



# Wahpe Woyaka pi ( Talking Leaf )

South Dakota Council Teachers of Mathematics Newsletter

## Presidential Ponderings

The calendar says spring, but some of us have yet to experience much spring weather!

We are excited to announce the SDCTM Summer Symposium at Dakota Wesleyan on July 14<sup>th</sup>. We had so much interest last year in Building Thinking Classrooms that we will bring Jessica Strom from Minnesota back to work with teachers again. Registration information will be coming next month! We will also serve lunch again, and I hope to get a block of rooms at a hotel to help with costs for those coming from further away.



It was good to see many of you in Huron at the SD STEM Ed conference. I do think that numbers were down, and I wonder if that had to do with a lack of available substitute teachers. Let's hope that more of you can attend next year. Actually, we have the math speakers for next year already booked. Kevin Dykema, former NCTM president, will be joining us as a featured speaker, along with Dr. Nicki Newton, whose focus is on elementary math. Both are excited to come and share their knowledge with South Dakota teachers.

The last hearing on the proposed math standards will be on May 4<sup>th</sup> in Rapid City at 10 AM (Mountain time) at the Doubletree by Hilton. Stephanie Higdon and I both testified as opponents in Pierre in February. Honestly, I think they are tired of listening to me, so if any of you in the Rapid area are willing to testify, it would be very appreciated! If you have questions about that process, please reach out to me at [south.dakota.ctm@gmail.com](mailto:south.dakota.ctm@gmail.com). I do plan to go and testify again. Also, I have been blogging about the standards, and my blog may include information that you haven't heard. I have written six posts about the standards.

I do want to thank the SD Department of Education because they listened and have added a set of Precalculus standards to replace the 4<sup>th</sup> year standards. In Huron, we had asked that they post them in April, and they have posted the updated proposed standards. This gives us time to look at the changes and submit public comments. Again, I encourage you to carefully read those that are most familiar to you and make comments if you have them.

Thank you for all that you do for Mathematics Education in South Dakota!

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Spring 2025-2026

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## Calendar Reminders

<i>Proposed Standards Final Hearing</i>	May 4
<i>SDCTM Summer Symposium</i>	Jul. 14



## Around the State

Greetings friends!

I'd like to share a little about the CIRCLES Alliance: an initiative I've been fortunate to be part of for the past three years.

The Cultivating Indigenous Research Communities for Leadership in Education and STEM (CIRCLES) Alliance is a National Science Foundation supported initiative focused on fostering curiosity and interest in STEM among Indigenous students. The CIRCLES Alliance is a six-state collaboration to include, South Dakota, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, North Dakota and Wyoming. As we know, students develop a strong STEM identity when they can meaningfully connect to what they are learning.

In South Dakota, our work is guided by two primary goals. First, we provide professional learning opportunities that support educators in implementing effective, place-based teaching practices that engage students in STEM. The South Dakota CIRCLES Alliance team has developed two unique workshops that have been offered multiple times, with a third currently in development and scheduled for release this summer.

Second, we are developing curriculum for middle school students that helps them see themselves reflected in STEM fields. This work encourages curiosity and creativity, builds excitement around STEM disciplines, and strengthens connections to students' culture and community.

Please let me know if you have questions, are interested in learning more about the goals in the other CIRCLES Alliance states, or how you may be able to join in a CIRCLES workshop, we would love to have you!

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*"...students develop a strong STEM identity when they can meaningfully connect to what they are leaning."*

Let's make our social media presence heard, SD Math Teachers!  
You can follow SDCTM on the following social media platforms:



Instagram: SDCTM\_Math



Facebook: South Dakota Teachers of Mathematics



X (Twitter): @SouthDakotaCTM

Be sure to watch for updates on all platforms!



# Higher Ed Viewpoint



In my October submission to our Wahpe Woyaka pi newsletter, I highlighted that Professional Development (PD) is critical for teachers to stay up to date with current research in mathematics education. As the school year winds down, now is an excellent time to start exploring professional development opportunities throughout the summer.



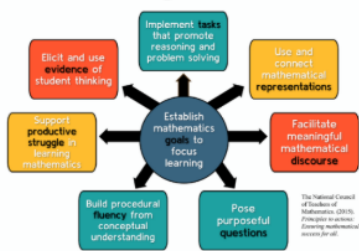
The South Dakota Council of Teachers of Mathematics offers a Summer Symposium in July. This year, the symposium will be held on July 14 from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm at Dakota Wesleyan University in Mitchell, SD. You can use this [link](#) for more information. Registration and details about the topic will be coming out soon. Forty-one teachers from across the state participated in the symposium last summer, making it a great place to learn about research-based instructional practices and connect with other mathematics teachers.

CAMSE (Center for the Advancement of Math and Science Education) also offers Professional Development workshops for K-12 teachers. According to the Black Hills State University website, "The Center for the Advancement of Math and Science Education (CAMSE)'s mission is to promote effective and meaningful teaching and learning of science and mathematics at all levels." As of this publication, I have not seen a list of PD offerings for Summer 2026, but the flyer shows last summer's offerings. You can contact the Center directly at 605-642-6873 for more information.



