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Becoming a Reflective Mathematics Teacher

Alice F. Artzt and Eleanor Armour-Thomas
Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2002

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It seems to be universally accepted that the best critic of one's own performance is the performer himself. Athletes and actors improve their performances by watching video playbacks, and teachers can benefit from following the same procedure. In their book, *Becoming a Reflective Mathematics Teacher: A Guide for Observations and Self Assessments*, Dr. Alice F. Artzt and Dr. Eleanor Armour-Thomas, both professors at Queens College of the City University of New York, have provided useful tools for the mathematics teacher to perfect such self-assessment. This book is designed to be a companion to a comprehensive book on methods of teaching mathematics. In the United States, and specifically at Queens College, a "field component" is included in the methods course taken by students. This book provides ten observation assignments, which help focus what students observed, what they should look for, and what is being discussed in their methods course.

One must keep in mind that the students for whom this book is intended are about to complete their undergraduate study of mathematics, so it is assumed that they have a firm knowledge of mathematics, as well as concomitant enthusiasm for teaching the subject. The authors make this clear from the start.

The first chapter focuses on student-centered teaching, an approach that highlights student learning rather than presentation. Chapter 2 builds on chapter 1 by examining the teaching process. Chapter 3 focuses on observations in the classroom. This allows the future practitioner to focus on the projected venue of his activities. All of this is then documented by salient research findings. In addition, the second half of the book provides detailed procedures for observing other teachers in various classroom settings. The authors take care to guide the reader in organizing materials for a portfolio that will document his growth as a teacher. In short, this book is a useful guide to observation and self-assessment for a new teacher or a teacher in training and, as the authors indicate, it is intended to accompany a standard textbook on methods of teaching mathematics. I would highly recommend its use to insure that the next generation of mathematics teachers continues to improve instruction in this most important subject.

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