

The Research Council on Mathematics Learning seeks to stimulate, generate, coordinate, and disseminate research efforts designed to understand and/or influence factors that affect mathematics learning.

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Bea Babbit, President

Learning From Children at Play

Have you ever watched children and youth practice what they love – baseball, skateboarding, surfing, biking, guitar, hairstyling, video games? In mixed-age play groups, the older, more experienced kids set the standards. They pitch first, they bat first, they ride the first wave, they create the first hair style, they play the first song. And while they are performing, they compare their performance to media and sport stars who are the best in their field. They frequently try new techniques and creative approaches. Meanwhile the younger kids play minor roles in playing right field, setting up the skateboarding ramp, sighting incoming waves, retrieving guitar picks, finding the right hairbrush, and cheering the exploits of their older friends. The older kids practice and perform again and again before their admiring audience until finally the younger kids demand their turn. The older kids finally concede knowing they will lose their admiring audience if they leave them unengaged for too long.

Now the younger group tries to throw the strike they saw their older friend deliver, or ride

the wave, or play the chord, or match the high game score. They exert every ounce of energy in swinging the bat or trying to match the creativity of their peers. Their performances have many flaws but their efforts are without reserve. Meanwhile their older friends simultaneously encourage and deride their performance. "That was knarly. You can do better than that. What was that?" The more experienced kids coach, mentor, encourage, and criticize. The younger kids do everything possible to get one more turn often asserting, "I can do better than that, watch this one, that was the best ever!" Eventually the older kids will reassert their right to be in the spotlight to show their younger friends a better way to perform. In my neighborhood, this process will go on and on until one kid after another is called home for dinner, or to do homework, or to go to bed.

Children and youth can teach us a lot about setting standards and putting in the time
(continued page 2)

and effort to achieve them. Consider the standards they set in their play. They always want to be the best. If there is a national figure to emulate they will constantly refer to that individual and their skills. But they will also have school and neighborhood heroes. They know who is best at their school and who is best in their neighborhood and they can usually articulate why that person is the best. If kids disagree on who is the best, they give examples from the performance of their choice to support their position. I have never heard a child say "I want to be average."

In contrast, I frequently hear educational professionals say, "We are doing fine, our students are performing at the national average." While other say, "We're trying to get our students up to the national average." The problem with striving only to meet the national average came home to me the other day as I read a report that indicated the writing composition skills of our university freshman and sophomore composition students was at the national average and hence, the report concluded, we must be doing a fine job in our instruction. This conclusion contradicts what most professors in higher education experience. Our students as a whole are poor writers and we see it in every assignment they hand to us. How can this contradiction be explained? The explanation comes in the details describing their performance as any child on a playground could tell you. Here is the description of average writing performance.

Adequate. These papers take a position on the issue defined in the prompt and support that position but with only a little elaboration or explanation. Organization is clear enough to follow without difficulty. A control of the language is apparent, even though there may be numerous errors in mechanics, usage, or sentence structure.

Children and youth could tell us that numerous errors in technique with any skill will result in batter strike outs, wipeouts on surfboards, skateboards and bikes, ugly sounds on the guitar, bad-hair days, and obliteration within a video game. As professionals, we know that numerous errors in writing technique result in unclear communication to the intended audience and a product that conveys mediocrity rather than excellence. Similarly, numerous errors in math technique result in broken lines of logic and unreasonable conclusions in problem solving.

Children have found ways to set high standards, practice technique, and be creative in their own play. Can we learn from their approach?

RCML in Las Vegas Conference 2006 Report

by Jeff Shih

The Thirty-Third Annual RCML Conference was held in Las Vegas, Nevada on the campus of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas on February 23-25. By all accounts the conference was a huge success. One hundred twenty seven mathematics educators gathered together to share research findings and learn from each other.

The conference began with a no-host reception at the Mirage Hotel on Thursday afternoon followed by a tour of the Mirage Dolphin Habitat and Secret Garden. Missy Giannantonio, Curator of Education, and Holley Muraco, Research Consultant, our John Wilson lecturers for this year, addressed the attendees on the educational aspects of the facility and the research projects currently underway.

The seventy-seven regular sessions began on Friday morning. Dr. Jane McCarthy, Interim Dean of the College of Education, welcomed conference attendees at lunch. At this time, the business meeting also took place, conducted by President Bea Babbitt. Friday afternoon continued with more sessions, culminating with our major keynote session. Skip Fennell, longtime member of RCML and president-elect of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics gave his talk entitled, "The Definition of a 'Highly-Qualified Teacher' Depends on the Qualifications of the Definer." Dr. Ronald Yasbin, Dean of the College of Sciences, welcomed the group to the keynote.

After a continental breakfast, Saturday's conference continued with twenty-six sessions. A "pack-your-own" lunch buffet concluded the successful meeting.

The conference committee and your Las Vegas hosts would like to take this opportunity to thank all who participated in the conference for making it such a success. We look forward to seeing you next year in Cleveland!

