



## Response to NCTM and CEC Position Statement on Teaching Mathematics to Students with Disabilities

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A [position statement](#) from two national organizations (NCTM [National Council of Teachers of Mathematics] and CEC [Council for Exceptional Children]) focused on the teaching of mathematics to all students with disabilities is timely. Given the strong research base in special education about mathematics, the focus in CEC teacher preparation standards about the use of research-validated practices, and the focus in both general and special education legislation about the use of research-validated practices, the expectation is that such a position statement would rely on a consensus of current evidence in the field. Unfortunately, the NCTM/CEC position statement falls well short of this expectation.

The NCTM/CEC position statement provided a list of “actionable recommendations” for the mathematics support of students with disabilities. However, many of these recommendations are merely beliefs and philosophies without significant and rigorous research to support them. We expected better from a position statement meant to inform the crucial and complex practice of providing mathematics education for all students with disabilities and thus call for a position statement that is grounded in the now considerable knowledge base of effective mathematics instruction for students with disabilities.

In 2021, the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) produced a [high-quality review](#) (Fuchs et al., 2021) in which much of the research on assisting students who experience difficulties with mathematics was considered. The WWC review resulted in six recommendations with strong levels of evidence. Yet only one of these recommendations (i.e., mathematical representations) was mentioned in the NCTM/CEC position statement. We would expect a position statement for students with disabilities to focus on all six recommendations, including representations, mathematics vocabulary, number line, computational fluency, word-problem solving, and systematic, explicit instruction.

Among the many omissions from the position statement is an emphasis on systematic, explicit instruction. In the High-Leverage Practice documentation from CEC, the practice with the strongest research base to support its use with students with disabilities was systematic, explicit instruction (Nelson et al., 2022). Not including systematic, explicit instruction in this position statement is educational malpractice, particularly for an organization like CEC that is designed to promote high quality, inclusive, and equitable education for students with disabilities.

We were initially excited by the idea of this position statement but are disappointed with the reality of this statement. Given the incredible pressure and stress that teachers are under to support students with disabilities in mathematics, policy makers and teachers deserve actionable recommendations based on trustworthy research.



In summary, this position statement from NCTM and CEC is inadequate in a field that demands the use of research-validated practices. Therefore, in the next few months, we will release documents with actionable recommendations based on evidence for the teaching of mathematics to students with disabilities.

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