Oregon School Mathematics Specialist Endorsement
Proposal Summary: October, 2011*

Rationale. School Mathematics Specialists (SMS) are teacher leaders responsible for supporting effective mathematics instruction and student learning. The specific roles and responsibilities for SMS vary according to the needs and plans of each setting, but their expertise and successful experience are essential in supporting teachers, especially now Oregon's students will be expected to meet the high expectations of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in mathematics by the 2014-2015 school year.

At the elementary level, most teachers are generalists who study and teach all core subjects. This makes it difficult for them to develop in-depth knowledge and expertise in any single subject, but mathematics can present a special challenge because preservice and inservice programs often focus more on literacy instruction. At the same time, state and national leaders have become increasingly aware of the critical need for students to become skilled and engaged mathematicians. Thus, mathematics has joined language arts as the two content areas for which the CCSS have been developed.

While teacher leaders in mathematics are active in districts across the state, a state-level endorsement would provide formal recognition, opportunities, and incentives for teachers to increase their knowledge and skills as mathematics instructors. Currently, thirteen states have created endorsements or certification for school mathematics specialists. Oregon has often led the nation in mathematics education, creating performance assessments and adopting standards closely based on the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics' Focal Points, for example. Creating a School Mathematics Specialist endorsement would be another opportunity for our state to take a leadership role.

Roles for Mathematics Specialists. As stated above, roles and responsibilities for these specialists would vary. At the classroom level, an SMS might teach mathematics to students at a single grade level or provide intervention, acceleration, or enrichment in mathematics to small groups of students from different grades. At the school or district level, an SMS might lead professional development activities or coach other teachers. At the state level, they might serve on teams to help develop curriculum, assessments, workshops, and/or policies related to mathematics instruction.

School Mathematics Specialist Endorsement Overview. Oregon's SMS Task Force envisions an endorsement that reflects the Association of Mathematics Teacher Educators' (AMTE) mathematics specialist standards, which include the following: courses that emphasize content, pedagogy, and leadership knowledge; and a meaningful practicum experience. Initial work will focus on developing programs for elementary/middle school specialists, and in time, middle school/high school specialists' programs could be offered as well. While many of these standards exist

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in Oregon's current reading endorsement, for the SMS endorsement we propose a prerequisite of three years of successful teaching experience. This requirement is supported by AMTE because of the school and district leadership roles SMS professionals might assume.

SMS Endorsement Process. Our SMS Task Force began our work during the Summer of 2011 at a two-day session led by AMTE staff, sponsored by the Brookhill Foundation. At the time, we created the following goals and timeline:

- Gain TSPC approval for an SMS endorsement (Spring, 2012);
- Sponsor a summit with representatives from higher education and K-12 math leaders to design a proposed course of study similar in many respects to the Read Oregon program;
- Universities bring forward program proposals to TSPC for approval (Fall, 2012-Spring, 2013);
- Begin the first endorsement cohort focused on elementary-level endorsements.

We are asking Key Communicators from the state to support this proposal. We believe School Mathematics Specialists would play a critical role in helping all students achieve success in learning mathematics at the high levels required by the CCSS.

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***Much of the content of this proposal summary has been adapted from *Standards for Elementary Mathematics Specialists: A Reference for Teacher Credentialing and Degree Programs (2010)*, published by the Association for Mathematics Teacher Educators.**

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