*“Professional development opportunities are crucial for providing mathematics teachers with resources to learn about the latest research on effective instructional practices.”*

## Effective Mathematical Teaching Practices



FREE RESOURCE

The Board of Education has been holding hearings on the new proposed Mathematics Standards for South Dakota teachers. If these standards are adopted, determining the impact on students and teachers will be critical. While simplifying the language in the proposed standards may be helpful to some teachers and parents, will it result in a loss of mathematical accuracy and depth? If the issue is understanding standards, wouldn't a better use of time and resources be offering teachers professional development to deepen their understanding of the depth and richness of the mathematics they teach?

Professional development opportunities are crucial for providing mathematics teachers with resources to learn about the latest research on effective instructional practices.

Christine Larson  
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# SUMMER SYMPOSIUM

**SAVE THE DATE**  
**JULY 14, 2026**

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**TUESDAY | 8.00AM TO 4.00PM**

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**DAKOTA WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY, MITCHELL SD**

**REGISTRATION COMING SOON!  
MORE DETAILS TO BE ANNOUNCED**

**[HTTP://SDCTM.ORG/SYMPOSIUM/SYMPOSIUM.HTM](http://SDCTM.ORG/SYMPOSIUM/SYMPOSIUM.HTM)  
OR FOLLOW SDCTM ON FACEBOOK FOR UPDATES!**



## 6-8 Highlights

Spring is finally here (someone tell the weather!) so I want to take a look at activities that can get kids engaged during this busy season. One of the big things that many of us look at in the spring is test prep. Have you looked at the interim assessments for your classes? I know test prep can be boring, but it doesn't have to be! Where I find that my kids struggle the most is with the performance tests. The idea of one giant word problem freaks them all out, and then, on top of it all, we want them to explain with words (gasp) how they found their answers.

To really practice this, take a look at the performance interim assessments and see if you can make them "real." For example, the 7<sup>th</sup> grade practice performance assessment is about camping. They have a campground map and have to find the best route from one location to another. This involves speed/unit rates, scale factors, and rational number operations. This does not have to be boring!! Have the students create a map of the school - they can approximate the distances if you don't have a nice way to measure, but they can always use practice with a tape measure too. They can use a stop watch to measure the time it takes to walk from one classroom to the another using different routes and calculate speed for their paths. Perhaps they have to walk slower when walking past the library, but can run in the gym which might make it faster to go the longer distance. Have the students work in groups to decide which way is the best. To get the practice with explaining with words, you can have the groups create their own paths, and then they have to defend why their way is the best. Having a debate is a great way to get them to explain their reasoning, and the competition aspect gets them excited.

If you've already taken your assessments and are just looking for projects to do to keep kids learning, my favorite projects are:

### Barbie Bungie Jump

- 8<sup>th</sup> grade stats
- Students have to collect data and figure out how many rubber bands it will take to drop Barbie from the top of the playground and get her as close to the ground as possible without hitting her head.

### Target Design

- 7<sup>th</sup> grade area and probability (Could be done with 6<sup>th</sup> grade if you only work with polygons)
- Students design a target and calculate the areas to determine probability of hitting the target. Then they stand on the desks and drop counters (I use beans) onto their target to see if their theoretical probability matches their experimental. When I do this, I like to get the high schoolers involved and we actually shoot arrows at the targets!



*"To really practice [performance tasks], take a look at the performance interim assessments and see if you can make them 'real.'"*

*(continued p. 6)*



## 6-8 Highlights (*continued*)

### Garden Design

- 6<sup>th</sup> grade volume ratios
- Have students design a raised garden bed or large planter. They calculate the volume to determine how much soil they need and create a shopping list - boards and posts for the outside (perimeter), plastic to line it (surface area), soil, fertilizer (ratios/percentages). You can even tell them how many square inches each type of plant needs to grow and have them make a diagram of which plants they are planting with can get them working with ordered pairs (if using graph paper) and scale factor.

### Better Box

- Probably 7<sup>th</sup> grade geometry but could work for any of the grades if scaffolded correctly.
- Students measure a case of pop and the pop cans. They work on creating the best box for packaging. They need to take into consideration the amount of empty space in their package (takes up more shelf room than needed), the amount of packaging required to manufacture (cost), and the uniqueness of the design (marketing advantage) while making sure that it is still easy to ship and store (so not too crazy!).
- 6<sup>th</sup> grade may have to work with something that isn't cans such as juice boxes or even Toblerone display boxes
- 8<sup>th</sup> Grade could pick one overall shape of box (only rectangular prisms for example) and create a scatterplot of surface area vs. volume to examine the relationship or volume vs empty space. They could use their scatterplot to determine the best box and then try to create it.

Here is to a great end of the year! As I tell my kids, "Let's finish strong!"

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## Colleague Recommendations

**There are many local, regional, and national content contributors that are worth a follow. Is there someone that you look forward to reading? Send us your recommendations and we'll add them to the newsletter so others can benefit as well!**

**This quarter's recommendation**

**Dan Meyer's Substack Newsletter**  
Subscribe [Here!](#)

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