

MATHEMATICS

Textbook for Class VIII

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राष्ट्रीय शैक्षिक अनुसंधान और प्रशिक्षण परिषद्
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING

ISBN 978-81-7450-814-0

First Edition

January 2008 Magha 1929

Reprinted

January 2009 Pausa 1930

January 2010 Magha 1931

November 2010 Kartika 1932

January 2012 Magha 1933

November 2012 Kartika 1934

November 2013 Kartika 1935

November 2014 Kartika 1936

December 2015 Agrahayna 1937

December 2016 Pausa 1938

December 2017 Pausa 1939

PD 800T RPS

© National Council of Educational
Research and Training, 2008

₹ 55.00

Printed on 80 GSM paper with NCERT
watermark

Published at the Publication Division by the
Secretary, National Council of Educational
Research and Training, Sri Aurobindo Marg,
New Delhi 110 016 and printed at Nova
Publications, C-51, Focal Point Extn.,
Jalandhar-144 004

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Foreword

The National Curriculum Framework, 2005, recommends that children's life at school must be linked to their life outside the school. This principle marks a departure from the legacy of bookish learning which continues to shape our system and causes a gap between the school, home and community. The syllabi and textbooks developed on the basis of NCF signify an attempt to implement this basic idea. They also attempt to discourage rote learning and the maintenance of sharp boundaries between different subject areas. We hope these measures will take us significantly further in the direction of a child-centred system of education outlined in the National Policy on Education (1986).

The success of this effort depends on the steps that school principals and teachers will take to encourage children to reflect on their own learning and to pursue imaginative activities and questions. We must recognise that, given space, time and freedom, children generate new knowledge by engaging with the information passed on to them by adults. Treating the prescribed textbook as the sole basis of examination is one of the key reasons why other resources and sites of learning are ignored. Inculcating creativity and initiative is possible if we perceive and treat children as participants in learning, not as receivers of a fixed body of knowledge.

These aims imply considerable change in school routines and mode of functioning. Flexibility in the daily time-table is as necessary as rigour in implementing the annual calendar so that the required number of teaching days are actually devoted to teaching. The methods used for teaching and evaluation will also determine how effective this textbook proves for making children's life at school a happy experience, rather than a source of stress or boredom. Syllabus designers have tried to address the problem of curricular burden by restructuring and reorienting knowledge at different stages with greater consideration for child psychology and the time available for teaching. The textbook attempts to enhance this endeavour by giving higher priority and space to opportunities for contemplation and wondering, discussion in small groups, and activities requiring hands-on experience.

NCERT appreciates the hard work done by the textbook development committee responsible for this book. We wish to thank the Chairperson of the advisory group in science and mathematics, Professor J.V. Narlikar and the Chief Advisor for this book, Dr H.K. Dewan for guiding the work of this committee. Several teachers contributed to the development of this textbook; we are grateful to their principals for making this possible. We are indebted to the institutions and organisations which have generously permitted us to draw upon their resources, material and personnel. As an organisation committed to systemic reform and continuous improvement in the quality of its products, NCERT welcomes comments and suggestions which will enable us to undertake further revision and refinement.

New Delhi
30 November 2007

Director
National Council of Educational
Research and Training

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Preface

This is the final book of the upper primary series. It has been an interesting journey to define mathematics learning in a different way. The attempt has been to retain the nature of mathematics, engage with the question why learn mathematics while making an attempt to create materials that would address the interest of the learners at this stage and provide sufficient and approachable challenge to them. There have been many views on the purpose of school mathematics. These range from the fully utilitarian to the entirely aesthetic perceptions. Both these end up not engaging with the concepts and enriching the apparatus available to the learner for participating in life. The NCF emphasises the need for developing the ability to mathematise ideas and perhaps experiences as well. An ability to explore the ideas and framework given by mathematics in the struggle to find a richer life and a more meaningful relationship with the world around.

This is not even easy to comprehend, far more difficult to operationalise. But NCF adds to this an even more difficult goal. The task is to involve everyone of that age group in the classroom or outside in doing mathematics. This is the aim we have been attempting to make in the series.

We have, therefore, provided space for children to engage in reflection, creating their own rules and definitions based on problems/tasks solved and following their ideas logically. The emphasis is not on remembering algorithms, doing complicated arithmetical problems or remembering proofs, but understanding how mathematics works and being able to identify the way of moving towards solving problems.

The important concern for us has also been to ensure that all students at this stage learn mathematics and begin to feel confident in relating mathematics. We have attempted to help children read the book and to stop and reflect at each step where a new idea has been presented. In order to make the book less formidable we have included illustrations and diagrams. These combined with the text help the child comprehend the idea. Throughout the series and also therefore in this book we have tried to avoid the use of technical words and complex formulations. We have left many things for the student to describe and write in her own words.

We have made an attempt to use child friendly language. To attract attention to some points blurbs have been used. The attempt has been to reduce the weight of long explanations by using these and the diagrams. The illustrations and fillers also attempt to break the monotony and provide contexts.

