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**Equity, mathematics reform and policy: the dilemma of ‘opportunity to learn’.**

Herbel-Eisenmann, Beth (ed.) et al., Equity in discourse for mathematics education. Theories, practices, and policies. Based on a conference, Rochester, NY, USA, May 2008. Dordrecht: Springer (ISBN 978-94-007-2812-7/hbk; 978-94-007-2813-4/ebook). Mathematics Education Library 55, 195-204 (2012).

Summary: Educational reformers have advocated for the use of discourse practices in mathematics classrooms in order to improve the quality of mathematics education. The research in this area suggests that when discourse practices are effectively implemented in classrooms among teachers with strong mathematics knowledge that student learning increases and achievement gaps are narrowed. However, this chapter considers how policy-level factors including academic tracking, teacher quality, and assessment policies may negatively influence students’ opportunity to learn related to mathematics discourse. We suggest that the existence of academic tracking may decrease the likelihood of students in low track classrooms from being introduced to mathematics discourse because of the low rigor often found in these settings. Teachers with weak mathematics knowledge and pedagogical skills may be less likely to possess the capacity to effectively implement mathematics discourse. In addition, the implementation of high stakes assessment policy in the United States via the No Child Left Behind Act may constrain the use of discourse practices in classrooms. This may occur when the format and content of a state assessment compels schools to use instructional strategies that do not promote the use of discourse practices related to mathematics. In the end, these policy-level factors may limit the use of discourse as a means to improve mathematics teaching and learning resulting in further stratification of mathematics knowledge in American classrooms.

*Classification:* C60 A40

*Keywords:* equity; discourse practices; classroom discourse; educational reforms; opportunities to learn; teacher quality; assessment policies; tracking

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