Join us in Cleveland, Ohio, March 1-3, 2007 For the 2007 Conference of the Research Council on Mathematics Learning

Roland G. Pourdavood – General Chairperson
Anne Reynolds and Patrick Wachira – Program Chairpersons

1. Dates

March 1-3. A Thursday evening get-together will be followed by sessions on Friday and Saturday, ending at noon or mid-afternoon on Saturday. Beginning the conference after dinner on Thursday will enable many west coast participants to stay over Saturday night.

2. Location

Wyndham Cleveland at Playhouse Square
1260 Euclid Ave, Cleveland, Ohio 44115
Tele: 216-615-7500.

Rooms at the Wyndham Cleveland Hotel are:

Single \$83, Double \$83

Room registration should be made directly with the hotel by January 9, 2007. RCML is not liable for a room guarantee if reservations are not solidified prior to January 9, 2007.

It is anticipated that the entire meeting will be held at the Wyndham Cleveland at Playhouse Square. The hotel is centrally located in the heart of Cleveland's business and theatre District. It is a short walk or Taxi ride from live theatrical performances, two major indoor shopping venues, The Flats Entertainment District, many fine restaurants, Cleveland's Lakefront, The New Gateway Sports Complex, The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, Cleveland Indians, Cleveland Cavaliers, and the Cleveland Browns Stadium. In addition, the conference location gets us back to our roots at Kent State University.

Directions to the hotel

From Cleveland Hopkins Airport: Highway 71 North to East 9th Street. Take East 9th street to Euclid Avenue and turn right. The Wyndham Cleveland is on the right hand side.

From Akron/Canton: Highway 77 north to East 9th Street. Take East 9th street to Euclid Avenue and turn right. The Wyndham Cleveland is on the right hand side.

From Chicago/Toledo/Detroit: Highway 90 east to Downtown Cleveland. Exit East 9th street to Euclid Avenue and turn right. The Wyndham Cleveland is on the right hand side.

From Youngstown/Pittsburgh: Highway 76 to the Ohio Turnpike (I-80). Follow I-80 West to exit 10 (I-71 North) to East 9th Street. Take East 9th street to Euclid Avenue and turn right. The Wyndham Cleveland is on the right hand side.

From Columbus/Cincinnati: I-71 North to East 9th Street. Take East 9th street to Euclid Avenue and turn right. The Wyndham Cleveland is on the right hand side.

Transportation

Cleveland Hopkins International Airport serves all major carriers. It is 15 minutes away from downtown.

**Proposal Form RCML 2007
Cleveland, Ohio
Dates: March 1-3 2007**

Name: _____ Position/Title _____

Preferred Address _____

Telephone (work) _____ Telephone (home) _____

Email address _____

Title of Presentation (Limited to 75 characters): _____

Type of presentation: _____ Single Paper _____ Panel _____ Other _____

Theme Area(s) _____ Diagnosis/Assessment _____ Instructional Tools and strategies
_____ Special Education _____ Teacher Education _____ Other: _____

SESSIONS PROBABLY WILL BE 40-45 MINUTES IN LENGTH.

How will the presentation address the mission of RCML?
(Mission: Stimulate, generate, coordinate, and disseminate research efforts designed to identify, understand, and affect factors which influence mathematics learning.)

Abstract of the proposal:

Co-presenter(s): _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Send proposals by **Sept., 30 2006** to:

Patrick Wachira, Program co-chair
2121 Euclid Ave, CB 270
Cleveland, Ohio 44115-2214

Phone: (216) 687-3747
Fax: (216) 875-9875
email: p.wachira@csuohio.edu

Minutes: RCML Annual Business Meeting

February 24, 2006

President Bea Babbitt called the meeting to order at approximately 12:05 p.m. The meeting was held at the International Gaming Institute located on the campus of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. President Babbitt welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave a brief history of RCDPM / RCML that included a reminder of our "roots" in special education and an overview of past locales for the Annual Conference.

Item 1: Approval of Minutes for Last Year's Meeting

The minutes of the annual meetings are published in *Intersection Points* in the April issue, they are included on the RCML website, and they are posted at the Annual Conference in the registration area. David Davison called for approval of the minutes. Dixie Metheny seconded the motion. The minutes were approved.

Item 2: Treasurer's Report

Winifred Mallam presented the Profit and Loss report for 2005. RCML had approximately \$3,800 in income generated by membership dues and \$9,100 in income generated by program registration. Expenses incurred during the calendar year 2005 for the 2005 conferences, *Focus*, membership dues for Triangle Coalition, office supplies, plaques, postage, printing, and web master honorarium totaled approximately \$10,200. When income generated by interest and back service charges were calculated, the net result was a gain of approximately \$2,700 for the period January through December 2005. The total assets of RCML in both operating and conference accounts are approximately \$33,700. Melfried Olson moved that the treasurer's report be accepted and Sue Brown seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Item 3: Membership

Roland Pourdavood reported: RCML has 202 active members. He also suggested implementing a "two check" policy for accounting purposes: one check to pay for annual dues and a separate check for conference

registrations. He gave two reminders to members: (1) check and confirm contact information is correct, and (2) membership dues are payable at the end of the year (December 31st).

