

Quality Curriculum Can Help More Kids Love Math

“We want kids to love math, to think like mathematicians, to appreciate its relevance and its beauty – and we want them to learn real math skills that they are going to need in life.”

These are words from Joel Rose, CEO of New Classrooms and former teacher, spoken earlier this week when the Collaborative for Student Success partnered with The Hill to host *Making the Grade: Solving the U.S. Math Problem*. The event laid bare how severe of an impact the pandemic has wrought on kids' math progress. As Chad Aldeman pointed out in [his coverage](#), students across ages and grade levels are seeing precedent-setting declines in math achievement – and those who were already farthest behind are struggling the most to catch up. Meanwhile, [grade inflation](#) means many kids continue to get As and Bs in math, even if their math skills are far below grade level, which sends a signal to parents that everything's fine.

As the mom of a middle and a high schooler who “does education” for a living, this is personal for me. During the disruptions of COVID, I couldn't help my kids with math the same way I could jump into their English assignments, and I watched them sail through online work with good grades even as they struggled more than usual with math concepts. That's why I'm so glad the event explored the long-standing acceptance people like me have had that it's ok if math is just not your thing.

2023 National Teacher of the Year, Rebecka Peterson, encouraged the audience to flip the script on this aversion to math. She said, “When students go up to my English teacher colleagues and say, ‘I just don't like reading,’ my colleagues say, ‘We just haven't found you the right book yet.’ What would it look like if, when students say, ‘I don't like math,’ our response was: ‘we just haven't found you the right problem yet?’”

We should think the same way when it comes to math curriculum. A recent [EdWeek survey](#) shows that nearly a quarter of teachers do not report using a core mathematics curriculum at all, and [EdReports holds](#) that only 40% of math teachers regularly report using standards-aligned materials. Maybe we just haven't found the right curriculum for their students yet. Jeff Livingston's [recent piece](#) in *The 74* points out that, “the national math market is in a transitional state, gravitating toward higher-quality curriculum overall. The shift is nascent but gathering steam. As states and districts move into their next K-8 math curriculum adoptions, they'll have a much stronger field of choices.”

[State policy actions](#) to advance quality math instruction are gaining momentum, too. Alabama led the way with the passage of its 2022 Numeracy Act, which carves out a distinct state role in reviewing K-5 math instructional materials and intervention programs for struggling students and schools. Since then, a handful of other states have taken actions ranging from strengthening math teacher preparation and professional development to bolstering individual student supports with quality instruction at the [center](#).

Helping kids (and teachers and parents) love math is a problem we can solve – and high-quality instructional materials are an important part of the solution. Check out the [full event video](#) for more inspiration on the roles we all can play.

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