



**CALIFORNIA
BUSINESS
for Education
EXCELLENCE**

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CBEE APPLAUDS GOVERNOR SCHWARZENEGGER'S DEFENSE OF HIGH STANDARDS

(Sacramento, CA) – California Business for Education Excellence applauds Governor Schwarzenegger for his leadership by sending his clarifying message to the State Board of Education that proficiency in Algebra 1 is the 8th grade standard we expect all students to reach.

There has been considerable controversy escalating over 8th grade Algebra 1 for all students and there is a chance the state education leadership would waver by lowering these 8th grade standards. This bold leadership of the Governor should aid the decision making process for the State Board of Education to do the right thing for students.

This problem in expectations surfaced because of the federal requirement under the No Child Left Behind Act that all 8th grade students be tested on 8th grade standards as defined by the State of California. In California that means Algebra 1. However, California has been using two math courses and two different tests for the 8th grade– one for Algebra 1 and the other for an easier course called General Math which tests 6th and 7th grade math standards.

James Lanich, President of CBEE said “We should not perpetuate a two-track system of high standards for some students and lower standards and expectations for the rest. Students in the lower level math courses are disproportionately minorities and economically disadvantaged students. A watering down of rigor would be a huge disservice to these kids who need the most help. **We must keep the expectations high and stay the course that all students take Algebra in the 8th grade.**”

However, more focus is needed in the earlier grades to support struggling students and to provide them with the foundational pre-algebra skills. We must stay the course and support the brave step that California took several years ago to require that 8th grade math be based on Algebra 1 standards only. This policy set in motion a huge increase in the number, and diversity, of students taking Algebra in the 8th grade. From 2003 to 2007, the number of students taking Algebra I increased by 88,000 students, while the number of students taking General Math decreased by 66,000. The fact that the pool of students taking Algebra increased by 58 percent shows that students can and will rise to the challenge. Students placed in the lower level course have not increased their proficiency; they have remained at about 23 percent proficient over the five year period.

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California Business for Education Excellence (CBEE) was founded in 1999 by major business and business organizations to represent the business community in state education policy making and restore excellence to California public schools. For more information visit www.cbee.org

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