



The Ohio Council of Teachers of Mathematics
BECOME OCTM: Building an Energetic Community of Ohio Mathematics Educators

May 8, 2009

Dear Governor Strickland:

The Ohio Council of Teachers of Mathematics (OCTM) is an organization of 3,500 mathematics educators from pre-school through college. We serve mathematics educators at all levels by providing and supporting engaging, ongoing, collaborative professional growth opportunities. We believe that every Ohio student should have full access to mathematics education that is *student-centered* and that develops the understandings and skills necessary for *quantitative literacy and career readiness in a global economy*. OCTM strongly advocates for policies and practices that value and emphasize *critical thinking, informed decision-making, and analytical problem solving* on the part of every teacher and student.

We write this letter to respond to your current proposal for education reform in Ohio. **OCTM supports the goal of systemic reform involving all stakeholders across the state.** We also support the goal of infusing Twenty-First Century skills into every content area, and **we believe that the new academic content standards in all areas should emphasize conceptual understanding as well as fluency in important skills.**

We understand that the ACT is one of the proposed high school graduation requirements. The ACT is a fast-paced, standardized test that measures the procedural learning that was the goal of education in the twentieth century. **Instead, OCTM highly recommends that the new required examination assess students' problem-solving skills, communication skills, and critical thinking abilities.**

*Finally, student learning is most directly influenced by the interactions among students and teachers. Thus, we strongly urge you and the legislature to support teachers in the crucial role they play by providing sufficient resources for "purposeful, structured, and continuous" professional development as described in the *Ohio Standards for Professional Development*. This document states: "In order for professional development to contribute to real change and to continuous improvement efforts, participants must be provided with time to fully engage in the professional development process, to apply new ideas and to reflect on changes in their practice."*

Although OCTM applauds the current proposal to increase professional learning partnerships between colleges of education and school districts, this can only be a first step. **The need for dramatic shifts in educators' thinking about teaching and learning will require significant time and meaningful collaboration during the school day and school year, facilitated by school- and district-based professional development leaders as well as educators from other institutions.**

Thank you very much for your careful consideration of these important issues and for your leadership in providing world-class mathematics education to all Ohio students. OCTM looks forward to future discussions and collaboration with you and Ohio legislators, as well as the Ohio Department of Education. We invite you to contact OCTM through our president, Kim Yoak, at kjyoak@gmail.com or at 330-689-5200, ext. 6255.

Respectfully,

The Ohio Council of Teachers of Mathematics Board of Directors