



NATIONAL COUNCIL OF
TEACHERS OF MATHEMATICS

January 15, 2009

Congress Member
US House of Representatives/US Senate
Washington, DC 20515/20510

Dear Congress Member:

On behalf of the 100,000 mathematics teachers and 240 Affiliates of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), I would like to congratulate you on joining the 111th Congress as well as thank you for your service. We look forward to working with you and your colleagues over the next two years as you address federal policy issues that affect mathematics educators and classrooms.

The urgency and importance of a strong and effective education system and a competitive 21st-century workforce were topics of much discussion last fall as thousands of candidates nationwide sought elected office at the federal, state, and local levels. NCTM agrees completely with the calls for increased quality in education, accountability of schools and educators, and success in closing achievement gaps while improving the performance of U.S. students in the ranks of their international peers.

A strong prekindergarten–grade 12 mathematics education for all students is increasingly important to our nation’s economic stability, future security, and workforce productivity. In an economically competitive nation, everyone must be mathematically literate and recognize the importance of mathematics learning. NCTM believes that teachers and what they do in the classroom are at the heart of this vision. As a result, NCTM works at the federal level to advance policies that support classroom teachers and the educators who prepare them, as well as to advocate adequate federal investment in programs that are important to student learning.

Perhaps most important, NCTM believes that the federal government should invest in teachers at every stage of their development, including the recruitment and retention of qualified teachers. This means investing in the preparation and ongoing support of middle and high school teachers of mathematics and math specialists and coaches in elementary schools, as well as investigating the best strategies for competing with private industry to attract skilled professionals to the classroom. Ideas discussed and put forward in the 110th Congress and President-elect Obama’s proposed Teacher Service Scholarships, as well as his proposals related to teacher education and compensation, reflect the importance of recruiting academically qualified candidates to pursue educational careers, providing them with access to qualified mentors and other supportive resources, and ensuring that their workplace is professional and rewarding.



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NCTM also supports greater coherence of curriculum, assessment, and accountability in prekindergarten–grade 12 mathematics education. Since the publication in 2006 of NCTM’s *Curriculum Focal Points for Prekindergarten through Grade 8 Mathematics: A Quest for Coherence*, which identifies the mathematical topics that form the foundation for lasting learning at each grade level, the Council has been at the forefront of efforts to align curriculum and assessment with learning goals to provide meaningful assessment data to guide decisions about schools. To this end, NCTM supports constructive national discussion about the value of voluntary common instructional expectations for mathematics education to address the often inconsistent, excessively long lists of learning expectations currently included in many state standards.

As detailed in the National Mathematics Advisory Panel’s report, *Foundations for Success*, preparing elementary and middle school students for success in algebra is crucial to fostering academic and personal achievement. The America COMPETES Act, enacted with strong bipartisan support in the 110th Congress, authorized a new initiative to prepare elementary and middle school students “for rigorous high school mathematics courses.” NCTM strongly endorses funding this initiative and all programs authorized in that legislation.

NCTM supports numerous other federal investments in mathematics education, research initiatives, and teacher preparation efforts, including programs at the National Science Foundation—most notably, the Math and Science Partnerships program, which supports efforts to improve math and science education nationwide, and the Transformative Research initiative. We also encourage the new administration and Congress to heed the call initially made in 2000 to double the NSF budget within five years.

If we can assist you or your staff as you consider education issues, please contact our Associate Executive Director for Communications Ken Krehbiel at (703) 620-9840, ext.2102; kkrehbiel@nctm.org.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James M. Rubillo". The signature is written in a cursive style and is placed over a white rectangular background.

James Rubillo
Executive Director