Mona Toncheff (00:05):
Hi, this is Mona Toncheff, Past President of NCSM. Welcome to the NCSM Podcast, Learning with Leaders: The Reset. Renew. Restore Series. Join me and my co-host, John SanGiovanni, as we sit down and have conversations with emerging and established leaders about how we can reset for the upcoming school year. Listen as we talk to mathematics leaders who can help us think about resetting what has become status quo these last two years. We will learn about their inspiration, perceptions, insights, and perspective. Listeners, fellow mathematics leaders, if you feel like current math instructional practice or student learning seems stuck or stalled. It's time to hit reset.

Mona Toncheff (00:53):
Hello listeners. I am Mona township and welcome to the NCSM podcast. Learning with leaders. We have a special addition to the Reset. Renew, Restore series. This month, we are releasing five bite-sized podcasts highlighting the newest NCSM publication, *Culturally Relevant Leadership in Mathematics Education.*
So starting on August 11th, we will release a podcast every Tuesday through September 1st. And the final tasting of the book will be released on September 11th, right before the annual conference

John SanGiovanni (01:26):
Bite-sized tasting. All right, that's the right moment. This podcast is an appetizer for the landmark NCSM publication, and a taste of some of the great work featured in the NCSM annual in Anaheim. Oh, and by the way, if you haven't, now is the time to register for that conference. And while you're at it, you should register a colleague and maybe two other colleagues while you're at it as well. So, we look forward to seeing you there.

Mona Toncheff (01:52):
Yes. And today we are excited to talk to Dr. Becky Angus, Gina Rivera and Dr. Pamela Seda. I'm going to start with introducing Dr. Rebecca Angus, who I know as Becky. She is a former high school mathematics teacher department chair, assistant principal, principal, and is a current middle school mathematics coach. She truly loves her role in public education, is proud of the work that her and her teams do to ensure all kids are learning mathematics at high levels.

John SanGiovanni (02:23):
Yeah. And Georgina Rivera, who her friends call Gina is NCSM's current second vice president. She's a principal and a pre-K through five school in West Hartford, Connecticut. She has previously served as the elementary STEM supervisor for Bristol Public Schools. She's been a district wide elementary mathematics coach, and she began her career as a middle school math teacher. And I'm also proud to say that she has also authored quite a few books

Mona Toncheff (02:51):
And last but not least, I'd like to introduce Dr. Pamela Seda, who I like to call Pam <laugh>. They all have nicknames. Interesting. And she is the owner of Seda Educational Consulting and has over 30 years of educational experience. She has held various positions in mathematics education, including high school math teacher, instructional coach, college math instructor, and a K-12 district math supervisor. All three of these educators are passionate about changing how students experience mathematics. So welcome Becky Gina, and Pam.

Pamela Seda (03:24):
Thank you so much.

Georgina Rivera (03:27):
Thank you for having us on. I feel like I'm amongst family here. We're all friends.

John SanGiovanni (03:34):
Glad to have you. And yeah, we all have nicknames. Mona, I'm going to ask you about your nickname later. Maybe we'll do that after the recording, but we want to keep this safe for work. That being said again, welcome folks. Let's talk. Well, let's talk about what we've been talking about. We've been talking about culturally relevant teaching and learning and leading in mathematics for the past two episodes. And so Becky, we want to start with you. It's a topic that frankly we just can't talk enough about. So before we dig into your chapter, tell us how you see this new book supporting mathematics leaders.

Becky Angus (04:15):
I'm really excited about this book. I really believe this new book provides multiple roadmaps to lead the bold work necessary to implement culturally relevant mathematics. There's so many amazing protocols, scenarios, templates, experiences from the field in this book, that truly support all math leaders, no matter where they are on their journey of becoming culturally mathematical leaders.

John SanGiovanni (04:37):
Gina, is there anything that you want to add to that in terms of, you know, how do you see this new work supporting mathematics leaders?

