

Everyday Mathematics and NCTM Curriculum Focal Points for Mathematics

The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) released Curriculum Focal Points for Mathematics in September 2006.

- The focal points are compatible with the original NCTM standards, to which *Everyday Mathematics*, Grades Pre-K-6 mathematics program published by Wright Group/McGraw-Hill is aligned.
- NCTM President Francis “Skip” Fennell noted that some media outlets over-interpreted the focal points as a change to “back to basics” philosophy at NCTM. Instead, the focal points were intended as a first step toward a national discussion on bringing consistency and coherence to mathematics curriculum in the United States.
- NCTM has always supported the idea of students learning to recall basic math facts and achieving computational fluency, while attaining these goals with understanding.
- The focal points do not call for the return of rote memorization of basic facts. Instead, they call for students to become fluent using efficient procedures, including standard algorithms, to understand why math procedures work and how to use them to solve problems.
- The focal points are the latest in a series of recommendations, beginning in the late 1970s out of the failure of the “back-to-basics” movement, that have the same message: Students need both basic skills and conceptual understanding.
- *Everyday Mathematics* has a focus algorithm (process for solving a problem) for each operation (addition, subtraction, multiplication and division) that allows students to better understand how math works. They are similar, but not always identical to computational algorithms.
- Compared for computational algorithms, focus algorithms are easier to learn, are less likely to lead to wrong answers, and help students understand underlying math concepts better.

To read the grade-level focal points for yourself, visit www.nctm.org/focalpoints