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A Note from the Editor

Dear *TME* readers,

This has been a productive year for the editors of *TME*. We overhauled and updated our website, broadened our reach nationally and internationally, and doubled our number of reviewers. Collectively, the editors worked with almost 30 authors providing feedback and readying articles for publication. We are now proud to present the final of two issues to be published in 2004. This issue showcases both national and international research and commentary. We hope your reading of these articles will be both educational and thought provoking.

David Clarke opens this issue with an editorial inviting you to read the research he, Margarita Breed, and Sherry Fraser conducted in the early 1990s and published in this issue. In their research article, they highlight some positive consequences of teaching with the *Interactive Mathematics Program* (IMP), a problem-based curriculum that has gained attention in recent years. Clarke's editorial further asks mathematics education researchers to consider research methodology when studying classroom learning. In so doing, he draws on the international comparative research of the Learner's Perspective Study.

Two studies presented in this issue examine the effectiveness of assessment items. Bates and Wiest discuss the impact personalization of word problems can have on students' performance on mathematics assessments. Contrary to recent research they report no significant difference in students' performance with personalized and non-personalized problems. Rueda and Sokolowski study the effectiveness of their locally developed mathematics placement test at Merrimack College and show that students who follow the recommendations for course enrollment based on their test scores perform well in those classes.

Finally, Cyril Julie, a scholar in South Africa, invites readers to consider the development of democratic competence in students within a newly formed democratic country and the role mathematics might play in that development. He asks whether democratic competence can be realized within Realistic Mathematics Education (RME), a curriculum developed in The Netherlands and recently imported into South Africa. His question is important for consideration and his discussion is stimulating.

As I close my final comments as the editor of *TME*, I encourage readers to support our journal by submitting manuscripts, reviewing articles, or joining our editorial team. *TME* is growing in recognition, and it is through the efforts put forth by all of us that it will continue to thrive.

Serving as the 2004 editor of *TME* has been truly rewarding. I was privileged to lead a team of editors who worked well both together and independently. The publication of *TME* is a direct result of their time and effort. I appreciate MESA allowing me the opportunity to do this work and I hope that my efforts have been notable. I also extend my thanks to all of the other people who make *TME* possible: reviewers, authors, peers, and faculty.

With Sincere Thanks,

Holly Garrett Anthony

105 Aderhold Hall

The University of Georgia

Athens, GA 30602-7124

tme@coe.uga.edu

www.coe.uga.edu/tme

About the cover

Cover artwork by Tyler M. Ricks. *Untitled*, 2004.

For questions or comments, contact: tricks3@email.byu.edu

This piece is the culmination of years of experimentation and study with computer art. Starting with just a simple 3 by 3 grid in an 8th grade art class, the style blossomed into hundreds of different pieces using many different geometrical ideas. The process of hand-drawing each line takes hours of work, but can produce extremely complex mathematical images. The piece featured on the cover was created on the computer program GeoSketchpad™, and is part of a larger series using complex "string frames," so called because they resemble physical frames on which strings are tightly strung. Other series use complex grids, different geometric shapes, or skewed frames to create intricate line drawings.

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