

Controversy has associated with the elementary math program since the adoption of *Investigations* in 2000. The Board of Education is supporting a plan that will hopefully diminish the math controversy and result in a more unified community focused upon student competence in mathematics.

Six years ago, the Alpine School District undertook considerable effort to focus upon mathematics instruction and the connection to student learning. Dissatisfied with the status quo, which was underscored by student math scores that were less than expected, a group of administrators, teachers, and parents spent considerable time reviewing and evaluating promising math programs. After carefully scrutinizing several programs over the course of a year, the committee recommended to the Board of Education the adoption of the program known as *Investigations in Number, Data and Space*. This particular program came highly endorsed by the National Science Foundation and The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. It also aligned with the math state core curriculum very well.

Many Alpine elementary schools sought early adoption of the program and a massive teacher training program began in order to support a change in math instruction. Using standards identified to improve student understanding, *Investigations* required new ways of teaching and student learning. The program did not resemble traditional math programs and began to arouse concerns from some patrons that it was not teaching students adequately.

In order to respond to some parent and teacher concerns regarding the materials associated with *Investigations*, groups of expert math teachers were hired during the second summer to rewrite some of the homework. Additionally, teachers were provided supplemental materials that supported instruction in basic facts and algorithms.

During this school year, the Board of Education released a statement defining the Alpine School District philosophy of math. In this statement, the Board articulates their belief that there is not one single math program that responds perfectly to all students' needs. The Board called for a balanced math approach that emphasizes the elements of understanding, computing, applying, reasoning and engaging. Teachers in the district were given the latitude to make professional decisions regarding the needs of their students and teach according to those needs.

Because there has been considerable divisiveness within the community regarding the *Investigations* math program, approval has been given to revisit math materials associated with a more localized adoption procedure in the next school year. A district review committee will be organized and math goals and criteria for selecting materials will be defined. Two programs will be approved at the district level; one program will be more traditional in nature and the other will be standards-based. Local schools will then be given the opportunity to review both programs and work through a process to determine the one that responds most closely with the consensus of the school staff and community.

The district office staff will sustain the local decisions and provide any additional training and support necessary to achieve the philosophy of a balanced program.

The Board of Education is encouraged by the discussion and attention on mathematics instruction and learning. It is important that all parties recognize that the ultimate goal for both the schools and parents is the understanding and success of students in mathematics. Please join in a partnership that emphasizes cooperation and positive relationships in reaching this noble goal.