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To Whom It May Concern:

I write this letter to lend my support to the Oklahoma Academic Standards for Mathematics.

I commend the group of individuals who put together this document as it is impressive amount of work they accomplished in a short period of time.

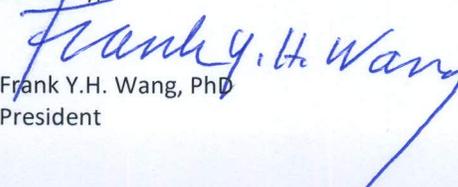
My background is as follows: I am a mathematician by training with a bachelor's degree in math from Princeton University (1986) and a PhD in pure math from MIT (1991). While pursuing my PhD I taught students at MIT and at the University of California at San Diego. I am also co-author of a calculus textbook published by Saxon Publishers in 1988. In 1991, I began work full-time at Saxon Publishers and became its president in 1994. I left Saxon Publishers at the beginning of 2003 to pursue my lifelong passion and desire to be a classroom teacher. I came to the Oklahoma School of Science and Math and taught math during the years of 2003-2005 for free. I also taught math (Calculus II, III, and IV) at the University of Oklahoma in 2003 and 2004. Over my career, I estimate I have spoken to/conducted workshops for between 20,000 and 30,000 teachers all over the United States.

My work as a textbook publisher made me familiar with a various state standards. Generally, I am not a fan of these standards as I have found many of the individual standards to be too vague and "touchy-feeley" (Sorry about the use of a colloquial term here; I could not think of a better word). Moreover, I find that there often no clear and measurable way to assess whether a student has successfully met a particular stated standard.

I was pleasantly surprised to read the Oklahoma Standards and find they are direct and explicit in their expectations. For example, Standard A2.N.1.1 states "Find the value of i^n for any whole number n ." This standard expresses clearly what is expected of the student. (Too often I have read standards in the past from other states that have read "The student will develop critical thinking skills." What does this mean? How can this be measured? Some states will require that the student develop problem solving skills. My belief is that one develops problem solving skills not by reading about problem solving but by solving a lot of problems. Those people who are good problem solvers, I believe, are also those who have spent hours solving many problems.)

Given my prior experience studying state standards, I approached this task of examining the Oklahoma Standards with a healthy amount of skepticism. I was pleasantly surprised. Overall, I found the standards to be clearly stated, explicit, relevant and appropriate. I feel that students who are in classes that follow these standards will be well-prepared for college and be capable of pursuing STEM majors, if they chose to do so.

Sincerely,


Frank Y.H. Wang, Ph.D.
President

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