Georgina Rivera (04:50):
So I mean, I, myself would've wanted this book a couple of years ago as I started my journey as a math leader, the way that I see it really supporting people is I think when, you know, NCSM really started to work on culturally relevant pedagogy and how it connected with math, what we found is, the research was in lots of different places. But what I love about the book is we put it all in one place and we make it accessible for leaders at all positions within a school. So whether you're a coach, or a teacher, or a site leader, you can pick up this book and there are actionable things that you can use within the book, to help become a culturally relevant math leader. And so that was really the purpose behind the book. I remember having conversations with Mona and we would do professional learning and people would be really interested when we started to pull out the tasks or the practices. And then, you know, it really sparked that idea of we need to write a book around this. So that's why I'm so excited about the book itself, because it was something that our members wanted. And because of that, we put a lot of time and effort as a writing team to make this come alive for math leaders.

John SanGiovanni (05:51):
Yeah, Gina you're right. And this is a book that our members want and our members need. And as math leaders, Pam, I have to ask you the same question. How do you see such an important work helping our colleagues and other math leaders?

Pamela Seda (06:05):
Well, I agree with Gina in the fact that it places, everything, it takes a lot of the research from different places and puts it all together. And so in essence, it creates that safe space to start learning. And I know a lot of leaders are, have wanted to do this equity work, but didn't know where to go. Didn't know where to start. There are people, you know, who feel like maybe they're not supported in the environment that they have. And so this is a place that really creates that safe space, no matter where they are in their journey, whether it's just learning, it gives really simple definitions for things, as well as those who have been doing this work for a while. You know, I've been doing this work for at least two decades, and there are things that even that I learned in working on this book. So I think that is a great positive.

Mona Toncheff (07:10):
So I wanted to ask all three of you guys around, what was your role in this important work? How did this come about? And I'm going to start with Pam since she was just answering that.

Pamela Seda (07:23):
<Laugh> Okay. Well one of the things that I was able to do is incorporate my care equity framework, which was started in my dissertation research. That framework came out of that dissertation research, which was then more fully developed in my book, Choosing to See a Framework for Equity in a Math Classroom. And so I was able to bring that expertise to think about leadership. The book I wrote was really specifically for teachers. And so I was able to take that framework and say, okay, leaders, what can we do to help support teachers in implementing this?

Mona Toncheff (08:07):
Becky, do you want to add your thoughts around how your role, what your role was in this important work?

Becky Angus (08:14):
Yeah. I was really excited that I got to take, you know, the task and bring it into a classroom and really take that teacher-student perspective into our chapter on advocacy. And I, I just want to also add on to what Gina and Pam said like that all of these resources are coming together in one place, is just going to be so helpful and amazing. It's exciting for my role even still as an instructional coach and leading some math work. Otherwise you spend so much time in our resource-rich world, and this is like a one stop shop place, that we can do some really exciting and great work for our kiddos.

Mona Toncheff (08:56):
Right. Gina, what about you?

Georgina Rivera (08:59):
So I would say one of the primary rules, I think, was working with the team around taking what we had as the framework for leadership in mathematics, and then pushing ourselves to create the culturally relevant framework, and those essential actions. I remember that was really the birth of this book. Like once we got those actions, then we were able to go off into writing teams. So being part of the beginning stages of that was really helpful because it pushed my thinking as a math leader. Like, how do I take the framework, which is already strong and make it culturally relevant, right? And how do we make it accessible for all math leaders? So that would, that was like one of the most memorable pieces. The other piece was doing the research. I, kind of like Pam, I've been in this work for a while, but searching for things that would support the different ideas in the book was something that I felt was really important because I wanted to use research-based practices.

Georgina Rivera (09:45):
And I also wanted to honor the work that was already done. People have been studying culturally relevant pedagogy for a really long time, but putting it in a framework of mathematics and really helping math leaders bring this into their work, was critical. So I felt honored to be part of a team that, you know, really took the time to research and then work side by side with the writers to be able to reflect on like, what did they write and what was I learning from them? And how do we refine that writing? I think it was really, for me, a fantastic like, experience because I got to learn more kind of, like Pam said, I got to learn more about culturally relevant pedagogy because of it. So it was really more of a gift for me.

Mona Toncheff (10:23):
That's awesome.

