

**Math Teacher Lounge transcript**  
**Season 4, Episode 3:**  
**LIVE from NCTM with Bethany and Dan**

Presenter (00:00):

Ladies and gentlemen, from Math Teacher Lounge, we have Bethany Lockhart Johnson and Dan Meyer! <cheering>

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (00:08):

Doesn't go well that the door was locked. Like, I could not get in! <Laugh>

Dan Meyer (00:12):

Yeah. Gotcha. All right. We're gonna sit a little bit. Let's see how that works—

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (00:16):

Hi!

Dan Meyer (00:16):

Yeah. I think we'll stand up? Or whaddaya think, sit...?

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (00:19):

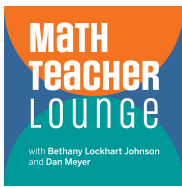
Should we stand? Hi.

Dan Meyer (00:22):

Hello. Great to see you folks. Yeah, I can hear you.

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (00:25):

Can you hear me? That's—I know YOU can me. Can you hear me OK? OK! We're here. Hello. Thank you for like, lining up and coming out and being here. Thank you!



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Dan Meyer (00:35):

Means so much to me that you could be here for me, on my show, with Bethany Lockhart Johnson, my co-host. <Audience laughs>

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (00:40):

The hour has just started.

Dan Meyer (00:42):

We're just getting going. Yeah. If you folks have heard the podcast, you don't know how much gets cut out. And it's like, mostly me just having, you know, anxious nerves and saying something silly and then we cut it out and we can't do that here today. So it should be real fun for all of us, I think. Yeah.

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (00:55):

It's not true. It's mostly dancing. "Bethany, can you stop talking? Bethany?" Cause it's mostly—

Dan Meyer (00:59):

"It's my turn. It's my turn! Bethany <laugh>! I haven't been heard for a while."

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (01:02):

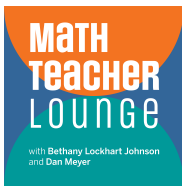
Dan. We're at an in-person conference.

Dan Meyer (01:05):

In-person BIG conference, I would say. I'd say a big conference. Yeah.

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (01:08):

And have you been to the Amplify booth?



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Dan Meyer (01:11):

I have! Have these people? There's a claw machine with free socks.

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (01:16):

Yeah. You're saving me socks, right? That's what you're saying. <Laugh> I mean, it's exciting. How has your conference been so far?

Dan Meyer (01:21):

So far it's been a blast. I feel fed. I feel like the community's been awesome. How are you feeling about it?

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (01:29):

OK. Let's talk about me for just a second.

Dan Meyer (01:31):

Yeah. Talk about you.

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (01:31):

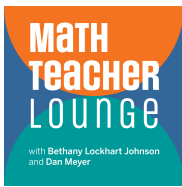
Last night, Dan, was the very first night that I was away from my toddler. <Audience: Aw!>

Dan Meyer (01:38):

Big commitment being here. Thank you.

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (01:40):

I got super-emotional walking back to the hotel after dinner, and then I got in my room, <laugh> I put on pajamas, and I turned on music. I slept so good!



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Dan Meyer (01:50):

Yeah. <Audience laughs> Give it up for no kids! <Audience laughs> Hey!

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (01:55):

I love him so much. But I slept all the way through the night. Oh, by the way, I ordered room service in the morning.

Dan Meyer (02:01):

On Amplify.

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (02:01):

That bill's coming. But it's been a great conference and I'm so delighted to be here in person and to get to share energy...and hopefully that's all we're sharing today. Y'all got your tests, right? Yep. Sharing energy and community today. Because we know it's been hard. Hardness. Hard.

Dan Meyer (02:25):

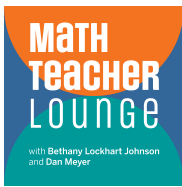
Yeah.

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (02:26):

Years. Hard. And to be in person, I know conferences reinvigorate me and I go back into my educational spaces feeling revitalized with new connections and new ideas to try. So yeah, I've been excited to be here. And thank you all for being here.

Dan Meyer (02:40):

Yep. I don't care if I get six different strains of Covid here. I'm just thrilled to be here. <Audience laughs> I don't know if you've had the same feeling, though,



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Bethany, you folks...I'm a little bit confused to some degree about what we're doing. I just wanna be really transparent. This is my sarcastic voice but I'm being sincere here. It kind of feels like we're in a little bit of a time capsule. Like we all got in a time capsule in 2019 and, you know, you open it back up and it's like, OK, so we're still, you know, talking about X, Y, or Z protocol for establishing classroom routines or whatever. And I'm like, OK! Like, I loved that in 2019! But I do admit, I'm still trying to figure out a little bit like, what are we doing now? What's our relationship to the world out there? Things are very different. I have had some great sessions that I've enjoyed. I'm also like, still waiting for a session to draw a little blood. Do you know what I mean? Like there's been sessions...no? OK. You've been in these sessions where it's like, "Oh, ow." Like, and you look down and there's and there's blood there. It's like, I thought I knew what we were up to. Like, I thought I knew what teaching was and how we relate to the world. I dunno, like in any Danny Martin session in 2019, "Take a Knee" was one, where I was like, "Oh, OK. Like, I'm not as hot as I think I am here. Like, I'm part of a system." That kind of thing for me draws blood. And I haven't been in one of those yet. Been some great sessions. I'm a little hopeful that today we draw a little blood and think about what we're doing here, is my hope here, if that's OK. So Bethany's gonna moderate that impulse and she'll be the fun one and I'll be the blood-drawing one.

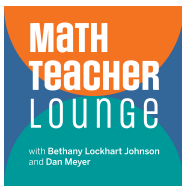
Bethany Lockhart Johnson (04:05):

No, I don't...that metaphor doesn't speak to me personally. But what I will say is, I get what you're saying about really wanting to be in that room where there's like this synergy happening. No promises about that today other than—

Dan Meyer (04:18):

I promise. <Audience laughs> Go on.

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (04:20):



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Other than I get what you're saying. I'll find my own metaphor that does not involve bloodshed, but.

Dan Meyer (04:25):

Sure. There's a lot of ways we we could go about this today. And the one that I'm excited about is, you know, we could like, you know, analyze some results from students, and talk about what went into that. Look at classroom video. Lots of possibilities. But here's what we're up to today. Hope you're into it. Which is, we are here in the heart of the entertainment industry. You know, Tinseltown! Um, the Big Apple! Uh...

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (04:47):

No!

Dan Meyer (04:47):

Come on. What do you got here? Um...

