



Introduction

A high-quality mathematics program is essential for all students and provides every student with the opportunity to choose among the full range of future career paths. Mathematics, when taught well, is a subject of beauty and elegance, exciting in its logic and coherence. It trains the mind to be analytic—providing the foundation for intelligent and precise thinking.

To compete successfully in the worldwide economy, today's students must have a high degree of comprehension in mathematics. For too long schools have suffered from the notion that success in mathematics is the province of a talented few. Instead, a new expectation is needed: all students will attain California's mathematics academic content standards, and many will be inspired to achieve far beyond the minimum standards.

These content standards establish what every student in California can and needs to learn in mathematics. They are comparable to the standards of the most academically demanding nations, including Japan and Singapore—two high-performing countries in the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). Mathematics is critical for all students, not only those who will have careers that demand advanced mathematical preparation but all citizens who will be living in the twenty-first century. These standards are based on the premise that all students are capable of learning rigorous mathematics and learning it well, and all are capable of learning far more than is currently expected. Proficiency in most of mathematics is not an innate characteristic; it is

achieved through persistence, effort, and practice on the part of students and rigorous and effective instruction on the part of teachers. Parents and teachers must provide support and encouragement.

The standards focus on essential content for all students and prepare students for the study of advanced mathematics, science and technical careers, and postsecondary study in all content areas. All students are required to grapple with solving problems; develop abstract, analytic thinking skills; learn to deal effectively and comfortably with variables and equations; and use mathematical notation effectively to model situations. The goal in mathematics education is for students to:

- Develop fluency in basic computational skills.
- Develop an understanding of mathematical concepts.
- Become mathematical problem solvers who can recognize and solve routine problems readily and can find ways to reach a solution or goal where no routine path is apparent.
- Communicate precisely about quantities, logical relationships, and unknown values through the use of signs, symbols, models, graphs, and mathematical terms.
- Reason mathematically by gathering data, analyzing evidence, and building arguments to support or refute hypotheses.
- Make connections among mathematical ideas and between mathematics and other disciplines.

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The standards identify what all students in California public schools should know and be able to do at each grade level. Nevertheless, local flexibility is maintained with these standards. Topics may be introduced and taught at one or two grade levels before mastery is expected. Decisions about how best to teach the standards are left to teachers, schools, and school districts.

The standards emphasize computational and procedural skills, conceptual understanding, and problem solving. These three components of mathematics instruction and learning are not separate from each other; instead, they are intertwined and mutually reinforcing.

Basic, or computational and procedural, skills are those skills that all students should learn to use routinely and automatically. Students should practice basic skills sufficiently and frequently enough to commit them to memory.

Mathematics makes sense to students who have a conceptual understanding of the domain. They know not only *how* to apply skills but also *when* to apply them and *why* they should apply them. They understand the structure and logic of mathematics and use the concepts flexibly, effectively, and appropriately. In seeing the big picture and in understanding the concepts, they are in a stronger position to apply their knowledge to situations and problems they may not have encountered before and readily recognize when they have made procedural errors.

The mathematical reasoning standards are different from the other standards in that they do not represent a content domain. Mathematical reasoning is involved in all strands.

The standards do not specify how the curriculum should be delivered. Teachers may use direct instruction, explicit teaching, knowledge-based, discovery-learning, investigatory, inquiry-based, problem solving-based, guided discovery, set-theory-based, traditional, progressive, or other methods to teach students the subject matter set forth in these standards. At

the middle and high school levels, schools can use the standards with an integrated program or with the traditional course sequence of algebra I, geometry, algebra II, and so forth.

Schools that utilize these standards “enroll” students in a mathematical apprenticeship in which they practice skills, solve problems, apply mathematics to the real world, develop a capacity for abstract thinking, and ask and answer questions involving numbers or equations. Students need to know basic formulas, understand what they mean and why they work, and know when they should be applied. Students are also expected to struggle with thorny problems after learning to perform the simpler calculations on which they are based.

Teachers should guide students to think about why mathematics works in addition to how it works and should emphasize understanding of mathematical concepts as well as achievement of mathematical results. Students need to recognize that the solution to any given problem may be determined by employing more than one strategy and that the solution frequently raises new questions of its own: Does the answer make sense? Are there other, more efficient ways to arrive at the answer? Does the answer bring up more questions? Can I answer those? What other information do I need?

