

Legislative Priorities of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics 2024

Teachers and what they do in Pre-K through 12 classrooms are at the heart of preparing college-, career-, and citizen-ready high school graduates. Time and again, research demonstrates that the quality of the teacher in the classroom is the largest factor in successful learning. The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) supports investing in teachers of mathematics at every stage of their development and believes that mathematical literacy and fluency can be achieved for each and every student through an increased emphasis from policymakers on early childhood education, rigorous and engaging PK–12 mathematics instruction, family engagement, high-quality standards and assessments, and the guarantee of appropriate conditions for learning for each and every student in the country’s schools and classrooms.

Founded in 1920, the [National Council of Teachers of Mathematics](https://www.nctm.org/) (NCTM) is the world’s leading mathematics education organization. It advocates for high-quality mathematics teaching and learning for each and every student. Success on this count requires support from federal, state, and local lawmakers.

Mathematics Does Not Have the Profile It Warrants

Understanding mathematics increases the opportunities for success of every individual. Mathematics increases our ability to navigate the world around us, make sense of information, manage finances, understand economics and countless other functions. Yet, the teaching and learning of mathematics do not get the attention they warrant in federal, state, and local policy discussions. There is no question that mathematics achievement among US students has been disappointing year after year. The drop in mathematics scores for grades 4 and 8 in the 2022 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) was the largest ever and impacted students at all performance levels. Systemic change in how we engage students in learning mathematics is necessary. The results in the Nation’s Report Card point toward the need for a greater focus and higher priority on mathematics instruction. Drops in math scores back to 2003 levels highlight the need for an increased focus on students’ mathematical understanding and reflect the impact of policies that have significantly slowed previous gains in mathematics.

Yet, federal, state, or local lawmakers do not feel any sense of alarm or urgency. There is no discussion among them about the state of affairs or interventions that might remedy the problem. This must change.

Successful Mathematics Educators Need Adequate Support

In 2024, teachers are being called upon to do much more than teach. They are juggling their own family obligations with their commitments to students and colleagues, are worried about their health and the health of their students and colleagues, and are managing hostilities that are coming at them from parents and lawmakers. These circumstances have laid bare the need to support educators. Teachers of mathematics and the mathematics education community need lawmakers to do the following:

- Invest in professional development programs that recognize the unique demands of teaching mathematics at every level and from new teachers onward.
- Invest in the E-Rate program and other programs that give all students and teachers access to the technology they need to be successful in learning mathematics, no matter their setting.

- Invest in programs that support colleges of education and the modernization of mathematics preparation programs for teachers at all levels and recruitment and support of diverse future teachers.
- Rely on research-informed practices in preparing and supporting PK–12 mathematics teachers and classrooms.

Mathematics Achievement Must Improve

NCTM members are increasingly concerned about the state of mathematics education, particularly given the persistently disappointing achievements of the country’s students on both the National Assessment of Educational Progress and the Programme for International Student Assessment. NCTM has taken a critical look at policies, practices, and issues that affect mathematics education at every level—early childhood and elementary, middle school, and high school—to support the critical conversations and actions needed to create positive systemic change. Specifically, we ask lawmakers to do the following:

- Convene a panel, similar to the 2006 National Mathematics Advisory Panel, to advise the President of the United States and the Secretary of Education on how best to prepare mathematics educators for modern classrooms, how best to support mathematics educators throughout their careers, how best to balance quality teaching with assessing student learning of mathematics, and how best to ensure that the mathematics being taught and learned increases opportunities for each and every student.
- Establish programs for leaders and teachers that focus on engaging and lasting mathematics teaching and learning to confront the pervasive challenges of unmet learning that are experienced disproportionately in mathematics at all levels.
- Establish federal, state, and local programs that provide high-quality, evidence-based professional development for mathematics educators.
- Ensure that accountability requirements do not continue to result in practices that minimize sense making and understanding of mathematics concepts and that annually decrease mathematics learning time.
- Facilitate the use of federally funded research to inform classroom teaching through changes to the What Works Clearinghouse and other resources.
- Work with NCTM and other like-minded organizations to ensure that each and every student has access to quality mathematics teaching and teachers in every year of their PK–12 schooling, regardless of their location, race, or socioeconomic status.

Education Needs Adequate Investments

School buildings are crumbling across the country. Teachers and students are being exposed to unsafe conditions, particularly in areas that are economically challenged. Even with the federal funds that have been distributed to states to invest in K–12 education during the pandemic, students and teachers do not have access to the resources and supports they need. Federal, state, and local governments must use public resources to create a minimum standard and improve school facilities and infrastructure.

NCTM asks lawmakers to support the following:

- Invest in school buildings, transportation, and technology to bring facilities into the 21st century.
- Invest in programs authorized by the Every Student Succeeds Act at their proposed funding levels and not the lower amounts that have been appropriated since the law’s 2015 enactment. Specifically, increase Title I funds that support the country’s neediest schools, Title II programs that support educators, and Title IV, Part A funds that support local choices related to serving students and schools.

The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics is committed to a constructive dialogue and policies to ensure a mathematics education of the highest quality for each and every student.