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (04:51):

It was daytime at night. Like the lights were so bright.

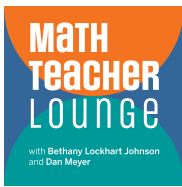
Dan Meyer (04:54):

The City of Lights.

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (04:55):

There was a movie premiere outside my hotel room, which I was not invited to, unfortunately. But so what are we doing today?

Dan Meyer (05:01):



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So here's what we're doing. We are gonna settle, once and for all, a question you have not asked yourself yet, perhaps, but will want to know the answer to in a moment. Which is: Who is the best teacher in all of film or television? OK? We're gonna do that. It'll be fun. But I hope that in debating this a little bit with a special guest we'll bring up in a moment, that we will start to uncover some truths about what makes good teaching. How that's different from teaching as we see it in movies and tv. Why middle-class America wants teachers to look a certain way in movies and tv. What all that means. And it'll be awesome. I think. I'm hopeful it'll be awesome. So what we did here is we've invited eight people. Eight folks you people may have known. You've been in their sessions today, in this conference, perhaps. And asked them: Who's your fave? Like, we might have our favorites, but we wanted to democratize it a bit. So asked some cool people who you folks like, who are very smart and thoughtful about teaching: Who's your favorite teacher?

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (05:58):

A few of whom are in this room. Thank you for your submission.

Dan Meyer (06:00):

Thank so much. Yeah. We'll see what happens here. <laugh>

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (06:03):

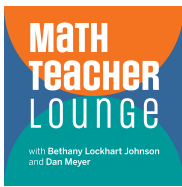
As they shrink down.

Dan Meyer (06:03):

Yeah. Might draw some blood that I don't mean to right now. We'll see. OK.

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (06:06):

That metaphor, what IS that??



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Dan Meyer (06:07):

Yeah. Yeah. I love it. I'm still going with it. <laugh> And you folks will be a huge part of this. THE part of this, really. So what will happen is I'll share with you our first nominees. A few of us will make a case for our favorites, or least favorites, as the case may be sometimes. And then by applause, by acclamation, you folks will decide who wins and advances to the next round. Start with eight, move to four. You folks know math. You know where this goes. OK.

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (06:34):

No, keep going. Keep going.

Dan Meyer (06:36):

Two, then one.

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (06:36):

Yeah. Got it.

Dan Meyer (06:37):

Then a half of it. No?

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (06:38):

He had to school me on the making of brackets. But we got it. Yeah.

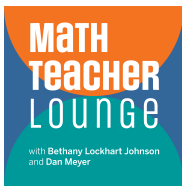
Dan Meyer (06:41):

How brackets work.

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (06:41):

But we got it. March Madness, what?





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Dan Meyer (06:44):

Yeah, in order to do this right, we had to bring up—all the folks that you'll see are also former Math Teacher Lounge guests, or like, just fan favorites. And we're also bringing up a former Math Teacher Lounge guest to help us decide this and debate this in a respectful manner.

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (06:59):

New dad.

Dan Meyer (07:00):

New dad.

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (07:01):

You see where my brain's still at? I miss him. <Laughs>

Dan Meyer (07:03):

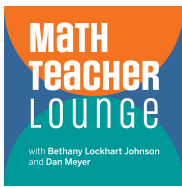
Friend from San Diego. Really cool teacher.

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (07:06):

Incredible teacher.

Dan Meyer (07:06):

Works at Desmos and Amplify. And I just want you to welcome up your friend and mine. Chris Nho!



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Bethany Lockhart Johnson (07:11):

Chris Nho!

Dan Meyer (07:13):

Come up, Chris. Let's go, buddy. We didn't talk about it, but did you want to do the cornball stuff too?

Chris Nho (07:22):

Wow. Would I love to do—

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (07:23):

And then the door could be locked! And then you have to wait and like, just—

Chris Nho (07:27):

Yeah, I'll skip that part.

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (07:28):

Hi. Welcome. You're here. We're here in person.

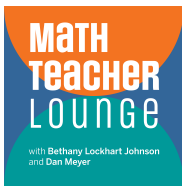
Chris Nho (07:30):

Very glad to be here. Thank you all for having me.

Dan Meyer (07:33):

Tell me who you are.

Chris Nho (07:34):



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My name is Chris Nho. I live in San Diego. I'm a new dad. A three month old, just had. Yeah, she's actually here at the conference with us in the hotel room. And I promise you she is not by herself. She is with...come on. I was like, "Hey, just gimme one hour. I'll be right back. I have to do very important work." But yeah, I think I got invited here because I have opinions and I'm willing to draw...some...blood.

Dan Meyer (08:02):

There we go! Two outta three! We're good on the metaphor now.

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (08:06):

We're so glad you're here. If you haven't listened to the episode where Chris and Molly and some other public math folks share their ideas and ideas of how to take math out into the world, please listen, because we had a blast.

Dan Meyer (08:19):

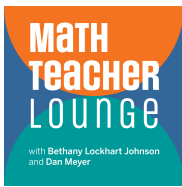
Inspiring work. Really inspiring work. Very cool. Cool. OK. Right on. OK.

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (08:23):

Let's do this!

Dan Meyer (08:24):

Let's get started here. Yeah! <Audience cheers> Yeah. And we might ask you who your favorite teacher is, who's missing from our list of eight? We might have forgotten some people. Anyway. All right. So here's our first two. Our first two are nominated by way of, let's see, um, Mandy Jansen is a professor at the University of Delaware. Got some awesome talks here this week, a Shadow Con talk last night. She'll be nominating one. And also, um, Lani Horn is a professor at Vanderbilt, also extremely cool, prolific author and speaker, just all-around great human and friend



of teachers everywhere. And she'll nominate another in this bracket, which is the Northeastern Comedy bracket, Northeastern comedy bracket.

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (09:06):

It just worked out that way.

Dan Meyer (09:07):

Yeah. Here it is. Here is Tina Fey in Mean Girls.

Tina Fey in Mean Girls (09:12):

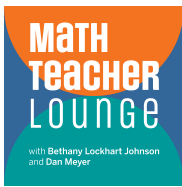
"OK. Everybody close your eyes. All right. I want you to raise your hand if you have ever had a girl say something bad about you behind your back. Open your eyes. Now close your eyes again. And this time I want you to raise your hand if you have ever said anything about a friend behind her back. Open up. It's been some girl-on-girl crime here."