Class VIII is the bridge to Class IX where children will deal with more formal mathematics. The attempt here has been to introduce some ideas in a way that is moving towards becoming formal. The tasks included expect generalisation from the gradual use of such language by the child.

The team that developed this textbook consisted teachers with experience and appreciation of children learning mathematics. This team also included people with experience of research in mathematics teaching-learning and an experience of producing materials for children. The feedback on the textbooks for Classes VI and VII was kept in mind while developing this textbook. This process of development also included discussions with teachers during review workshop on the manuscript.

In the end, I would like to express the grateful thanks of our team to Professor Krishna Kumar, *Director*, NCERT, Professor G. Ravindra, *Joint Director*, NCERT and Professor Hukum Singh, *Head*, DESM, for giving us an opportunity to work on this task with freedom and with full support. I am also grateful to Professor J.V. Narlikar, Chairperson of the Advisory Group in Science and Mathematics for his suggestions. I am also grateful for the support of the team members from NCERT, Professor S.K. Singh Gautam, Dr V.P. Singh and in particular Dr Ashutosh K. Wazalwar who coordinated this work and made arrangements possible. In the end I must thank the Publication Department of NCERT for its support and advice and those from Vidya Bhawan who helped produce the book.

It need not be said but I cannot help mentioning that all the authors worked as a team and we accepted ideas and advice from each other. We stretched ourselves to the fullest and hope that we have done some justice to the challenge posed before us.

The process of developing materials is, however, a continuous one and we would hope to make this book better. Suggestions and comments on the book are most welcome.

H.K. DEWAN
Chief Advisor
Textbook Development Committee

A Note for the Teacher

This is the third and the last book of this series. It is a continuation of the processes initiated to help the learners in abstraction of ideas and principles of mathematics. Our students to be able to deal with mathematical ideas and use them need to have the logical foundations to abstract and use postulates and construct new formulations. The main points reflected in the NCF-2005 suggest relating mathematics to development of wider abilities in children, moving away from complex calculations and algorithm following to understanding and constructing a framework of understanding. As you know, mathematical ideas do not develop by telling them. They also do not reach children by merely giving explanations. Children need their own framework of concepts and a classroom where they are discussing ideas, looking for solutions to problems, setting new problems and finding their own ways of solving problems and their own definitions.

As we have said before, it is important to help children to learn to read the textbook and other books related to mathematics with understanding. The reading of materials is clearly required to help the child learn further mathematics. In Class VIII please take stock of where the students have reached and give them more opportunities to read texts that use language with symbols and have brevity and terseness with no redundancy. For this if you can, please get them to read other texts as well. You could also have them relate the physics they learn and the equations they come across in chemistry to the ideas they have learnt in mathematics. These cross-disciplinary references would help them develop a framework and purpose for mathematics. They need to be able to reconstruct logical arguments and appreciate the need for keeping certain factors and constraints while they relate them to other areas as well. Class VIII children need to have opportunity for all this.

As we have already emphasised, mathematics at the Upper Primary Stage has to be close to the experience and environment of the child and be abstract at the same time. From the comfort of context and/or models linked to their experience they need to move towards working with ideas. Learning to abstract helps formulate and understand arguments. The capacity to see interrelations among concepts helps us deal with ideas in other subjects as well. It also helps us understand and make better patterns, maps, appreciate area and volume and see similarities between shapes and sizes. While this is regarding the relationship of other fields of knowledge to mathematics, its meaning in life and our environment needs to be re-emphasised.

Children should be able to identify the principles to be used in contextual situations, for solving problems sift through and choose the relevant information as the first important step. Once students do that they need to be able to find the way to use the knowledge they have and reach where the problem requires them to go. They need to identify and define a problem, select or design possible solutions and revise or redesign the steps, if required. As they go further there would be more to do of this to be done. In Class VIII we have to get them to be conscious of the steps they follow. Helping children to develop the ability to construct appropriate models by breaking up the problems and evolving their own strategies and analysis of problems is extremely important. This is in the place of giving them prescriptive algorithms.

Cooperative learning, learning through conversations, desire and capacity to learn from each other and the recognition that conversation is not noise and consultation not cheating is an important part of change in attitude for you as a teacher and for the students as well. They should be asked to make presentations as a group with the inclusion of examples from the contexts of their own experiences. They should be encouraged to read the book in groups and formulate and express what they understand from it. The assessment pattern has to recognise and appreciate this and the classroom groups should be such that all children enjoy being with each other and are contributing to the learning of the group. As you would have seen different groups use different strategies. Some of these are not as efficient as others as they reflect the modeling done and reflect the thinking used. All these are appropriate and need to be analysed with children. The exposure to a variety of strategies deepens the mathematical understanding. Each group moves from where it is and needs to be given an opportunity for that.

For conciseness we present the key ideas of mathematics learning that we would like you to remember in your classroom.

