

From: Kathy Schulz
Sent: Thursday, May 13, 2021 9:44 PM
To: IQC; MATHFRAMEWORK
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Mathematics Framework Revisions

Good evening,

I am writing regarding the proposed revisions to the California State Mathematics Framework. I am the parent of a sixth grader in the Sacramento City Unified School District, a graduate of California's public schools (San Juan Unified), and a former classroom teacher. And I have to say that I am profoundly disappointed in the proposed changes to the framework and the abject misunderstanding of gifted children, growth mindset, and grit.

Let me begin by saying that I do not have a stake in this change. My son is currently completing 8th grade math. He is on track to complete Calculus - should he wish - long before he graduates high school. Hopefully AP Statistics, too. In what we recognize is an unusual case, (most of) his elementary school teachers allowed him to do self-study instead of homework on math he already understood; in 5th grade he joined the 6th graders for math; and, after taking the district's challenge exam this past summer, qualified for Math 1. However, in the 3rd week of school we ended up moving him back to Math 8, because between the Zoom format and actually being challenged in math for the first time, he was quite overwhelmed. And this is where you fail to understand the disservice you do to students by removing the option to accelerate in math.

While the label "gifted" may have a detrimental effect on developing a growth mindset and the requisite "grit" to persevere through challenges, failing to provide children with curriculum that poses a challenge accomplishes the same thing. Regardless of whether or not they are labeled as "gifted" kids know when things come easily to them. They build their identity as someone for whom learning - whether it's reading or writing or solving equations - comes easily. And other people know it too. We have heard non-stop since our son was two years old how smart he is, usually from strangers on the street who he engaged in conversation. In first grade several of his classmates approached me and asked what we did to make him so smart. In truth, we did nothing. We sent him to a play-based preschool, he never saw a flashcard until they introduced them in school, and we chose not to put him into a GATE program. He was simply born with an innate thirst to learn and the capability to learn new concepts and build on them more quickly than most of his peers.

And when these bright kids, for whom everything has always come easy, encounter challenge, they crumple.

My son was completely capable of doing the Math 1 this past year. But because it required work, because for once in his school career his brain hurt the way normal people's brains do when they are learning something new, he shut down and became convinced he couldn't do it. When he didn't understand something he literally just left the virtual classroom. So we moved him back to 8th grade math, where he is pulling straight As (one quarter A+) and continues to solve all the problems in his head instead of working them out on a piece of paper.

I understand that gifted programs, and schools in general, have equity issues. But I fail to see how removing the opportunity for qualified children to accelerate addresses this. Keeping children like my son in a classroom with his age peers will not result in raising the level of other children's math. It will result in a (n even more) bored and disengaged child who may very well become a disruption and distraction. Or just check out completely. As I noted in my second paragraph, **most** of his teachers allowed him to do independent learning at home (e.g. through Stanford and John Hopkins CTY) instead of homework - which for him was just busy work. The one exception for this was his third grade teacher who insisted that he couldn't possibly understand math that well and he absolutely needed third grade math. That year was the only year he received 2s on his report card - in math - and less than satisfactory marks in citizenship/behavior.

Due to the late hour at which I'm submitting this I'm not even going to address the issue of putting California teens at a disadvantage in applying for top universities, especially in the science programs. But that should be a very real concern. As should the fact that, by removing the opportunity for students to take the AP Calculus courses, you are adding to the number of classes they will need to take in college, which presents its own equity issue.

I realize that my son is one data point, and is therefore not statistically significant. But there are plenty of other children - some more advanced, some less - who will benefit from the opportunity to accelerate and be challenged. You should be expanding those opportunities, not curtailing them. Especially since the highest income students will be able to pursue higher mathematics through private school or online programs like we did (since private school *was* beyond our means).

I hope you will reconsider the changes to the framework and recognize that some children absolutely need acceleration and it should actually be available at an even younger age on a case-by-case basis.

Thank you for your attention,
Kathy Schulz

P.s. My son would like to include a message as well: As a child who has been labeled gifted I have enjoyed being able to go into advanced classes because they are an actual challenge and I can do my grade level math in my head. These opportunities should be available and encouraged - not mandated but encouraged - for other kids like me.