

PUBLIC WRITTEN COMMENTS FROM
MIDDLE SCHOOL MATH REVIEW FORUM

Feb. 1, 2007

As a parent of a third grade student, I have numerous concerns about the implementation of a reform math curriculum. Upon learning of tonight's discussion forum (which was incidentally brought to my attention via e-mail forwarded from other concerned parents, rather than communication sent home from the school) I reviewed a great deal of information available regarding the curricula on the table. My concerns are these:

1. Teaching reform math runs the risk of completely removing the parent from the process of skill reinforcement and homework help. Busy parent's such as myself, will be hard pressed to find the time to attend training sessions to learn how to help our children, if those are even offered at times that are conducive to busy schedules.
2. CMP2 requires a longer math period to allow for the time in "exploration" in problem solving (read: re-inventing the wheel). What will lose out in the balance? Music? Art?
3. Even very good reform math curricula are found to be weak in the area of developing computational facility. CMP2 is noted to promote the use of calculators at will, even for problems which children with a firm grasp of math facts should be able to do in their heads. Have we as a society decided that it is okay for a generation to grow up dependent on calculators to make simple decisions in the grocery store?
4. The data on WASL scores that is posted on the district's websites shows that some schools are outperforming the state average in terms of average yearly percentage gain since CMP implementation, but many are not keeping up with the state average. (I am assuming that the State Average on the spread sheet is truly from the whole state, and not just for the CMP districts in the state.) Also, many schools experienced a huge dip in the WASL scores for the first two years or more following implementation.
5. The McDougal-Littell curriculum is noted to reverse achievement gap trends in ethnic minorities, which, though not a huge issue in our district, is a wonderful added benefit to what looks to be an otherwise very solid curriculum.

As a parent in this district, I would prefer to see resources spent in other ways, perhaps in teacher in-services, increasing the subject matter expertise of those teaching in the problem subjects such as math, rather than in a costly, unproven curriculum that disregards parental reinforcement of math skills in the home. If my input matters, I would vote for McDougal-Littel curriculum.

Sincerely,

Hillary Arnold and Timothy Hurtado

Parents of Morgan Hurtado, 3rd grade, Centennial Elementary

I have 2 children at Pioneer



I have 2 children at Pioneer and one at Washington Middle School. I am strongly in favor of the McDougall-Littell curriculum for many reasons. I am worried that if CMP2 is implemented, our district won't be able to fund the extensive training necessary to make this type of program work. I want to be able to help my kids with their math and I don't want to have to fit parent math nights into my busy schedule in order to help my kids with a curriculum that hasn't been proven to work. Even the biggest supporters of CMP2 claim that it requires more class time to teach. My son's schedule at middle school is already packed full. He either gets to play an instrument, OR sing in choir, OR take an Art class. He does not get to have PE all year. What are we going to cut if we are to spend more time on math? According to the publishers it takes something like 180 teaching days to get through one year of CMP2 when we only have about 150 true teaching days in a year. How will we supplement that curriculum when we can't even get through the actual text? As we have seen with Trailblazers, supplementation will be necessary to get our kids mastering the middle school concepts before moving on to H.S. math.

Trailblazers has completely failed to give my kids a decent math education. They have come out of each grade without fluency in basic skills such as addition, subtraction, multiplication and long division. They can do some calculating but usually they resort to their fingers and they really don't know the standard algorithms. This is unacceptable. My oldest son started Washington this year and with the traditional math curriculum in place now he is finally learning math. I believe in conceptual learning. I would hope that the teachers really understand the concepts so that they can explain them well and do projects occasionally to demonstrate the concepts (and I know McDougall Littell curriculum provides at least as many of these options for teachers as CMP2 does). However, equally if not more important in the study of math is learning algorithms and practicing them enough to really get them down. CMP2 does not provide this and our kids won't be well equipped to move on without this. As in learning anything, whether it be math, or an instrument or a sport, practice is the only way to get better.

ALL kids in Olympia should have the option of a traditional math education – not just algebra and geometry – but a full traditional track. It is working for 70% of the kids and they have a right to continue with something that works! It makes sense to take the 30% of kids who are struggling with math and use different types of curriculum with them, and also spend more time on them, they are the kids who the traditional program seems to be leaving behind.

Jodi Hansen



Hmmmm...

Very interesting meeting.

I have student at Jefferson who is piloting CMP. This is what he says:

He likes the CMP better than “last year”. Prior to last year, according to my 6th grader, concepts were introduced yet never used again. CMP has kept him engaged. It

re-teaches concepts and those concepts have stuck more with my student than ever before.

