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Special Issue Reprint

Incremental and Innovative Approaches to Professional Development for Mathematics Teachers

Edited by: Samuel Otten , Amber G. Candela and Zandra De Araujo

Professional development researchers and teacher educators have been striving to improve mathematics instruction for decades, but in many places, there has been an inertia of procedurally focused mathematics instruction that has been incredibly resistant to change. Even when specific professional development (PD) efforts have found success in certain contexts or with certain teachers, it has proven difficult to sustain and disseminate these instructional improvements on a broader scale. This Special Issue on PD for mathematics teachers includes contributions reflecting on the limitations of transformational PD (PD that seeks profound changes in mathematics instruction) and studies on innovative and incremental approaches to PD striving to make instructional changes more manageable for teachers in their busy lives and complex educational contexts, and perhaps thus more likely to sustain and spread. Some of the featured research on incremental PD breaks down transformational practices into specific pieces, whereas other studies provide teachers with choices of smaller facets of teaching upon which to focus. Overall, this Special Issue urges the field to consider how incremental approaches to PD for mathematics teachers might address some of the limitations of typical transformational efforts.

