

A Statement of the National Science Board:
***In Support of the Math and Science Partnership Program at
the National Science Foundation***

Education is a core mission of the National Science Foundation (NSF). NSF not only promotes research, but also shares in the responsibility for promoting quality math and science education as intertwining objectives at all levels of education across the United States. NSF's highly competitive peer-review process is second to none for openly and objectively identifying, reviewing, selecting, funding and providing stewardship for the very best science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) proposals and programs in research and education.

Science and mathematics competency is becoming ever more essential to individuals and nations in an increasingly global workforce and economy. STEM education is a special challenge for the highly mobile US population, because it demands a sequential, cumulative acquisition of knowledge and skills. To raise US student performance to a world-class level, all components of the US education system must achieve a consensus on a common core of mathematics and science knowledge and skills. These core competencies must be embedded consistently in instructional materials and practices everywhere and at all levels, without precluding locally held prerogatives about the content of curricula.¹

The NSF's Math and Science Partnerships (MSPs) are important tools for addressing a critical—but currently very weak—link between pre-college and higher education. This major new national initiative, outlined in NSF's 2002 Authorization Act, has received strong and broad support from Congress and was signed into law by President Bush. It provides for the collaboration between pre-college and college to promote excellence in teaching and learning; therefore facilitating the transitions for students from kindergarten through the baccalaureate in STEM disciplines. The added benefit for our nation is those students who do not choose STEM careers become the informed scientifically literate voting citizens we need for the 21st Century.

We do not have the luxury of time for further political debate on how to bring our nation's education system up to a world-class level in science and mathematics—much less to achieve world leadership in these critical competencies.² NSF has the mandate, depth of experience, and well-established relationships to build the partnerships for excellence in STEM education. The Board, therefore, strongly urges that continued, full funding of the MSP Program at NSF be sustained over the long term as an essential component of a coordinated Federal effort to promote national excellence in science, mathematics and engineering.


Warren M. Washington
Chairman

¹NSB 98-154, NSB 99-31, <http://www.nsf.gov/nsb/documents>.

²NSB 03-69, <http://www.nsf.gov/nsb/documents>.