It is my belief that the resistance to something new has more to do with racial and socio-economics than what is best for all students.

My son loves the CMP program.

It is also interesting that parents do not have trust in professionals. They are comfortable with what they were taught – yet don't trust current studies or the teachers/professors who use them every day.

I also believe the people who showed up tonight do not make up the majority of mathematical thought. The folk that are here have the agenda to be here.

Thank you.



70% of kids entering OHS are at or above grade level –
You mentioned 35% of kids in the district are struggling –
Why take away from the kids already doing an outstanding job in Math??

Why didn't this info on this adoption come to me from my kid's school?



I don't think we need to change the current math that we have. We need to spend the money on more teachers to help our children.

Who is going to help my child when the school is closed and they come home?
Can I have a phone # for help?



Re. meeting state "standards" – perhaps we need to look at what those are. I think the WASL math standards need to be looked at and plan to do that. Mathematic proficiency "as measure on the WASL".

Please emphasize basic skills. Spiraling curriculum makes sense. Why have California and other states abandoned constructivist math?

Jill Saibel
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I am a student teacher at The Evergreen State College. I've gone through a more traditional math curriculum in my schooling, but it wasn't until after I went back to relearn it in a more conceptual approach that it made sense. Knowing and experiencing this myself, I support CMP2.

Furthermore, in my student teaching experience in Fall of '06, I taught 7th grade math and science at Clover Park Middle School. It was a block schedule of 2 hours of math/science and the same time for English/Social Studies. While it was nice to have the time, it was not necessary as a lot of times I only had 1 hour to teach a lesson. This hour was enough time and the students were able to do the lesson and stay engaged. I also saw benefits of CMP in being able to more easily integrate it into my science teaching. The lessons stressed application of concepts, which I could reinforce in science. For those students lacking basic skills, I also noticed an increase in their ability to do computational math with greater fluency. I supplemented this by giving more skill based homework to go with some critical thinking/application work. But in class, the students gained the conceptual knowledge to do the homework.

One final note, one of my students had an IEP for dyscalculia. This student was better served by CMP2, which helped him to see that math was more than computation (his deficit area). In class he was more engaged and would show a deep understanding of concepts even if his computation skill seemed to show otherwise. He was able to articulate what he would do even though he had difficulty computing it out. But with the concepts and a calculator as an accommodation this student was able to show that he could understand what was happening. This would not have been possible in a curriculum that focused on basic skills.



The McDougall Little math text should be adopted by OSD.

CMP2 is the wrong choice:

- Takes too long to teach and would result in large gaps in math knowledge.
- Parents are left out of the loop and cannot help with this confusing curriculum.
- Large class sizes will exacerbate the problem and kids will be lost.
- No data to support that CMP helps with student math ability.
- District budget does not support appropriate implementation of this.

Thanks you.
Jeff Nejedly
OSD Parent



I support CMP2. I am a graduate student in a master in teaching program. I have done research on the cognitive theories supporting both texts and CMP2 comes more

closely in line with supporting cognitive theory that has the best chance of reaching the most students and helping them to achieve the highest levels.

I have observed for lengthy times (every day for 10 weeks and then weekly for several months) the CMP2 program. It works! – and teachers know they are making a difference. Students are less resistant to math and seem to enjoy the exploration.

No curriculum is perfect for every child. CMP2 is the best alternative.



As a parent of a middle school student at WMS who is participating in CMP, I have many concerns about CMP.

1. The homework –
 - Questions are vague – even fuzzy at times.
 - There are no references, equations available, answers to check to see how one is doing.
 - If the idea is missed in class – unless a parent can supplement – it is missed.
2. The language –

It is very language intense. This will cause great difficulties for any student with language problems – dyslexia, autism, ELL. These children already struggle in other classes and now have to struggle in math.

Thank you.



From the context of the past couple of decades of brain research and the development of the new “science of learning”, CMP is the only choice that makes sense. Add to that the unique characteristics of the WASL assessment and the focus on conceptual, higher level thinking, CMP again trumps a “traditional” approach.

As a “procedural” aside, the selected format for this meeting precisely plays into the hands of the fanatical (perhaps a little too harsh) approach of the Oly-PARM minority.



Very interesting that there were 3 CMP presentations to the adoption committee but 0 for others.

I have not seen anywhere how the teachers will have the time to complete all the books in the given amount of time. From what I hear most are still on or just completing book 2 of 6.

With all the pilot classes for CMP I have not seen ANY test score data that shows improvement. In fact, 2005-2006 pilot shows scores went down (and that was with a class with several assistants).

