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# Foreword

**T**eachers are the lever in making change. We know that teachers can increase student progress by taking on the study of the complex, multifaceted task of teaching mathematics. This can be accomplished, in part, through learning about what research suggests has worked to increase student performance. Yet teachers who seek effective practices in teaching mathematics to students with special needs will find that the amount of research-based strategies for mathematics instruction pales in comparison to the expansive array of strategies for use with students with special needs in literacy. Teaching mathematics is intellectually challenging, as is teaching students with learning disabilities. The combination can be doubly difficult. These are the very reasons why this book is so significant and its value so unique.

Simply put, Judy Storeygard focuses on the learning issue rather than the label—or formal diagnosis. By emphasizing the characteristics of learning needs, she focuses on an approach that helpfully responds to the needs of students across disabilities. Building on multitiered prevention systems used in many states, she moves away from consistently starting with a focus on the “gaps” in students’ knowledge. She instead moves to identifying strengths in students’ prior knowledge—a sounder first step. She emphasizes the behaviors students present every day in the classroom and finds ways to combat the tendency to step in and do the work for the students. In its place is this press for acknowledging and identifying capabilities and potential contributions from which to build. This welcome approach is the underlying framework for the book—in essence minimizing what the student cannot do and maximizing the student’s opportunities to respond.

In *Count Me In!*, Judy steps out in front and illustrates how this change to more effective mathematics teaching can occur through the

shared examples drawn from the work of classroom teachers. In the spirit of her last book, *My Kids Can*, she continues to hold high expectations for all learners by crafting chapters that move beyond the labeling of students. She details ways to uncover some of the complex barriers to learning challenges, and shows how teachers can respond to a variety of misconceptions on their own.

*Count Me In!* showcases authentic environments in classrooms using a feature called “Voices From the Field.” Here, classroom teachers directly communicate their wisdom about the very purposeful choices they make. These conversations result in suggestions ranging from practical ideas that are applicable to Monday morning, as well as thoughtful, broad-based reflections that provide the foundations for an overarching philosophy about working with students with disabilities. The book addresses the challenges teachers confront every day in building the following for students:

- Capacity for learning mathematics
- Cognitive flexibility
- Ability to organize, plan, and self-monitor
- Development of useful strategies
- Skill in expressing mathematical ideas

By asking questions along the way, Judy reveals how to identify the organizational, behavioral, and cognitive skills necessary for students with special needs to derive meaning from a variety of activities. She then describes specific ways to provide additional support if any weaknesses in these skills are diagnosed.

Because approximately 80 percent of students’ time in mathematics class is spent working on mathematics problems, Judy’s emphasis on a problem-solving approach to instruction that promotes and supports sense-making is critical. Peppered with the verbatim dialogue from problem-solving sessions and samples of student work, she helps readers to see the moves necessary to help kids make sense of problem situations and to communicate their mathematical ideas. She paints vivid pictures of classrooms where the teacher’s language and organization are shared in think-alouds; these bring the process of building a safe environment for learning and cultivating a culture of acceptance to the forefront.

It is important for all teachers to know, when reading this book, that it is not about the fear of facing the challenge of learning to teach mathematics to students with disabilities in a potentially new way. It is about the complex task of doing so—and how others who’ve gone

before can support their colleagues. Teachers' voices are central to this work, and the mantra in one classroom, *effective effort plus time equals success*, holds true for teachers as well as students.

As one of the teachers in the book said to her students, "If you'd like help getting started, please come join us."

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