Item 4: Past President's Report

Sheryl Maxwell gave the results of the election. She announced the new board members:

President Elect 2005-2006
Pat Lamphere-Jordan

Treasurer 2006-2008
Dixie Metheny

Conference Committee 2006-2009
Stacy Reeder and Keith Adolphson

Vice-President for Conferences 2006-2008
David Boliver

President's Report

Bea announced all members of the executive board were present for the executive board meeting and that everything was "going smoothly". Vice President for Conferences Report David Davison announced that there were no paper awards again this year. The papers submitted did not meet the criteria for acceptance. He reviewed the intent / purpose of the awards. David announced that the 2007 RCML Conference would be in Cleveland, Ohio. The call for papers was distributed. The deadline for proposals is September 30th. David issued invitations for possible sites for future conferences.

Item 5: VP for Publications Report

Anne Reynolds reported that *Focus* (Volume 4 Winter) was in the mail now and that the delay was due to the printers. She announced that the problems have been resolved and that the following issues should be timely. She thanked Michael Naylor for his wonderful work on the newsletter, "Intersection Points", and announced that the electronic distribution method was working well. Anne also thanked Ryan Speer for his excellent work with our web site.

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Minutes, continued from page 5

Awards / Recognition

Bea Babbitt presented recognition plaques to conference chairs and outgoing officers:

Jeff Shih, 2006 Conference Program Chair

Bill Speer, 2006 Conference Chair

Sheryl Maxwell, Past President 2005-2006

David Davison, Vice President for Conferences 2004-2006

Winifred Mallam, Treasurer 2004-2006

Mary Enderson, Conference Committee, 2003-2006

Michael Naylor, Conference Committee, 2003-2006

Nomination of New Officers

President-elect Pat Lamphere-Jordan distributed nomination forms for our fall elections. The available positions will be: Vice President for Publications, Secretary, and two conference committee members.

Closing

The President closed the meeting at approximately 1:15 p.m. The motion to adjourn was given by Pat Lamphere-Jordan and seconded by Ginny Usnick.

Submitted by: Diana S. Perdue

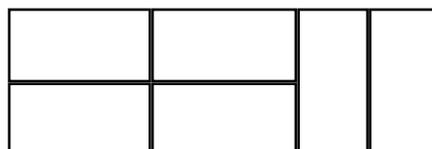
Points of Puzzlement

by Michael Naylor

GARDEN EDGING

I have twenty large stones, the faces of which are rectangles two feet long and one foot wide, which I want to use to build a 20-foot long wall to keep the ravenous tomato snakes out of my garden. The wall will be two feet high, which can be achieved by standing the stones up vertically, laying pairs of stones horizontally on top of each other, or any combination of these.

For example, here are two ways I could build a 6-foot wide wall:



How many different ways are there to build a 20-foot wide wall?

How many different ways are there to arrange n stones?

Email your solution to mnaylor@cc.wwu.edu.

Best solutions win valuable intrinsic rewards.

RCML Officer Nomination Form 2006-2008

Elections will be held for the following leadership positions:

Vice-president for Publications

- Serves a two-year term
- Coordinates activities of Newsletter Editor, FOCUS editor, and membership Coordinator
- Serves on Editorial Board of FOCUS during term and next 4 years
- Reports publication activities to Executive Committee
- Arrange all necessary copyrights, library of congress and ISBN identification numbers
- Works with Secretary to archive documents
- Provide permission for reprinting RCML publications
- Forward copies of RCML publication policies and procedures to all publication appointees as necessary

Secretary

- Serves a two-year term
- Records and maintains minutes of Business and Executive Committee meetings
- Maintains all official records, documents, and current Constitution and By-laws
- Updates incorporation documents every 5 years
- Record revisions to organization Handbook

Conference Committee

- Works with Chair of the Conference Committee
- Assists Conference Chair with conference activities

Your help and support is needed so that RCML continues with quality persons in the leadership ranks. Please take the time to consider who you think might make a good candidate for these positions. Self-nominations are certainly acceptable. Complete the following nomination form and send it to Pat Jordan at 325 Donna Ave., Guthrie, OK 73044 or e-mail it to patricia.jordan@okstate.edu. Nominations should be received by September 1, 2006.

Name: _____

Position: _____

Address: _____

e-mail address: _____

phone number: ____ work or ____ home -> _____

RESEARCH COUNCIL ON MATHEMATICS LEARNING PERSONNEL, 2006-2007

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President 2005-2007

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VP Conferences, 2006-2008

David Boliver
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VP – Publications, 2005-2007

Anne Reynolds
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Secretary 2005-2007

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED