



Education Matters

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Dear Reader,

I wish you a good year 2003 with happiness and peace and many brilliant ideas for teaching and research. I hope that 2003 will become a year in which education matters more than ever.

I do not know about other countries, but in Germany the discussion of education has got some new impetus recently. The reason is PISA 2000 that has caused a deep shock. Nothing is wrong with the Tower of Pisa, but, as you may know, PISA is the acronym of the *Programme for International Students Assessment* run by the *Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development* (OECD). It started in 1998 and will end in 2007. PISA 2000 is the first of three surveys of the reading, mathematical and scientific literacy of 15-years old students in 32 industrialized countries with the focus on reading while PISA 2003 will focus on mathematics and PISA 2006 on science. The results of PISA 2000 are very similar in all three domains. They show many interesting details and provide much to think about. The main ranking lists Finland, Canada and New Zealand as the top three countries, United Kingdom next to Korea and Japan in the first third, and the United States and France, for example, in the middle third. Germany is placed in the last third with very bad results for the bad students and only average results for the good students. No wonder that a wave of irritation swept over Germany when PISA 2000 was published last year. Hopefully, this will lead to a serious discussion and sustainable improvements of our educational system. I must admit that am not very optimistic because the first reactions in the political quarters seem to aim in the wrong direction. If you want to learn more about PISA you may visit the PISA web site www.pisa.oecd.org.

The main contribution of this issue of the *Education Matters* column is a lovely fairy tale told by Wilfried Brauer, Markus Holzer, Barbara König, and Stefan Schwoon. They try to lure hesitant students into the adventures of automata and formal language theory by means of challenging tasks and promised treasures in the style of Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. Have a nice reading.

More about education matters can be found on the **EdMat** webpage

<http://www.informatik.uni-bremen.de/theorie/EducationMatters> .

If you want to contribute to the column, you may use the submission page on the webpage or send your contribution preferably in electronic form to

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