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The Equity Committee Book Club: Deepening Comprehension and Elevating Conversations about Equity

Fall 2024 (/connections/fall-2024)

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The AMTE Equity Committee seeks to promote awareness, understanding, and sustained attention to equity in mathematics teacher education. As a part of this work, the committee provides equity-related resources for mathematics teacher educators (MTEs). In alignment with our purpose and mission, we created an annual Equity Book Club and invited all AMTE members to participate. The inaugural session began meeting in the Fall of 2023. The book club aims to create space and provide resources for AMTE members to grow in their equitable mathematics teaching knowledge, skills, and confidence. We envision the book club developing into a community where MTEs can connect, build relationships, and learn from each other. Since many MTEs work in a place where they are the sole or one of a small number of MTEs, having opportunities to collaborate with others can be invaluable. Moreover, given the current social and political climate where some states have banned aspects of equity work, we want the book club meetings to provide a safe space for all participants to learn and grow.

In the Fall of 2023, the five members of the Equity Committee worked together to design and implement the book club. The committee polled AMTE members and used their responses to design the book club, which met for two hours, one day a month for four months. Approximately fifteen to twenty AMTE members attended each month. To accommodate members' schedules, we offered two meeting times. One group met on Tuesday evenings, and the other met on Friday afternoons (Eastern Time). Based on survey responses, the book chosen for the inaugural book club was *Choosing to See: A Framework for Equity in the Math Classroom* by Pamela Seda and Kyndall Brown. The structure of each session included an icebreaker, an open discussion of the two or three chapters read with the sharing of resources and experiences, and a discussion around specific prompts or activities connected to the book chapters. During the last session, we were honored to have Dr. Pamela Seda attend and share her motivation for writing the book.

Book Review

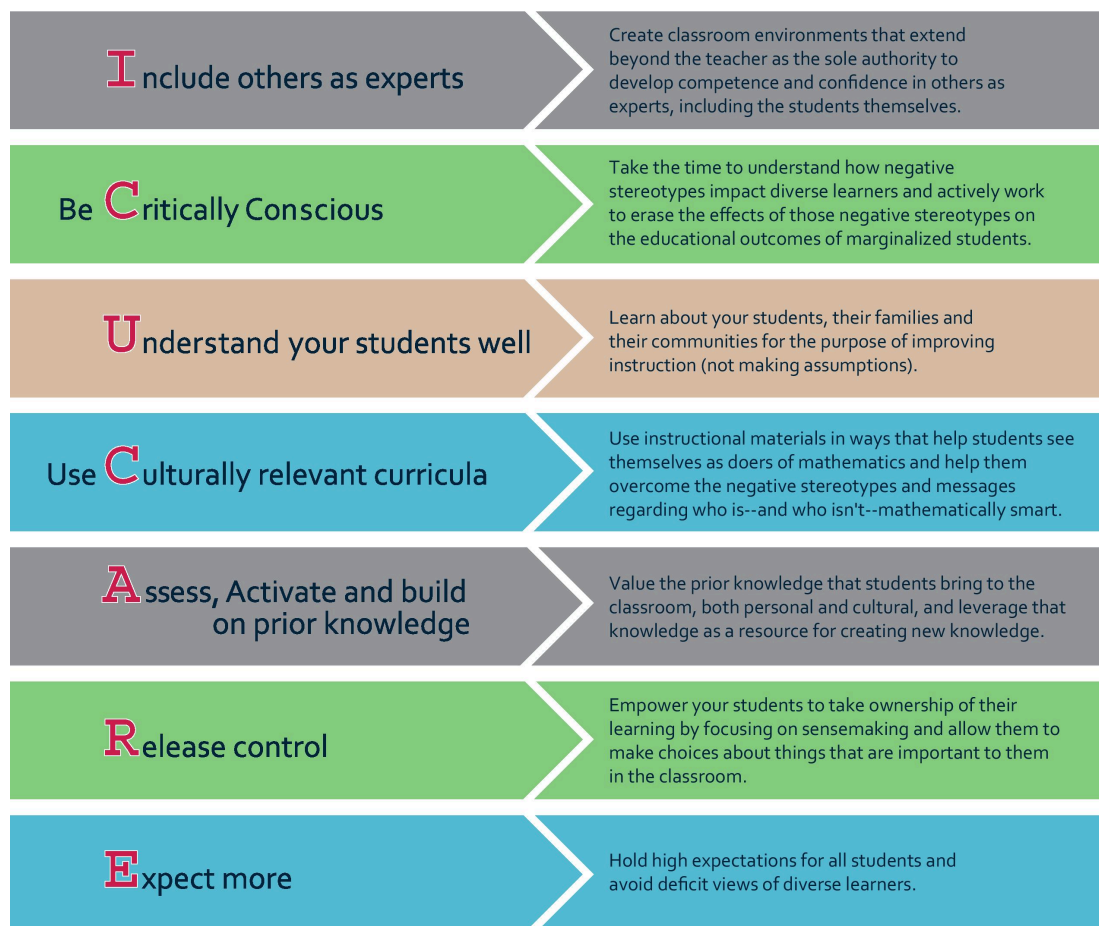
We strongly recommend this book to any current or aspiring mathematics educator. The book has seven chapters, each corresponding to a principle, represented by a letter in the acronym ICUCARE, the equity framework described in the book (see Figure 1). The seven principles are: (1) Include others as experts, (2) Be critically conscious, (3) Understand your students well, (4) Use culturally relevant curricula, (5) Assess, activate, and build on prior knowledge, (6) Release control, and (7) Expect more. Each chapter includes the following parallel structure: personal story, definition, why it is an equity issue, topic explanation, questions to consider, and a call to action.

