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# WISCONSIN EDUCATION ASSOCIATION COUNCIL

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## MEMO

**TO:** Members of the Legislative Council Study Committee on Building Wisconsin's Workforce

**FROM:** Mary Bell, WEAC President

**DATE:** January 22, 2009

**RE:** Additional math credit graduation requirement

The high school experience should provide all students with the opportunity to succeed in post-secondary education and the world of work.

Proponents of an additional math credit graduation requirement seek to better prepare students for their lives following high school by requiring more math education.

Revenue caps have made it increasingly more difficult for school districts to sustain, let alone, add courses of any kind. In fact, year after year, surveyed school superintendents report that the breadth of the curriculum is narrowing in Wisconsin's public schools under revenue controls. More and more school districts, especially those with declining enrollment, are eliminating individual classes and/or entire course areas such as technology/vocational education, family and consumer education, music, foreign language, business, art and physical education. Reduced course offerings mean fewer opportunities for students.

The one-third of students who currently do not take a third year of math may have struggled with the subject or fail to appreciate the importance of math to their lives and future goals. These are the student we are trying to reach. Pushing these students into a higher level math course is not likely to have the desired outcome of increasing math proficiency. A better alternative is to design a course that focuses on the math knowledge and skills we want all students to know before graduating. Also, a math curriculum could be integrated into such courses as science, social studies, consumer education or vocational/technical education to stimulate interest and make application more readily apparent.

If the Legislature requires a third year of math, WEAC believes this change should be accompanied by school funding reform so school districts have the means to offer additional math alternatives without forcing other courses out. A more effective school funding system will ensure a quality education for all students and prepare them for the challenges of a 21<sup>st</sup> century knowledge-based economy.

Mary Bell, President  
Dan Burkhalter, Executive Director

