

BOOKS

FROM NCTM

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Motivation Matters and Interest Counts: Fostering Engagement in Mathematics

James A. Middleton and Amanda Jansen, 2011. 186 pp., \$37.95 paper. ISBN 978-0-87353-658-5; stock no. 13787. National Council of Teachers of Mathematics; www.nctm.org.

This book, written for mathematics teachers, is a review of literature addressing motivation in mathematics education. Authors Middleton and Jansen have used classroom vignettes and examples from research to produce an excellent example of NCTM efforts to authentically link research and practice. The principles of motivation and categories of instructional strategies for increasing student motivation to learn mathematics described in this book could not be of greater importance, given the ever-increasing importance of mathematical knowledge and the fact that many students are intimidated by mathematics.

In addition to its critical information, the book is an enjoyable read. The diverse perspectives of the authors (Jansen, a former middle school teacher, and Middleton, a learning scientist) also provide a healthy balance

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of theory and practice. *Motivation Matters and Interest Counts* is written in a particularly open manner. For example, Jansen talks frankly from experience, admitting her own struggle to motivate students to learn mathematics. The only drawback of the book results from a personal preference; I prefer the use of transcripts (typically longer and messier) versus vignettes (that sometimes sound contrived), being aware that vignettes are sometimes used because they can tell the story in fewer words. To their credit, the authors use a combination of these two forms, which will likely satisfy a wider audience.

Given the importance of the content and the informal, although scholarly, prose of *Motivation Matters and Interest Counts*, I strongly recommend it to all teachers of mathematics, from early elementary teachers to university faculty teaching mathematics and mathematics education courses.

—Jill Newton,
Purdue University,
West Lafayette, Indiana

FROM OTHER PUBLISHERS

Birthday Pi

Douglas M. Keenan, 2011. 62 pp., \$14.95 paper. 978-1-4565-7887-9. CreateSpace; www.amazon.com.

This book provides a rich and new way of looking at the common units that we see every day. Keenan demonstrates how pi, a transcendental number that relates to circles and other circular motions, can be used to determine the number of seconds in a year and explore the motion of a pendulum, the circumference of Earth, and the measurement of the Great Pyramid. I think it is always interesting to find mathematical concepts in real-life phenomena.

The overall strength of this book is the author's attempts to connect well-known mathematical concepts to the real world. This strength will hold the interests of young students. However, if the target readers of this book are middle school students, some equations in the book might be too difficult. For example, information on pages 17 and 25 will need more explanations. If readers are not familiar with those equations, they might not be able to follow the text.

Overall, I think *Birthday Pi* is an interesting book. It will certainly interest people who want to see the connections between mathematics and real-life phenomena.

—Dae S. Hong,
Hostos Community College,
Bronx, New York

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