I hope that the school district will base their decisions on facts and not use this as an experiment on our children.

I also have not heard or seen any feedback on student experience except that was presented tonight BY A STUDENT!



My son is currently in the CMP pilot program at WMS. He is a sixth grader who was placed in 7th grade math. CMP has caused difficulty in our home due to its ambiguity and lack of support of parents. Parents need training on this “new” math in order to facilitate our children’s learning. What does a single/working parent do? We must find time and resources to prepare ourselves to better foster the acquisition of a math that is foreign to most of us. The “idea” of CMP is great; however, the realistic implementation is improbable.

The CMP has decreased his interest in math and I am frustrated by this!



We’d like to see more teaching on basics and fundamental concept taught in our school district – i.e. the “traditional way”. Math is math. With out a solid foundation who can accelerate?

We appreciate the hearing opportunity.



Please adopt McDougal Little (course 1, 2, 3)* and NOT CMP2 (24 booklets for 3 grades).

For our children’s sake, please don’t play politics with their future. The state of California doesn’t get away from CMP for no reason.

*the lesser of two evils

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Please, adopt Littell 1, 2, 3! Basic math skills and math fundamentals (traditional algorithms) are crucial when continuing in higher math programs. Do not lower the expectations of our kids because of politics.

Lianne Glattharra
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These questions and answers need to be posted on the OSD website!!!!



I like the forum. Please improve math teaching – teach the basics, build a good foundation!



I'm concerned that the MS math curriculum should flow smoothly into HS math curriculum. If HS follows a more traditional curriculum, it makes sense that MS would also be traditional.

I was upset to hear that the CMP doesn't re-teach concepts, but "expects" kids to retain last year's concepts. I prefer the spiraling curriculum that McDougal-Littell contains. I feel that most kids learn best when concepts are repeated more than once.

I'm very concerned that I won't be able to help my kids with their math homework, even though my math education includes college level calculus.

I'm concerned about the possibility that the amount of time needed for a class period of math will increase with CMP, edging out other class time. What gets cut? I don't want anything cut. Class sizes currently appear not to lend themselves to the concept of CMP.



I hope you are not losing sight of the true objective – to prepare our children to run the science/industry/bio/medical/socio-economic base for our nation – which is based

in traditional (classic/pure) mathematics – not constructive math. Constructive math will not serve them in the future!

Do not teach my child to pass a short-sighted test – (WASL) teach my child the math that they will use after the WASL, math that will serve them and society in our future! Have you looked beyond the WASL?

No CMP!

Andy Newman
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I currently have one elementary student (2 next year) in the Oly. School District. Both my child and I have been unhappy with Trailblazers. I feel the program is confusing to understand and has little emphasis on basic skills. It has also undermined his confidence in completing equations by requiring the kids to use charts and number lines to complete simple math problems. He loves to do traditional math at home through workbooks and also problems that his engineer father writes for him.

I feel that McDougall-Littell is the best choice for middle school math and sincerely hope that you choose that option.

(Illegible signature.)



I have a 5th grader who does well in math. He has no problem meeting any state standard. I have also survived trailblazers. Having passed that hurdle....I do not relish another experiment with my child. The 2-3 year dip that will accompany CMP2 will be my child's ENTIRE MIDDLE SCHOOL EXPERIENCE!

CMP2 will NOT meet my child's needs – it only serves well the lower 20-30%. What will you do for my child when we have experimented for 2-3 years?

Beth Pendowski



I'm in favor of traditional because:

1. Need the basics first and if CMP is lacking in computation, more kids miss out.
2. math is its own language. CMP requires much composition to explain to the process

- a) this is discouraging for boys
- b) this makes math tedious – it's no longer fast and fun

3. Are we switching to CMP to teach to the WASL? I thought the WASL was not setting the standards/goals. Thank you!

Lisa Mallott



I have taught science for 15 years. I have taught students at middle school, high school and college levels. CMP2 curriculum does not prepare students to address problems in biology, chemistry and physics. Any curriculum can be adapted to provide context and relevance but CMP2 does not provide the necessary tools to enable students to succeed in the context of science, economics or any discipline that requires problem solving that actually involves mathematics.



I am in support of the adoption of CMP2. It is time for us to look at the research concerning how children learn. The research supports this type of curriculum. And, if CMP2 is such a poor choice, why have so many districts within Washington State chosen it? And why do many of those districts have higher WASL scores than ours? Are we to believe that they are all “blindly” making decisions about curriculum?....I think not. I believe the educators in other districts have looked at the data and WASL scores and are moving towards helping children, based on HOW THEY LEARN! And, we should do the same.