John SanGiovanni (10:24):
Yeah. So today, we want to zoom in, right? And, and, and that's what these nibbles or bite-sized snacks are in this series of podcasts here. So today we're focusing on the guiding principle of advocate, and, and that's what the three of you contributed to especially. Tell the listeners how the leadership actions and the advocate guiding

principle are connected to the framework. And Gina, why don't we start with you, tell us a little bit about that and then Pam, Becky, if there's anything you want to add to that you, you are welcome to, of course.

Georgina Rivera (11:08):
So we started with the actual framework and then what we did is, between myself and the writing team, all of us worked together and we thought, well, how, how would this look like if we were being culturally relevant? Right? And so, like, I think about that first imperative where we have a commitment to ourselves and we want high quality mathematics. Or, when we are being culturally relevant, we want to make sure that includes culturally relevant practices. So we push that to a whole other level. And then we looked at effective teaching practices. But when we're in this book, we're looking at the equitable math teaching practices. So it takes the framework and it pushes it one step further. And that's what I like about it, is because we're pushing leaders to think about cultural relevance and being equitable at all times. One of the other ones is when we think about professional learning, we really talk about, does your professional learning include cultural relevance?

Georgina Rivera (11:47):
So is it just, you know, high quality mathematics? It can't just be that. We also have to learn about our students and their cultures. And how would that be integrated in math, in the three big tenants of Gloria Ladsen-Billings, and is that incorporated into professional learning? And then finally, when I look at the original framework, we talked about helping stakeholders understand, but what we say in this book is we want stakeholders to have a seat at the table. So it takes all of the pieces of the framework and it elevates it to a whole other level. So people really see that where we want to be equitable, we want to include families and we want to include professional learning that includes culture and identity. So it's all of what we had that was great in the framework, but I believe it brings it one step further.

John SanGiovanni (12:36):
Yeah. I love how you talk about this work, elevating the framework to an entirely new level. And that's such a nice add. Speaking of adds, Pam or Becky, are there any things like, do you want to add to that?

Pamela Seda (12:47):
Sure. I just want to emphasize the fact that when we're talking about advocate, the fact that, with this work, there's a reason we need to advocate for it, that there are going to be resistance, there's going to be obstacles. And I love the fact that this book prepares leaders to deal with those obstacles. It just doesn't leave it up to, oh, this is wonderful. Here's what you should do. But it provides tools and scenarios and things so that as leaders begin to face obstacles, which they will, that's the reason why we need to advocate, right?. They they're prepared to do that.

Becky Angus (13:40):
And I would like to add just so everyone knows, this work is hard. I got to work with so many amazing mathematical rockstars through this writing process. And one of the things I truly enjoyed by focusing on the advocate principal design is how it attaches so naturally to the social justice issues that are going on in students' communities and students' schools. And I found that it just really got to the heart of, it just builds in this deeper mathematical learning pathway for kids. When we dive into that social injustice of everything that's going on in the world. And then to just keep in mind that this is still really hard work, but we can do it when we all come together.

Mona Toncheff (14:13):
Yeah. I appreciate those thoughts. Cuz this is, it's not something if, if this was easy, we wouldn't be where we're at right now, correct? Status quo would be a little bit different. So you know, we've talked about the fact that this chapter is about advocate and I heard Pam talk about barriers and obstacles. Becky addressed the social injustices in the world. So I wanted to start with like, well, what does it mean? Like what does it mean to

advocate for culturally relevant teaching, learning and, or leading in mathematics? I'm going to go ahead and start with you, Pam, since you introduced barriers and obstacles into the conversation.

Pamela Seda (14:49):
Well, the framework gives, you know, some very specific actions as to what that means. But on a personal level, you know, advocate means, one, understanding what this work is, right? That means we as learners having to be willing to learn what, what it is to mean to be culturally relevant. And then it just means using that as a lens in every action that we engage in that we're conscious, we're looking at things through an equity lens and we're not just keeping things separate. So it means it might be uncovering students', teachers' unproductive beliefs about students. It may mean making sure as Gina said that you're actually incorporating these things into professional learning. So if you see the district's school improvement plan, professional learning plan, and you don't see anything that specifically addresses cultural relevance, then you're advocating and making sure, well, I need to make sure this is put in, so that you have the structures and the time that is necessary to make sure that teachers and faculty have time to adequately learn how to do this work.

