

ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF MATHEMATICS
IN WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS, AN AFFILIATED
GROUP OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF
TEACHERS OF MATHEMATICS

MATHWEST NEWS

SEPTEMBER 2001 Volume 14, Issue 3

Play The Odds.
Take The Chance.
Come and Join Us For Dinner.

Inside this
edition:

★ A calendar of
upcoming events
for MATHWEST
members

★ A listing of
upcoming
professional
development
opportunities

★ An update on
the new
membership
database.

★ A report on the
recipients of the
Mary Alice Wilson
Grants

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING OCTOBER 18, 2001

Our next meeting will be another dinner meeting to be held at the Holyoke Holiday Inn beginning at 3:30 PM.

Our main focus for the evening is
Probability and Statistics.

So come meet other members of your mathematics community while learning a little at the same time.

The cost will be \$10 per person for the evening.

Mark your calendar now, and mail your check to MATHWEST so that you don't miss this opportunity.

Look inside for more information about this event!

VISIT OUR WEB SITE
www.wgby.org/edu/mathlink

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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

NCTM EASTERN REGIONAL CONFERENCE

Mainely A Math Odyssey

November 1st - 3rd, 2001

Portland, Maine

For more information contact: Jackie Michell, 27 Alpine Road, Portland, ME 04103 or email her at: jadamitchell@aol.com.

TEACHING ALL CHILDREN:

BEST PRACTICES IN MATH

The New England School Development Council (NESDEC) is sponsoring an upcoming presentation by Kay Toliver, a national leader in mathematics education, available to all ATMNE members and affiliates. Ms. Toliver will be presenting a one-day institute titled "Teaching all Children: Best Practices in Math" on October 10, 2001.

NESDEC is a 55-year-old non-profit, educational organization providing professional development opportunities for K-12 teachers and administrators throughout the six New England states. For more information contact Jill Norton at (508) 481-9444 or email her at jnorton@nesdec.org. You can also visit their website at www.nesdec.org.

2002 ANNUAL NCTM MEETING

April 21 - 24, 2002

Las Vegas, Nevada

The 2002 Annual Meeting of the NCTM will be in Las Vegas, Nevada, Sunday, April 21-Wednesday, April 24. The major venues will be the Venetian, the Sands Expo Center, and Harrah's.

The theme for this Annual Meeting is "Realizing the Vision of School Mathematics." The vision is explained in *Principles and Standards for School Mathematics* which was released in April.

Watch the mail for the Las Vegas Annual Meeting Preview! The Annual Meeting Preview, which includes registration and hotel forms, will be mailed to NCTM members and posted on NCTM's Web site in early to mid-November.

CENTER FOR INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGIES

WGBY's CIT continues to have drop-in hours from 3 to 5 PM on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Stop by to preview or borrow videos, evaluate software, ask questions, and get support. They also has a busy schedule of low-cost classes for Fall 2001. For more information check out: www.wgby.org/edu.

GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

DIGI-BLOCK GRANT

Digi-Block, a developer of mathematics products for elementary schools, will grant \$5,000 for curriculum development and implementation projects, staff development and training projects, after-school programs or co-curricular activities, and innovative assessment techniques using the Digi-Block Learning System. This system is a hands-on program that offers teachers an easy and innovative way to teach place value and basic arithmetic operations. Through physical interaction with the Digi-Block materials, students discover the important role of grouping by tens, and build a foundation for learning higher math concepts in the upper grades.

Applications for the grant should include: a description of how the learning system will be used in the classroom or school, a synopsis of the project, background information on the applicant, a letter of recommendation from the principal or math department chair, and a description of the progress of the project. All applications must be postmarked on or before November 1, 2001. For more application information, visit www.digi-block.com.

Do you have an interesting idea to help promote mathematics education? Do you need some funding? MATHWEST has a small amount of money set aside for this purpose, since no grant was awarded in 2000. Contact a board member for more information.

VISIT OUR WEB SITE
www.wgby.org/edu/mathlink

**MATHWEST ANNOUNCES
THE TWO RECIPIENTS OF THE
MARY ALICE WILSON GRANT 2001**

The Mary Alice Wilson Grant is funded by MATHWEST for the purpose of enhancing mathematics understanding and appreciation in grades K-12. Grants are awarded annually for up to \$1,000. The following proposals were accepted by the MATHWEST Board at their June meeting and the recipients will complete their project by May 1, 2002.

