

2023 Judith E. Jacobs Lecturer:
*Grappling with the Tensions Between Building Foundations and
Encouraging Change: What Does it Mean to Belong to X?
(Where X might be Research Orientation, a Thought Group or
AMTE.)*

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**Grappling with the Tensions Between Building
Foundations and Encouraging Change: What Does
it Mean to Belong to X? (Where X might be
Research Orientation, a Thought Group or AMTE.)**

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State University

AMTE 2023 Judith Jacobs Lecture

February 3, 2023
New Orleans, LA

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Thank you!

Assumptions

- Audience
- Availability.
- My experiences influence who I am

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A few assumptions

I assume you are a mathematics teacher educator, but I will not assume you've been in the field long. So I am pitching this presentation toward relative newcomers to AMTE. I'll try to provide context that, for some in this audience, will not be necessary.

Anything, including the video, from the presentation is available to you.

My experiences influence who I am.

My personal relationships/roles have influenced me.



A partner

Influential Experiences



A friend



A parent



A child



A sibling ³

The theme for today's talk is about seeing, looking for, trying to take different perspectives, and I'll share a personal story about perspective. My mother died 5 1/2 weeks ago, so this story is also to honor her memory. My parents were German Jews; they each escaped the Nazis, they each lost relatives, their homes, and their country. My mother once pondered to me whether, if she had not been a Jew, would she have been strong enough to do the right thing during Nazi Germany? Would she have

helped people, even at the risk of her own family? I suppose no one really knows the answer to such a question until they are in that situation, but I remember thinking how extraordinary it was for someone who had suffered under Hitler, someone who lost family, their home, their life as they knew it, to still have the objectivity to even ask such a question. I value her ability to take that perspective, and I hope I can continue to honor her memory by always working to try to understand another person's perspective. Thanks, mom.

And my professional relationships/roles have influenced me.

Professional Influential Experiences

- Tire buster at Sears
- B.A., M.S., and Single Subject Teaching Credential, CSUN
- Started my career as a secondary school mathematics teacher in the Los Angeles area
- A teacher in Liberia, West Africa as a Peace Corps Volunteer
- Ph.D. in Math Ed, Univ. of Wisconsin (Student of Tom Carpenter)
- Mathematics Educator, School of Teacher Education, SDSU
- A colleague
- An advisor
- Co-chair of the AERA SIG-RME and co-chair of AERA's Division C Section 2 Annual Meeting
- Past president of AMTE (2017-2019)
- 2022-2023, Interim Director, SDSU's School of Teacher Education
- I'm retired (sort of)



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In college, while studying mathematics at CSUN, my part-time job was to change people's tires at Sears. I loved that job, and long after I became a professor I used to dream that I was a tire buster on the weekends.

I have two degrees and a teaching credential from CSUN.

I was a teacher in the Los Angeles area, and for 2 ¼ years in Liberia, West Africa. I am still in touch with some of my former students. The photo is of Fertiku Harris, taken in 2020 when my older son and I visited Liberia.

I was a graduate student at the Univ. of Wisconsin, and my advisor was Tom Carpenter. That's where I first began to place students' mathematical thinking at the core of my work. I have spent my career at SDSU. I've worked with a wonderful group of colleagues!

I have been an advisor, both at the doctoral level and master's level, and I've been able to continue working closely with some of my students. As you know, relationships evolve, so some people who were once my students are today my colleagues, friends, and mentors.

My service work is also important and has affected me. I think serving as AMTE president taught me much that I am using this year as the interim director of our department – it required me to see more perspectives.

And in 2021, I retired. But a California State University faculty member may enroll in a Faculty Early Retirement Program and work ½ time for up to 5 years. I'm in my second year, and in June, when I was asked to step in as Interim Director, I was willing to do it, and wow, am I grateful I did. What a privilege it has been to have an even broader perspective of the work of faculty, lecturers, supervisors, and staff!

I'm honored to be making this presentation.

Judith Jacobs Lecturers

2003, Judith E. Jacobs	2013, Karen Karp
2004, Thomas J. Cooney	2014, Barbara J. Reyes
2005, Glenda Lappan	2015, Nadine Bezuk
2006, Judith Sowder	2016, Francis (Skip) Fennell
2007, Deborah Loewenberg Ball	2017, Marilyn E. Strutchens
2008, Ed Silver	2018, Margaret (Peg) Smith
2009, Jeremy Kilpatrick	2019, Denise A. Spangler
2010, James Hiebert	2020, Paula Sztajn
2011, Joan Ferrini-Mundy	2021, Marta Civil
2012, Deborah Schifter	2022, Sandra Crespo

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What a wonderful group of colleagues! And I'm proud to represent this special organization and to have worked alongside so many thoughtful, dedicated, and caring people.