Lani Horn (09:52):

I am nominating Sharon Norbury from Mean Girls as the best movie math teacher. She is an awesome teacher who is always there for her kids. She always sees the best in them. She shows that she can forgive even some pretty bad behavior, if she sees that kids are trying. She's a strong feminist who makes sure that smart girls don't dumb themselves down just to impress boys.

Tina Fey in Mean Girls (10:22):

"Katie, I know that having a boyfriend may seem like the most important thing in the world right now, but you don't have to dumb yourself down to get guys to like you."



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Lani Horn (10:30):

She's also super hard-working. She works three jobs. She's always there for the kids. She plays piano in the talent show and takes them to Mathlete competitions. And she's also socially aware. And when things go really badly among the girls, she does some pretty creative things to try to get them to be kinder to each other.

Dan Meyer (10:54):

OK. That's one.

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (10:55):

Helen Case.

Dan Meyer (10:57):

All right. Settle down. Settle down. Settle down. All right.

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (10:59):

Piano too!

Dan Meyer (11:00):

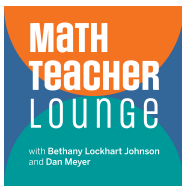
Bethany's already trying to bias people here. All right. Chill out. Hold on. So next one is Mandy Jansen with Jack Black from School of Rock. Uh-oh. Uh-oh.

Jack Black in School of Rock (11:09):

"What was your name?"

Kid in School of Rock (11:10):

"Katie."



Jack Black in School of Rock (11:11):

"Katie. What was that thing you were playing today? The big thing."

Kid in School of Rock (11:14):

"Cello."

Jack Black in School of Rock (11:15):

"OK. This is a bass guitar and it's the exact same thing, but instead of playing like this, you tip it on the side. Chellooooo! You've got a bass! <Laugh> Try it on."

Mandy Jansen (11:25):

And I'm nominating for best teacher in a film Jack Black as Dewey Finn playing Mr. Ned Schneebly in the film School of Rock. So why this portrayal? First of all, playing a longterm sub. Those are so hard to find right now. <Audience laughs> Really hard. And then he teaches using class projects. That's brilliant. Integrated learning. And then love this. He gives students roles and tasks that are differentiated and align to the specific strengths that each student has.

Kid 2 in School of Rock (12:05):

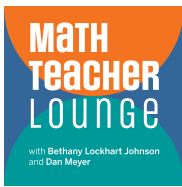
"I can also play clarinet, you know!"

Jack Black in School of Rock (12:06):

"I'll find something for you when we get back from lunch. I'll assign the rest of you killer positions."

Mandy Jansen (12:13):

And the film culminates in a performance of a collaborative song that they all wrote and performed together. And the students experience that collaboration and teamwork and creating something beautiful is much more important than winning



first place. And finally, one of the songs that the character sings in the film is "Math is a Wonderful Thing." Can't beat that.

Dan Meyer (12:40):

All right. That's tough. That's tough. So here's the deal. What we have right now is just a quick minute—so Bethany, you ranked, we all ranked our own faves here outta the list of eight. And Bethany put Jack Black in *School of Rock* a bit higher than Tina Fey in *Mean Girls*.

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (12:54):

Missed the piano part though.

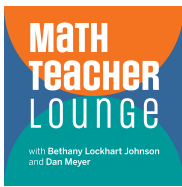
Dan Meyer (12:55):

And Chris, vice versa here. So Bethany, would you start us off and just make a quick case here for Jack Black versus Tina Fey?

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (13:01):

OK. So here's what I'm thinking. There's been rumor that maybe they're putting less than credentialed people into classrooms to fill teaching gaps. I mean, just rumor. And so here's this guy who is a rocker. He is not a substitute. He has no teaching training. And yet he goes in there and it turns out that he has the ability to see students' potential and to recognize their unique abilities. And like Mandy said, he really tapped into, like, he saw them and said, "No, more is possible for you than what you think is possible." And there's like real sub anxiety. When you walk in, you can either be like, happy there's a sub, but I was usually really nervous. Right? And he goes in and he makes that classroom into a home.

Dan Meyer (13:53):



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Wow.

Chris Nho (13:54):

Wow.

Dan Meyer (13:56):

Chris, speak on it. Tina Fey needs you. Chris.

Chris Nho (13:59):

Tina Fey. Here we go. I'm gonna argue here that—when was that movie made?

Dan Meyer (14:03):

T is for terrific. I is for Interesting.

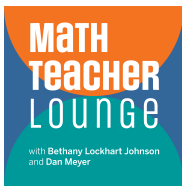
Chris Nho (14:06):

Decades ago. And I'm gonna argue that Tina Fey was very progressive for her time. OK, let's talk about social emotional learning. Hello. <Audience laughs> Love that. Right? Stand up if, I mean, she's getting people to talk about their emotions. And there's a curriculum. But let's just pause, because that's not what's really happening in the classroom right now. So social emotional learning, I think she's, she's got that a lot. And then number two, you know, if you remember the plot of Mean Girls a little bit, she gets her name written in that Burn Book. Like she sees what they say about her. Restorative justice. Let's go. <Audience laughs>.

Dan Meyer (14:38):

Whom amongst us. Yes.





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Chris Nho (14:40):

You write Mr. Nho in the Burn Book?? Well, your grade book is gonna look like a Burn Book! OK? <Audience laughs> Tina Fey, Tina Fey, she was like, "No, you know, know what? I'm actually gonna spend more time with you. You're gonna become a mathlete." And Lindsay Lohan discovers—she drops the most iconic line in all of math education. "The limit does not exist." Thank you, Tina Fey, for that. For that gift.

Dan Meyer (15:04):

Bless. Bless you. Tina Fey. Wow.

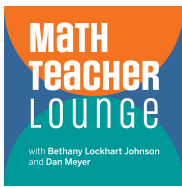
Bethany Lockhart Johnson (15:05):

Oh, man. Wow.

Dan Meyer (15:09):

Let's see what the people say here. I do wanna just add one quick thing about—it's interesting to me how often in these movies—just kind of go in a little bit, zoom out just a minute—how often it's a teacher who has no training as a teacher. <Bethany laughs> I am kind of curious why it is. Like, those are the movies that get hot, that get made. Again, these are all kind of a mirror of the taste of the moviegoing public. You know what I'm saying? Like, these, these are not movies—I wanna believe they are made for me and for us as teachers. But they are not. There's not enough of us to justify, you know, Jack Black's, you know, M&M budget or whatever he's got going on in his trailer or whatever. That needs to be for everybody in middle-class America. So what is it about middle-class America that wants to see teaching as something that anybody can do? Just like, you know, just, just run up there in your van and make it happen.

