

PRESS RELEASE
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Website connects math circles nationwide to resources and builds community
Growing educational trend of after-school math groups find support through online portal

BERKELEY, California – The Mathematical Sciences Research Institute (MSRI) announced today the launch of the National Association of Math Circles (NAMC) website—go to <http://www.mathcircles.org>—to link to the community of students, parents, teachers, and math circle organizers. Throughout the United States there are currently 58 math circles for students eager to gather with their peers and learn and explore mathematics in an in-depth way. The new website will be an essential resource for the burgeoning community of student math aficionados and it provides a virtual primer on how to start a math circle for potential circle organizers. In general, math circles enable mathematicians (often math professors from universities nearby) and math-related professionals to meet and teach motivated middle and high school students in informal after-school settings to work on interesting problems and topics in math.

This new web-based initiative is the result of generous support from the Akamai Foundation. “Math innovation has always been, and continues to be, at the heart of our mission,” said Tom Leighton, chief scientist and co-founder, Akamai, who serves as a trustee of MSRI. “We applaud the work by MSRI in creating an online portal dedicated to fostering mathematics education. The Akamai Foundation remains committed to helping to promote mathematics education among the next generation of technology innovators, inspiring young people to embrace math.”

The Akamai Foundation, established in 2000 by Akamai Technologies, Inc. (NASDAQ: AKAM), and funded solely through donations from Akamai employees and individuals outside the company, promotes mathematics education in grades K-12. The Akamai Foundation also co-sponsors MSRI’s U.S. girls teams that are invited to compete at the China Girls Mathematical Olympiad (see <http://www.msri.org/specials/gmo/2009>) each summer. The Akamai Foundation aims to encourage those high-achieving students and other students to continue their mathematics education.

Math circles add to after-school enrichment opportunities

“Math circles have rapidly spread throughout the U.S., and MSRI is pleased to partner with the Akamai Foundation to create this website, which will provide resources for fostering this invaluable group activity for young students of mathematics,” said Dr. Robert Bryant, Director of MSRI. “These circles provide a welcoming and supportive environment where students can experience the joy of exploring mathematical ideas and solving problems. Students with these skills and experiences will join the leading edge of science researchers, making essential contributions to our nation’s future.” The impact of the website will be diverse and widespread as math circles already operate in over 20 states, from the San Francisco Math Circle and the Mobile Math Circle (Alabama) to the Riverbend Math Circle (Indiana) and New York and Boston Math Circles.

Website launch highlights unique educational features

The NAMC website will have its official, public unveiling on **Saturday, August 8th, 3:40 pm-3:55 pm**, at “Math Fest,” an educational conference sponsored by the Mathematical Association of America (MAA) in Portland, Oregon, at the Marriott Downtown Waterfront hotel. The presentation by Dr. Brandy Wieggers and Joshua Zucker will show how to quickly access logistical information, search the math problem database, and highlight the collaborative efforts of math circle organizers to share their work and grow a national math circle association.

The website’s easily navigable pathways can locate local math circles for children interested in participating in the growing educational phenomena. Or, search among useful listings for summer math camps, math

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events, and math competitions—from regional to national to international Olympiads—that talented students of math, and their parents, will want to know. The focal point of the website is an extensive collection of math problems that are suitable for math circle settings. This accessible archive contains a staggering 1,000 math problems (solutions will be limited to organizers and teachers), which can be searched by math topic and notes any prerequisite math background that may be needed. Additionally, *Within the Circle*, a video funded by the Akamai Foundation, of several actual math circle sessions in action will be available, by request, through the NAMC website.

Building online community

The benefits of a national association of math circles include easing the transition of starting a new circle with the support of experienced organizers and various successful models to emulate. An online forum offers the immediacy of a direct link to the wisdom of the math circle community to brainstorm and network. The website showcases the so-called, “Circle in a Box,” an indispensable tool for people interested in creating their own math circle program, through a dynamic “wiki” interface. Members of the math circle community can continue to develop the *Circle in a Box* wiki and stay up-to-date with current information. Commissioned by MSRI and edited by Dr. Sam Vandervelde, the downloadable *Circle in a Box* features best practice stories from program organizers intermixed with lesson plans, pedagogical tips, advice on administration, and funding suggestions.

About MSRI: The Mathematical Sciences Research Institute (MSRI, <http://www.msri.org>), based in Berkeley, California, is one of the world's preeminent centers for research in the mathematical sciences and has been advancing mathematical research through workshops and conferences since its founding as an independent institute in 1982. More than 2,000 mathematicians visit the MSRI each year, and the Institute hosts about 80 researchers in residence at any given time. MSRI is involved in K-12 math education through the annual “Critical Issues” conferences for educators and math circles and Olympiad competitions for students, and public education through its “Conversations” series of public events.

About the Akamai Foundation: The Akamai Foundation (<http://www.akamai.com/html/about/foundation.html>) was established in 2000 by Akamai Technologies, Inc. and is funded solely by Akamai executives, its employees and individuals outside the company. The Akamai Foundation is dedicated to excellence in mathematics, with the aim of promoting math's importance and encouraging America's next generation of technology innovators.

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