

District subtracts new math classes

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Oregonian

9 May 09

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Curriculum | Tigard-Tualatin adopts a more traditional approach after parents complain

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THE OREGONIAN

TIGARD — After less than a year using a “reform math” curriculum, the Tigard-Tualatin School Board voted Thursday to adopt a more traditional program next year that district officials estimate will cost \$396,000.

The board’s 3-2 vote overruled the recommendation of district staff and will change how math is taught in grades six through 10. Teachers primarily will use Holt textbooks and use the district’s current College Preparatory Mathematics curriculum only to supplement the traditional math courses. Board Chairman Mark Chism and member Jill Zurschmeide opposed the proposal.

Superintendent Rob Saxton proposed that staff use CPM as the base curriculum and supplement with Holt, an option that would have cost about \$216,000 more.

Reform and traditional math have been hotly debated in Tigard-Tualatin. Reform math supporters say students learn the concepts behind solving problems instead of the rote memorization in traditional math. Traditional math supporters say reform math focuses too much on word problems, group work and is not rigorous enough to prepare students for advanced math.

Board members Barry Albertson, Art Rutkin and Caroline Neunzert said they favored a more traditional textbook, partly because there is a lack of sufficient evidence that CPM was successful in other districts. They also identified holes in CPM and its implementation in the district this year.

“You shouldn’t find a group of parents complaining so bitterly

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To read a more in-depth description of reform math, see the links in this story at

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Math:

Switch back will be costly for district

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about not even understanding what is coming home, and how to assist their children," Rutkin said.

Zurschmeide said she sees the benefits of CPM including progressions in her daughter's math comprehension. She called it a mistake to opt for a new curriculum because of some holes in CPM.

"I don't think it's fair to throw out CPM when we haven't even used it for a year," she said. "We have smart teachers, they can fill those gaps."

The district now faces questions about how to pay for the adoption amid looming budget cuts and staff layoffs for 2009-10. Officials have less than four months to create a new curriculum and train teachers.

"Now we have the duty to make sure we implement that decision as effectively as possible for student learning," Saxton said.

Tigard-Tualatin officials this year revisited CPM, which cost \$195,000, after parents began questioning its rigor just months after the new program entered classrooms in

September. Eventually, a group called Parents for Math Choice formed a Web site and began advocating a traditional curriculum so students had options to reform math.

This spring, a group of parents and district staff met with a facilitator to discuss possible curriculum changes. They agreed not to let money be a factor during discussions.

Mark Veteto, a Parents for Math Choice member, said he was happy about the board's decision but did not want to "gloat" about CPM's diminished role.

"I have mixed emotions about that," Veteto said. Though happy, "I know that there's probably a parent out there that's disappointed, there's probably some teachers that are disappointed. That was the reason we wanted choice."

Tigard High School algebra teacher Nicole Barker said she felt disheartened that the curriculum would change when her students were making huge math gains. In addition, she said the money to pay for new textbooks could be better spent elsewhere.

"We're in a position where our colleagues are going to be losing their jobs and I hate to see class sizes go up," Barker said. "They are going to be on the chopping block and we're going to be funneling money into replacing something that we already bought?"

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