
For Your Information

Palis Elected TWAS President

JACOB PALIS of the Institute of Pure and Applied Mathematics in Brazil has been elected president of the Academy of Sciences for the Developing World (TWAS). He will assume his three-year term in January 2007.

Palis was born in Brazil and has been a fellow of the academy since 1991. He is a leading scholar in the field of dynamical systems. Awards he has received include the Trieste Science Prize, the Brazilian Order of Scientific Merit, the InterAmerican Prize for Science, and the French Legion d'Honneur-Chevalier.

"TWAS has become the world's leading voice for the promotion of science and science-based development in the developing world," Palis said. He cited two particular areas of concern as being increasing the participation of women in science and ensuring that scientists in underdeveloped countries can successfully pursue scientific careers within their own countries. "These issues will continue to be focal points of the academy's agenda during my tenure," he said.

"TWAS has played an instrumental role in spurring science-based development in the developing world," said Palis. "However, for progress to continue, we must do all that we can do to make science and technology integral parts of the development agendas of both governments and international organizations. We must also take advantage of the growing scientific proficiency of such developing countries as China, India, and Mexico to help build the capacities of scientifically deficient developing countries, which are usually the world's poorest countries as well.

"That's why TWAS intends to continue to play a leading role in South-South cooperation in science. It's one of the most effective long-term strategies for reducing poverty and promoting economic growth. The academy will work hard to convince governments across the developing world that scientific cooperation and exchange is in everyone's interest."

Palis succeeds C. N. R. Rao, who has served as president of TWAS since 2002.

—From a TWAS announcement

NCTM Releases Curriculum Report

On September 12, 2006, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) released *Curriculum Focal Points*, which identifies three important mathematical topics at each level, prekindergarten through grade 8. The publication is intended to bring more coherence to the very diverse mathematics curricula currently in use. It provides a framework for states and districts to design more focused curricular expectations and assessments for prekindergarten through grade 8 mathematics curriculum development.

"The *Curriculum Focal Points* are designed to promote a discussion on the refinement of mathematics curricula and address the impression that various state and district curricula are 'a mile wide and an inch deep,'" said NCTM president Francis (Skip) Fennell. "The *Curriculum Focal Points* present a vision for the design of the next generation of state curriculum standards and state tests, and they present a way to bring needed focus to what is taught in mathematics."

State standards often describe specific learning expectations by grade. In some cases there are close to one hundred expectations per grade, with different expectations from state to state. The focal points are intended as a first step toward a national discussion on how to bring consistency and coherence to the mathematics curricula used in the United States. At each grade level, prekindergarten through grade 8, *Curriculum Focal Points* identifies three topics, described as "cohesive clusters of related knowledge, skills, and concepts", which form the necessary foundation for understanding concepts in higher-level mathematics.

Curriculum Focal Points for Prekindergarten through Grade 8 Mathematics: A Quest for Coherence was developed with the involvement of mathematicians, math educators, curriculum developers, and classroom teachers. The report and additional information are available at <http://www.nctm.org/focalpoints/>.

—From an NCTM news release