And I would like to dedicate this presentation to Tim Hendrix, who is unable to travel this year to AMTE. Tim and I call each other brothers, not of blood, but of heart. I know that Tim is a friend to many in this audience, and he's a great friend to AMTE. We miss you this year, Tim!

This presentation is dedicated to my close friend,
to a great friend of AMTE, Tim Hendrix.



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So what's with this title and description?

Grappling with the Tensions Between Building Foundations and Encouraging Change: What Does it Mean to Belong to X? (Where X might be Research Orientation, a Thought Group or AMTE.)

Looking for Multiple/Differing/Evolving Perspectives
Or...seeing both sides...

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I think it was at the STaR Conference where I first heard that we should not fix other people in time, and maybe the opposite of fixing people in time is recognizing that people who are committed to growing are always changing and developing new perspectives. One way to think about the purpose of this talk is to ask what it means NOT to fix in place a research orientation or an organization, and looking for other perspectives while holding on to what is valuable is an ongoing challenge.

I'll tell some stories today, and note that sometimes I go off on a tangent.
Click: But sometimes the side trip is the most memorable part of the journey.

A story teller...



But sometimes
the side trip is the
most memorable
part of the
journey.

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Here's a quick sidetrip. Advisory boards. I used to associate them with funded research grants. Our research projects have had great advisory boards, and I love serving on advisory boards, to get inside of the thinking and work of others. When I agreed to give this talk, I invited six colleagues/friends to be on my advisory board, and they heard this talk earlier this week.

Actually, they heard a version of the talk that does not exist anymore. If you have a major paper to write or a major task to undertake, consider asking some people to serve on your advisory board. You don't have to meet much, but the accountability helps and the feedback will make your project better.

The Plan

- Introduction
- Stances, A Personal Example
- Teaching Example – Calling home
- Research Perspectives: A Videoclip
- A Service Example: AMTE
- Final Thoughts
- Questions

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Early in my marriage, when my wife and I had a disagreement, I sometimes found myself thinking,

Three Stances

- RAP Stance 1: "I'm right, she's wrong. I love her so I'll give in."
- RAP Stance 2: "I don't know whether I'm right or she's right. I love her so I'll give in."
- RAP Stance 3: "There's no right or wrong here. We have different perspectives. I love her so I'll try to understand her perspective."

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"I'm right, she's wrong. I love her so I'll give in."

Later in our marriage when we had a disagreement, I sometimes went back to that way of thinking, but it had changed to "I don't know whether I'm right or she's right. I love her so I'll give in." And now, when we have a disagreement, I often find myself thinking, : "There's no right or wrong here. We have different perspectives. I love her so I'll try to understand her perspective."

I shared with Margaret that I was going to tell this story, and her response was, “Oh, yeah, right, like you always gave in?” Margaret is not here today, so the answer is, yes, that’s correct.

By the way, I used to tell this story to students when teaching about constructivism. Maybe it’s a better story for marriage counseling.

I call these stances.

What is a stance?

1. the position or bearing of the body while standing



2. a mental or emotional position adopted with respect to something



A stance can be physical (I used to be a wrestler) or it can be mental or emotional. Either way, it is a way to position oneself so as to prepare to act, and just as the intended action affects the stance, so too the stance affects what action one may take.

How might each of these stances have positioned me to act?

Three Stances

- RAP Stance 1: “I’m right, she’s wrong. I love her so I’ll give in.”
- RAP Stance 2: “I don’t know whether I’m right or she’s right. I love her so I’ll give in.”
- RAP Stance 3: “There’s no right or wrong here. We have different perspectives. I love her so I’ll try to understand her perspective.”

In Stance 1, I was positioned to think about how I could **convince** my partner that I was right. In the second, I was positioned to think how I could **determine** who was right.

In the third, I was positioned to think about **better understanding** the other person's thinking, feeling, and experiencing.

Generally now, Stance 3 is more useful.

I told this story here because it is an example of where, as my thinking evolved, I replaced one way of thinking – one of us must be right – with another way of thinking, which is that right/wrong is not useful here and instead look at varying perspectives.

The theme of my presentation today is about belonging or holding onto something, and how do we move forward while holding on to something useful?

