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Exploring Diversity in Researchers' Conceptualizations of Responsive Teaching

In Event: *Differing Notions of Responsive Teaching Across Mathematics and Science: Does the Discipline Matter?*

Sun, April 10, 10:35am to 12:05pm, Convention Center, Level One, Room 101

Abstract

Purpose

A growing body of educational research focuses on the practice of responsive teaching in which teachers listen and respond to their students' ideas (Ball, 1993; Jacobs et al., 2011). While there is some consensus in the field, there is also substantial variability in how researchers conceptualize the practice. We propose a set of researcher assumptions that help explain this variability and allow us to see through seemingly disciplinary differences among professional development (PD) efforts.

Perspective

We adopt the perspective that researcher conceptualizations of teaching reflect (tacit or explicit) views about (i) the nature of student learning, and (ii) the ways in which research about students' learning can and should inform teaching in that domain. Therefore, articulating researchers' understandings of student cognition and their views about the role of research in teaching is essential for making sense of differing conceptualizations of responsive teaching.

Methods and modes of inquiry

We conduct secondary analyses of published work on PD and research targeting responsive teaching.

Data sources and evidence

We use evidence from researchers' written descriptions to look for patterns connecting the conceptualization of responsive teaching enacted in the PD or operationalized in the research, the researchers' assumptions about students' cognition and learning, and their views about the role of research in PD and teaching.

Results

Differences between conceptualizations of responsive teaching can be characterized and explained largely by the researchers' views about the extent to which (i) students' knowledge about the given domain has been mapped by research, and (ii) learning the targeted material consists of progressing through hierarchical "stages." Mappedness deals with the completeness of descriptions of student cognition, whereas hierarchicalness deals with the orderliness of student learning. We use two well-developed exemplars from the literature to provide evidence that different sets of research assumptions underlie different conceptualizations of responsive teaching.

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