Guidelines for Group Coordinators

The following suggestions are intended to help you make the most of the short time you have available.

- Attend to the need for "discussion" OR for "project work" in your group. These are different types of activity, and the work of any group should reflect its designation.

- Plan for variety in the conference sessions. Propose activities that are different from oral reporting of research, and think about how to engage audiences actively.

- For continuing groups, encourage email contact between group members during the year, making sure that people without electronic access have opportunities to be involved via newsletters or other means.

- Be prepared to welcome and include new members into the group, and where possible involve them in planning for the group’s activities at the conference. Group leaders’ contact details are listed in the announcements, and people will select groups when they register, so be prepared to welcome any new participants who contact you. (However, if the group is a project group nearing completion of a project, and therefore there will be no role for newcomers, you should make this clear in the description of the group in the announcements.)

- If possible, circulate pre-reading as well as a short history of the group and its aims, work, themes and key issues, etc., so people joining the group feel informed when they first meet. Have some spare copies available, or at least available for copying, at the conference as you are bound to have a few extra people turn up.

- When planning the group’s activities, make sure of inclusiveness. Consider gender, culture, background with the topic, etc. For instance, be aware of the gender balance in group leadership, presentations and discussions. Draw new people into discussions and consider language issues—some leaders use strategies that allow small groups to work in their own languages and use some practical examples that are not all oral-language dependent. Use organizational strategies that bring people into a group—some groups have had problems with individuals dominating discussions, so plan strategies that circumvent this. There are often big differences in
people’s knowledge of the topic area—some leaders plan a few activities where people can contribute at their own levels.

• Your work is not restricted to the official conference sessions—some successful groups have organized special times together, such as a group dinner on a free night; and of course, many groups plan for on-going networking and group activities throughout the following year.

• Allow for some discontinuity in face-to-face contact—many active PME members cannot attend the conference every year but will still make valuable contributions to the work of continuing groups.