

INTEGRATED MATH

Testimony to the Seattle School Board, December 15, 2004:

I am a second grade teacher here in the Seattle School District, and I am here to talk about integrated math.

Over the years, I have heard many complaints from Seattle parents regarding the Houghton-Mifflin integrated math program in our high schools. The criticisms of this program are numerous and varied:

- "I couldn't make heads or tails of it."
- "My children never understood it."
- "My child's self-confidence quickly eroded in math."
- "If I put my kid in private school, it will be because of integrated math."
- "The books don't explain anything."
- "My child had to take remedial math in college."
- "I had to hire a tutor for \$70.00 a week to get her through it."
- "My child enjoyed math at Kennedy (private school) but was lost and discouraged with integrated math."
- "My kid won't take another math class."
- "Integrated math is the worst thing you can do to kids."

These quotes are from TEACHERS regarding their sons' and daughters' experiences in Seattle integrated math classes. I have heard similar statements from many other parents of otherwise well-performing students.

Professor Cliff Mass, long time U of W professor, recently reported on the declining math competency of entering freshmen. He cited the declining pre-calculus placement test scores at the University of Washington as evidence that mathematical ability is the casualty of the integrated math curriculum. The test remained virtually the same throughout this period.

AUT 1990 MATHPC 68.36	AUT 1995 MATHPC 58.71
AUT 1991 MATHPC 68.53	AUT 1996 MATHPC 57.36
AUT 1992 MATHPC 69.91	AUT 1997 MATHPC 58.58
AUT 1993 MATHPC 62.69	AUT 1998 MATHPC 49.48
AUT 1994 MATHPC 60	AUT 1999 MATHPC 50.14

Notice the steep decline from 1990 to 1999--a drop of an astounding 27%! And this drop occurred even though the University was being increasingly selective regarding lower classmen! Unfortunately the test was changed in 2000.

Apparently many teachers who teach integrated math do not support it. It is a pale shadow of the respected Singapore integrated math. Teachers are doing their best with the materials they are given, but it's like trying to build a house using a broken hammer and bent nails--it takes twice the effort to get an even substandard result. The real culprits are the people who require that teachers use such programs. Textbook adoptions are apparently based on slick sales presentations and unfounded promises

by reformers--not expert examination and valid data. Throw grant money into the mix and the snake oil peddling reformers are absolutely irresistible.

With regard to math education, far from "delivering on the dream," the Seattle School District is stomping on the dreams of countless youth due to poor curriculum choices. In math, it is curriculum, not demographics, not teachers, not in-service classes, that makes all the difference. I refer you to the paper, "Curriculum Makes a Huge Difference" by independent research scientist and engineer, William Hook (www.nychold.com).

Teachers do not need more training. We have been trained to death. We need sound materials with which to work so we can do the jobs we are very capable of performing.