Problem solving involves applying skills, understanding, and experiences to resolve new or perplexing situations. It challenges students to apply their understanding of mathematical concepts in a new or complex situation, to exercise their computational and procedural skills, and to see mathematics as a way of finding answers to some of the problems that occur outside a classroom. Students grow in their ability and persistence in problem solving by extensive experience in solving problems at a variety of levels of difficulty and at every level in their mathematical development.

Problem solving, therefore, is an essential part of mathematics and is subsumed in every

strand and in each of the disciplines in grades eight through twelve. Problem solving is not separate from content. Rather, students learn concepts and skills in order to apply them to solve problems in and outside school. Because problem solving is distinct from a content domain, its elements are consistent across grade levels.

The problems that students solve must address important mathematics. As students progress from grade to grade, they should deal with problems that (1) require increasingly more advanced knowledge and understanding of mathematics; (2) are increasingly complex (applications and purely mathematical investigations); and (3) require increased use of inductive and deductive reasoning and proof. In addition, problems should increasingly require students to make connections among mathematical ideas within a discipline and across domains. Each year students need to solve problems from all strands, although most of the problems should relate to the mathematics that students study that year. A good problem is one that is mathematically important; specifies the problem to be solved but not the solution path; and draws upon grade-level appropriate skills and conceptual understanding.

Organization of the Standards

The mathematics content standards for kindergarten through grade seven are organized by grade level and are presented in five strands: number sense; algebra and functions; measurement and geometry; statistics, data analysis, and probability; and mathematical reasoning. Focus statements indicating the increasingly complex mathematical skills that will be required of students from kindergarten through grade seven are included at the beginning of each grade level; the statements indicate the ways in which the discrete skills and concepts form a cohesive whole.

The standards for grades eight through twelve are organized differently from those for kindergarten through grade seven. Strands are not used for organizational purposes because the mathematics studied in grades eight through twelve falls naturally under the discipline headings algebra, geometry, and so forth. Many schools teach this material in traditional courses; others teach it in an integrated program. To allow local educational agencies and teachers flexibility, the standards for grades eight through twelve do not mandate that a particular discipline be initiated and completed in a single grade. The content of these disciplines must be covered, and students enrolled in these disciplines are expected to achieve the standards regardless of the sequence of the disciplines.

Mathematics Standards and Technology

As rigorous mathematics standards are implemented for all students, the appropriate role of technology in the standards must be clearly understood. The following considerations may be used by schools and teachers to guide their decisions regarding mathematics and technology:

Students require a strong foundation in basic skills. Technology does not replace the need for all students to learn and master basic mathematics skills. All students must be able to add, subtract, multiply, and divide easily without the use of calculators or other electronic tools. In addition, all students need direct work and practice with the concepts and skills underlying the rigorous content described in the *Mathematics Content Standards for California Public Schools* so that they develop an understanding of quantitative concepts and relationships. The students' use of technology must build on these skills and understandings; it is not a substitute for them.

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Technology should be used to promote mathematics learning. Technology can help promote students' understanding of mathematical concepts, quantitative reasoning, and achievement when used as a tool for solving problems, testing conjectures, accessing data, and verifying solutions. When students use electronic tools, databases, programming language, and simulations, they have opportunities to extend their comprehension, reasoning, and problem-solving skills beyond what is possible with traditional print resources. For example, graphing calculators allow students to see instantly the graphs of complex functions and to explore the impact of changes. Computer-based geometry construction tools allow students to see figures in three-dimensional space and experiment with the effects of transformations. Spreadsheet programs and databases allow students to key in data and produce various graphs as well as compile statistics. Students can determine the most appropriate ways to display data and quickly and easily make and test conjectures about the impact of change on the data set. In addition, students can exchange ideas and test hypotheses with a far wider audience through the Internet. Technology may also be used to reinforce basic skills through computer-assisted instruction, tutoring systems, and drill-and-practice software.

The focus must be on mathematics content. The focus must be on learning mathematics, using technology as a tool rather than as an end in itself. Technology makes more mathematics accessible and allows one to solve mathematical problems with speed and efficiency. However, technological tools cannot be used effectively without an understanding of mathematical skills, concepts, and relationships. As students learn to use electronic tools, they must also develop the quantitative reasoning necessary to make full use of those tools. They must also have opportunities to reinforce their estimation and mental math skills and the concept of place value so that they can quickly check their calculations for reasonableness and accuracy.

Technology is a powerful tool in mathematics. When used appropriately, technology may help students develop the skills, knowledge, and insight necessary to meet rigorous content standards in mathematics and make a successful transition to the world beyond school. The challenge for educators, parents, and policymakers is to ensure that technology supports, but is not a substitute for, the development of quantitative reasoning and problem-solving skills.