

Destreaming/De-tracking Math Position Statement

The goal of each OAME/AOEM Position Statement is to outline OAME/AOEM's beliefs on issues surrounding math education by providing transparency and guidance to those involved with mathematics education in Ontario. Any clarification regarding a position, or how to proceed in accordance with it, can be brought to the attention of the OAME/AOEM Executive Committee.

Focal Question

How do we as a community of educators support effective implementations of practices for a destreamed mathematics classroom?

Summary

OAME/AOEM promotes, supports, and advocates for excellence in mathematics education for all students. There is a body of research which has demonstrated that academic streaming based on perceived mathematical ability has negatively impacted Black students, Indigenous students, students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and students receiving special education supports. As stated in the [OAME/AOEM position statement on Access, Equity, and Inclusion](#), "All students should have equitable access to a high-quality, research-informed mathematics education that meets their diverse needs and is provided in a safe and inclusive environment." As such, OAME/AOEM supports mathematics educators in the dismantling of formal and informal structures rooted in bias that lead to academic streaming.

Academic streaming (or tracking) is the separation of students by perceived ability and/or previous academic achievement. Destreaming (or de-tracking) refers to the dismantling of academic streaming systems, leading to academically heterogeneous or diverse student groupings that are consistent within a classroom and between classrooms. Academic streaming and destreaming may be occurring explicitly (visible structures that noticeably separate students by perceived ability) and implicitly (invisible structures and practices that separate students by perceived ability).

Why is destreaming important?

Research has shown that separating students into academic pathways too early in their schooling widens achievement gaps and inequities, particularly for Black students, Indigenous students, students from low socio-economic backgrounds, and students receiving special education supports (e.g., OECD, 2012; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2017). An educator who is effectively implementing a mathematics curriculum in a destreamed setting might address these inequities by:

- fostering a healthy and positive relationship with mathematics for all students
- fostering active self-reflections on potential educator biases
- valuing and affirming diverse knowledge, experiences, and contributions from all students
- combatting existing systemic and societal presumptions about students and about mathematics

Effective Practices for a Destreamed Mathematics Classroom

OAME/AOEM is committed to creating, supporting, and promoting opportunities for educators to learn and collaborate on strategies to effectively teach in a destreamed mathematics classroom. As an organization, we advocate for equitable and inclusive practices that provide all students with high-quality mathematics learning experiences and empower them to see themselves as mathematicians.

Destreamed instructional practices should:

- allow for student voices and choices while learning mathematics (e.g., Universal Design for Learning (UDL), differentiated instruction)
- reflect students' diverse backgrounds and experiences, allowing them to see themselves in the content (e.g., Culturally Responsive and Relevant Practices (CRRP), using mathematics as a tool to investigate topics of social justice)
- foster a safe learning environment, where students feel valued and comfortable enough to share their thinking (e.g., building an inclusive classroom culture and community, thinking-classroom practices, productive struggle, rough-draft thinking)
- recognize the diversity of ways that students demonstrate their learning (e.g., triangulating evidence of learning, open and parallel tasks, providing multiple opportunities to demonstrate learning over time)
- support all students to see that mathematics includes a collaborative human story across cultures (e.g., examining historical development of mathematics from all cultures beyond the currently dominant Eurocentric perspective)

Important Considerations

There are formal and informal structures rooted in systemic discrimination and educator bias that lead to academic streaming, and there is no one-size-fits-all solution. OAME/AOEM believes that, as a community of educators, it is imperative for us to continue to learn about systemic racism, classism, ableism, and other forms of discrimination in education. We must also reflect continuously in order to mitigate biases and the negative impacts of our instructional decisions. These decisions must consider the diversity of lived student experiences, and that this diversity may vary from year to year, grade to grade, and course to course. OAME/AOEM supports mathematics educators' ongoing commitment to removing barriers to equitable mathematics education and in creating learning environments that support **all** students.

Resources

CASE (Coalition for Alternatives to Streaming in Education). (2021). *CASE fact sheet and recommendations*. Author.

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