Maarit, a mathematics teacher from Finland, experienced an epiphany following a constructive learning seminar at Leeds University she attended with a group of compatriots. Aware that students found conventional maths teaching uninspiring, she developed a fresh approach. After testing it in schools across the country, she went on to co-author 9 Finnish maths curriculum textbooks.

Maarit is driven to prove the subject is not boring but challenging, stimulating and fun; a tool to make sense of the world rather than a list of rules. Her students often learn outside the classroom by taking unconventional approaches to real-life problems (measuring a large circle with shoes to demonstrate the effectiveness of pi, for example).

Maarit’s methods have resulted in above-average PISA mathematics scores for her school (with Finland often top overall) as well as in national tests. Girls tend to do better in maths in her school than boys (the reverse is generally true in OECD countries).

With a colleague she met on a Fulbright teaching exchange, Maarit produced Paths to Math, a website offering maths resources in three languages. She ran STEM subject projects for the Economic Information Bureau for Finnish Industry, forging close links with schools in other countries, and worked as Project Manager for the EU New Opportunities for Women programme. She has featured in the Huffington Post as well as on Finnish and Korean television.