, your cast goes by so fast. I'm like, I know it's too much. We gotta high red apples. And I

think that, like, that whole like, Oh my God. I was like, I'm trying to break your brain. I'm trying to break your brain. I'm trying to break your brain. Um, and, you know, it's part of my like energy. We had our back to school night last week, and I only got to meet, you know, a fourth of the sixth graders, because I've only have a fourth third rotation. So during the my prep period, I was like, I said, you know, I. I'm I said, if I'm your child's favorite teacher, and if I'm not, check your child's priorities, and the

**Kari** 15:07

parent, the parents and caregivers,

**Michelle** 15:09

yeah, I did, and they laughed, um, and yeah, so it is. It is an interesting, uh, my assistant principal loves writing, and so she's really into this class. She's like, really jazz about this class. And she's been very, very helpful with like me. Also Teachers Pay Teachers like, seeing some of the resources. I mean, I will say that regardless of like, the like, your ability to understand the content, there is a magic that happens with being a teacher. And like, you have to be able to, like, have that relationship in the building. Like that is super important. Yeah. So yeah.

**Kari** 15:59

And actually, along those lines, what I thought might be good for us to share is some of our beginning of the school year tips. You know, are like the things that we focus on at the beginning of the school year. So for instance, one of one of the things that I always do, and I learned this from Vanguard High School, where I taught. It's a title one school, high school in New York City. I taught there from 2001 to 2011 and we always created community norms with our students, and it and that's to, like you said, to help develop relationships and also for students to understand that this is a community space, a shared space. And so I did that with my students. The there are, of course, you know, I my students that I had last year, they know that one of the things that I appreciate is professional language. I don't I don't really like it when students curse in my classroom. So that was the one community tour that I added. And the other thing I like to do is I like to do a lot of different team builders get to know you type of activities I typically do this yarn challenge that I learned from CPM, the college preparatory math book, where it's like a loop of string and you have to create these different figures with a group of four. But since I had taught these students already. I tried to play this post it game, which I realized I didn't I don't think I followed the rules quite right, but I try to do a bunch of team builders. And then the other thing that I've been focusing on for the beginning of the school year, because it's a math methods class, and they're all training to become secondary math teachers, I'm really trying to model research based practices, so we're doing cognitively demanding tasks in small groups. I'm selecting and sequencing for different groups to come to the front and present and have a discussion around the different solution strategies and how they connect to each other, and, you know, using my complex instruction group work strategies. So I'm enjoying it, and I really like teaching in person, teaching online during the pandemic, was really hard to try to teach a math methods class where you're trying to model pedagogical practices. What about you, Michelle, what are your back to school, you know, tips or things that you tend to focus on?

**Michelle** 18:51

I think, from like a educative perspective, I want to like value like rest and um, setting reasonable expectations, I think, um, that I've been having, like a, like, a hard time personally in my life, recently, in the last two years. Let me not be recent, and there's so much energy that you put into school and teaching and like taking care of kids, and the societal pressure is just unreal and sometimes to your detriment. And I was talking to one of the former teachers that I know, who is retired now, and she was like, Miha, that's Miss obergon. She's like, Miha girl, like, stay until seven o'clock at night to do all the things and not taking care of your health. Is like, it doesn't matter at the end. I was like, it sure doesn't. If you're dead, you. Incapacitated or not there for your family, or missed out on moments, or missed out on seeing your your your children grow up, or seeing your families have special moments. So I think giving yourself rest and kindness, I'm not saying slack often. Don't do nothing now, but just like really sending, like, very realistic boundaries, uh, for yourself and for your community. That's first I think that I when I taught students year long, I would also say that take stock in knowing who they are. Give opportunities for you to have kids do independent work, where you can sit at their table and as they're working kind of talk and get to know them, so that you can see the humanity in them. And, you know, have fun and be joyful with this work, because that's what you're supposed to do. We're supposed to find joy in this work. 100% that's probably not the tips you're looking for, but that's what you're getting from me. Those

**Kari 21:20**

are the tips that we're looking for. We want Michelle Cody's tips. Those are Michelle Cody's tips.

