

## TERC Math

*Testimony to the Seattle School Board, October 20, 2004:*

I am a second grade teacher here in the Seattle School District. Seattle Administrators are apparently in the process of making the TERC Math Curriculum mandatory for Seattle Elementary Schools. A more unworthy curriculum could not be found.

We would laugh at anyone who said he/she wanted to become a pianist, but refused to practice. Yet well-placed practice is exactly what is missing at every juncture from TERC. We would also roll our eyes at the "wannabe" pianist who refused to take instruction from the teacher. Yet systematic instruction from the teacher is exactly what is missing from this program. The children are supposed to "discover" and "invent" their own methods of solving problems. Imagine spending \$55,000 a year on a piano teacher who let the children "discover" how to play the piano. It would be an outrage--and so is TERC.

To facilitate TERC, I was given a 9 volume set of large manuals. To confound anything, be sure to put it in 9 volumes. It takes several years to ferret out the nuggets of worthwhile material buried in the time-wasting busyness of TERC. It is ironic that those who say we learn by discovering, come out with 9 volumes of direct instruction to teach teachers.

The first question in the assessment book for second grade is a prime example of the lack of logic in this program. The question is open ended, but asks the teacher to look for specific information not asked in the question! TERC mires the children in mind-reading and the teacher in baseless speculation.

In the assessment book for teachers, one would expect at least some objective answers to math assessments, but there are none. Indicators are given of what the teacher is to look for because this is a PROCESS-ORIENTED program, not ANSWER-ORIENTED. This is heady stuff for those who drink the TERC kool-aid. These same reformers who are pushing TERC would not be so sanguine if the engine in their car was off a few centimeters here and there, but the manufacturing PROCESS was good. I dare say they would not care a wit about the process. They'd demand precise calculations.

Fortunately for India, its educational system cannot afford experimental reform programs like TERC. India, which continues to use traditional math curricula, has well-prepared math students who are hired for our technical jobs. It is interesting that big corporations are pushing the reform agenda which dumbs down our students, seemingly giving the corporations an excuse to look elsewhere for technical workers.

A full critique of the TERC program can be found on the internet site founded by Berkeley University professors to advise and correct the alarming adoption of programs like TERC into the public schools (<http://www.mathematicallycorrect.com>).

Administrators who are concerned about disproportionality, would do well to heed their warning. It is experimental programs like TERC that leave huge gaps which are especially damaging to children of disadvantaged parents. Their parents cannot provide remediation for them like many middle class parents do.

### **NOTE TO PARENTS:**

The following districts have adopted the TERC math curriculum and are in various stages of implementation: Bellevue, Everett, Seattle, Spokane, Tacoma, Bainbridge, Richland and North Kitsap. TERC is being sold as the curriculum to help students pass the WASL. The new WASL contract is with Pearson which also publishes TERC.