

Educators from the Rice University School Mathematics Project (RUSMP) in Houston have worked with mathematics teachers and leaders in their network to create a Teacher's Pledge and Educational Leader's Pledge for supporting equitable access to powerful mathematics teaching and learning. The words below are potent reminders of why many of us became educators. As you read them, consider joining them in creating a pledge of your own to the students and educators in your school(s). —Inspiration! Editor

WE PLEDGE

By Dr. Anne Papakonstantinou and Arthur Howard

SINCE 1987, THE RICE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL MATHEMATICS PROJECT (RUSMP) HAS DIRECTLY IMPACTED

over 12,000 PK–12 teachers and teacher leaders from over 150 districts and private and charter schools across the state and beyond through its summer and academic-year programs and courses, year-round coaching and mentoring, curriculum development, and annual Fall and

Spring Networking Conferences. Moreover, over 16,000 PK–12 students have benefited from RUSMP PK–12 year-round programs and summer camps. RUSMP's Web Adventures, science and health interactive games, initially developed by Rice's Center for Technology in Teaching and Learning, has over 10 million global users.

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RUSMP's outreach to PK–12 education also includes findings from its extensive research on vital topics such as teacher retention, student motivation, and student interest and retention in STEM. RUSMP has produced over 100 research papers published in peer-reviewed journals, in conference proceedings, or as book chapters and more than 110 evaluation reports. RUSMP has presented research related to mathematics and STEAM education at more than 115 international or national conferences.

In its work with schools, RUSMP staff have noticed an alarming disregard for joyful student learning and growing disrespect for teachers as a result of the overemphasis on high-stakes testing. Rather than nurturing learning, teachers are forced to

“train” students for tests that often measure unimportant information. Rather than developing a love for learning, students are learning to HATE mathematics. Seeing the harm that the hyper-focus on testing is doing to students and teachers led us to the decision to create a Teacher Pledge and an Educational Leader Pledge along the lines of the Hippocratic Oath that doctors take before they begin their practice. Teaching is a profession but also a calling, and the pledges recognize this. While their words are phrased in a positive, commitment-based manner, they also reflect extensive research that shows a methodology that encourages children to want to learn, teachers who want to create life-long learners, and communities who actively support both.

A TEACHER'S PLEDGE

In the spirit and legacy of Maryam Mirzakhani, Bob Moses, Jaime Escalante, and of all the other great thinkers and teachers who have come before me, I make this pledge to you, my students.

I pledge that I will teach you in such a way that you will know that:

- Your welfare is important to me. I will teach you with love, respect, and kindness.
- Your contributions to classroom discussions are important to me. They help me understand your thinking.
- Your questions are important to me. They show me that you are trying to learn and grow.
- Your thinking is important to me. Learning takes time, and your understanding is more important to me than a quick answer.
- Your willingness to say, “I don’t understand yet.” is important to me. It shows you are willing to struggle and persevere to understand and not just give up.
- Your becoming a lover of learning is important to me. I will demonstrate my love of learning by the way I nurture and teach you.



AN EDUCATIONAL LEADER'S PLEDGE

In the spirit and legacy of Iris Carl, Richard Tapia, Booker T. Washington, and of all the other great thinkers and educators who have come before me, I make this pledge to you, my educational community.

- I will be a servant leader and will always include the voices of our community in decisions to ensure that we elevate our educational community to its highest level.
- I will be a transparent decision-maker so that our community shares the vision, direction, and successes that we will achieve.
- I will respect, support, and honor every member of our community and will lead with compassion, reason, and humility.
- I will earn and maintain the trust of our community.
- I will keep abreast of current research on best practices so that this knowledge guides our decisions and that we do not fall wayside to dangerous fads that do harm to our community.
- I will ensure that all students receive the best education possible...that, which the best and wisest parents want for their own children, we want for all the children of our community.



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