

SIGMAA-MCST Business Meeting

August 6th, 2011, 7:15 to 9:00 AM

Present: Tatiana Shubin, Phil Yasskin, Jim Tanton, Sam Vandervelde, Ed Keppelmann, Diana White, Amanda Serenevy

Nominations for Chair-Elect and Secretary/Treasurer: We decided to nominate Tatiana Shubin for Chair-Elect and Japheth Wood for Secretary/Treasurer. Tatiana agreed to run for the Chair-Elect position. Amanda will contact Japheth to ask him whether he is willing.

T-Shirts: It would be nice to have a Math Circles t-shirt (possibly including a problem on the back and incorporating the logos of the NAMC, MTC, and SIGMAA). Many members of circles around the country would enjoy this. Amanda could facilitate the logistics of getting the t-shirts ordered or set up as a Cafe Press site, but would need images created. Diana suggested sending out a t-shirt design appeal to circles around the country. Amanda will work on the appeal for the Joint Math Meetings.

What Should Be Done With Email List from Sessions? Jim plans to send out a thank-you for attending email to the list of participants along with an encouragement to join the SIGMAA.

NCTM Diana mentioned that she did a demo Teacher Circle at the Denver regional NCTM conference this past year. We discussed what we might do to establish better connections with NCTM. Shared concerns include promoting math circles for students and teachers, and educating mathematicians about new common core state standards and the need to address preparation of future teachers. It was suggested that we try to approach the joint MAA/NCTM committee about sending someone to the January meeting at the Joint meetings. We also may send some people to the NCTM meetings in 2012 and 2013. We will revisit this issue in January.

Types of Sessions

We discussed what kinds of sessions we thought we should have in the future. The sessions should provide math content ideas for circles, should help people with administrative questions, and should promote networking.

MSRI Math Circle Dinner: On the networking front, it was mentioned that the MSRI sponsored Math Circles dinner is extremely valuable. Diana said that two new participants told her that the dinner was the best part of Math Fest. There is some concern about whether MSRI will continue as sponsor. We decided that we will contact MSRI to offer to jointly sponsor the dinner. People also thought the ice breaker and challenges that Dave Auckly provided during the dinner were useful for promoting conversation, and it was agreed that having that sort of informal program plan is a good idea.

Staffing a Table to Explain What a Math Circle Is: It was mentioned that it might be difficult for newcomers to understand what a Math Circle is since talks do not always explain this. It was suggested that in the future, we could staff a table outside or at the front of rooms containing any of our sessions to get to know people coming in and to give them information.

Contributed Paper Session: There was quite a bit of discussion about whether contributed paper sessions are a useful format. Contributed paper sessions give participants a chance to present in a way that might be recognized by their departments. However, it can get repetitious to hear about the specific administrative details of individual circles. Some of the group like the idea of replacing contributed paper session with the poster and activity session we are trying in January. However, we don't yet know whether that will be a good format for meeting the needs of the Math Circle community.

Invited Paper Session: The advantage of an invited paper session is that the talks can be longer (at the Joint Meetings), and there is more coherence to the program since it is planned by the organizers.

Demo Circles: Everyone loved the Math Circle for mathematicians that Dan Ullman ran and agreed that we should repeat that kind of session in the future. Sessions for children and teachers are a bit difficult because of the problem of finding participants. This is especially true in August and varies by region. Some of the group pointed out that while it is difficult, it may be good for us to try to continue doing this since it helps to promote awareness of Math Circles in different locales.

Math Wrangles: The Math Wrangle format has been successful for the past three meetings, but it can sometimes be difficult to find school-age students. It was decided that undergraduates could be recruited in cases where school-age students are hard to find (especially for August meetings).

Mini Course on How to Start a Math Circle: Sam is willing to spearhead the effort to offer a mini course for 2013. It was mentioned that this kind of session would provide interested newcomers with background information which would not be of interest in the general session to a mixed audience including experienced Math Circle organizers.

Sessions for Math Fest 2012 (tentative):

- Contributed Paper Session (1 two-hour session)
- Dinner co-sponsored with MSRI including an informal speaker/presenter
- 2 Demo Circles with mathematicians as participants. One will be pitched at a fairly high level (graduate student level). The other will involve a topic that could easily be taken back to a middle-school Math Circle.
- Math Wrangle with Undergrads

Sessions for Joint Math Meetings 2013 (tentative):

- Invited Paper Session (1 two to four hour session)
- Mini-course on How to run a Math Circle for Kids
- 3 demo circles – one for mathematicians, one for a general audience of adults (mathematicians and teachers), and one for kids.
- Math Wrangle with school-age students
- Poster/Activity session (if we still like it after January)

Tatiana suggested that we may want to look again at these lists by email and reconsider whether this is too much or whether it is the right mixture of sessions.