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (15:54):



Magic magically manifests.

Dan Meyer (15:56):

Yeah. Manifest. Yeah. That's just interesting to me. I just toss that out there as some red meat. Let's see what the people say here. All right, OK, so you're ready. Let's get the bracket going here. The question is Tina Fey versus Jack Black. You had a moment here. Just whisper to someone real fast who you're going for here real quick. What are you thinking here? <Crowd murmuring> All right. Crowd's buzzing. Crowd's buzzing. Would you folks...? All right. Bring it back. Go ahead and make some noise for Tina Fey. <Crowd cheers> OK. OK. Make some noise for Jack Black! <Crowd cheers> Judges say Tina Fey. Tina Fey moves on. All right. All right.

Chris Nho (16:44):

Stunned. I'm stunned. I'm speechless.

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (16:46):

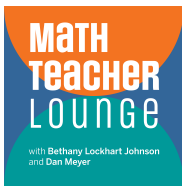
Tina Fey moves on. Wow.

Dan Meyer (16:48):

This has exceeded my expectations in terms of having some fun, but also getting deep, getting deep and real about teaching. I'm into this right here. Yeah. What's up?

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (16:54):

That's the goal. That's the goal. OK. You wanted blood? Oooh, this next matchup might just be where that blood comes forth! OK. Stretch. Warm up. Dan Meyer, who's up next?



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Dan Meyer (17:11):

We've got the animated/animatronic round here in the Southeast. And repping the two contestants here, who do we have? We have Allison Hintz, professor, author outta Washington, as one of the two nominators. And the other nominator is one of my heroes, though we'll find out very wrong about this nomination, Jenna Laib, who's in the crowd, and I'm trying not to make eye contact here. <Laugh> And here are the two nominations. A couple minutes each. And then we'll chat about it. And one of us will probably die. But we'll see how it goes.

Allison Hintz (17:50):

A long, long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away, MTL, we began learning from the Jedi Master of Teaching. With the Socratic and experiential approach. With unparalleled mindfulness, compassion, and humility. The best teacher in TV and film, Yoda is. <Audience laughs> Yoda lives the values we share as teachers and learners. He humbly comes alongside us as we construct new knowledge.

Yoda (18:29):

"You must unlearn what you have learned."

Allison Hintz (18:32):

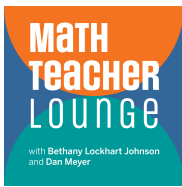
Yoda allows us to struggle and sees mistakes as critical to learning.

Yoda (18:39):

"The greatest teacher, failure is."

Allison Hintz (18:43):

Yoda values curiosity and reminds us of the beauty and joy of teachers learning from children.



Yoda (18:52):

"Truly wonderful, the mind of a child is."

Allison Hintz (18:59):

MTL! Join the Resistance! Let the force flow through you in declaring, the best teacher in TV and film, Yoda is.

Dan Meyer (19:18):

Give it up for Allison Hintz! All right! <Audience applauds>

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (19:20):

Allison! And to have that on hand too, which is kind of perfect.

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (19:26):

Just to be clear, the helmet is not a part of a Zoom background.

Dan Meyer (19:29):

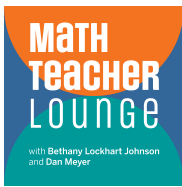
You may evaluate the quality of the nomination based on the costumes of the nominator. That is acceptable. That's acceptable.

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (19:35):

That is a REAL HELMET.

Dan Meyer (19:35):

All right. The next nominator here, this one is from Jenna Laib, math coach, all-around stellar human. Here we go. This is Ms. Frizzle.



Ms. Frizzle (19:42):

"Single file, class. Our rotten field trip has only just begun."

Jenna Laib (19:47):

And I think that the best teacher from TV or movies is Ms. Valerie Frizzle from The Magic School Bus. First and foremost, Ms. Frizzle believes in her students. She encourages them to take an active role in their learning, and also to advocate for change in their local community. For example, there's an episode where there is a logger who's gonna cut down a rotting log that would benefit the local ecosystem. And the students figure out a way to convince him to leave the log so that all of the animals and the plant life can benefit. She orchestrates really challenging situations for these students, and she allows them the space to ask questions and engage in problem-solving and puzzle their way out of these really, really difficult scenarios. Ms. Frizzle has unmatched pedagogy. She's bold, she's innovative, and she's a major proponent of experiential learning. So these students are heading straight into a storm to learn about weather systems. <Audience laughs> These students are heading into the human body to learn about digestion and disease. They literally get baked into a cake to learn about some chemistry and reactions.

Children in The Magic School Bus (20:54):

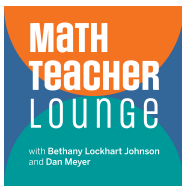
"What's happening?" <Audience laughs> "Why is it suddenly getting so hot?" "Maybe it's because the floor is on fire!" <Audience laughs>

Jenna Laib (21:02):

This pedagogy is all led by her outstanding catchphrase, which is:

Ms. Frizzle (21:06):

"Take chances; make mistakes; get messy!"



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Jenna Laib (21:14):

From her pedagogy to the classroom community that she creates, Ms. Frizzle is an inspiration, and that is why I think that she is the best teacher from TV or film.  
<Audience applauds>

Dan Meyer (21:25):

Right on! Give it up for Jenna. Give it up for Jenna. All right. I'm gonna take first pass at this. Chris knows my argument already, so I'm gonna take this here. I see some of you are feeling how I'm feeling on this one. OK, so I don't have tons to say in favor of Yoda. I think it was all true what Allison said. I think the costume was banging. It was awesome. So there's all that, but I have more to say against Ms. Frizzle than for Yoda.

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (21:48):

No, no, no. Wait a second!

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (21:49):

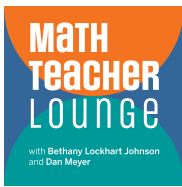
Let's let it happen. Bethany, I've come prepared.

Dan Meyer (21:54):

I may have made a misstep here, I realize.

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (21:56):

I've come prepared.



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Dan Meyer (21:56):

So I think Jenna is all correct. I think those clips spoke for themselves. I think that what they add up to, to me, is not "great teacher," but more "someone who should be locked up." <Audience laughs> Or at the very minimum, "someone who should be kept away from children." <Audience laughs> Do not let that woman around children. I mean, check it out. Look, I don't wanna throw down credentials. I've been to grad school, though. I know how this works. When your brain is stressed, you get these—all the cortisol happens. Your working memory shrinks up. You cannot learn when you're stressed. And those kids, like whatever lesson Ms. Frizzle is teaching by sending them into an oven, I repeat, an oven <audience laughs>, like, they're not gonna learn anything 'cause their brains are freaking out with stress and fear. OK?

