



NATIONAL COUNCIL OF
TEACHERS OF MATHEMATICS

October 8, 2008

Ms. Wendy Macias
U.S. Department of Education
1990 K Street, NW, Room 8017
Washington, DC 20006
HEOA08@ed.gov

Dear Ms. Macias:

As the Department of Education prepares to develop regulatory guidance related to the enactment of the Higher Education Opportunity Act (PL 110-315), the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) would like to raise a number of issues of particular interest to its 100,000 members.

During the development and consideration of this legislation, NCTM supported many of the proposed revisions of the Higher Education Act, particularly those that emphasized providing wider access to higher education and stronger support for teacher preparation. The final product and its revisions of Title II—the portion of the bill that addresses teacher preparation programs—recognizes teacher quality as an essential component in producing student achievement. NCTM unequivocally supports rigorous standards for the preparation of all teachers and efforts to put highly qualified teachers in every classroom and Title II's inclusion of these ideals.

The bill also acknowledges the critical role strong science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education programs play in ensuring our nation's competitiveness in the global economy. We appreciate the elements of the bill that would improve STEM teacher professional development and provide meaningful incentives to encourage students to obtain STEM degrees and pursue STEM-related careers. We are also pleased that the bill encourages diversity in the STEM workforce by increasing the participation of underrepresented groups.

A number of provisions are of particular interest to mathematics educators.

Teacher Quality Partnership Grants

The bill revises and reauthorizes Title II, Part A, "Teacher Quality Enhancement Grants for States and Partnerships." It consolidates the three currently funded programs (state, recruitment, and partnership grants) into one program—the Teacher Quality Partnership Grants. We look forward to working with the Department of Education and our colleagues in teacher preparation programs to ensure that these changes serve schools and students as intended.



Preparing General Education Teachers to More Effectively Educate Students with Disabilities

NCTM is particularly pleased about the enactment of this new program. These new five-year, competitive “Teach to Reach” grants would be awarded to eligible partnerships to improve the preparation of general education teacher candidates to ensure that they “possess the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively instruct students with disabilities in general education classrooms.” Teaching requires these specialized skills, and we applaud this effort.

Preparing Teachers for Digital Age Learners

Given the profound impact technology has had on the classroom, NCTM strongly supports efforts to prepare teachers to use technology effectively in the classroom. The compromise bill’s Title II, Part B, “Preparing Teachers for Digital Age Learners,” awards competitive grants to consortia of public and private entities to prepare teachers to use technology. We are grateful for this new initiative and look forward to working with the Department on its implementation.

Graduate Fellowships to Prepare Faculty in High-Need Areas at Colleges of Education

This new program provides competitive grants to institutions to offer graduate fellowships to address current and future faculty shortages in schools of education. Priority is given to the fields of elementary and secondary school mathematics and science, special education, and English language learners. NCTM strongly supports this new program and its recognition of the challenges facing those charged with preparing the teaching workforce.

Many other provisions in the new law affect NCTM and its members, and as the regulatory process moves forward NCTM will continue to share the interests of its members with the Department of Education. As you proceed, if we can provide you with any additional information please contact NCTM Associate Executive Director for Communications Ken Krehbiel at (703) 620-9840, ext.2102.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jim Rubillo".

Jim Rubillo
Executive Director