

Preface

[S]eldom, if ever, do we ask the “who” question—who is the self that teaches? How does the quality of my selfhood form—or deform—the way I relate to my students, my subject, my colleague, my world? How can educational institutions sustain and deepen the selfhood from which good teaching comes?

—Parker J. Palmer
The Courage to Teach

All too often we hear anecdotes of teachers’ leaving the field because they are overwhelmed by the demands of teaching. Perhaps a teacher education program has prepared a novice teacher with the necessary mathematics content knowledge, a foundation in pedagogy, some classroom discipline techniques, and hands-on experience in the classroom. Maybe a more experienced teacher is struggling to keep abreast of the constant barrage of changes in the field or within his or her own building. Even within the supportive structure of a university teacher preparation program, in-service teachers may feel weighed down by all the demands placed on them. Regardless whether one is a beginning, experienced, or preservice teacher, one can become overwhelmed by all that is required to merely survive let alone flourish as a mathematics teacher.

In the quote above, Parker Palmer challenges us to ask ourselves how we might help colleagues on their continuous journey to better their teaching. Do we leave our colleagues to flounder as they navigate all the complexities of what it means to teach mathematics? Mentoring is the answer to Palmer’s question of how we might “sustain and deepen the selfhood from which good teaching comes.” Mentoring can provide the support and encouragement not only to survive the demands and challenges of teaching but also to thrive and develop as professionals who are dedicated to the teaching of mathematics.

In 2004, NCTM published a series of publications titled *Empowering the Beginning Teacher of Mathematics*. Realizing that a gap existed in providing similar support specifically for mentors of mathematics teachers, NCTM’s Educational Materials Committee issued a call for manuscripts that would provide the basis of practical “how to” advice for individuals who participate in formal or informal mentor training or serve in the capacity of instructional coach, peer coach, lead teacher, collaborative peer, department chair, administrator, critical friend, team leader, university supervisor, or department or grade-level colleague.

The original intent of the call was to create grade-level publications mirroring the framework of the beginning teacher books. However, when the editorial panel met to review the numerous submissions, the advice for mentors and mentoring programs was not so much differentiated by grade level but rather, was distinguished by the level of teaching experience of the teacher being mentored. The result is separate publications on the mentoring of beginning mathematics teachers, experienced mathematics teachers, and preservice mathematics teachers. Although some mentoring advice is specific to each group, other mentoring advice transcends any amount of teaching experience.

The intent of the editorial panel was to create publications on the mentoring of mathematics teachers that would be informative and practical resources that are easy to reference to address the reader's specific needs. We hope we have provided some useful ideas as well as challenged the reader to think differently about what it may mean to be a mentor.

REFERENCE

Palmer, Parker J. *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*. San Francisco, Calif.: Jossey-Bass, 1998.