Karen in Motion: The Role of Physical Enactment in Developing an Understanding of Distance, Time and Speed.

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Summary

The role of direct kinesthetic experience in mathematics education remains relatively unexamined. What role can physical enactment play in mathematics learning? What, if any, implications does it carry for classroom teaching? In this article I explore the role that a third grader's kinesthetic experience plays in supporting her learning of the mathematics of motion, a content area typically for older students. Based on analyses of two individual interviews and classroom participation, I argue that Karen's ability to use physical enactment to inhabit motion trips, along with a thoughtfully emergent curriculum design, created a learning environment that enabled Karen to develop a deep, conceptual understanding of distance, time, and speed.