Figure 1

ICUCARE Equity Framework

Seven Principles of Equity Pedagogy

ICUCARE Equity Framework



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Taken from:

Seda, P., & Brown, K. (2021). Choosing to see: A framework for equity in the math classroom. Dave Burgess Consulting, Inc.

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We appreciated the authors providing clear definitions for each principle, the research backing the principles, practical implementation strategies, and personal anecdotes illustrating their experiences. Seda and Brown (2021) emphasize that the framework is not a recipe but a blueprint that we can customize to meet the unique needs of the learners in our contexts. We found the practical examples of how we can empower each learner to thrive in our mathematics learning spaces inspiring. For instance, Seda (2023) shares how she applied the Release Control principle by empowering her learners to connect verbal, algebraic, numerical, and graphical (VANG) representations of functions using a card sort VANG game she created.

We wished the book had provided more guidance about the sequencing and prioritization of the principles. We were left wondering if the order of the principles mattered and if any were dependent on others or more impactful than others. We also think incorporating students' perspectives on the principles would enhance the book.

Participant Feedback

To better understand the experiences of those who participated in the book club, we collected data through an open-ended survey asking participants to reflect on what they liked about the book group, its impact on their beliefs and practices, and how we should improve future sessions. We sent the survey to the seventeen participants who regularly attended the meetings, and nine responded.

Respondents overwhelmingly indicated that they valued the book club. Several appreciated having an opportunity to get to know and talk with other MTEs across the country. In response to a survey question asking participants to share what they liked most about the book club, one person stated, "Getting to know AMTE members from a broad swath of the country!" Another participant shared, "Communicating with other MTEs regularly; hearing what others were doing; networking." These responses provided evidence that the book club helped create opportunities for participants to connect with other MTEs and build relationships. One member of the Equity Committee added, "I loved it at the AMTE conference when I saw several people from the book club. It was easy to connect with them because we had the shared experience of the book club." Both the participants and the facilitators felt a greater sense of connection from participating in the book club.

Regarding participant practices, over 50% of the MTEs who responded to the survey reported using what they learned from the book or using the book with the students they work with. For example, one participant explained, "I am currently using the book in my elementary math methods course with much success. The material is accessible to my undergraduates, and they are putting it to good use in their lesson creation and rehearsal teaching assignments." Another book club member described their intention to "use the tools with my coaches." Similarly, another participant wrote, "I am now using excerpts from the book that we read with my students!" Seeing participants apply what they learned so quickly to their teaching was inspiring. Another MTE reported that participating in the book club positively influenced her beliefs, leading to changes in her teaching. She explained it this way, "This book solidified my beliefs and practices more. Additionally, it kept me thinking about ways that I can stay within the limitations of my system and still provide guidance for my students on these vital topics." This quotation highlights how belonging to the book club can empower members. In the case above, the MTE gained the confidence she needed to work within the system and "provide guidance ... on these vital topics" to her students.

Future Book Clubs

The members of the Equity Committee were pleased with the participants' feedback from the inaugural book club and are looking forward to building on this experience in Fall 2024. The book club facilitators worked to foster and maintain a space where participants felt safe being open and honest. Some participants reported feeling safer and more supported sharing with the book club than with colleagues at their institution. One participant explained it this way, "The book club provided me with a space where I felt safe sharing my thoughts without fear of being judged or there being professional repercussions. Being able to do this helped me learn." This helped us realize that new or untenured faculty and faculty working in states that prohibit some forms of equity work need spaces where they feel comfortable sharing their beliefs and learning with others.

Another outcome of the book club that participants found invaluable was the frequent sharing of resources. Participants uploaded resources they currently use in a shared document created by the Equity Committee. These resources helped make the material come alive and gave participants tangible ways to improve their teaching.

Our next iteration of the book club is planned for Fall 2024. After a vote by AMTE members, the book we will use is *Cultivating Mathematical Hearts* by Maria del Rosario Zavala and Julia Maria Aguirre. The book club will meet on the second Tuesday of each month from September through December. Session One will meet from 12:00 – 1:30 (ET), and Session Two will meet from 6:00 – 7:30 (ET). We invite all AMTE members to join the Equity Book Club. Requests to sign up for the book club will be made through the AMTE listserv. We hope to see you in the Fall!

References

Seda, P. & Brown, K. (2021). *Choosing to see: A framework for equity in the math classroom*. Dave Burgess Consulting.

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(<https://doi.org/10.5951/MTLT.2023.0104>)

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AMTE Long Term Goals for 2024-28

AMTE 2024-2028 Long-Term Goals

1. Challenge and support mathematics teacher educators to engage with and take action on issues of social and racial justice in their work.
2. Support and provide guidance on the high-quality preparation, recruitment, retention, and diversification of mathematics teachers across the variety of educational spaces.
3. Engage in community building and other efforts to support the recruitment and retention, diversification, and professional learning of mathematics teacher educators and leaders who serve in a variety of educational contexts.
4. Strengthen the research and research-based practices of mathematics teacher educators to serve the evolving needs of students, educators, schools, and communities.

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