

Schifter, Deborah (Ed.):

What's Happening in Math Class? Vol. 2: Reconstructing Professional Identities

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Michael Price, Leicester

This book is the second of two volumes (Schifter 1996) resulting from the work of the Mathematics Process Writing Project (MPWP) in the United States of America. The project was directed over a three-year period (1990–1993) by Deborah Schifter of the Center for the Development of Teaching at the Education Development Center in Newton (Massachusetts) and was an extension of the work of the SummerMath for Teachers courses at Mount Holyoke College in South Hadley (Massachusetts) which Schifter directed from 1988 to 1993. The MPWP involved 48 teachers (44 women and four men) in the production of narratives (49 are mentioned on p. 5) about their classroom experiences in mathematics. In the first volume, 13 narratives were published and the second volume here under review includes nine narratives from elementary school teachers spanning Grades Kindergarten through 6. Four mathematics teacher educators provide commentaries on three pairs and one trio of narratives. Schifter provides an introduction, a conclusion and two appendices which helpfully include details of the structure of the MPWP courses, and the reading and writing assignments given to the participants.

In order to understand the significance of this book for the international development of mathematics education it is necessary to situate it in the context of recent developments in the USA. Schifter (p. 1) refers to “a convergence between changing social needs and two decades of research in cognitive psychology” which has helped to shape a new vision of the teaching and learning process in classrooms. This vision has been embodied in a number of influential policy documents over the last ten years, including major publications from the Mathematical Association of America (1991), the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (1991) and the National Research Council (1989, 1990).

Central to this vision is a constructivist view of learning in which each student builds a personal set of meanings for the mathematics in the curriculum as implemented by teachers in the classroom. In the words of the National Research Council (1989, p. 58–59), for students to understand what they learn “they must enact for themselves verbs that permeate the mathematics curriculum: ‘examine’, ‘represent’, ‘transform’, ‘solve’, ‘apply’, ‘prove’, ‘communicate’.” This view of the learning process has fundamental implications for both the forms of student engagement to be promoted in the mathematics classroom and the role of the teacher as a facilitator in

such engagement. The emphasis shifts to communication and collaboration among students in posing questions, formulating conjectures, discussing problems and evaluating solutions. In all this, the teacher “guided by close analysis of her students’ thinking, frames appropriate problem-solving contexts for them, facilitates discussion of their mathematical ideas, and steers them toward confrontation with important conceptual issues” (p. 1).

Translation of the rhetoric associated with this vision into curriculum reality requires practising teachers to “construct for themselves practices appropriate to its principles” (p. 1). As Schifter emphasises, such a process is complex and challenging for teachers, and involves “reconstructing professional identities” which is the subtitle of the book. As she makes clear, the major motivation for this book (and its companion volume) was the need for a “wealth of images” to provide interpretations for the “rhetorical motifs” of the reform movement (p. 6). The book provides a public contribution to what should, in Schifter’s view, be a continuous and unending process of professional learning about how students learn.

For the teacher contributors themselves, writing about their own classroom inquiries was an important part of their personal learning progression, supported by the MPWP courses. The teachers used tape recording, note taking, transcription, recollection and discussion with other teachers to inform their narratives. On the MPWP courses the teachers were also provided with formative reading and writing assignments, and regular feedback from Schifter, their instructor. Production of the final public narratives was nonetheless “time-consuming, exposing, and difficult” (p. 175). But the editor expresses the conviction that such writing “represents a form of professional research uniquely suited to the project of reform” (p. 175) which the writing was intended to support.

Seven of the nine narratives are presented under three headings which capture different aspects of the process of professional reconstruction: teachers as mathematical thinkers, as managers of the classroom, and as monitors of student learning. The two other narratives illustrate particular aspects of the new pedagogy and reflective practice focused on a scheme for graphical work and the use of student journals, both in Grade 3.