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (22:41):

"What's happening??"

Dan Meyer (22:43):

"What's happening? Am I on fire? Well...I'm learning lots, though! Sure is magical!" <Audience laughs> It's like, "No. Get that woman out of a classroom." That's my opening and closing argument. Right? There's all it is.

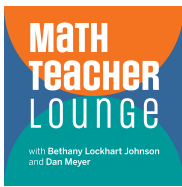
Chris Nho (23:01):

All right. All right. All right.

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (23:02):

Chris knows.

Chris Nho (23:03):



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I've got, I've got lots to say. First off, I think Dan was in charge of the editing of those video clips. So let's let that be—you know, let the record stand. <Audience laughs>

Dan Meyer (23:11):

Where's the lie though? Where's the lie?

Chris Nho (23:14):

And, you know, second, I think, um—this is the guy up here saying, "I wanna see blood." You know? And then he has a teacher who literally takes the students into a blood cell and, and you get a little scared! You get a little worried for the students, you know? So I just don't get it, Dan. This or that. OK? I think Ms. Frizzle—so I actually went to a project-based learning school. I taught at a project-based learning school. And the best thing about it is like, your learning, it doesn't just stay in this box of math lesson or writing lesson, history lesson. And I think with Ms. Frizzle, like you can't help but learn things because you are getting baked in a cake. <Audience laughs> Yeah, it is a little scary. And I imagine there's cortisol and things happening, but guess what? Probably the next episode, they go into their own brains and explore what's happening. That kind of thing. You know?

Dan Meyer (24:07):

The kids that survived, just be clear. <Audience laughs>

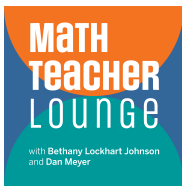
Chris Nho (24:10):

Yeah. OK. Would I want Nora, my three-month-old, to be babysat by Ms. Frizzle? Maybe not. <Audience laughs> But what I have to say about Yoda is Yoda maybe wins the best tutor award. Give it up for Yoda's Best Tutor Award.

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (24:24):

Oh, yeah...





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Chris Nho (24:25):

That ratio's looking really nice. I could teach the heck outta Luke Skywalker. OK? But 20 little Luke Skywalkers running around. I'm not sure. OK?

Dan Meyer (24:34):

Luke did survive the training, though. <Audience laughs> So that's awfully nice to say about it. All right, Great words from Chris here. I'm still not convinced. We'll see how you're convinced here. Would you whisper to someone where you're leaning here? Frizzle or Yoda? <Audience buzzing>

Chris Nho (24:47):

I tried. I tried.

Dan Meyer (24:53):

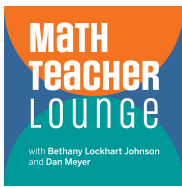
All right. That's enough of that. Let's hear it folks. Give it up for Yoda. <Audience cheers> Give it up. Give it up. You. Give. It. Up.

Chris Nho (25:05):

Hey, next. Next.

Dan Meyer (25:06):

All right. All right, all right. <Mutters> Give it up for Ms. Frizzle. <Audience cheers louder> I dunno, it's pretty close. Call a tie. Maybe Yoda? Yoda by nose? <Audience laughs> All right. All right. Let's...let me see who's it. Let's get the people advancing here. I'll keep on moving here.



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Chris Nho (25:26):

As you're doing that. Um, Dan ranked Ms. Frizzle last in his personal ranking. And I ranked Ms. Frizzle very high, so we knew this one would be spicy,

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (25:36):

<laugh> Spicy it was. Are you having a good time so far? <Audience cheers> So while we love seeing these images and we love seeing these video clips, at the core, what are these things about how teachers are portrayed? And how accurate is that to our real lives? I mean, besides the cake part, right? That my chemistry class did often feel like I was on fire. I was so stressed in it. Um, we're ready?

Dan Meyer (26:05):

Yep. Great. We're ready, we're up here. So the next two nominees are coming to you folks from Tracy Zager, who is the editor of my book, forthcoming in 2027 at the earliest and 2032 at the latest. And also your very own Zak Champagne from Florida, here in the room. Hey, Zak. Zak, let's see who the nominations are. I'm gonna skip past that, didn't work out so well for me. Here it is. This is Marshall Kane from the TV show Community.

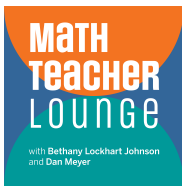
Michael K. Williams in Community (26:32):

"You two complete your case to the class and let them decide your grades."

Joel McHale in Community (26:37):

"Professor, thank you."

Michael K. Williams in Community (26:40):



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"It's not a favor, Mr. Winger. Man's gotta have a code."

Joel McHale in Community (26:44):

"Awesome."

Zak Champagne (26:46):

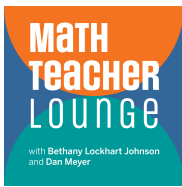
This is a pitch for an underdog. This teacher didn't stand on desks or encourage his students to follow their musical passions. In fact, this teacher was seen only in a few episodes of my favorite TV show of all time, Community, Community has set at Greendale Community College in Colorado. And in season three, we get to meet Dr. Marshall Kane, a biology professor whose story is an inspiration to anyone who just takes the time to look and listen. Dr. Marshall Kane slowly earned his PhD while in prison, serving a sentence of 25 to life. In his classroom, he inspires students to love biology, question why LEGO has become so complicated, and randomly pairs his students for group projects to ensure no one feels left out. His greatest performance comes when a group of students believe their yam project was intentionally sabotaged. Dr. Kane took this as an opportunity for some trans-disciplinary real-world learning. So yes, at community college, he felt that a middle-school mock trial was the best way to determine who killed the yam. So let's all pick the underdog and vote for Dr. Marshall Kane. After all, man's gotta have a code. <Audience goes "oh!" and applauds>

Dan Meyer (27:53):

Thank you, Zak.

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (27:54):

I have a code.



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Dan Meyer (27:56):

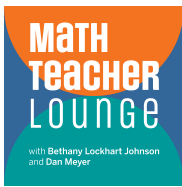
Next up is Tracy Zager, nominating an unusual nomination, not a single person, but an ensemble performance. A bunch of people from a movie called Searching for Bobby Fisher. Here we go.

