

## The New Math

Most high school students try to keep calculus at a safe distance, but students from disadvantaged backgrounds generally go one step further: They ignore it completely. To narrow the gap between these kids and higher math,

a university collaboration that includes Rutgers–Newark has developed SimCalc, a software program that makes calculus fun and interesting.

“We call it democratizing access,” says Roberta Schorr, an assistant professor of academic foundations, explaining that SimCalc offers a way to get calculus education into urban classrooms. The software, which uses sophisticated simulation technology and animated graphics, allows kids to absorb underlying concepts of higher mathematics without being distracted by the need to first learn abstract algebraic symbols.

Over the past year, classes

from Central High School in Newark have come to a computer lab at Rutgers–Newark to work with the program. Rutgers is one of several universities nationwide that is testing SimCalc, which was developed with funding from the National Science Foundation and can be downloaded for free at <http://tango.mth.umassd.edu>.

“We know it’s working

because students are talking with each other about their solutions and writing equations and formulas to justify them,” says Schorr.

The demand for the software has been considerable,

the professor continues. “I’ve had teachers from all over the state call me with questions about how to use it. It’s one thing to download the software from the Internet, but quite another to use it effectively.

We plan to hold quite a few professional-development workshops for teachers interested in SimCalc over the coming year.”



**A new program takes the fear and dread out of calculus—and it's free.**

