

## RESPONSE COMMENTARY

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# A Call for Mathematics Education Colleagues and Stakeholders to Collaboratively Engage with NCTM: In Response to Martin’s Commentary

**Diane J. Briars**  
*NCTM President*

**Matt Larson**  
*NCTM President-Elect*

**Marilyn E. Strutchens**  
*NCTM Board of Directors*

**David Barnes**  
*NCTM Associate Executive Director  
Research, Learning and Development*

In his commentary “[The Collective Black and Principles to Actions](#),” Martin (2015)<sup>1</sup> offers a thought-provoking critique of *Principles to Actions: Ensuring Mathematical Success for All* (National Council of Teachers of Mathematics [NCTM], 2014). First, we want to thank Dr. Martin for his continuing contributions. The questions, perspectives, and voices of those such as Dr. Martin and others who are critical of NCTM’s positions and initiatives are some of the ones that the Council needs to hear, both to help address persistent challenges and to inform our framing of the contexts and opportunities to make significant, real, and lasting change. We rec-

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<sup>1</sup> The commentary referenced is a published version of Danny Martin’s remarks made at the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics Research Conference plenary session “Turning the Common Core into Reality in Every Math Classroom,” delivered on April 15, 2015 in Boston, Massachusetts. (Other invited plenary panelists included Deborah Loewenberg Ball, Dan Meyer, and Steven Leinwand.)

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DIANE J. BRIARS is President of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), 1906 Association Drive, Reston, VA, 20191; email: [dbriars@nctm.org](mailto:dbriars@nctm.org). She is a mathematics education consultant, supporting schools and districts in systemic improvement of their mathematics programs; previously, she was Mathematics Director for the Pittsburgh Public Schools.

MATT LARSON is the K–12 Curriculum Specialist for Mathematics for the Lincoln Public Schools, Lincoln, NE and President-Elect of National Council of Teachers of Mathematics; email: [mattlarson94@gmail.com](mailto:mattlarson94@gmail.com). He is the author of several books focused on the effective implementation of professional learning communities.

MARILYN E. STRUTCHENS is an Emily R. and Gerald S. Leischuck Endowed Professor and a Mildred Cheshire Fraley Distinguished Professor of Mathematics Education in the Department of Curriculum and Teaching at Auburn University, 5010 Haley Center, Auburn, AL 36830; [strutme@auburn.edu](mailto:strutme@auburn.edu). Her research interests include equity in mathematics education, secondary mathematics teacher education candidates’ field experiences, teacher leadership, and reform mathematics professional development for grades K–12 teachers.

DAVID BARNES is the Associate Executive Director for Research, Learning and Development at the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 1906 Association Drive, Reston, VA 20191; [dbarnes@nctm.org](mailto:dbarnes@nctm.org). His interests include leadership development, the development and support of early career teachers, and linking research and practice coupled with association management.

ognize the need to listen more broadly and hear voices and perspectives that are beyond our immediate framework. We invite Dr. Martin and others who are interested in undertaking the work to improve mathematics education for students, particularly marginalized students, to engage with the Council. Initially, we need to come together to raise issues, identify opportunities, and increase understanding. More importantly, we need to work together to understand, build, disseminate, and implement specific strategies and actions to address shared challenges and concerns.

Martin (2015) states that the mathematics education community, in general, and the Council, in particular, has not made significant progress in addressing the opportunity gap (Flores, 2007); that is, it has not made significant progress in changing “the conditions of African American, Latin@, Indigenous, and poor students in mathematics education” (Martin, 2015, p. 22). We agree. While mathematics achievement of all groups of students has increased substantially over the past 25 years, in terms of National Assessment of Education Progress scores, Advanced Placement participation, and so forth, significant achievement gaps between subgroups remain (NCTM, 2014; U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, 2015). While we have made progress, we have not made enough progress. We all need to do more. NCTM needs to do more. In particular, we need to expand our understandings of the complexities inherent in equity and access with respect to issues of experience, identity, and agency. This need is one of the major reasons why we created *Principles to Actions* (NCTM, 2014). We commit to addressing these concerns through our advocacy and policy work, and challenge others to join us in taking action toward changing the status quo.

Courageous and collaborative actions are necessary by university and classroom teachers; university, district, and school leaders; mathematics educators, researchers, and policy makers, working together to impact meaningful and sustained change. We recognize the significant challenges in producing systemic change to the status quo, such as those that Martin (2015) articulated. We invite all (mathematics) educators and stakeholders to work with us and other mathematics education organizations, such as The Benjamin Banneker Association, TODOS, National Council of Supervisors of Mathematics, Association of Mathematics Teacher Educators, Association of State Supervisors of Mathematics, and The Algebra Project, as well as other organizations, such as the Council of Great City Schools, The National Alliance of Black School Educators, The White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for African Americans, The U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, The National Association for the Advancement of Color People, and The Education Trust, to address these challenges and impact the educational system so that it provides quality education and parity in opportunity and outcome.

As the public voice of mathematics education, NCTM has worked to raise the consciousness of all of those who are involved in mathematics education through its standards documents (e.g., NCTM, 1989, 1991, 1995, 2000, 2009, 2014), other publications, and initiatives; yet, there is much work to be done. NCTM must move be-

yond isolated projects, publications, and other initiatives aimed at promoting equity and access. As the public voice, we have significant work to do to make the complexities of equity and access part of the conscience, the discussions, and the daily actions of our membership. We cannot do it alone. We need and invite mathematics educators and other stakeholders, including those who have been critical of our work, to not only engage with the Council but also to challenge the Council with advice on specific frameworks, methodologies, practices, and policies, and so forth, and join us in actions that we can undertake to systemically change the experience and opportunity for marginalized learners. Martin (2015) was correct in stating that change cannot come fast enough and has been too long in coming. His statement just reinforces the need for all parties to work together more closely and more diligently. As an immediate first step, NCTM will be convening leaders of our national affiliates to begin a dialogue around issues of equity and access.

Furthermore, we intend to build on the framework of equity and access put forth in *Principles to Actions* (NCTM, 2014) by working to foreground the complexities of identity, agency, and opportunity in our messaging and activities, including ongoing work associated with *Principles to Actions*. These efforts include online professional development toolkits and a research companion; both are in development. In addition, the 2016 NCTM Annual Meeting and Exposition program will explicitly address equity and access through the “Instruction and Policies that Promote Equity and Access” and “Promoting Productive Dispositions about Mathematics” strands and the Iris M. Carl Equity Address. NCTM is also considering how our commitment to equity and access is institutionalized in our strategic planning, initiative development, and the voice of NCTM. Initial steps include greater diversity among our leadership appointments and the planning for one of our newly formed “Innov8” conferences to specifically address equity and access for 2017.

*Principles to Actions* (NCTM, 2014) and the dialogue Dr. Martin opened surrounding NCTM’s historical treatment of equity and access issues can serve as catalysts for us to constructively collaborate. NCTM commits itself to partnering with mathematics education colleagues and other stakeholders so that together we can improve the educational system. Collaboratively, we can change our educational system to provide access and opportunity to students who are marginalized and build a positive mathematics identity and sense of agency. We invite Dr. Martin and others to engage with us, to identify needed courageous actions, and to take the actions necessary to help ensure meaningful and lasting change. Those interested in collaborating in this work should contact NCTM at [change@nctm.org](mailto:change@nctm.org).

## References

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