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The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics has released a new document that identifies the most important mathematical topics for each grade level K-8. Seen as the next step to implementing NCTM's Standards, *Curriculum Focal Points* specifies the mathematical content that a student needs to understand deeply and thoroughly for future mathematics learning.

Recent media coverage of the release claim that the document is a complete reversal for NCTM and a plan for returning to the old ways of teaching mathematics. NCTM's president, Francis (Skip) Fennel, responded to these reports with a letter to the Council's members. In that letter he states,

*...A September 12 Wall Street Journal article did not represent the substance or intent of the focal points. The focal points are not about the basics; they are about important foundational topics. The Council has always supported learning the basics. Students should learn and be able to recall basic facts and become computationally fluent, but such knowledge and skills should be acquired with understanding. Unfortunately, some of the other news media have followed the Wall Street Journal's lead and have similarly misrepresented the Curriculum Focal Points.*

You can learn more about [Curriculum Focal Points](#) from NCTM's website. There you can read [Dr. Fennel's letter to members](#), see [answers to questions](#) about the document, and submit your own questions.