

EDITORIAL

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The beginning of a new decade generally brings forth numerous reflections on the decade past as well as predictions for the future. With respect to education, the 1980s may well be thought of as the “Decade of the Report.”

The loud calls for reform in the teaching and learning of mathematics gave rise to or grew out of numerous reports (*A Nation at Risk*, *Everybody Counts*, *Educating Americans for the 21st Century*, *New Goals for Mathematical Sciences Education*, *The Underachieving Curriculum*, and so on). Virtually all of these reports painted a rather dismal picture of education in general and mathematics education in particular. Most of the reports made recommendations for change, but these recommendations were often rather general in nature and failed to discuss in detail how these improvements could be attained.

More recently, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics has published *Curriculum and Evaluation Standards for School Mathematics*. This document focused on what should be included in the mathematics curriculum and on appropriate ways of evaluating student learning and school programs. Currently, NCTM has produced a working draft of *Professional Standards for Teaching Mathematics* which focuses on standards for teaching and the professional development of teachers.

In light of increasing public demand for accountability by teachers and schools and the call for reform from within the mathematics education community, what should one’s individual response be? I would like to suggest three ways that we, as individuals, can help to bring about positive changes.

First, I believe each of us must be open to change. We must be willing to carefully evaluate the mathematics curriculum and how it is being taught. This may require each individual to evaluate his/her own practices and priorities. There should be no “sacred cows” in the curriculum, our programs, or in our teaching methods.

We must be willing to consider challenging questions and issues. What should be in the mathematics curriculum? At what level? For which students? How can those disadvantaged/underrepresented students be reached? How can we make