

February 02, 2017

Dear Dr. Gold,

Your email to LCUSD K-7 parents of 01/17/17 (Subj: "7-8 adoption and application for the committee") states:

"Additionally, to provide more opportunities for parental input, we would like to include a parent from each grade level (incoming 7th and 8th) to attend the final meeting where the recommendation for adoption will be made. Two applicants will be selected and notified by February 10, 2017. The selected parents will not vote at this meeting but will have the opportunity to learn about the process, ask questions, etc. If you are interested in this opportunity, please fill out the attached application and send it to me by February 3, 2017. 7/8 Math Adoption Parent Application ([Click Here](#))"

Though we appreciate the opportunity for two parents to be present at the 7/8 math textbook committee meeting, the gesture seems largely symbolic and not meaningful. If you were not aware, during the rather acrimonious LCUSD Governing Board meetings last May leading up to the adoption of *Everyday Mathematics* for LCUSD grades K-5, there was a strong sentiment among parents that parental input was intentionally minimized during the selection process, in contravention of state educational code and board policy. Though we were told parental participation on a textbook committee during the textbook adoption processes had never been included in the past, we pointed out that the both the Ed Code and board policy specifically define a role for parents in the process of selecting instructional material. For code and policy references, see the letter from parents to the board dated 05/22/16:

https://lcfmathparents.files.wordpress.com/2016/05/lcUSD_mathxtbkselection_letter-2016-05-22.pdf

After the elementary math textbook decision by the LCUSD board on 05/26/2016, Governing Board Vice President (now President) Jeffries said:

"One of the things we've learned from all this is that we need to be transparent in the way textbooks are selected as well. We need to have a process that, from the very beginning, involves the parents, so parents know what's going on."

Inviting two parents to the final meeting of a several year process to witness the final vote of the committee hardly meets the Board's policies or stated wishes. Given that understanding, we the undersigned ask that you consider allowing parents to vote in the middle school textbook selection committee meeting and that you allow parents, not district staff, to select the parent representatives allowed to attend that meeting.

In addition, in the future we suggest you consider adding parent representatives much earlier in the textbook selection process. The intent is not to have parents dictate what textbooks are adopted by the Board, but rather to help the Board make the best informed decision with input from both parents and teachers, ideally including input from parents and teachers who have engaged together in dialogue and careful evaluation through a collaborative adoption committee process. It was clear during the K-6 elementary math textbook adoption process last year that many of the decisions made were inadequately informed. Teachers and administrators were unaware of the enormous negative opinion of and controversy surrounding one of the textbooks, or of any of the myriad problems experienced by other districts that chose to implement it, until parents pointed it out. The members of the textbook committee also seemed unaware of the irregularities in the selection process (e.g. one of the textbooks was not on the state-approved list, which though not disqualifying in and of itself as a candidate textbook, should have opened the door to consideration of other materials not on the list that met board policy and ed code requirements, and in another case, teachers rated the online component of curricula for which they apparently were never given access.)

There are a large number of parents in the district with advanced degrees in mathematics, the sciences and engineering who had concerns about some of the candidate textbooks but were never heard from in the process. Other parents seemed more informed than committee members about the history of the recommended mathematics textbooks, and the *Math Wars* surrounding them that engulfed schools nationwide in the 1990s and early 2000s, including La Canada. These very same parents could be helpful earlier on in the selection process when candidate textbooks are first being identified. There are other parents who have expertise and experience in research who can assist in vetting the materials under consideration. It was clear from the elementary textbook process last year that little to no research had been done into the textbooks selected as “finalists” or the experience of other districts similar in character to LCUSD to see what worked and didn’t work for them. Several surrounding districts with whom district staff frequently like to compare LCUSD were or are coincidentally also in the process of selecting elementary and middle school math textbooks. Parents reached out to administrators, teachers and parents in those other districts to find out their experience and preferences. The teacher/administrator committee, as far as we are aware, did not do so until parents raised concerns to the Governing Board.

This is not a suggestion from left field. Other school districts include parents on their textbook selection committees from the inception of the committee. For example, compare La Canada’s process to Palo Alto’s. As a coincidence, Palo Alto Unified School District is similarly in the midst of selecting a math textbook for middle school. Here is the web page for their Middle School Math Textbook Selection Advisory Committee:

<https://www.pausd.org/committees-task-forces/middle-school-math-textbook-selection-advisory-committee>

Notable differences between their committee and ours include:

- They include parents, community members and students.
- Their committee meetings are open to the public.
- They publish the purpose of the committee, its members, the schedule of meetings and detailed minutes of all meetings.
- Textbook materials are on display at all middle schools for extended periods of time, not limited to three three-hour windows and with prior registration required.
- Their piloting process is much more rigorous than ours.

Given these considerations, we respectfully request that parents invited to the meeting be allowed to vote, that parents and not district staff select the parents who attend that meeting, and that in the future you consider inviting parents on to the committee earlier on in the process.

Thank you,

Sugi Sorensen

Chris Salvo

Bill Pham

Phuong Tran

Paul Li

Deborah Parker

Dr. Christian Frankenberg

Dr. Suniti Sanghavi

Trina Chen