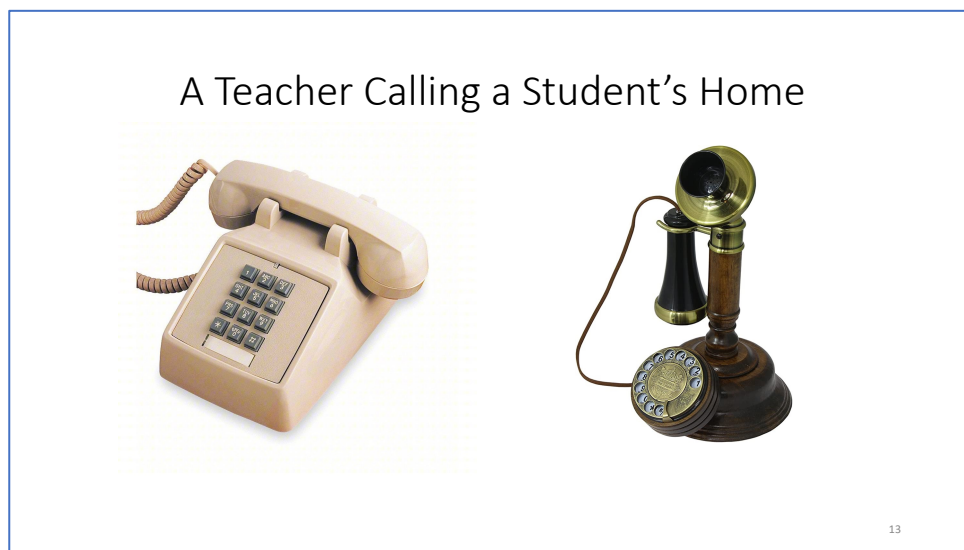
Sometimes I think we move on from a position and we don't want to go back to it. But other times, it's not that simple because the old position may continue to be useful.

For example, with the right/wrong vs. different perspectives, when we were raising children, both understanding different perspectives and learning about right/wrong were useful

I am going to return to this notion, that is, do we, should we, and how do we hold onto important questions, or stances, or commitments from the past as we continue to move forward?

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Here's a story from teaching.



I remember one Friday afternoon when I was a high school teacher feeling weighted down as I walked to the office. I was going to call the home of a student who had misbehaved and back then we did not have cell phones nor did I have a phone in my classroom, so I was going to use the office phone. School had been out for half an hour and the school was relatively quiet, with

many teachers working in their rooms, administrators in the office, and fall athletes working out. I was alone with my thoughts on the walk to the office, and it was then that I realized that I was not looking forward to the call. After the call, while walking across campus back to my classroom, I got to thinking about the drudgery of calling home. And then I had an epiphany. Why couldn't I call home about something positive? So I went back to my class and went through my roll book, selecting one student from each of my five classes who had done well the past 10 weeks. I remember one call in particular, which went something like this:

Phone ringing, someone, maybe Ken Ozuna, whose parents I was calling, answers.

Me: Hi, this is Mr. Philipp from Canyon High School. Is this the Ozuna residence?

Ken: (Pause, quietly) Yes.

Me: Are Mr. or Mrs. Ozuna home?

Ken: (Pause, gulp, and quietly): No.

Me: Is that you, Ken?

Ken: (with more energy, albeit some reservation) Oh, hi Mr. Philipp. How are you?

Me: I'm fine, Ken. Let me tell you why I'm calling. I went through my rollbook, and over the last ten weeks, you have had one of the highest averages in my Algebra 1 class. And even more importantly, you have been working really hard and you are always polite and just a pleasure to have in class. I called to tell your parents.

Ken: (with enthusiastic pleading) Oh Mr. Philipp, will you please call back again?

I did call back, and I spoke with Mrs. Ozuna, Ken's mother. On Monday morning, before first period, I looked up from my desk and Ken was standing on the other side of my desk, wearing a big grin while pulling down on the lapels of a shirt as he said, "Hey Mr. Philipp, new shirt!"

I've told this story to prospective mathematics teachers and until recently, I looked at the story in a particular way, about what a **teacher** did.

A few years ago something happened that caused me to look at the story differently. I was at a writing workshop and the leader asked us to think of someone who had been generous to us. After thinking of several people who had helped me in my personal or professional life, I thought of the story of Ken. All of these years I had thought that the story was about a generous act of a teacher, me, toward a student, Ken. But that day I looked at the story another way: Maybe the supreme act of generosity had been from Ken when he came to tell me that his parents had bought him a new shirt as a result of my phone call home. Because by sharing that with me, he provided me useful feedback about a professional action I had taken, feedback that reminded me of an important reason that I had chosen to become a teacher! I wanted to support students' growth, and the simple act of showing appreciation for Ken's effort and kindness in my class resulted in his parents being proud of Ken. Was my act toward Ken an act of generosity. I think so, although one could make a case that I was just doing my job. But his act seems particularly generous. Had he not approached me on Monday morning, I'm not sure I would even have remembered the story! After all, I don't remember the other positive calls I made that day!

