

Reader for the AP Calculus Exam

Since 2007, I have been a Reader for the AP Calculus Exam. A Reader is really a corrector of the AP Calculus Exam. AP Exams are given in Calculus and over 30 other subjects. The AP Calculus Exam is taken by over 300,000 high school students across the United States and in a few other countries during the first week of May. All exams are given at the same time within their time zones to protect security. In 2007, the Reading took place at Louisville, KY, while Kansas City, MO, was the host the last three years.

Half of the nearly four hour exam is Multiple Choice which can be scored electronically. The other half of the exam is Free Response which must be corrected by hand. More than 800 teachers, about half being college Calculus teachers and the other half being high school AP Calculus teachers like myself, meet in June to correct the exams. For seven consecutive days, we correct from about 8AM until 5PM (of course, with a one hour lunch break and two fifteen minutes breaks).

The AP Calculus Exam has six Free Response questions to be scored. Each question is worth nine points and consists of three or four parts. To insure that all exams are being scored consistently, all Readers meet for a briefing that usually lasts approximately 90 minutes. At the briefing, we are taught how to award up to nine points for a particular question. With the wide variety of teachers and teaching styles used to teach Calculus, the briefing tries to show us all of the different methods that we might encounter and how to score each of those methods. We are not allowed to ask any questions at the briefing.

After the briefing, the over 800 Readers report to our assigned tables to meet our table partner, our 16 other Readers, and our two Table Leaders. Except for the other briefings, this table is where we spend our entire work week. If we are not sure if the student's work is worthy of points, we are to confer with our table partner. If we are still in doubt, we are to go to one of our table leaders. We get packets of 25 exams to correct, and when finished, we take the packet to our table leaders who check over our already corrected work. If our table leader disagrees with any of our

scores, they ask us to rescore that problem and to discuss with them why we scored that problem the way we did. This is important so that all 800 Readers are scoring the exams consistently. After the table leaders cross check a few of a Reader's packets, they are able to develop a trust in that Reader and won't crosscheck any more of his or her work on that question. We repeat this process on either three or four of the six Free Response questions.

An invaluable part of the week for me is being able to interact with some of the best Calculus teachers in America and some foreign countries. I am able to ask for any help on any problems that I run into in my own AP Calculus class. In Hoven, being the entire 9-12 math department, I have no peers with whom to consult or discuss.

Also, being from very rural America (no stoplight within 50 miles; no McDonald's within 80 miles), I get to experience some of the big city atmosphere. At Louisville, KY, in 2007, I visited the Muhammad Ali Center, cheered at an AAA baseball game, rode a rented bicycle along the Ohio River, toured the Louisville Slugger Museum and Factory, and jogged across the bridge into Indiana. In 2008-9-10 in Kansas City, MO, I visited the World War I Memorial, the Union Station, the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum, the American Jazz Museum, the College Basketball Experience, and Kaufman Stadium (KC Royals baseball game).

Most Readers are on the waiting list for about six years. I was on the waiting list for only two years, and I believe I was picked to be a Reader for two reasons. First, my AP Calculus students' results have made me look very good, and secondly, The College Board wants diversity. The Dakotas had no high school teachers as Readers, so I became the token Dakotan. I am still the only high school South Dakotan, although North Dakota has been represented by a Bismarck teacher the last two years.