

November 6, 2006

National Mathematics Advisory Panel
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Members of the Mathematics Panel:

Let me first take this opportunity to thank the members of the panel for this invitation to share the thoughts and views of the leaders and members of the National Education Association (NEA). All children deserve no less than the best mathematics education that we can provide and we applaud your attention to this important issue. As Robert Moses has argued, mathematics literacy is a civil right and is tied directly to equity in this country. And from our view, an equitable education is tied directly to closing the achievement gaps.

The NEA representing 3.2 million educators in public schools and institutions of higher education throughout the country believes that a Great Public School is a basic right for every child. Our vision of a Great Public School includes seven points:

1. Quality programs and services that meet the full range of all children's needs so that they come to schools every day ready and able to learn.
2. High expectations and standards with a rigorous and comprehensive curriculum for all students.
3. Quality conditions for teaching and lifelong learning.
4. A qualified, caring, diverse, and stable workforce.
5. Shared responsibility for appropriate school accountability by stakeholders at all levels.
6. Parental, family, and community involvement and engagement.
7. Adequate, equitable, and sustainable funding.¹

For my time with you I would like to focus on one of our criteria: A qualified, caring, diverse, and stable workforce. We believe that this relates directly to one of your focus areas--teaching.

Mathematics researchers have asserted that "reform is not a matter of paper but a matter of people."² A qualified, caring, diverse, and stable workforce in our schools requires a pool of well prepared, highly-skilled candidates for all vacancies, and high quality opportunities for continual improvement and growth for all teachers.

¹ National Education Association. (2006). ESEA, It's time for a Change! NEA's positive agenda for the ESEA reauthorization

² Cooney, T. J. (1988). The issue of reform: What have we learned from yesteryear? *Mathematics Teacher*, 81, 352-363.

NEA believes all newly-hired teachers must have received strong preparation in both content and content-specific pedagogy. Teachers struggle with providing in-depth instruction in the numerous mathematics topics presented in today's state curriculum frameworks and textbooks. Mathematics preservice teachers need content instruction that is focused and deep in the content that they will teach.

We support federal government funding programs that provide financial incentives for qualified individuals to enter the teaching profession, and for collaboratives between school districts, teacher unions, and institutions of higher education for the development of programs that would facilitate the recruitment and retention of a qualified, diverse group of teacher candidates. We support funding programs that speak directly to increasing the numbers of mathematics teacher candidates from diverse backgrounds.

The National Education Association further believes that prospective mathematics teachers should benefit from programs that have earned professional accreditation from the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), the only accrediting body that is both standards and outcomes-based.

To reach the diverse students that fill our classrooms, strong content knowledge must be connected closely to a variety of teaching strategies and methods of instruction. Differentiated instructional techniques and strong content knowledge can be achieved through supported partnerships among teacher education colleges and schools, departments of mathematics, local and state organizations representing teachers and other educators, and state and local school districts.

NEA believes that all newly hired teachers should receive quality induction and mentoring services from trained veteran teachers, to ensure a successful experience in the first years and decrease the turnover of new teachers. Further, all teachers should have access to quality and effective professional development. In 2002, NEA supported the work of the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) which resulted in the documents: *What Works in the High School: Results-Based Staff Development* and *What Works in the Elementary School: Results-Based Staff Development*. The guides recognized that "advances in student achievement are closely linked with increases in teaching quality, and that teaching quality is influenced by the nature and quality of professional learning available to teachers throughout their careers."³

The NEA calls for federal policy directed toward providing states and school districts with the resources and technical assistance to create an effective program of professional development and professional accountability for all employees. These programs should help struggling teachers improve professional practice, retain promising teachers, and build professional knowledge to improve student success. In the end, professional development programs should be strongly tied to increasing student achievement.⁴

As a nation, we are struggling with how to increase and retain quality mathematics teachers. Many strategies have been suggested and examined, including pay systems that directly link

³ Killion, J. (2002). *What works in the elementary school: results-based staff development*, 18.

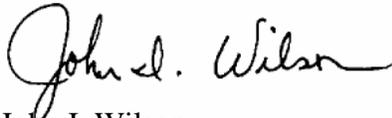
⁴ Killion, J. (2002). *What works in the high school: results-based staff development*, 79.

teacher compensation to student test scores. The NEA remains opposed to such systems. Such merit pay systems fail to recognize that teaching is not an individual, isolated profession. Rather, it is a profession dependent on the entire network of teaching professionals, where the foundation for student achievement is built over time from each of the student's educators. Further, merit pay undermines the collegiality and teamwork that create a high-performing learning institution.

The NEA's leaders and member are strongly committed to providing a Great Public School for every child. We believe in excellence for every child. We support equitable educational environments for every child. Together, we can provide a Great Public School for every child.

Thank you for your time and attention and we wish you success in your endeavors.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John I. Wilson". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

John I. Wilson
Executive Director