Choose my perspective, my stance here. Seeing this anecdote as a teacher's act of generosity helped me as a teacher; but seeing the anecdote as a student's act of generosity, helped me in all aspects of my life and led to me working harder to share with people when I appreciate what they've done, because they may not realize how meaningful it was.

My grandmother used to say that when you give a gift, and the gift is received in the same spirit with which it was given, then everything is beautiful. Teachers have spent years developing the gifts that they want to give to students. And too often, teachers feel as if they are not able to successfully give their students their gifts. Our job is to help these teachers more successfully give their gifts!

But there's another side to this. Sometimes teachers actually have no idea what gifts have been received! That was the beauty of the Ken Ozuna story!

I'll turn to another example, and this time I'll foreground research as we consider how one video can be viewed through multiple perspectives. I'll mention IMAP later, but for now just know that there are a bunch of IMAP videos. Can one view a video more than once? Many students think not – they've seen it before. And no, the video does not change. But the viewer changes, the context for using it changes, the purpose changes. Rich videos of students' thinking are not like reruns of a bad sitcom...they are more like the rereading of a fine novel. There's more there. Your perspective matters.

Javier is a fifth grader who had been in the U.S. for about a year when this was taken. The video clip is 1 minute in length, and then I'll give you a few minutes to turn and talk to your neighbor.

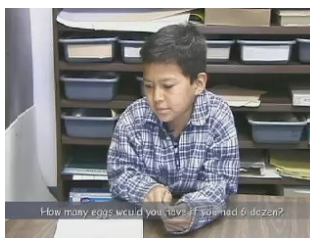
Question 1: You are about to view a video clip of a 5th-grader solving "How many eggs would you have if you had 6 dozen?"

Example, Javier, Grade 5

(Javier, VC #6, 0:00 - 1:10)

What do you notice?

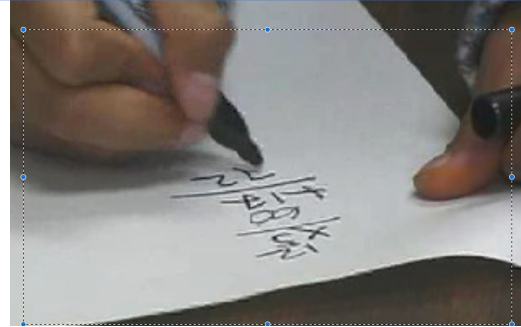
How might you use this videoclip in your work?



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Javier Transcript

- I: You know how eggs come in a carton?
- C: Yeah.
- I: And there are usually---
- C: Twelve.
- I: ---a dozen, or 12, in there?
- C: Yeah.
- I: How many eggs would you have if you had six dozen---so if you had six of those cartons?
- C: Okay. Let me see. Six times 12. That would be ... 72.
- I: And how did you figure that out?
- C: Because when I say 5 times 12, that equals 60. If I add 12 more, that will be 2, 7.
- I: Wow! And how did you know that 5 times 12 is 60?
- C: Because 12 times 10 equals 120. And if I take the half of 120, that would be 60. It can go there, so I go six.
- I: Wow! Great explanation.



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By the way, here's Randy's representation of Javier's thinking.

One Representation of Javier's Thinking

$$\begin{aligned}
 &6 \times 12 \\
 &= (5 \times 12) + (1 \times 12) && \text{(Distributive property)} \\
 &= \left[\left(\frac{1}{2} \times 10\right) \times 12\right] + 12 && \text{(Substitution property)} \\
 &= \left[\frac{1}{2} \times (10 \times 12)\right] + 12 && \text{(Associative property)} \\
 &= \left[\frac{1}{2} \times (120)\right] + 12 && \text{Place value} \\
 &= 60 + 12 \\
 &= 72
 \end{aligned}$$



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This video clip is more than 20 years old, and over my career the ways that I have used this video have changed as my thinking has changed, and of course, a major source of my thinking changing is attending to our changing field of mathematics teacher education.

One focus of this video is students' mathematical thinking. This was a major research area early in my career, and this research serves as the foundation of so much of what I've done since.

But I'll shift this to teachers...to their knowledge, beliefs, skills, and dispositions.

What Knowledge, Beliefs, Skills, and Dispositions do Teachers Need to...

1. ...understand Javier's thinking?