Rapid-fire movie dialogue (28:11):

"What's that?" "Schleimann attack." "Schleimann attack? Where'd you learn that from, a book?" "No, my teacher taught me." "Aw, your teacher. Well, forget it. Play like you used to, from the gut. Get your pawns rolling on the queen's side."

Tracy Zager (28:26):

Hey, Math Teacher Lounge. This is Tracy Zager. I'm excited to share my nominee for the best movie teacher. But I have to admit that when I first got the email, I thought, oh, who am I gonna nominate? Because most movies about teachers are highly problematic. They usually have like a saviorism thing, usually white saviors. And I just felt like I couldn't suggest any of those. So rather than nominate a movie about a single teacher, I wanted to nominate a movie that taught me something about teaching. And that movie is a deep cut. It's Searching for Bobby Fischer. It's a movie about a chess prodigy. And what I love about it is that all of the different adults in the movie are in teacher roles in some way. And the student, Josh, the chess player, is a fully realized character, not an empty pail, who pulls from the strengths of each one of those adults while also dealing with their flaws and humanity. And there's just beautiful synergy in the way he gets the best out of everybody, but also has to overcome some of the barriers that they put in front of him. So I feel like it's a much more authentic and humbling, but also inspiring, movie about the power of teaching. So if you haven't ever seen it, check it out. And I can't wait to see who the other nominees are. Thanks so much.



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Dan Meyer (29:53):

Right on. Thank you, Tracy. Wherever you are. <Applause> We'll move a little quicker here. I'm curious, Bethany, you put Marshall Kane pretty high. I put Bobby Fischer pretty high. What do you have to say about Marshall Kane for us here?

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (30:04):

Well, I just wanna say two things. One is that, like Zak said, he has this code of conduct that he brings in. And he stays true to it no matter what happens. If you saw him in in Community, you know that he held himself up to such high esteem, but not just himself, his students as well. And he took accountability when he felt he had done wrong, even though, well, that's controversy. But first—oh, the other thing, rest in peace, Michael K. Williams. Oh my gosh. The actor who plays Marshall K. And the thing that I wanna say most of all about it is that he brings his whole self to the classroom. He was in prison for decades. He brings his whole self and says, "This is who I was. This is who I am today. And this is how we can work together as a community."

Dan Meyer (30:58):

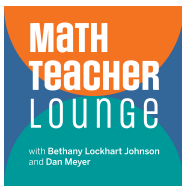
That's big. I love your comments about code of conduct too. It makes me wish that Ms. Frizzle had a code of conduct also.

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (31:05):

I knew that was coming back!

Chris Nho (31:06):

Two slides ago, Dan. That was two slides ago.



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Dan Meyer (31:08):

Can't let it go. So yeah, I love what you said there. I have no strong beef here either way. Bobby Fischer's a movie I have loved dearly and can't be objective about it. I love that the kid in that movie, more than any other movie here, the kid teaches the adults so much through his innocence and how he challenges them and how they're treating him. Dig all that so much. Will not, will not begrudge anyone any vote either way here. I do begrudge many of you your vote in previous rounds. <Audience laughs> So let's just, let's hear. We're not gonna ask you folks at all to chitchat. We're gonna move on this one. So would you folks make some noise here for Marshall Kane in Community? OK. OK. And would you make some noise here for Bobby Fischer, the kid in Bobby Fischer, the ensemble? <Audience cheers, applauds>

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (31:56):

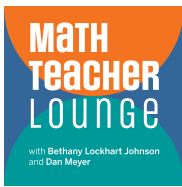
Marshall Kane.

Dan Meyer (31:57):

Marshall Kane takes it. All right. Good job, Marshall Kane! All right. Zak's feeling good. Moving on to the final four here, Zak, right on. OK. Our last—the Northwest Division here is also the large urban district division here. We have a couple different teachers in sets of large urban schools. They're nominated, they're advanced by a couple people here. One is past president of NCTM, Robert Berry. And another is Fawn Nguyen, Southern California phenom. Great teacher and friend of lots of us. Um, let's see who they nominated here. First from Robert Berry, let's see, who is it here? Janine Teagues from Abbott Elementary.

Abbott Elementary dialogue (32:37):

"Hey, you know what? I'm probably probably gonna be Kenny's second-grade teacher. Why don't you just let him get a head start with me today?" "That'd be



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great." "Yeah? OK. Hey, Kenny, would you like to be in my group today?" "Not really." "That's the spirit."

Robert Berry (32:54):

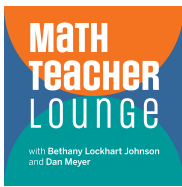
My nomination is gonna be Quinta Brunson, the Emmy Award-winning Quinta Brunson from Abbott Elementary. Janine Teagues is the character. She exemplifies care not only from an affect way, but she also exemplifies care in the things that she does for her students. While the scenes in the show are entertaining, they do represent the challenges that teachers experience when they're trying to meet the needs of her students. So she goes, goes all out for her students and finding resources. She accesses other people to get resources for her students. But the care shows up in the way that she is mindful of their needs. And so, for me, when I think about teachers and teaching, sometimes we can talk about pedagogy, but sometimes we also can talk about those kind of intangibles that makes a teacher a great teacher. It is apparent from her students that she cares about them, she supports them, and she goes all out 100% for her students. Janine Teagues, Quinta Brunson is, I think, is my choice of the best teacher on television because of the realism and the representation that she brings to this character of what teaching is about. <Applause>

Dan Meyer (34:28):

Right on. Right on. OK. OK. Next up, we've got, Fawn Nguyen is nominating Erin Gruwell from Freedom Writers. Here we go.

Hilary Swank in Freedom Writers movie (34:39):

"Look, you can either sit in your seats reading those workbooks or you can play a game. Either way, you're in here till the bell rings. OK? This is called the Line Game. I'm gonna ask you a question. If that question applies to you, you step onto the line and then step back away for the next question. Easy, right? The first question. How



many of you have the new Snoop Dog album? <kids move around> OK, back away. Next question. How many of you have seen Boys in the Hood?"

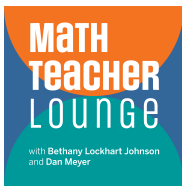
Fawn Nguyen (35:26):

We all learn about Miss G and her 150 students in the movie Freedom Writers starring Hilary Swank. All great teachers share a common set of traits. They care deeply about their students, have high expectations of them, and always believing wholeheartedly that they will succeed. Great teachers go above and beyond, not because they extraordinary—as Anne Gruwell would always refer to herself as an ordinary teacher—but because extraordinary things happen to people when we believe in them, give them hope, help them write their own story with a different ending. So what stood out for me with Miss G is the scope of her reach, the ever-expanding sphere of her humanity. The red tape she had placed on the classroom floor for the line game shows just how much we all have in common despite our differences. Her students didn't just learn from her; they learned from one another. If you'd like to be part of this expanding sphere to give voice and hope, please check out Freedom Writers Foundation dot org.

