

March 2, 2009

Open letter to Superintendent Randy Dorn
Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction
Olympia, Washington

From: Washington Teachers of Teachers of Mathematics and Colleagues in Education

Re: Fair and inclusive mathematics education policy in Washington State

Dear Superintendent Dorn,

Congratulations on your new position. Washington Teachers of Teachers of Mathematics (WaToToM) is a group of mathematicians, mathematics educators and teachers who have been working together for over a decade to support the advancement of mathematics education throughout the state and across the K-20 spectrum. We look forward to working with you to support the teaching and learning of mathematics in the months and years ahead.

Like the rest of the country, Washington urgently needs to focus attention on improving mathematics teaching and learning. However, in the midst of an often rancorous debate it is easy to lose track of the progress that Washington has made. Washington fourth and eighth graders continued to score significantly higher than the national average on the most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (or Nation's Report Card), both overall and among students eligible for free and reduced lunch. Other positive developments include the efforts of WaToToM members and our colleagues in collaborating on a broad array of professional development initiatives designed to empower teachers to deliver high quality mathematics instruction to every student in Washington; the partnerships of parents and educators throughout the state who are working proactively to improve mathematics education; and the foundation for unprecedented coordination between K-12 school districts and Washington's higher education institutions laid by the Transition Math Project and the Washington State Educational Coordination Committee, among others.

At the 2009 meeting of WaToToM, we discussed our great concern that recent policy decisions have put this progress at risk. Since 2007, an education policymaking process has been in place that supported collaborative efforts involving multiple perspectives of citizens and mathematics professionals in our state. We are disappointed that in recent decisions it appears that the opinions of a small number of outside consultants and vocal constituents have overridden recommendations based on such a collaboration.

The next stage of the state's mathematics education policy will influence the mathematics programs that are available to students in Washington State. We believe the current process for selecting curriculum ignores critical factors that must be included to ensure support of the best possible mathematics programs at all levels. It is our hope that you share our values of fairness in policymaking in order to support outcomes that will benefit all students in Washington State, now and for generations to come. We urge you to work with WaToToM and educators around the state as you formulate these curriculum decisions.

We request that you meet with a group of WaToToM members before making decisions based on the forthcoming report by Strategic Teaching. In addition to this urgent meeting, we request to participate on present and future committees concerning mathematics education policy. We also urge that the decisions stemming from the textbook recommendation process be revisited. Thank

you for your consideration of these important issues. We look forward to a productive exchange of views.

Respectfully submitted,

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Cc: Edie Harding, State Board of Education
Governor Chris Gregoire
Rosemary McAuliffe (chair, Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education committee)
Dave Quall (chair, House Education Committee)