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This question might be considered about teachers mathematical content knowledge, including teachers' common content knowledge and their specialized content knowledge.

An early influence on me was Shulman's PCK, and then later, Deborah Ball, Heather Hill, and others drew distinctions that I found so helpful among common and specialized content knowledge and knowledge on the mathematical horizon, and they unpacked PCK.

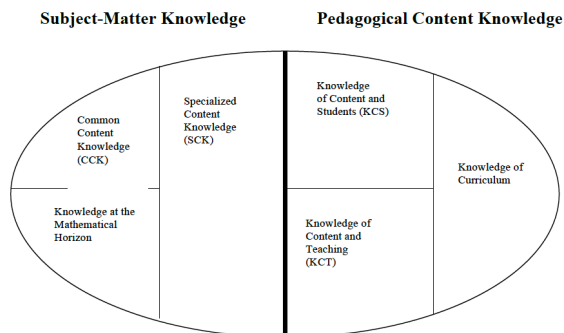


Figure X. Mathematical knowledge for teaching, from Hill, H. C., Ball, D. L., & Schilling, S. G. (2008). Unpacking pedagogical content knowledge: Conceptualizing and measuring teachers' topic-specific knowledge of students. *Journal for Research in Mathematics Education*, 39(4), p. 377.

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What Knowledge, Beliefs, Skills, and Dispositions do Teachers Need to...

1. ...understand Javier's thinking?
2. ...**be able to compare the reasoning in Javier's thinking to that of other students, and see the mathematical curricular implications now and into the future?**



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This includes teachers common and specialized content knowledge, but it also includes PCK, and knowledge of the mathematical horizon.

What Knowledge, Beliefs, Skills, and Dispositions do Teachers Need to...

1. ...understand Javier's thinking?
2. ...be able to compare the reasoning in Javier's thinking to that of other students, and see the mathematical curricular implications now and into the future?
3. ...**value Javier's thinking?**



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I might consider this teachers' beliefs about mathematics and about the value of students' sharing their thinking. Furthermore, valuing this thinking is going to increase the likelihood that teachers will invoke it in the classroom. And knowledge and beliefs are complex, as I remember some of the lively discussions I've had about the similarities and differences between teachers' knowledge and beliefs, or even whether that distinction is useful.

What Knowledge, Beliefs, Skills, and Dispositions do Teachers Need to...

1. ...understand Javier's thinking?
2. ...be able to compare the reasoning in Javier's thinking to that of other students, and see the mathematical curricular implications now and into the future?
3. ...value Javier's thinking?
4. **...build on Javier's thinking? For example, what follow-up questions might one ask of Javier to extend his thinking?**



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Teachers' knowledge and beliefs underscores teachers' practices, and one of the practices that has grown in the past 15 years is teacher noticing. I'll come back to this in a moment.

What Knowledge, Beliefs, Skills, and Dispositions do Teachers Need to...

1. ...understand Javier's thinking?
2. ...be able to compare the reasoning in Javier's thinking to that of other students, and see the mathematical curricular implications now and into the future?
3. ...value Javier's thinking?
4. ...build on Javier's thinking? For example, what follow-up questions might one ask of Javier to extend his thinking?
5. **...shift from a deficit view whereby immigrant and other "different" students are seen as lacking knowledge and instead view linguistic and cultural diversity as strengths?**



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Two of my most recent doctoral students studied noticing for equity, one explicitly by looking at the Power and Participation lens invoked by prospective secondary school mathematics teachers, and one more implicitly by looking at what principals noticed when viewing an exemplary mathematics lesson and finding that many principals held a strong noticing for equity perspective.

In recalling the theme of today's talk of highlighting different perspectives, I'd like to share some behind-the-scenes conversations that took place around noticing. Basically, the question was...Is noticing a practice, or is it more of a competency, like knowledge and beliefs? Miriam Sherin and Vicki Jacobs convinced me that it was a practice. And later I came to see that it was more useful to think of it as a practice, that is, we can focus on supporting teachers' more sophisticated noticing, and in the process, know that their practice is affected.

Let me take a moment to explain where I was coming from.

Why would someone (e.g., Randy) approach *Professional Noticing of Children's Mathematical Thinking* from a competency-based orientation instead of a practice-based orientation?

Beliefs

Beliefs must be inferred, because people are often unaware of the beliefs that shape their actions. Four principles:

- 1) **Beliefs influence perception.** Like a lens, beliefs filter enough complexity from a situation so as to make it comprehensible, shaping **interpretations** of the viewer.
- 2) Beliefs are **dispositions toward actions**, having a motivational force...beliefs compel one to act in particular ways.
- 3) Beliefs are not all-or-nothing entities; they are held with differing intensities.
- 4) Beliefs tend to be **context specific**.