T1-Interactive! Workshop

Nancy Farrell and Scott Trahan of Agawam High School will be conducting the workshop for up to twenty-five math and science teachers. Participants will be able to recognize and use the many components of the software application. They will solve application problems using the graphs of various functions and generate lesson plans. This workshop will take place in Spring 2002 and registration will be open to all members of MATHWEST. (\$500 grant)

The Anatomy of a Flower Project

Nancy Strouse of Center Elementary School in Easthampton will be conducting a year-long project for students to identify and define plant parts. With Inspiration software they will produce a compare/contrast template with observations and digital images and present a Hyperstudio card show with digital images and text to explain plant anatomy. (\$500 grant)



**MATHWEST Needs Your Email Address!
Membership Database Updated**

You may remember that back in our February 2001 issue that we included a personalized membership profile for each of our members, asking you to make corrections. In order to serve our membership better a new database was established, and we used the information you provided to update our records.

The process is almost complete. Our new membership chair, Donna Watson, with much assistance from Bill Chandler (our former chair), has finished entering the information into the computer, and we are well on our way to provide a more user friendly membership service. This will include email notification about upcoming renewals and programs that we will be offering.



Figure This!
Math Challenges for Families

*What is round, hard, and sold for \$3 million?
Mark McGwire became baseball's homerun king in 1998. His 70th homerun ball sold for slightly over \$3 million in 1999. Babe Ruth hit 60 in 1927. His homerun ball was donated to the Hall of Fame. Suppose his ball was valued at \$3000 in 1927 and like many good investments doubled its value every 7 years. Would you rather have the value of Ruth's ball or McGwire's?*

Check it out online at: www.figurethis.org

Starting with this issue, you may notice a change of your membership renewal date. Each member's renewal date was changed to expire on September 30th of the year of their current expiration date. However, members who will expire September 30th of this year, will receive our mailing until December.

This was done for a few reasons. First, having groups of members with the same expiration date will allow us to easily email members whose membership is about to expire. Secondly, some schools pay for memberships for their teachers. Having an expiration date of September, allows school districts to pay for memberships while there is still funds available in their budgets for the new school year. Lastly, the process to update our database has taken some time. In order to be fair to those who renewed during that process, we felt a September date was warranted since those membership renewals in some cases did not get processed until this summer.

We need your cooperation to help us bring this project to completion. Although some members returned their profiles with corrections, there are still many missing entries in our database. We are therefore asking that each member please email Donna at dmwatson55@aol.com providing her with their current mailing address, telephone number, and email address.

If your membership is set to expire this September, please renew your membership as soon as possible. If you renew for three years, you will save \$5 for helping us cut down on our bookkeeping. Membership benefits include our newsletters, membership to ATMNE, and information on professional development opportunities including our general membership meetings. Simply fill out the new registration form on page 8 of this newsletter along with a check made payable to MATHWEST and send it to: PO Box 784, Easthampton, Massachusetts 01027.

IN THE PRESS

NEA SEEKS TO BLOCK 'HIGH-STAKES TESTING'' Arizona Republic, 07 July 2001

The 9000 delegates of the National Education Association voted last Friday to support any legislation granting parents the right to allow their children to skip standardized tests. The union vote also directed NEA lobbyists to battle mandatory testing requirements on a federal level. Congress is considering legislation that would require mandatory state testing in reading and math in grades three through eight, and grade 10.

"If you want to know how your child is doing, you don't wait seven months to get the results of a standardized test," said Judi Hirsch, the algebra teacher who introduced the measure. "You ask your kid's teacher."

Union delegates also voted in support of a resolution encouraging local officials to use various ways of assessing student learning.

HOMEWORK TIED TO BETTER MCAS SCORES Boston Herald, 27 July 2001

A Massachusetts Department of Education survey of sophomores sitting for the 2000 MCAS exams yielded some interesting results. The analysis found no negative correlation between test scores and time spent watching television, playing video games and using the internet until those activities surpassed five hours a day.

Researchers did find a correlation between higher scores on the math exam and more homework, but reached no conclusions as to how much homework was most beneficial. Students who did three to five hours of math homework a week scored better than 10th graders who did more than five hours a week. The exceptions to that rule were Asians and white females -- they benefited from more than five hours a week of homework.

The most advanced students said they did between one and three hours of math homework a week.