Mona Toncheff (16:04):
Yeah. Becky or Gina. Do you want to add anything to that? Like what does it mean for you to advocate for culturally relevant teaching, learning and leading in mathematics?

Georgina Rivera (16:12):
I mean, for myself, I know Mona, you probably have heard my story in the framework for mathematics, the leadership, but for me, it's personal because I think about the experiences that I had that were math classrooms without culture. And so advocating for this is really advocating for students to be seen and heard in all math classrooms and to ensure that they're getting high quality instruction at grade level, where we ensure that they have the same outcomes everybody else does. And so that's really, really important. Being an advocate is a huge responsibility. That's what I always say because you're always looking for things that are unjust and you're trying to remove barriers. That's the way that I see advocacy and it's not something done alone. You have to join up with others, you need allies and you also need to have a really strong heart because I think like all of us have said, this is really hard work, but this provides tools.

Georgina Rivera (17:11):
And it also be provides the research that you need when people push up against you and say, you know, we're not doing this, but you could say, but here's research that says kids do better when we do this. And so that's why it's really important for us to not only just advocate, but then have the tools to be able to empower ourselves to be good advocates, right? Because you can advocate and make a lot of noise. But if it doesn't result in action and better student outcomes, then we're always going to be spinning our wheels, but good advocates make sure they have actionable outcomes and they follow through. And they make sure that those who have been marginalized, that things become just for the unjust. And, and I know that's a big call to action, but it is the work and it doesn't matter how big or small it is. It's that you're being an advocate and you're following through. And you're speaking for those who don't have a voice. So I'm very passionate about this. I can say, just because, when you see your students and they go through this, you don't want that for them. You want the best and all of us on this call feel the same way. That's why the Board is putting out this book. So advocacy is really the work of every single person because students need all of us to do this together.

Becky Angus (18:42):
So well said, Gina. And for me, I know that going through the writing process on the advocate chapter and reflecting on my journey in education, I really feel it's as a, as a bold mathematics leader to really truly become aware of my subtle biases or the body language I'm unaware of. And to ensure that as we implement these leadership strategies in this book, that we're aware that we have to support our teachers on this journey as well. It's really difficult to really kind of self-reflect and find those things that you don't intend to be a negative thing

when we're implementing culturally relevance, but it's definitely something there. And there's, so I'm thinking when I think around advocacy, I, I'm always thinking of how do I do that very intentionally to make sure the end result is exactly what you said, Gina. We have to make things that are unjust, just.

Mona Toncheff (19:40):
The, the power of the pause, right? <Laugh> to take the time and reflect on current reality and figure out next steps for sharing.

John SanGiovanni (19:49):
And thinking about the power of the pause. One last question for you all, give you just a pause to think about how you want to answer it and what wisdom you could share with our listeners. In your mind, when you think about advocacy, what do you think is something that's misunderstood about advocacy and advocate in terms of culturally relevant mathematics? And after that pause, I'll let anybody jump in to think about what is one thing that's just misunderstood about what it means to advocate for culturally relevant mathematics?

Pamela Seda (20:24):
I can start. I think one thing that's often misunderstood is people think they have to be an expert or in a, in a position of authority and with this title, and that if they don't, if they don't have this position, if they're not a principal, if they're not a district leader that there's, that they can't really advocate. And the thing is this, you can advocate from any position where you are, whether you're a classroom teacher. I think about leadership is really being aware of your influence because we all have influence. We can use it for good or bad, but to me, leadership means you're aware of your influence and you use it for good. You use it to build up people. And so in this case, advocating means using your sphere of influence wherever you are, to advocate that kids get to see themselves, that kids' mathematics identity is built effectively through their experiences in classrooms. And that can happen a day at a time, a moment at a time. It's not something that has to, you know, be this grand people on a grand stage have to do.

John SanGiovanni (21:18):
Thank you for that. And Gina, do you or Becky, do you have anything to add to that? Because I love the statement you just made Pam. Leadership, listeners you're a leader, right, is being aware of your influence and using it. And that's such an important message that can be misunderstood. So speak of misunderstandings. Is there anything you would add Becky or Gina?

