

1023-97-914

Robert Kaplan* (kaplan@math.harvard.edu) and **Ellen Kaplan**
(kaplan@math.harvard.edu). *The Great Conversation.*

The myth of mathematical talent has stifled the spread and deadened the teaching of mathematics for thousands of years. To the anecdotal evidence that this is a myth, and the evidence of our own experience, is added now experimental weight.

With the myth removed, how best bring people up to love math and to satisfy that love? For barriers remain: off-putting language, accelerating abstraction, frozen imagination, alienation, sheer heights, the panic of purpose.

The solution: immersion in a long-term problem with many partial insights along the way: the students themselves shaping the problem more precisely, coming up with hypotheses and proving or disproving them.

All of this in a collegial rather than competitive atmosphere, as math takes the lead in drawing us away from the childish traditions of school, and brings everyone into that Great Conversation that began before Euclid, and has never stopped. (Received September 22, 2006)