1. Enquiry to understand is one of the natural ways by which students acquire and construct knowledge. The process can use generation of observations to acquire knowledge. Students need to deal with different forms of questioning and challenging investigations- explorative, open-ended, contextual and even error detection from geometry, arithmetic and generalising it to algebraic relations etc.
2. Children need to learn to provide and follow logical arguments, find loopholes in the arguments presented and understand the requirement of a proof. By now children have entered the formal stage. They need to be encouraged to exercise creativity and imagination and to communicate their mathematical reasoning both verbally and in writing.
3. The mathematics classroom should relate language to learning of mathematics. Children should talk about their ideas using their experiences and language. They should be encouraged to use their own words and language but also gradually shift to formal language and use of symbols.
4. The number system has been taken to the level of generalisation of rational numbers and their properties and developing a framework that includes all previous systems as sub-sets of the generalised rational numbers. Generalisations are to be presented in mathematical language and children have to see that algebra and its language helps us express a lot of text in small symbolic forms.
5. As before children should be required to set and solve a lot of problems. We hope that as the nature of the problems set up by them becomes varied and more complex, they would become confident of the ideas they are dealing with.
6. Class VIII book has attempted to bring together the different aspects of mathematics and emphasise the commonality. Unitary method, Ratio and proportion, Interest and dividends are all part of one common logical framework. The idea of variable and equations is needed wherever we need to find an unknown quantity in any branch of mathematics.

We hope that the book will help children learn to enjoy mathematics and be confident in the concepts introduced. We want to recommend the creation of opportunity for thinking individually and collectively.

We look forward to your comments and suggestions regarding the book and hope that you will send interesting exercises, activities and tasks that you develop during the course of teaching, to be included in the future editions. This can only happen if you would find time to listen carefully to children and identify gaps and on the other hand also find the places where they can be given space to articulate their ideas and verbalise their thoughts.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Council gratefully acknowledges the valuable contributions of the following participants of the Textbook Review Workshop: Shri Pradeep Bhardwaj, *TGT* (Mathematics) Bal Sthali Public Secondary School, Kirari, Nangloi, New Delhi; Shri Sankar Misra, *Teacher* in Mathematics, Demonstration Multipurpose School, Regional Institute of Education, Bhubaneswar (Orissa); Shri Manohar M. Dhok, *Supervisor*, M.P. Deo Smruti Lokanchi Shala, Nagpur (Maharashtra); Shri Manjit Singh Jangra, *Maths teacher*, Government Senior Secondary School, Sector-4/7, Gurgaon (Haryana); Dr. Rajendra Kumar Pooniwalla, U.D.T., Government Subhash Excellence School, Burhanpur (M.P.); Shri K. Balaji, *TGT* (Mathematics), Kendriya Vidyalaya No.1, Tirupati (A.P.); Ms. Mala Mani, Amity International School, Sector-44, Noida; Ms. Omlata Singh, *TGT* (Mathematics), Presentation Convent Senior Secondary School, Delhi; Ms. Manju Dutta, Army Public School, Dhaula Kuan, New Delhi; Ms. Nirupama Sahni, *TGT* (Mathematics), Shri Mahaveer Digambar Jain Senior Secondary School, Jaipur (Rajasthan); Shri Nagesh Shankar Mone, *Head Master*, Kantilal Purshottam Das Shah Prashala, Vishrambag, Sangli (Maharashtra); Shri Anil Bhaskar Joshi, *Senior teacher* (Mathematics), Manutai Kanya Shala, Tilak Road, Akola (Maharashtra); Dr. Sushma Jairath, *Reader*, DWS, NCERT, New Delhi; Shri Ishwar Chandra, *Lecturer (S.G.)* (Retd.) NCERT, New Delhi.

The Council is grateful for the suggestions/comments given by the following participants during the workshop of the mathematics Textbook Development Committee – Shri Sanjay Bolia and Shri Deepak Mantri from Vidya Bhawan Basic School, Udaipur; Shri Inder Mohan Singh Chhabra, Vidya Bhawan Educational Resource Centre, Udaipur.

The Council acknowledges the comments/suggestions given by Dr. R.P. Maurya, *Reader*, DESM, NCERT, New Delhi; Dr. Sanjay Mudgal, *Lecturer*, DESM, NCERT, New Delhi; Dr. T.P. Sharma, *Lecturer*, DESM, NCERT, New Delhi for the improvement of the book.

The Council acknowledges the support and facilities provided by Vidya Bhawan Society and its staff, Udaipur, for conducting workshops of the development committee at Udaipur and to the Director, Centre for Science Education and Communication (CSEC), Delhi University for providing library help.

The Council acknowledges the academic and administrative support of Professor Hukum Singh, Head, DESM, NCERT.

The Council also acknowledges the efforts of Sajjad Haider Ansari, Rakesh Kumar, Neelam Walecha, *DTP Operators*; Kanwar Singh, *Copy Editor*; Abhimanu Mohanty, *Proof Reader*, Deepak Kapoor, *Computer Station Incharge*, DESM, NCERT for technical assistance, APC Office and the Administrative Staff, DESM, NCERT and the Publication Department of the NCERT.

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