



Red4EdNC

Promise and Potential, Meet Reality

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It's fall and it feels like another successful school year is under way. The kids are decked out in their new outfits with new haircuts, and their book bags are overflowing with new supplies. Did you feel the excitement in the air that last week of August? The students and teachers began the year filled with fresh optimism.

And then we teachers saw our class rosters, and the reality of the funding finagling started to hit home. When I was arranging my desks into groups of three for collaborative learning, I was really proud of my creative use of space and got really excited about a table I set up as an alternative work space. But then I totaled up my roster numbers. Whereas I am thrilled that shifting of funds has allowed for class sizes for my elementary-aged birth children to remain reasonable, I am less than thrilled by the fact that I have 195 high school students this year. I wish I never totaled up that number because I started to feel deflated before the kids even walked in the door. I respect the fact that my principal encourages us to form meaningful relationships with every single one of our students, however, I am not exactly sure how I am going to do that. I am going to try my best, but... I actually, you know, have to teach, too. There are multiple high school classrooms around Wake County alone that have 40 or more students in the class!

At my school, we are starting this year with three-fifths of our department new to our school. This means that veteran teachers such as myself are in the position of helping multiple teachers on multiple Professional Learning Teams. Finding time to meet with all of these teachers takes away from my time to make meaningful connections with my 195 students!

So, why do we teachers need to meet so much? Well, in the fun world of math in North Carolina, we find ourselves in the middle of a unique battle of “Which Curriculum Is Best?” We were teaching Algebra I, II, and Geometry, and then 4 years ago, the State haphazardly implemented the Common Core Standards, threw together a curriculum, and called the courses Common Core Math I, II, and III.

Our three-year marriage to Common Core expired, so last year, a team was assembled to re-write the math curriculum once again. So we attended some very rushed meetings this past spring getting introduced to the curriculum we would be teaching this fall (pending the approval of said NC Math Curriculum in June 2016). Teachers were also prepping for (another) summer training sessions so we could effectively teach another new curriculum. NC Math would basically shift some things around to “fix” some of the haphazardness of the previous curriculum and would also clarify the standards (which had been a huge problem previously). In prepping for NC Math, teachers were actually asked for their input via surveys!

And then, that last week of school (June 2016), the news came out that there was a bill, sponsored by Senator Jerry Tillman, stating that schools should offer BOTH NC Math as well as the “old” Algebra I, II, and Geometry pathway. We wanted to throw our hands up in the air that minute.

Do you see why, perhaps, we had to replace three-fifths of our department?? How in the world are we supposed to teach TWO DIFFERENT CURRICULUMS? (*Someone, like myself, who has been around for several curriculum changes could likely handle teaching all these different courses because I HAVE taught all these different courses in the past, but come on*). How can we support the needs of giving the students the option of 6 different math courses versus 3? And that doesn't even account for honors versus academic or semester long versus all year long.

Consider the basic logistics. When I first started teaching at my school 18 years ago, we had 20 teachers in my department and the school had 1600 students. We now have 15 teachers and 2100 students. You don't need to be a math genius to know that this just doesn't add up. We can't hardly teach the courses we have now.

That is why this election is so important. You and I simply cannot sit idly by and assume that the vote will go the way we want without our active participation. Please educate yourself, and others, and vote for candidates that will make education a priority. Our kids deserve better from us. Their schools shouldn't be a revolving door of teachers, or curriculums, nor should their classrooms be as overflowing as their book bags.

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