



Francis (Skip) Fennell

My hope is that the proposed reauthorization of NCLB, which is under discussion as this message is being written, will include support for mathematics teachers in the equation for success for all students.

Originally published in the
NCTM News Bulletin
(July/August 2007).
Copyright 2007,
The National Council of
Teachers of Mathematics.
All rights reserved.

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND: CHALLENGES FOR ALL TEACHERS

Welcome back! Well, here you go—one more year. Whether this is your first year of teaching or your thirty-first, the energy and enthusiasm you'll put into getting ready for the new school year will be, shall we say, special.

Getting ready for new students and those first few days of school requires more than getting your classroom in order, sorting through rosters, making sure materials are stocked, greeting colleagues, and engaging in beginning-of-the-year professional development activities. It also includes planning for the long-range stuff, such as the progress of your students, your school, and your school district according to the expectations set by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. In this way, NCLB has affected teachers at every level.

My hope is that the proposed reauthorization of NCLB, which is under discussion as this message is being written, will include support for mathematics teachers in the equation for success for all students. Such support should help teachers meet the following challenges:

> **Highly Qualified Teachers**—One of the signature elements of NCLB is the requirement that all teachers be highly qualified. With that said, I wonder why it is that someone with a degree can become highly qualified by merely taking a test! Certainly, the more popular tests used to certify teachers need to be examined and strengthened in the areas of mathematics and mathematics education. What do we do about (and for) teachers of mathematics who work in the area of special education as well as those who work with English Language Learners? How do we ensure that all teachers of mathematics know the mathematics and pedagogy essential for teaching the subject?

> **High-Stakes Testing**—Large-scale assessments haunt all teachers. As states move to revise their state curricular frameworks so that fewer mathematical topics are covered at each grade level, assessments must be aligned with these revised curricula, which will presumably be influenced by the Council's recently published *Curriculum Focal Points for Prekindergarten Through Grade 8 Mathematics*. Wouldn't it be nice to have fewer curriculum topics to focus on, with state assessments linked to more important curricular topics? This would enable teachers to prepare fewer mathematics topics and ensure deeper understanding of them. Maybe, just maybe, this would halt the process of providing a test-prep curriculum for far too many students and touching too quickly on many topics a few days before the annual assessments merely because they are on "the test."

> **Meeting Needs**—Most teachers applaud the intent of No Child Left Behind. This is a law that seeks to guarantee that every child has a chance, can't be hidden, and has a path to proficiency. But teachers need support to meet the student population's wide range of instructional needs. The solution is not to lower standards for students by marginalizing curriculum, assignments, and assessments; to lower the proficiency level on state assessments to meet the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirement of NCLB; or to simply provide before- or after-school intervention programs without ensuring that they really help students.

Yep, the new school year is upon us, and with it come these challenges—and plenty more. No Child Left Behind offers challenges for all mathematics teachers. Let's hope that we'll get the assistance we need to ensure that all students have opportunities to learn challenging mathematics. Have a great year!

