

Revisions in math testing don't add up for students

I join with my fellow educators to condemn the proposed changes to the mathematics sections of the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks. ("Educators criticize math test revisions," Feb. 9 Union-News.)

I propose the following arithmetic test for Gov. A. Paul Cellucci and Department of Education board members:

■ Expenditures on education will increase or decrease with the introduction of a fundamentally different curriculum framework in mathematics. Decrease? Wrong. It will necessitate a fundamental increase in expenditures as it necessitates the purchase of more new textbooks, revision of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System tests, a new spate of professional development for teachers, etc.

■ Students' mathematical education and their preparation for the MCAS exams will be greater than or less than they would have been if the frameworks were not changed? Greater than? No chance. The existing frameworks have been in place for several years and only now can we begin to measure their impact. Fundamental change will cause massive disruption. It will also force students to pass MCAS exams that are fundamentally different than those their mathematical educations have prepared them for.

■ Recent high-profile political attacks on the commonwealth's mathematics curriculum and its teachers will induce more or fewer qualified mathematics teachers? More? Wrong again. We already face a devastating shortage of qualified mathematics teachers. Why would qualified mathematics teachers pursue a career in Massachusetts if the curriculum is changed by political whim, veteran teachers are labeled as incompetent and summarily tested, and the pay and benefits scales are dramatically below neighboring states? Simply, they won't.

When the governor and state education officials fail an arithmetic test so badly it is no wonder that their decisions regarding an appropriate mathematical education for our children are so ignorant and destructive.

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