Professional Noticing of Children's Mathematical Thinking

Professional Noticing of Children's Mathematical Thinking

1. ...**attending to** mathematically important details of students' thinking.
2. ...**interpreting** students' thinking in a manner that is consistent with details of their reasoning and connects to the research about children's mathematical thinking.
3. ...and **deciding how to respond in the moment** to students' thinking in a manner that customizes the response to **particulars about the students' reasoning**.

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The Professional Noticing framework on the right grew out of more than a year of data analysis by Vicki Jacobs and Lisa Lamb, mostly meeting at a coffee shop, The Living Room, on El Cajon Blvd. And the beliefs framework grew out of my extensive work on IMAP, which was associated with studying the effects of learning about children's mathematical thinking on the development of prospective elementary school teachers' content knowledge and beliefs. Lots of video came out of that project, including the one I used earlier.

Beliefs influence perception...and the first component of PN is attending.

Beliefs shape interpretations, and the second component of PN is interpreting.

Beliefs are dispositions toward actions, and the third component of PN is deciding how to respond.

Keep in mind, the PN framework is not about the action of responding, it is about deciding how to respond.

Am I into the theoretical weeds? Maybe. But I think that the theoretical perspective we take on the construct of noticing matters.

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I'd like to turn now to a service example.

What does it mean to belong to AMTE (or another professional organization)?

Does the organization serve its members?
Do members serve the organization?

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What does it mean to belong to an organization?
Who serves whom?

Learning to ask a useful question is at least as important as finding the answer, and generally more difficult. So here's another way to pose these questions.

What does it mean to belong to AMTE (or another professional organization)?

Does the organization serve its members?
Do members serve the organization?

What might affect one's stance toward an organization?

One's place in one's career?

One's job?

One's personal characteristics (gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation)

One's role in this or past organizations?

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Let me unpack this with an experience I had, but to provide some context, we will take a brief stroll through recent history.

The AMTE President serves on the Board of Directors for 4 years; 1 year as president-elect, 2 as president, and 1 as immediate past president. Every odd year we get a new president, so tomorrow Megan Burton will step into the Immediate Past President Role and Enrique Galindo will step into the president position. One of the opportunities the AMTE president enjoys is attending the STaR Conference, a 5-day meeting in June comprised of early career faculty.



AMTE STaR Fellows Program

Service, Teaching, & Research (STaR) in Mathematics Education: Supporting Early Career Professionals

- The [STaR Program](#) is an early career induction program for faculty in mathematics education with tenure track appointments in institutions of higher education designed to address common challenges faced in early career.

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June 2017 was my first year as AMTE president, having stepped into the roll in January of 2017. Hm, can you think of anyone else who became president in January of 2017? Yes, AMTE's Board was entering interesting times.

So the STaR Conference was the end of June and in the middle of June Governor Abbott signed Texas House Bill 3859.




Texas House Bill 3859

About one-quarter of all Texas adoption agencies affiliate with a religion, and the bill defends these agencies from lawsuits if they deny potential parents based on "**sincerely held religious beliefs.**"

Signed by Governor Greg Abbott, June 15, 2017
To Take Affect on September 1, 2017




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Texas House Bill 3859


About one-quarter of all Texas adoption agencies affiliate with a religion, and the bill defends these agencies from lawsuits if they deny potential parents based on **“sincerely held religious beliefs.”**

A bill in Texas that would allow adoption groups to refuse to place children with parents on religious grounds



A Texas Bill That Allows Adoption Agencies to Discriminate




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Just a week later, California Attorney General Becerra, invoking California Assembly Bill 1887, which states that California employees, with a few exceptions, may not be supported with state funds to visit states on the discrimination list, added Texas to the list of restricted states.


But the 2018 AMTE Conference was scheduled in Houston, Texas. The STaR Fellows, who are expected to attend the subsequent AMTE conference, were talking about not going and the idea was floated to reach out to past STaR Fellows and encourage them, in unity against discrimination, to also not attend. Of course, that position made lots of sense! Shouldn't an organization stand up for what it believes? Keep in mind that this was a year when attacks on scholars were taking off, and the scholarly work of some in our community, including Laurie Rubel and Rochelle Gutierrez, was misrepresented in a public and unfair way. By the way, a paper that came under attack by Rochelle was in an AMTE volume. It was upsetting, and at times, for some colleagues, it was frightening!