Dan Meyer (36:38):

OK. This right here is a tough one for us. Thank you, Fawn. We collectively ranked—that's our number one seed and number eight seed, which I hasten to say does not have to do with Erin Gruwell, a person, but the portrayal and the movie. So we don't have like a whole lot of...there's not a lot of defense we have to offer here of our eighth seed. And I heard like a kind of a little bit of a murmur over the crowd on Erin Gruwell. So I'm more interested than having a defense back and forth. I'd be curious what you, Bethany, think about what, like, what both movies have to say about like, what teaching is, especially teaching urban schools with black and brown kids and lower-class kids, for instance. They both have, I think, very different things to say about them. Do you have thoughts about that?





Bethany Lockhart Johnson (37:19):

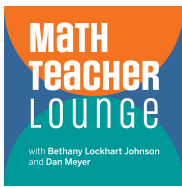
Well, it's interesting because there is some overlap in the sense that the arguments that both Fawn and Robert Berry put out, they both care deeply about their students, right? We're not gonna argue that. They care deeply. And something that I would say about Miss Teagues is there's something about the way that she sees not only her classroom, her students, but she sees all of the students in the school as her students. And her idea of resource generation is really helping the teachers to generate resources from their community themselves, and to also realize that the students see themselves reflected in the teachers. And I think that—you know, again, this is not about the real person—but the movie portrayal, and we often see kind of this, for Freedom Writers, we often see this like, Great Last Hope whisked in and her personal sacrifices are what makes these students, these brown and black students' transformation possible. Because of her sacrifices. Including her marriage. Including, you know, three jobs. And it's just portrayed in a way that I think really celebrates her sacrifices rather than what the students have already brought—they already come into the room bringing so much as they are, already, without her intervention.

Dan Meyer (38:38):

I love the portrayal of the teacher as part of a community of teachers. Versus in so many of these movies, it's the teacher as the only person who gets it, you know, oftentimes coming from outside of the world of teaching and everyone's against them and wants 'em just to fall in line and do the thing we always do, and they're the outlier. But in Abbott Elementary, it's like we all rise and we fall together. And teachers are investing in each other's success, especially with Gregory the longterm sub. We're all rooting for his, you know, his flourishing. I love that. And yeah. That's bigtime.

Chris Nho (39:09):

Yeah, I think one interesting thing is that Freedom Writers, when it came out, I think it was like a commercial success.



Bethany Lockhart Johnson (39:17):

Oh, big time. Yeah. It was.

Chris Nho (39:18):

It probably influenced a lot of people to try teaching out. So I do wonder what it says about us, right? Like that we want teaching to fit this narrative, and we wanna be those people who could go into a classroom and <puts on "cool voice"> "Y'all listen to Snoop Dog?" and just have that question HIT. <laughter> And you know, I've taught in a large urban school district, and I've been that person and I've seen other people try and be that person. And I think stepping away from it a little bit, just—it's a reflection of what people want out of teaching and what they think better education looks like.

Dan Meyer (39:57):

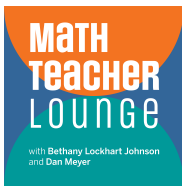
Yeah, yeah. This idea that, so I'm a middle-class person, let's say, and like, there's this idea, like, "I know what I would do if I was going into circumstances of impoverishment." Like I have—

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (40:06):

"All they really need is..."

Dan Meyer (40:07):

...for me to give 'em some real talk and tell 'em, you know, pull their pants up or whatever, listen to Snoop Dog, that kind of thing. And that will be the key. And that's not how it is in, you know, in Jack Black in School of Rock or Tina Fey school, which are, you know, coded as largely like upper-class or largely white schools. And in those movies, it's interesting, like how it's about students discovering themselves, oftentimes. And the central figures are often students. And the



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students need to reject an oppressive parent figure or something and find themselves. But no, in Freedom Writers, it's like, "You need to become more like the middle-class teachers who are coming in here to give you this wisdom." It's just interesting. I do find it—a pet peeve of mine is when movies portray teachers as only successful if you endure, for instance, the failure of your marriage, or even in Stand and Deliver, for instance, like Jaime Escalante, they depict him having a heart attack. And, like, the job oughta be...easier. <Audience laughs>

Chris Nho (41:04):

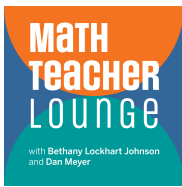
Truth.

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (41:05):

That's the barometer for how much....

Dan Meyer (41:09):

Like, no heart attacks and no divorces related to the job, that kind of thing. I do love how in Abbott—one last thing and we'll vote and Abbott will win <audience laughs>—is like how, like there, there is a lot of degradation in Abbott, but it's not a divorce or a heart attack—it's the petty indignities of asking a student, "Do you wanna hang with me?" And a student says, "Nah, not really." And that just spoke to me like how it's not cinematic, but teaching, successful teaching, is like a collection of developing an immunity to students saying, "You're not hot." <Laugh> You know? And so I love that. I do wish that there was more depiction of students in Abbott Elementary. It's a lot of adult stuff. Whatever. Give it up for Abbott, if you would, please. Let's just get this done here. All right. That's plenty. That's plenty. Not gonna ask folks about Freedom Writers. OK, let's move on to— all right, let's hear it for Freedom Writers! Yeah. OK, cool. We go, yep.



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Chris Nho (42:05):

Plot twist!

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (42:07):

OK, let's see our final four. Cut and paste. Real time. Real time.

Audience member (42:12):

Where's Dolores Umbridge?

Dan Meyer (42:14):

Oh....

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (42:16):

Hey, did you hear that? He said, "Where's Dolores Umbridge?"

Dan Meyer (42:20):

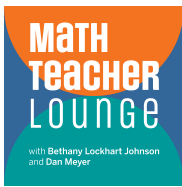
All right. OK.

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (42:20):

See, we missed so many. We could...

Dan Meyer (42:21):

So coming up here, we've got in the Eastern Conference, Tina Fey and Ms. Frizzle. Y'all know how I feel about that one. Let's just get this one done. OK, let's give it up for Tina Fey. Let's hear it. <Audience cheers> OK. All right. Yes! Let's give it up for menace to children everywhere, the terror, the Ms. Frizzle. <Audience cheers> One more time for Tina Fey. Let's hear it. <Audience cheers> One more time for Ms. Frizzle. Let's hear it. <Audience cheers>



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Bethany Lockhart Johnson (42:59):

Yeah. OK.