There has been a lot of emphasis on California state schools (who are using traditional curriculum), and the inference that they should be a standard by which to compare our district. Based on 2006 data on the California Dept. of Education website, only 23% of students are proficient in Algebra I by the end of high school, and they are losing ground at the Algebra II level as well. Why would our district want to make a choice that would cause us to “lose ground”?

I know my children would have been served very well in middle school with CMP2. They have always achieved high grades in math, and have been above grade level in their math class placements. However, they have spoken openly to the fact that they have not retained their learning, and do not understand the relevance of what they learn in math. They are both crucial thinkers, and want to understand not just “how”, but “why”. I think all our children would benefit by learning why they learn what they learn.

My main questions to the committee are these:

If there still is the intention to continue with a traditional track for students who excel, and a new approach would benefit students who struggle, why would McDougal-Littell even be a consideration? Our district has used a traditional

approach for years, and it has not made great strides in serving the struggling kids, so why would we not want to choose an approach that brain research has shown would serve these students? Our focus needs to be on serving all students, with a variety of learning styles, not just the high achievers. Choose CMP2!



I have 3 children, 2 in elementary school and 1 in middle school.

This is a complex issue, I don't envy those who need to make this choice.

At the school board meeting addressing this issue of the middle school math issue, I mentioned how I had liked the Trailblazer math program. As someone who had trouble with math I applauded efforts to improve the teaching of math. During my comments, at that meeting I continued to say that my children day after day did graphing, lots of graphing. They also were just getting to understand one method when they switched methods and started over. Although I did not think of it at the time the graphing issue sums up the concern I have with a Trailblazer style math curriculum. This curriculum taught students how to use graphs and make simple graphs, and don't get me wrong, this is important. I design aircrafts using graphs, but this is where the problem is. This curriculum may teach some students math that may have not otherwise done as well. However it does so at the cost of those who could have excelled. (No student shall get ahead). The graphs I use at work are a summary of very involved equations. It's the ability to be able to work these equations that is critical, it's the ability to be able to develop the data that goes into a graph that is vital, not the ability to make the graph or read the graph. And it is here that Trailblazers fails. So please consider all students in your decision including those that wish/want to excel in math oriented careers.

2 of 3 other schools districts I have had children in no longer use Trailblazers and NO teachers like it.

Thank you, Charles Norman




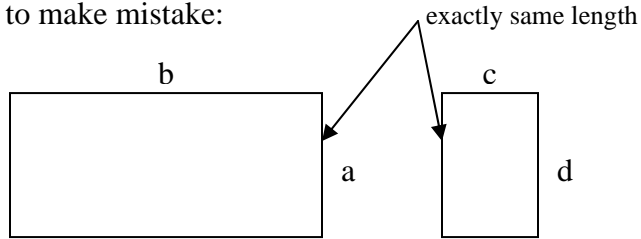
Concerns regarding CMP2:

- ◆ Objectives not clearly stated.
- ◆ Often fails to emphasis key concepts – mentions then drops it.
- ◆ Students need to practice.
- ◆ Leaves parents out of loop. Parents are a huge resource to kids. Don't leave us out.
- ◆ No reteaching/spiraling. Some students miss it first time around.
- ◆ Questions about how this will affect accelerated students track
- ◆ Over depend on calculators
- ◆ Doesn't develop mathematical fluency.



I have 2 children, one is in Washington Middle School. I support CMP2 concept but I don't like actual CMP2 book and CMP2 homework and answers.

1. Homework questions are explained in long sentences. To explain the situation and homework answers require a lot of writing. This book is not an English quiz book it should be a math textbook. Traditional textbook also had long sentence questions. These questions are often also explaining interesting facts of real life like Egyptian pyramids length. With Egyptian pyramid or Greek column height is old architecture photos/pictures. CMP2 questions are not interesting. For example, they have pages after pages for  dart questions.
2. I don't like answers of the homework. Most of the answers are carefully made to be not round, very ambiguous answers. I think first few questions should be very easy one and gradually harder questions. For example, first questions are 9 divided by 3 = 3, then 9 divided by 4. All of the CMP2 questions are same hardness. Some questions like this one are placed to make mistake:



Why not start from this way?



Other thing is I don't like how the CMP2 teaches ratio in a to $b, \frac{a}{b}$

I learned in $a:b$, but never $\frac{a}{b}$. $\frac{a}{b}$ is only for division.

One day my daughter was writing $\frac{0.5}{0.8}$ for division.

I was shocked that she confused decimal can be written in division because she saw in CMP2 text for ratio that $\frac{a}{b}$ for a to b.