**Michelle 21:28**

And find a good show to binge watch.

**Kari 21:31**

The fact that your students say things like this, class goes by so fast that is such a compliment to you and to your teaching. That is one of my goals with my teaching, because my class is from four to 645, and every class, I want us to be able to smile and laugh together. I start every class with a check in so every single person gives a check in about anything they want to tell us, anything they want to share about what's going on with them. But one of my goals is for class to go by quickly. I think that that that if people are engaged and invested in the class community, and the time goes by quickly, that's that's just a really good sign of good teaching and good community,

**Michelle 22:25**

or it's a sign of, you know, you get the kids so riled up, then they'll be so excited, Like, keep them twirling. Then they were like, Okay, look up, but the bells ring. I'm pretty sure that there's some kids in the class who be like, this class is going forever and ever, and if this woman don't stop talking, you know? Anyways, so yes, so I am excited. I think that that the new, like, one of the cool things about being a sixth grade teacher is the fact that, like, it's a reset every year, kind of of like new kiddos, even though I, like, have some sibling situations that I'm, you know, like, oh, I, you know, like, I've seen the sibling now, but I like it. I like the idea that I'm able to be like, alright, friend.

**Kari 23:37**

I love that. Yeah, when you get to teach siblings or cousins also, because the kids will vouch for you.

**Michelle** 23:46

Yeah, they do and give you a little bit of street cred. Yes,

**Kari** 23:52

exactly.

**Michelle** 23:57

Yeah. I actually just told Lianne today. I thought I had told her before that I wasn't teaching math, and she's like, wait what? You're not teaching math. And I was like, Yo girl, I can teach other things. And she's like, we will do like. I it was like, her brain can compete. Like I can like, do you that's I was like, Anna, we're trying something different. So yeah, and I don't know, like I'm I love the newness, the innocence, the Dun dun dun what's behind the next corner, and that ability to kind of like, like, live free now, come talk to a girl in October, in uh, November, in April. Not mad the same. There's something about April.

**Kari** 24:55

It was for me, Mark bro,

**Michelle** 24:58

30 days. September, April, June and November. April has 30 days on the calendar, but emotionally and mentally, April is like six months in itself. But when,

**Kari** 25:14

when is your spring break?

**Michelle** 25:18

Um, it flex breaks between March and April.

**Kari** 25:20

Because I remember March was the longest, because spring break was in April, and we had zero days off in March. So for me, March, I remember, felt like, yes, six months in a month.

**Michelle** 25:37

Um, I mean, even after spring break, you still have. There's no breaks in April either. And then the last break was not until the end of May and and then also you have testing that happens in April and May. So it just felt, it always feels, you know, it always feels just extra long, extra grimy, like here, here's this month again. So I don't know, like I said, I'm super excited. I'm so excited about doing the kids um, and like seeing their personalities develop and grow. They're very, very, very like Elementary in the beginning of the school year, and you see the difference. You see the transition into sixth graders around, like December, and then you really see the transition to middle schoolers towards the end,

**Kari** 26:31

yeah. I mean, well, we always talk about, you know, middle school and high school. I just think is so different. And I hear my students talking about that right now because of depending on where their placement is at. But the school that I'm going to be visiting in October is a middle school. So I'm excited to get to see a middle school out here in Las Vegas. But I think we're going to wrap up this episode, right? Michelle, our first episode of season two. Thank you everyone for your patience for season two to come out, and for you know hanging with us, we have a lot of ideas in the pipeline. Episode Two is actually a shared episode with Dr Tracy Benson's anti racism Institute podcast, and we will be posting that one shortly as well.

**Michelle** 27:34

All right, y'all, thanks for turning in. Being here, being a friend. Thank you for being the friend. Oh, y'all come in too. Season two, we appreciate you too. Go to girls. I love that show. That

**Kari** 27:57

was great. Yay, Michelle. We gotta add the little applause. Can we edit?

**Michelle** 28:03

Actually watch Golden Girls? It was wildly inappropriate. Golden Girls, mad law, quantum leap. Your girl was old when she was young for show. Alright? Y'all see you. Same time, same channel. Bye. Who Bye? You?