

Text from email message sent out by Deanna Mossman, Feb. 26

Hi,

This is a brief summary of the school board meeting from Wed., Feb. 22. We heard the doors of many career opportunities for our children close with a resounding boom.

This is my view and anyone that was there and would like to add anything or a different perspective is welcome to.

The board let us speak shortly after opening. Each person was given 5 minutes and the board was instructed not to respond to any of us.

Our parents that spoke were well researched and polished. The main points of their presentations were:

--We would like a choice of a traditional math track: pre-algebra, algebra 1, geometry, algebra2/trigonometry, pre-calculus, calculus. (After the meeting, Garret Dagget, didn't even know that a traditional track isn't offered in Dist. 81. Made us wonder how many other board members are uninformed.)

--The "fuzzy math" curriculum doesn't teach basic math facts or algorithms. Teachers are to stand back and let students "discover" the process.

--"Fuzzy math" makes students rely heavily on calculators to the extent they are not able to do any math without one. Calculators are not allowed in the college math placement exam nor in many college math classes. The college professors affirmed this too.

-The textbooks and whole curriculum for this program is WASL driven. They are preparing our kids for the WASL, not for college or for life. (Pearson holds the contract for the WASL and the textbooks are published by Pearson). The professors expanded on this by stating to the board and the superintendent that they needed to better prepare our kids for college. The colleges and universities don't look at the WASL scores and don't care about them. They are looking at SAT and ACT scores, both use traditional math. Yet the school curriculum continues to embed itself in WASL curriculum. Superintendent Benzel summed it up for all of us when he responded with, "The WASL is a 10th grade exit exam, not a college prep test." That spoke volumes for most of us. Our kids are merely WASL statistics that help the schools get higher scores, awards, funding, etc. They really DON'T care about preparing our kids for college. After the 10th grade WASL, they're done with our kids. I think that's the message many of us got.

--The conflict of interest of the NCTM doing the research and being paid by NSF and the program being recommended because it matched WA state

EALRS. The EALRS were developed largely by research from NCTM. The kickback the schools get is at the expense of our children's education. Conflict of interest is written all over here. No mathematicians were involved in the development of the program.

--We brought up the CA failure with fuzzy math. CA used it for 7 years and went from #2 in the nation to #48. Kris Lindeblad, the math coordinator for high school and presenter of CorePlus program to the board, was asked to respond to this. Her response was that it was too political to look into and research. The district has been looking into CorePlus (the high school version of fuzzy math) for three years; we've been researching it for a few months. They couldn't take the time to look into failed fuzzy math programs across the nation in that amount of time? AND the consequences it has on students?!

--We pointed out the struggles that lower level learners have with this program. Especially because it is so reading intensive.

--We asked why parents weren't made aware of the changes and why parents weren't involved in the adoption process since that is their policy.

--We addressed the low morale of teachers having to teach something they don't believe in. Losing great teachers to early retirement or other districts.

--We stated that the curriculum is in violation of WA St, Ed. Law RCW.28A.150.210 as well as the WA State Constitution which states, "each district must provide extensive offerings in the basic areas of reading, language, math..."

--We told the board and superintendent that we did not want our children to be guinea pigs. But as Barb Richardson, board member, told us, "Don't worry, we'll monitor the students and their progress as they are going through the program." This is yet another experimental program being implemented by Dist. 81. I spoke with Linda Bolty at EWU. She is open to CorePlus and working some with Kris Lindeblad. Not sure if she is math ed. or a mathematician. She said the program takes a long time to implement and is high maintenance and time consuming. It is often misapplied as it seems to be in the CV district right now. She said the biggest piece missing is the bringing it all together at the end. Since the teachers have so many GLEs to address and time is an issue, this last piece is usually forgotten. "Unfortunately, your children will be the experimental group as this is being implemented and I sympathize with your concerns." Did we sign our kids up for this experiment????!!

--The three professors, all Drs. in mathematics gave very compelling and convincing presentations (Dr. Cochran, Dr. McKenzie, Dr. Overbay). Some of the important things they were able to emphasize:

--Students coming from the Integrated and CorePlus programs are not prepared for college.

--These students are often placed in the remedial math class and often struggle with the lowest level math class. Sometimes they don't know what to do with those students.

--They have had to turn students away that have been aspiring to a career in engineering. The students from CorePlus and Integrated programs lack the basic math foundations.

--Last week a professor had to take a struggling algebra student aside to find out what the problem was. The student's quote was, "I can't do the algebra, I'm a CorePlus student."

--We asked the board to postpone the adoption of CorePlus for District 81 highschools until they were able to do further research. We would give them our research to help. We also asked them to give us a choice. Karin Short and Kris Lindeblad did an incomplete presentation on CorePlus. They were not giving any concrete research to support the program, gave half the story in many cases and a few lies thrown in there too. They even tried to compare Dist. 81 to Bellevue, WA as part of their basis for implementation!!!!

We we're all VERY frustrated because we were not allowed to respond to the presentation. Many of us would have loved the chance for rebuttal. Especially the professors. Instead we remained in our seats with muzzles on. Karin and Kris asked the board to adopt CorePlus for grades 9-11. A few canned questions that I'm assuming were thought up before hand were asked. One of us stepped out of protocol and pleaded again that they postpone the adoption until further research. All of our research, presentations, the professors presentations fell on deaf ears. Rocky Treppiedi motioned that the program be adopted and they unanimously voted it in. We felt like our guts had been ripped out. Many left angry, some left in tears.

We were able to ask a few board members after the meeting why money from I-728 was passed to reduce class size and the money was actually used to hire 150 "coaches" to teach the teachers how to teach this inadequate math program. Our class sizes are larger than ever!! Why don't our kids have math textbooks at the middle school? Why don't any of our kids have science textbooks? Why aren't there any spelling books and the ones we have are almost 20 years old? The Language Arts books are close to 20 years old! They couldn't answer us.

That money was a misallocation of funds. Why should we believe that by passing this levy that the same thing won't happen?!

Someone from the district has tried to intimidate one of the professors by calling a Dept. Chair with concerns about statements made afterwards and possible misinformation. Not to worry, the Dept. Chair has the same concerns as the professor and the parents!

--We will have our website up this week as, "Parents for Math Matters." I

will let everyone know the address as soon as I can.

--We will have WASL opt out forms also available to print out. Many parents don't know their children don't have to take the WASL. If enough parents opt out, they will have to change the curriculum. Maybe this will help them realize we want our children educated for their future, not the WASL!!

I will also forward the letter written by Dr. Shannon Overbay after the meeting. Please forward this on to any parents you think would be concerned or need to be made aware of the situation.

Thanks,
Deanna