Becky Angus (22:08):
I would say, you know, just I'm thinking back to, you know, our year's worth of work of meeting and thinking and talking and just the, the push and the pull of our ideas and thoughts, and really how to take something that's so massive and complex and, and bring some understanding and, and thoughtfulness to it, that I think it's sometimes we misunderstood is that we have to pick one or the other. You know, do we advocate, or do we be equitable? Do we focus on professional learning or do we focus on something else? And I think it's important to know how these, all of the pieces of this book that they're so overlapping and can be utilized in many different ways. And really it's hard to follow up Pam's statement because that was just spot on that we just really do have to be aware of, you know, we all have influence.

Becky Angus (23:02):
But I would say just my brain still kind of hurts when I'm thinking about culturally relevant mathematics and how do we implement it in a really sound way with integrity, because it is very complex work. So just to not be afraid and to take steps forward and have the tough conversations and we might be crying and pulling our hair out, but we can get there and anything we do better, is better and we don't know what we don't know, but we have to keep trying. So it's just, it's exciting work in this book I think is just going to really help a lot of people.

Georgina Rivera (23:37):
And I would say for myself, I know that John would ask me what's misunderstood. I think one thing that's deeply misunderstood is people think that culturally relevant mathematics is only for diverse communities and diverse schools. But I would say that all students should have exposure to culturally relevant practices or culturally relevant pedagogy. And I say that for several reasons, because culture goes beyond race and ethnicity. It crosses socioeconomic lines. It also looks at different religions. It looks at ways of being. And so when we look at students, even if your student population might not be diverse, it doesn't mean that you shouldn't be engaged in culturally relevant pedagogy. I've heard that a lot, but I'm going to say we're, we're building 21st century learners that are going to be global citizens and, and they're going to be engaged with students from all over the world. So I think it's really important that this work is for every single community and for every single group of students.

Georgina Rivera (24:168):
Because if you look at the tenants, number one, we want high expectations for all students and ensure equitable outcomes. Who wouldn't want that? Number two, we're going to grow our cultural competence, which we know would bring probably more societies together because we would better understand each other. And number three, social justice is about fixing things that are unjust. I can't think of a single community that doesn't have unjust things regardless of race, ethnicity, or, or culture. So that's why I feel like it's misunderstood sometimes I think, well, that's not for me because you know, our school is homogeneous, right? Well, that's the opposite. That's exactly why you need this because you need to become culturally competent and also look at the injustices that are happening within your community. So that's what I think is misunderstood that, “this is not for me. This is just for certain groups of students or certain groups of educators.” And I'm going to challenge that idea and say, this book is for every math leader.

Mona Toncheff (25:23):
Agreed. <laugh>, I'll put a stamp on that. I completely appreciate that statement. So I just want to tell you guys, thank you so much for sharing your expertise, not only today during the conversation, but also on the writing team. I just, all three of you have experiences that really made this chapter, the closing chapter in the book, a great way to just like hit the road, running with knowledge of how to do this. I would just want to let the listeners know by the time this podcast is released, the conference will only be a few weeks away. So you'll be able to purchase the book at the conference, at a conference rate and then it will be available online in the coming weeks after that. So once again, thank you guys for your time today. Do you want to add anything, John there?

John SanGiovanni (26:26):
I do just because the conference is only a few weeks away when you hear this, that doesn't mean you still can't register. If you have forgotten or if it's slipped behind, don't forget that registration. It's still open. We can't wait to see you in person in just a few short weeks.

Mona Toncheff (26:15):
Thanks everybody.

All speakers (26:23):
Thank you. Thanks for having, thank you for having us.

Mona Toncheff (26:27):
We hope you have been inspired by this bold mathematics leadership conversation and will tune into our podcast series each month. If you enjoyed this episode, please share it with others. Post about it on social media or leave a rating and a review. You can learn more about NCSM Leadership in Mathematics Education and our upcoming professional learning events on the NCSM website at mathedleadership.org. You can also follow NCSM on Twitter at @mathedleaders using the hashtag #NCSMbold. Thanks again.