

An, Shuhna: 2004, *The middle path in math instruction: Solutions for improving math education*. Scarecrow Education, Lanham, MD.

In a time of sharp contrasts—red states, blue states; Yankees, Red Sox; and traditional, reform—Shuhna An is a voice for the middle ground in mathematics teaching. She advocates building on students' ideas with concrete examples, all the while bridging to the mathematical structures. Additionally, she promotes both the goals of conceptual knowledge and procedural development.

An searches for the middle path by comparing the teaching in the US and China, two systems moving in opposite directions. In the US the implementation of statewide exams have an impact on teachers' approaches, and in China creativity and inquiry through the use of manipulatives impact procedural development. With her focus on pedagogical content knowledge, An makes recommendations based on the differences in teacher's beliefs, planning, teaching methods, and knowledge of learner's cognition. By focusing on these aspects of pedagogical content knowledge, she sidesteps the heated debate of which topics to cover in order to lead an informative discussion about teaching mathematics.

The format of the book follows the typical research format which can be found in most journals; she follows the typical sequence of theoretical framework, evidence, and conclusions. However, she writes in a style that is accessible for anyone interested in mathematics education—researchers, teachers, and parents. The examples that she gives provide a clear idea of the expectations and demands of mathematics teachers.

This book also can serve as a resource for preservice math teachers. Even though the examples of teaching are of middle school classes, the discussions of pedagogical content knowledge easily transcends to all levels of mathematics teaching. For teaching seminars and workshops, the examples in the book can be good starting points for discussions. If a teacher's grade level is higher than middle school, examples of teaching upper-level content can be readily introduced and connected to the ones presented in the book. An discusses the teaching issues in a manner that can be generalized to the higher levels.

An's book demonstrates the challenges for teaching mathematics not only in the US but in China as well. Her book directs the discussion of teaching towards the middle ground using pedagogical content knowledge as the focus. The book is a moderate approach that is applicable for many who view teaching mathematics as serious and demanding work.