Janine Bempechat, a senior consultant to the Program for Educational Change Agents at Tufts University, said the findings reinforce the importance of homework for older students.

REVIEW TESTS GO TOO FAR, CRITICS SAY Washington Post, 10 July 2001 (p. A09)

As schools across the country increase their emphasis on standardized testing, teachers are beginning to wrestle with how best to prepare students for those tests without crossing the line into cheating. Giving students practice sheets with problems in exactly the same formats they will find on the test may boost scores, but it won't necessarily increase general knowledge of content, says Dan Koretz, a senior social scientist at the Rand Corp.

A review sheet for an algebra exam in Montgomery County, Maryland raised eyebrows recently when it was shown that some review questions were very similar to actual test questions. "Educators cheat to deceive parents and the business community about student achievement," declared education activist John Hoven.

But school officials have defended the review sheets. "Students shouldn't be so familiar with the content that they see the test [beforehand], but the scope and significance of the material has to be part of the instructional program," said district spokesman Brian Porter.

Teachers should make an effort to present information in different ways; however, in order to ensure that students become adept at more than just taking tests, said Lorrie Shepard, an educational measurement researcher at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

TEACHERS REJECTING TEST SCORE BONUSES

San Francisco Chronicle, 30 July 2001 (p. A-1)

California Governor Gray Davis' reward program for teachers in schools showing higher Stanford 9 scores is not having the desired effect. Rather than welcoming the \$591 bonuses, hundreds of teachers are donating the money to scholarships and other programs that benefit children. Teachers' organizations say the bonuses are nothing short of bribes.

"It is merely a trap for teachers, designed to keep them quiet in the face of a scheme that only masquerades as school improvement," said a statement from the faculty of Wildwood Elementary School in Piedmont.

Many teachers say the Stanford 9 is a poor measure of achievement, particularly since it is not well aligned with state standards. Improvements in the test are supposed to be ready by next spring.

"The reward money gives teachers a feeling of uneasiness," said Dennis Kelly, a Lowell High School teacher in San Francisco. "If we've been more successful at Lowell, or had more motivated students, does that make our efforts more worthwhile?"

California's \$677 million pot rewards both schools and employees for higher test scores. The program also includes prizes of \$5000 to \$25,000 for teachers at low-performing schools that make impressive gains. Those prizes have not been paid yet.

CRITICS ARGUE STATE ALGEBRA TEST TOO EASY

Chicago Sun-Times, 26 June 2001

The math wars have come to Maryland. A small but vocal group that has been involved in the national debate over math instruction is criticizing Maryland's math standards for not being rigorous enough. Moreover, they say, the state's new high school algebra test is more appropriate for sixth-graders.

"Parents will be misled into believing that their children have learned algebra on the basis of the child having passed this mis-titled test on grade-6 level algebra preparation," said Jerome Dancis, an associate math professor at the University of Maryland-College Park.

A parent, John Hoven, compared questions from the state's new algebra exam with questions from math exams in Singapore. The Maryland questions were asked of Singapore's fifth- and sixth-graders, he said.

Maryland's education department math specialist, Donna Watts, said the test only covers "about 60 percent of what should be in most algebra classes." It is intended to simply "raise the bar" for all students and "far above the old functional test," she said.

W. Stephen Wilson, a math professor at Johns Hopkins University, said Maryland's math standards do not place enough emphasis on basic arithmetic operations. If kids lack the ability to do basic arithmetic automatically, "without thinking," Wilson said, then "I and my colleagues across the country will flunk them When they try to take fast-paced college math courses."

But the chairman of the state math task force, Francis Fennell, said the standards will enable kids to be proficient in three key areas: factual knowledge, procedural fluency and conceptual understanding.

MATHWEST

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2001
HOLIDAY INN ~ HOLYOKE
PROGRAM STARTS AT 3:30 PM



SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

3:30 PM	Welcome
4:00 PM	K- 6 Speaker: Karen Lynds 7 - 12 Speaker: Dave Daniels
5:00 PM	Dinner
6:00 PM	Keynote Address

The topic for this meeting will be **Probability and Statistics**. NCTM's Data Analysis and Probability Standard recommends that students formulate questions that can be answered using data and addresses what is involved in gathering and using data wisely. Students should learn how to collect data, organize their own or others' data, and display the data in graphs and charts that will be useful in answering their questions. This Standard also includes learning some methods for analyzing data and some ways of making inferences and conclusions from data. The basic concepts and applications of probability are also addressed, with emphasis on the way probability and statistics are related. Our two speakers will try to address these concerns.

