

NCTM Equity Affiliates Coalition on CCSS

A joint public statement of TODOS: Mathematics for All, Benjamin Banneker Association, and Women and Mathematics Education

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) represent a state-led effort to introduce K-12 students to rigorous mathematics content and higher-order thinking skills in preparation for future workforce training and/or academic college courses. The intent of a common, coherent understanding among various demographic communities and regions of our nation on the knowledge and skills students are expected to learn for their future is a step in the right direction. We acknowledge the diversity of individuals and groups who have provided feedback to improve and strengthen this initiative. Rigorous content and higher-order thinking skills for all students are important elements of achieving equity.

However, a more holistic approach is required in addressing the CCSS efforts to close the achievement gap, as a focus on curriculum and assessment alone is not sufficient. Gaps in achievement are an indicator of disparities between groups of students usually identified (accurately or not) by race, ethnicity, gender, language, socio-economic class, or special need identification (NCTM, 2004). There is scientific evidence of improved learning for students exposed to researched-informed instruction and assessment practices; however, gaps in achievement remain.

As long as student achievement continues to be measured by large-scale standardized tests then we believe that the CCSS requirements present yet another set of obstacles for too many students who currently are underperforming in mathematics. Therefore, it is imperative that individuals with knowledge and expertise about students who live in poverty, who have special needs, who are Hispanic/Latino and others whose first language is not English, who are African American or Native American, who are female, participate in all implementation phases and decision-making for CCSS as we move forward. Additionally, expertise from sociologists can provide important insight into the learning needs for students in different social class groups. Of particular importance is to draw on the work of sociologists and education researchers who have documented the schooling experiences of students who have historically underperformed in mathematics. This work can inform teachers in their efforts to increase participation and access for marginalized students in U.S. classrooms. Psychometricians must analyze current CCSS assessment instruments and procedures to determine if desired achievement will be accurately measured.

Further, we believe that leaders and teachers must refresh their understanding of equity (NCTM, 2008) as a process to address social justice issues that impact teaching and learning. Unfortunately, conscious and unconscious biases, blatant and subtle, personal and institutionalized have caused unnecessary mistreatment of learners in school. If these biases are not explicitly addressed within professional learning experiences associated with implementation of the CCSS, perceptions of marginalized groups of students in U.S. schools as unable to learn rigorous mathematics may be reinforced. We believe it is time for renewed emphasis on equity as part of ongoing mathematics professional learning now and in the future.

The CCSS have the potential to level the playing field for all students – but we wonder how does one instrument measure the growth of the students on that field – when the students live in diverse landscapes on the field. We can no longer believe that the field is the same for all students. However, past experience reminds us that this must be an inclusive, well thought through effort if all students are to benefit equitably. The organizations listed will continue to engage in discussion with each other on the CCSS and are ready and willing to lend their expertise to CCSS experts.

References:

- National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. (2004). *The NCTM achievement gap task force final report*. Reston, VA: Author.
- National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. (2008). *Equity in mathematics education* (position statement). Retrieved from www.nctm.org/about/content.aspx?id=13490.