I was aware that fewer than 8 months before the 2018 conference, canceling the current conference site would result in AMTE losing a deposit of about \$100,000. Could we find another site? That work falls on AMTE volunteers and it is a great deal of work. But in all likelihood, we would not have found a new site and so we would have had to cancel the 2018 AMTE Conference. Maybe that would have been a powerful statement? And, at the same time, there were members who had counted on the AMTE conference as a place to present their work, to meet with others, etc.

Where do our responsibilities lie?




In the end, we decided to stay with the plan to hold the meeting in Houston, and we decided to encourage our members to attend the conference and stand with our LGBTQ+ colleagues and community members. And STaR Fellows did attend. AMTE also organized an all-conference reception in support of organizations that have found ways to support LGBTQ+ people in Texas.

And we added a second plenary session and moved it to the first day so that we might reflect our values:



Expanding Equity in Mathematics Education to Include LGBTQ+ People

2018 Annual AMTE Conference
Houston, Texas
February 8, 2018

<p>Dr. Randy Philipp <i>President, AMTE San Diego State University</i></p> 	<p>Dr. Laurie Rubel <i>City University of New York</i></p> 	<p>Dr. Stephen Russell <i>The University of Texas at Austin</i></p> 
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I didn't tell you this story as one of success or failure. I told it because it highlighted a dilemma. Did we do the right thing? The wrong thing? Or maybe I should ask a different question...what were the various perspectives of those involved?

I have served on several boards of directors – for AMTE, for the SDSU Research Foundation, for my synagogue. One thing that all boards have in common is a kind of conservatism – not politically, but existentially. A board is there to sustain the organization. But it's also there to guide it, to change it, to make sure it is true to its values. But that's not always such an easy thing. Being true to values is sometimes messy. How do we hold onto important questions we have asked, important values we have embraced, and continue to move forward?

Left, Right, and Center
KCRW

"a civilized yet provocative anecdote to the self-contained opinion bubbles that dominate political debate."

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One of the podcasts I listen to is out of KCRW, Santa Monica's NPR affiliate, called Left, Right, and Center, in which they claim to provide a "civilized yet provocative anecdote to the self-contained opinion bubbles that dominate political debate." But is this possible? Who decides what is Left? Center? Right?, because there is certainly no such thing as "the" left, or "the" right. And our technology is creating new challenges for us. For example, Twitter is important to many mathematics teachers, but what does the algorithm that runs Twitter do for creating and sustaining an environment that might perpetuate our own self-contained opinion bubbles? How do we know when we are in one?

And yet, we must try! And here's one way to do this, which was presented 120 years ago.



John Dewey Educator, Philosopher, Psychologist



October 20, 1859 – June 1, 1952

President, American **Philosophical** Association,
1905

President, 1899–1900, American **Psychological**
Association

High school teacher, 2 years

Elementary school teacher, 1 year

Founder of the University of Chicago Lab School, a
progressive K-12 School

The Child and the Curriculum 1902

The Issue: Should the curriculum be based upon the interests of the child, or upon the nature and structure of the curriculum?

"Any significant problem involves conditions that for the moment contradict each other. Solution comes only by getting away from the meaning of terms that is already fixed upon and coming to see the conditions from another point of view, and hence in a fresh light."

"But this reconstruction means travail of thought. Easier than thinking with surrender of already formed ideas and detachment from facts already learned is just to stick by what is already said, looking about for something with which to buttress it against attack."

The Child and the Curriculum 1902

“Thus sects arise: schools of opinion. Each selects that set of conditions that appeals to it and then erects them into a complete and independent truth, instead of treating them as a factor in a problem, needing adjustment.”

“But here comes the effort of thought. It is easier to see the conditions in their separateness, to insist upon one at the expense of the other, to make antagonists of them, than to discover a reality to which each belongs.”

“...To discover a reality to which each belongs.” This feels like a caring productive, inclusive, stance.

So let me return to the story about LGBTQ+ issues, Houston, Texas, and AMTE. Later in the summer of 2017, I received a letter from an AMTE member, who’d been at the STaR meeting. I’ll read a portion of it, with permission from the author, Nico Gomez,

The question I keep asking myself is, how does the organization define a discriminatory law? Currently, I feel California has defined it for us. I ask myself this because Texas has passed another series of discriminatory laws that we, the STaR fellows and AMTE, are not currently discussing. Approximately a month before the travel ban was announced, however, Texas passed [SB 4](#), the final legislation in their efforts to dismantle ‘sanctuary cities’ or cities that choose to follow certain procedures to shelter undocumented immigrants....These laws are focused towards law enforcement and when they stop or arrest someone they can ask about legal status. If no legal status is found, the law enforcement must report them to Immigration and Custom Enforcement (ICE). Removing these protections from undocumented immigrants effects the feelings of safety of parents and children. ... Texas is not the only state to pass these laws, Arizona has had similar “show me your papers” laws in effect since 2010. I feel a conversation about these discriminatory laws has not taken place, yet.

