

**Public Comments to the National Advisory Mathematics Panel**  
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**Submitted by:**

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Good morning and greetings to the distinguished panel. Thank you for this opportunity to make comment. My name is Barbara Franklin and I represent my company, PLATO Learning, where I am a Director of Field Market Development. My job involves analyzing policy-making groups such as yours to ensure that our company's educational strategies and solutions are in line with current research and guidelines.

PLATO has been in business for 44 years beginning as a National Science Foundation grant to the University of Illinois. We were the first company to provide computer-assisted instruction in education. Continuously reinventing ourselves and our products over the years, we now provide supplementary instruction and formative assessments for many diverse student populations in America.

When we begin product development we undertake to understand the research that is currently available in that academic field. I would like to tell you today about Straight Curve Math, an innovative new elementary math product that we researched, developed and beta-tested last year. We have released it for classroom use in the past few months. I have provided the research body and design principles that we used for our new elementary math product in my handout for you to look over.

Straight Curve Mathematics is to be used by math teachers and students in grades K – 6. It is designed to be implemented daily during a 20-minute segment of the mathematics period. To promote easy implementation, the product has both technology and print components for teachers and students and supports core instruction in the classroom. Its primary objectives are:

- Increase student achievement in mathematics through research-based best practices of classroom instruction, investigation, workshops, quizzes and games.
- Increase teacher effectiveness through professional development in mathematics content, instructional strategies, and technology/product usage

It is to be used as a “preventative” rather than an intervention.

Straight Curve Math is designed with landscape of learning maps and big ideas as the focal points of its curricula. These big ideas allow teachers to grasp instruction and to see connections; they can be defined as “central, organizing ideas of mathematics – principles that define mathematical order. Some of the

big ideas we included are numbers and operations, measurement, geometry, algebra (beginning in kindergarten) and data analysis and probability. These learning maps and big ideas translate then into hierarchical charts that align with NCTM focal points and state standards. Clearly we did not try to cover “everything” but instead identified those concepts that inexperienced teachers struggle with teaching and students must have to lay a foundation for future learning.

As you move towards your final report on policy recommendations for math education improvement please consider these points:

- Consider that the vast amount (quantity) and quality of differing state standards create difficulties for both teachers and students in American math classrooms.
- Allow and encourage systematic innovation on the part of smaller, supplementary vendors to bring forth promising practices and emerging technologies to improve student achievement. Do not be so prescriptive in your recommendations that innovation is blocked.
- Establish criteria for the review of commercial products that will allow all companies to undergo a fair and ethical process for participation in Elementary Math Now, the Science and Math Initiatives and other federal programs that will result from your report.

Thank you for your commitment to this extremely valuable undertaking and for allowing me this time today.