The first two narratives, from Lisa Yaffee and Nora L. Toney, concentrate on these teachers’ personal mathematics education and the tensions created between their past experiences and struggles as learners at the receiving end of mathematics instruction and the challenges of the new pedagogy as embodied in the summer and MPWP courses. The two narratives highlight the need to address elementary school teachers’ attitudes and feelings, which they bring to their own teaching and to in-service courses, as well as their perceptions of mathematical thinking. Toney, in particular, opens up and confronts much wider issues of race and gender which strongly impacted on her own mathematics education. In her essay on the two narratives, Deborah Loewenberg Ball draws out some of the implications of these teachers’ autobiographies for strategies to support the change process, including the potential and limitations of curriculum materials, courses and teachers’

Whats Happening In Math Class

Richard Bailey



Whats Happening In Math Class:

What's Happening in Math Class?: Envisioning new practices through teacher narratives, 1996 What's Happening in Math Class?: Reconstructing professional identities Deborah Schifter, 1996 These teacher narratives explore some challenges posed by the new mathematics pedagogy for the multiple identities teachers are being asked to enact professionally as mathematical thinkers acquiring the needed understandings of mathematics content and modes of thought as managers of classroom process and much more **What's happening in math class?** Deborah Schifter, What's Happening in Math Class?, 1996 **Resources in Education**, 1997 **A First Look at what We Can Learn from High Performing School Districts**, 1999 Transform Your Math Class Using Asset-Based Teaching for Grades 6-12 Michael D. Steele, Joleigh Honey, 2024-07-19 Foster a love of mathematics by creating a more inclusive and empowering learning environment through asset based teaching An asset based perspective on math education means starting with what students already know instead of focusing on what s missing This approach elevates student thinking and reasoning skills In this way educators acknowledge that all students bring prior experiences strengths talents and resources to the learning process and can contribute meaningfully in an authentic learning environment Transform Your Math Class Using Asset Based Teaching for Grades 6 12 provides insight into asset based perspectives in mathematics education to create an environment where all students feel valued and capable of being doers of mathematics In the book Michael Steele and Joleigh Honey highlight the importance of using language instructional routines and systemic structure that positively impact student engagement their math identity and ultimately their outcomes Providing a wealth of knowledge and practical strategies that can be used to transform math classrooms into inclusive supportive and empowering learning environments this book Introduces an asset based perspective that focuses on students strengths assets and potential to learn mathematics Includes a variety of frameworks and tools that teachers can use to build and grow their sense of asset based perspectives Offers strategies for promoting a growth mindset in mathematics encouraging productive struggle in math and promoting equitable math instruction Supports teachers in reflecting on their decisions self awareness and self management Includes a companion online study guide to support teachers individually or as part of a professional learning community Adopting asset based perspectives is about movement over time not about flipping a switch This book paves the path for an asset based journey that ultimately helps to transform our math classrooms and advance all students learning and development **What's Happening in Math Class ?**. Deborah Schifter, 1996 *Guided Math in Action* Nicki Newton, 2021-11-04 Learn how to help elementary students build mathematical proficiency with purposeful standards based differentiated engaging small group instruction This best selling book from Dr Nicki Newton provides a repertoire of in depth strategies for conducting effective guided math lessons scaffolding and managing learning in small groups and assessing learning Dr Newton shows you the framework for guided math lessons and then helps you develop an action plan to get started This fully updated second edition

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What's Happening in Math Class? ,1996 **Resources in Education** ,1996 The Competent Classroom Allison Zmuda,Mary Tomaino,2001 Describes the cross disciplinary journey of two high school teachers trying to align curriculum assessment and performance standards in their classrooms With a focus on the importance of constantly inspiring students the authors troubleshoot issues surrounding content standards instructional objectives and the aims of curriculum

Developing Mathematical Reasoning in Grades K-12 Lee Stiff,Frances R. Curcio,1999 This book sharpens your view of mathematical reasoning and its development at all grade levels It reveals the various perspectives about the nature of reasoning Also it addresses the many issues and concerns involving mathematical reasoning how learners reason in mathematics how communication promotes reasoning how teachers gather evidence of student reasoning what curricular approaches can be profitably explored what can be done to ensure success in developing reasoning and more This useful resource lets you dig deep into the topic and offers many ideas useful in your classroom *Proceedings of the High School Conference of ...* ,1923 *Proceedings of the High School Conference of November 1910-November 1931* ,1925

Proceedings of the High School Conference of November 1910-November 1931 Horace Adelbert Hollister,1925
Proceedings of the High School Conference University of Illinois. High school visitor,1922 **New York Court of Appeals. Records and Briefs.** New York (State)., The Mathematical Gazette ,1926 *Harper's Magazine* ,1927

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