Dave Daniels will present "*My Top Five Probability Problems and Paradoxes*" to our 7-12 teachers. All are useful for hungry math teachers and fun for students in the classroom. His presentation will come complete with a handout suitable for face-to-face interaction with students. Participants are asked to bring a TI-83 graphing calculator.

Karen Lynds has volunteered to discuss the issue on the elementary level. Hands-on activities will be the focus of her presentation. Participants should be prepared to be actively involved in an hour of mathematical exploration and fun.

REGISTRATION:

Send your check for \$10 per person (includes dinner) to:
MATHWEST, P.O. Box 784, Easthampton, MA 01027

DIRECTIONS:

The Holiday Inn is at the crossroads of New England. Directly off I-91 at Ingleside exit.

From the North: Take I-91 South to the Ingleside exit (Holyoke Mall). Take a left off ramp, and at next light, take a left. Hotel entrance will be on your left after corner gas station.

From the South and Mass Pike: Take Mass Pike to exit 4 and follow I-91 North to the Ingleside exit (Holyoke Mall). Take a right off the ramp and merge into the left lane. At the next light, take a left. Hotel entrance will be on your left after corner gas station.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

SEPTEMBER

- 13th ~ Board Meeting, 4 PM
Bertucci's Pizzeria, W. Springfield
- 18th ~ AP Calculus Get-Together, 4 PM
Bertucci's Pizzeria, W. Springfield

OCTOBER

- 16th ~ AP Calculus Get-Together, 4 PM
Bertucci's Pizzeria, W. Springfield
- 18th ~ General Membership Meeting, 4 PM
Holiday Inn, Holyoke
Topic: Probability and Statistics
- 25th ~ Board Meeting, 4 PM
Bertucci's Pizzeria, W. Springfield

NOVEMBER

- 1st ~ NCTM Eastern Regional Conference
Portland, Maine

DECEMBER

- TBA ~ Open House at WGBY's
Center for Instructional Technologies
44 Hampden Street, Springfield
- TBA ~ MATHWEST Elections

MARCH

- 7th ~ General Membership Meeting, 4 PM
Holiday Inn, Holyoke
Topic: Geometry
- TBA ~ TI Interactive! Workshop
Agawam High School, Agawam
5 two-hour sessions, PDP's awarded

APRIL

- 21st ~ NCTM Annual Meeting
Las Vegas, Nevada

AP Calculus Get-Together September 18th

Dave Daniels will discuss
hints from his grading experiences.
Refreshments will be served.
If you plan to attend, contact Lyn at
lheady@hotmail.com

MATHWEST Elections To be held in December

There are openings on the Board of
Directors. If interested, contact a
current board member for details.
Term of office is two years.

TI Interactive! Workshop March — April Agawam High School

Sponsored by a Mary Alice Wilson Grant, this
workshop is open to all MATHWEST mem-
bers. During the five, two-hour sessions,
participants will explore the various compo-
nents of this software application that
combines the functions of a graphing
calculator with that of a word processor. If
interested, contact Scott at
SLTrahan@aol.com so that convenient times
may be scheduled.



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GENERAL CALL FOR ARTICLES

The ATMNE is looking for articles to be submitted for publication in their journal. Information about submissions can be found in each issue. Remember, "publishing" earns PDP's and can also be part of a portfolio for those applying for National Certification.

Teachers are doing really interesting things in their classrooms and others would like to hear about what is happening in schools in our region.



P.O. Box 784
Easthampton, MA 01027

MATHWEST MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM
Mail to: MATHWEST, P.O. Box 784, Easthampton, MA 01027

- Membership Category:
- _____ 1 Year Regular (\$15)
 - _____ 1 Year Full-Time Student (\$5)
 - _____ 1 Year Full-Time Retired (\$10)
 - _____ 3 Year Regular (\$40)

- Area of Professional Interest:
- _____ Elementary
 - _____ Middle School
 - _____ Secondary
 - _____ College

Amount Enclosed \$ _____

Membership make a great gift for a new member of your mathematics department!

NAME _____

STREET _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____ EMAIL _____

Are you a member of NCTM? YES NO

A member of another NCTM affiliate? YES NO If yes, which one? _____