

Positioning, Purposes, and Policy: Examining the Purposes of Middle Leading of Mathematics in Primary Schools

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Research on mathematics leadership in schools increasingly positions it as a form of middle leading practice situated at the intersection of policy implementation, research translation, and classroom practice (Sexton et al., 2025). In this Round Table, we attend to the purposes of middle leading of mathematics as part of an ongoing scoping review examining how mathematics leadership is represented in MERGA-affiliated literature. Despite growing interest in the field, the purposes attributed to mathematics leadership remain diffuse and, in many cases, underspecified across the literature. While a dominant framing positions the purpose of mathematics leadership as improving student learning outcomes through school-based professional learning leadership (Copping et al., 2024), our review reveals several nuanced and varied purposes. This raises questions about how conceptualisations of mathematics leadership shape its purposes in schools, and what potential influence these might have on policy and practice. This Round Table is organised around three interrelated dimensions: positioning (how mathematics leaders are situated within organisational and relational structures), purposes (the intentions attributed to the work), and policy (how research might inform policy discussions). Together, these dimensions provide a lens for examining not just what mathematics leaders do, but why and for whom.

Participants are invited to contribute their responses and perspectives about the emerging themes generated through preliminary analysis of our scoping review. Round Table dialogue will be mediated by the following questions:

- How do the emerging purposes identified in our scoping review resonate with the work of mathematics leaders in practice?
- What purposes of middle leading of mathematics remain silent in research literature?
- What might be the purpose of research into mathematics leadership beyond exploratory descriptions of practice?
- How might MERGA engage policymakers with mathematics leadership research?

The aim of the Round Table is to generate insights from dialogue about how MERGA can extend mathematics leadership research that strengthens connections between practice, research, and policy. The session welcomes mathematics leaders, including aspiring and emerging leaders, and researchers with an interest in the field.

References

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