...I wish to be an advocate for them as much as an advocate for the LGBTQ+ community. The issue surrounding immigration is a divisive one. In future conferences, I hope to see more emphasis... on teachers becoming advocates for children and the communities they teach in.

I am saddened that in Texas we will not having the same emphasis on illegal


immigration discriminatory laws as on LGBTQ+ issues, but I recognize how California's travel ban has brought to light the oppressive system the LGBTQ+ population exists within. We have to pick and choose our battles and right now it is this one. I know AMTE is a place for advocacy against all forms of discrimination and those against undocumented immigrants will have its time as well.

Right or wrong do not work here. Seems to me that the bigger question is how can we pay attention to the perspectives of our members, and not land in our own self-contained opinion bubbles?

When I asked Nico Gomez whether I could share what he wrote, he said yes, but he added:

Honestly, I'm a little torn about including my name with the letter. There is a part of me that has to stand with what I wrote back then, and another that is disappointed at some of the language I used (undocumented; illegal) as these are not terms I would use today. I would also maybe stress less the this or that discourse and more of a "both and." But I was learning and growing and finding my own voice. I would like to believe I know better now.

He went in to state that AMTE should do more to highlight oppressive state-wide policies, including in the state of Louisiana. And he noted that *"I would also be remiss if I didn't point out one organization doing some grassroots work with immigrant communities in New Orleans: <https://www.firstgracecommunityalliance.org/about/projectishmael>."*



First Grace Community Alliance

FGCA's mission is to work with and for people in need, especially women and children, by meeting food, housing and other emergency needs, while simultaneously challenging systemic poverty in the greater New Orleans area. Our two main programs are: Hagar's House and Project Ishmael.

- <https://www.firstgracecommunityalliance.org/about/projectishmael>

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The 2023 Nico is different from the 2018 Nico. That's a good thing. Just as we should not freeze other people in time, we should also not freeze ourselves in time.

I tell the novice teachers with whom I'm working that if they continue to grow as teachers, they must accept that they may be someplace now that they weren't in the past. Furthermore, if they continue to grow, they will be someplace in the future that they can't yet be. **And that has to be ok!**

Ok, I'm about to transition to my final comments, but before that, I'm going to give you one more opportunity to share and learn from your audience neighbors.

Pause, Think, and Share
3 or 4 minutes

Think of a time (or times) when someone has been generous to you within your profession.

When you are ready, share with one or more people around you.

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Think of someone who has been professionally generous to you and with one or two people near you, please share.

The End

And I'll end with one more story. Maybe 20 years into my career, while watching tv with Margaret, they were doing a brief advertisement for the news saying something like, "Math scores just in for our nation's students and the results are disappointing; news at 11," and Margaret turned to me and asked, "I don't understand. What have you been doing at work all this time?" Of course, she was joking, but the joke was poignant: Why haven't we "fixed this" yet? Are we going to fundamentally change the way students learn math? And, of course, when we consider the tremendous inequities in American society, be they how schools are funded, or who has access to well-prepared teachers, or bias, racism or other isms in society. or children and teachers feeling safe in schools,...this can feel overwhelming.

And yet some change is happening! I attended a conference in the fall during which the presentation was about teachers talking to teachers about students' thinking in detailed ways. I don't remember teachers meeting around students' work and discussing their thinking 40 years ago. Of course, I'm sure it happened, but I think it was much more rare then than it is now.

I'm a baseball fan and in baseball they give all kinds of awards each year...for example, the best pitcher in each league wins the Cy Young Award. But some of the most important things we do, like teaching, or parenting, or mentoring, are too complicated to select the best. And with these complex domains, perhaps we sometimes feel insecure. Am I good enough? There have been many times in my career when I thought, wow, that person is more theoretical, or that person is so better at creating a rich, inclusive classroom environment. And eventually, thankfully, I turned down the volume on comparing myself to others...not sure I'll ever completely stop...and I tried to be the best Randy Philipp I could be.

We are all needed here. We're on the same team. And when I talk to people who come regularly to AMTE, they often talk about the community they experience here. This has been a cool team of which to be a part. Time for me to step aside and make room for new players and coaches.

Thank you!