The 'Math A' Controversy
by Wendy Soohoo

Math is in the news! However, it’s not for a good reason. This year’s June Math A exam resulted in many students being unable to achieve a passing grade, and then because of arguments over whether or not the exam was fair, the exam was rescored (refer to fig. 1). The Math Regents Review Panel was formed because of the high failure rate, and it conducted a study that compared and contrasted the June 2002 and June 2003 Math A Regents exam. Its task was to rescoring the exam in the fairest way possible and to determine why the failure rate was so high.

June 2002 students were held, and rescore all of their exams. Since this year’s exam was apparently harder than last year’s exam, it is incomprehensible how the Panel made similar grading standards. This may also create a problem in the schools since some students who may have passed at these standards will not be prepared for the next level of mathematics.

The problems surrounding the latest Math A exam arouse questions about its role in promoting students. By creating the Math A and B curriculum, the state was hoping to raise the standards of students’ competency. However, since this year’s exam was such a controversy, it caused the NYS Education Department to realize that it is of utmost importance that they publish a clear Math A curriculum and properly train teachers. However, the New York State Educational Commissioner, Richard P. Mills, announced on October 8, 2003 that “some children are going to need more time to get to a full achievement.” So the passing score will be 55 for an extra two years and Math A will be changed from a three-semester course to a two-semester course. Hopefully, these changes will improve the quality of learning.

Voice From the Field
By Eric Glatz

This is Eric Glatz, a TIME 2000 graduate. I am now starting my second year as a full-time mathematics educator. I am having a lot of fun with my job; working in the city leaves a lot of freedom in your style of teaching. I work in Richmond Hill High School in Queens, and the new city program mandates a double period of mathematics for all incoming freshmen. This leaves the teacher with a lot of class time, offering expanded possibilities on the types of lessons you can lead.

I enjoy my position a lot because I am always trying to incorporate things that interest me. (Continued on next page)
Reflections of TIME

Presents: Dr. Sultan
by Vidya Sriprasad

Sultan and he will be around until you graduate. It takes just one class to know what kind of teaching styles and test methods he uses. Dr. Sultan is one of the few professors that use the latest teaching methodology, where students participate in the lessons and learn from their mistakes with the help of the instructor. However, Dr. Sultan has not always taught this way. Dr. Sultan used to teach by expository instruction, which is teaching by standing in front of the class, lecturing and giving exams. He would not have any connections with the students, other than him talking and his students listening. While developing the TIME 2000 program with Dr. Alice Artzt, he realized that in order to make it successful, he would have to first modify his ways of teaching. This would mean having an interactive classroom. As TIME 2000 students, we are fortunate enough to have him as our teacher and as an ideal role model. By being in his classroom, we are active participants and we are able to observe his teaching habits.

We know Dr. Sultan in Queens College as a professor and the Math advisor for Math majors and Education minors, but what does he do outside of school? Well, he participates in three choirs; the one at Queens College, the Oratorio Society in Queens, and a voluntary choir. A TIME 2000 student went to a concert for a music class project and saw him there. She told me, “I was shocked to see him there, but he made a cool bass (singer).” Dr. Sultan is also involved in teaching at a high School for disabled children, wrote a textbook for Linear Programming, and published an article with Dr. Artzt in the Spring ‘03 edition of Mathematics Education Research Newsletter.

In my opinion, I think Dr. Sultan is a phenomenal professor who really cares about the students that he teaches. He always has time for them and he makes sure that his students understand the information that he teaches. This is why he’s an inspiration to his students.

Summer at Cyberchase
by Rebecca Steiner

Hello everyone! I hope you are all enjoying the fall semester here in TIME 2000. I also hope you had a wonderful summer; I certainly did, and I’d like to share some of my summer experiences with you.

I had an absolutely wonderful internship at Channel Thirteen (WNET) working on the PBS Kids program Cyberchase, an educational series designed to promote mathematical concepts in a fun and adventurous way. One of the highlights of the summer was “Writers’ Week,” when the writers and the mathematics consultants come from all over the country to sit in a conference room together to brainstorm ideas for upcoming shows. The two math consultants, Michael Templeton from Oregon and Carey Bolster from Maryland, designed some wonderful activities to stimulate the writers’ minds and to get their creative flow going. I got to participate in these activities, and it was truly a thrilling experience. I sat in a room with some of the most brilliantly creative people on the planet! (I dream of getting to work with people like that when I start teaching.)

I also got to learn a lot about the production process of an animated show like this. A few weeks into my internship, one of Cyberchase’s producers gave an informational “Production Overview” session for the interns in which she did a short demonstration of how an episode goes from just an idea in someone’s head to the actual animated show that is broadcasted on television. This was absolutely fascinating. It’s great to be able to see the big picture while you’re working on seemingly isolated pieces of the project.

The last week of my internship was the most fun. I got to sit in on a live recording of Christopher Lloyd (who does the voice of the cartoon character “Hacker”) over the phone in the office of one of the executive producers. I also got to attend a filming of the live action segment of the show, called “Cyberchase for Real,” in Central Park. I met Matthew Wilson (“Harry”) and Bianca DeGroat (“Bianca”) and I was even on TV for about three seconds on Monday, September 1, at about 4pm.

One of the most exciting aspects of Cyberchase is that it’s not just a television show like I originally thought. The Cyberchase team provides outreach materials to classrooms, after-school programs, and the general public. There’s a kids’ magazine, a teacher’s guide (two editions), an interactive website with lots of math games, many different workshops for children to do alone or in groups, and even a monthly Weekly Reader column for fourth graders. It’s just unbelievable how much work is required to make a program like this run!

Cyberchase airs on PBS on weekdays at 5pm and Sundays at 10am. Check out their website at pbskids.org/cyberchase!

Interested in seeing first-hand how mathematics appears in the real-world? Are you curious about summer job opportunities relating to mathematics education? There are summer internships available for math majors in a variety of fields such as advertising, curriculum development, data analysis, educational media, finance, instructional technology, market research, and publishing. So, get your resume ready to apply for a summer 2004 internship! For additional information, please email Tara at qcmathinterns@aol.com.

Math Help Websites

www.mathforum.org/dr.math

www.mathpower.com

www.mathgoodies.com

(Scal: 5 = Best)

Fun Corner

By Sidney Harris