Dan Meyer (43:00):

It took 'em one round, but they made the right call in the end. <Laugh>

Chris Nho (43:04):

All it took was 10 minutes of constant Ms. Frizzle-bashing. <Laugh>

Dan Meyer (43:09):

Persevering and problem-solving, that's my game. Yes. All right. So, do either of you want to influence the audience one way or the other?

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (43:16):

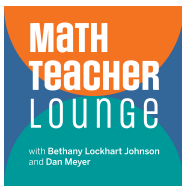
That's not how I play, Dan.

Dan Meyer (43:18):

Oh, OK. Yeah, that's true. That's true. You're good. On Abbott versus Marshall Kane, should we just let 'em have it? All right. All right. Give it up For Abbott Elementary. Not bad. And for Marshall Kane. OK. OK. I hear Zak and five other people. All right, cool. <laugh> Right on. All right. We got our, we got our finals,

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (43:45):

We did it. We made it to two. And we know: We left out a lot of people. Right? And honestly, I kind of wish we could poll like everyone. I mean, think you put it on



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Twitter, right? Like, who would you pick? But I would say we had a pretty solid eight there. I'm excited to see who... Look at the little crown he put, you guys. Come on.

Dan Meyer (44:05):

I worked hard for you. For you. <Laugh> Yeah. I liked that it was a good bunch that had a lot of different kinds of qualities...and lack of qualities in some cases. And it allowed us that—I shouldn't knock her while she's down, and she IS down, it's true. <Laugh> And I appreciate the conversation we've had, what they have revealed overall about teaching and what the world wants teaching to be versus what it actually is or actually should be. I appreciate that. So let's settle this here. Give it up, if you would, for Abbott Elementary. <Audience cheers> And give it up for Tina Fey in Mean Girls. <Audience cheers>

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (44:49):

Wow.

Dan Meyer (44:51):

That was close. I almost give that to Tina Fey.

Audience member (44:55):

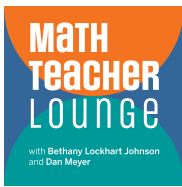
Yeah, we do!

Dan Meyer (44:55):

I don't know. That was a bracket-buster for me right there. Yeah. I lost money in the office pool off that right there. Maybe let's just find out one more time here. One more time.

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (45:03):

Last time.



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Dan Meyer (45:03):

Time to summon up all your conviction on one or the other here. No half-measures right now. All right.

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (45:07):

Emmy Award-winning Quinta Brunson.

Dan Meyer (45:09):

Yeah, you saw Robert Berry on that, right? He was like, "Oh, I got one more card to play. Emmy Award-winning." That's admissible. That's admissible. We'll take that. All right. So...give it up for Abbott Elementary, one last time. <Audience cheers> OK. All right. All right. And give it up for Tina Fey in Mean Girls. <Audience cheers>

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (45:30):

Drumroll, please!

Chris Nho (45:33):

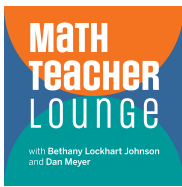
Best teacher is....

Dan Meyer (45:34):

Tina Fey in Mean Girls! Yeah. Not a bad pick.

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (45:39):

I love it. And I think, too, I think we're gonna have a little bit of a more reflective lens than we thought we did when we see depictions of teachers in film and television. And, you know, hopefully we'll see some new tropes come in, right?



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Dan Meyer (45:55):

Yep. Yeah. Every dollar we spend on movies with lousy teachers is just encouraging these people to make more lousy teacher movies, you know? Awesome. Thank you for being here for a live taping—

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (46:06):

Thank you for being here.

Dan Meyer (46:06):

—of our podcast, Math Teacher Lounge, in a hot room. Appreciate that. Yeah, it's been fun for us to have you here. Um, super-important, super-important final remark: Bethany loves Oprah and Oprah occasionally, in the show—

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (46:18):

Is she coming?! Is she here?!

Dan Meyer (46:19):

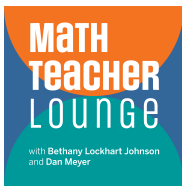
Not here! Not here! Calm down. Calm down. Um, but we do have in Oprah fashion, not something—

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (46:24):

Oh. Oh, OK. Oh, that's, that's OK. Sorry. I got, had really excited for a second. As if the Amplify playing cards, The Amplify t-shirts being chucked at you at high speed—I did try to get a t-shirt cannon, and that was quickly ruled out <laugh>. They didn't know about my rocket arm, right?

Dan Meyer (46:46):





Yeah, you got a cannon. <Laugh>

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (46:47):

Yeah. Oh, that's a compliment. Oh, is that a compliment? Thank you, Dan. Thank you. Look under your seat because we have five winners. We wanna thank you for being here in person. We wanna thank the folks who are listening. We wanna thank Amplify. Oh my God. Somebody just pulled off the chair tag. You get to take that chair home with you.

Dan Meyer (47:08):

Does anybody have a prize?

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (47:10):

OK, stand up if you...stand up if you...Yes! Stand up if you have one!

Dan Meyer (47:16):

Free set of classroom dry-erase boards, right here. Congratulations.

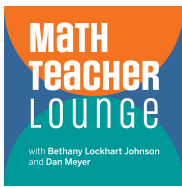
Bethany Lockhart Johnson (47:22):

And for you who pulled off the chair tag, I don't know. We gotta we gotta find something for you.

Dan Meyer (47:27):

Put that in your backpack.

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (47:30):



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Thank you again for being here. Thank you. Amplify. Thank you, Desmos. Thank you. Dan Meyer.

Dan Meyer (47:36):

Thank you folks. Chris, thank you buddy.

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (47:38):

Chris! Chris Nho, everybody!

Dan Meyer (47:40):

We will be, we will be at—Bethany and I will be at the booth, if you wanna chit-chat and hang out, sign some stuff. Whatever. You wanna have Bethany sign you, she'll do that. Um, come on down to the Amplify booth and we'll—

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (47:50):

We'll talk to you more about Ms. Frizzle.

Dan Meyer (47:52):

Fun and prizes. I will share with my real thoughts about Ms. Frizzle down there. I'd love to see you. Thanks for being here, folks.

Bethany Lockhart Johnson (47:57):

Thanks for listening. Bye.