

Editor's Introduction

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Editor,

Issues in Teacher Education

California Commission on Teacher Credentialing

What are the issues that haunt us, perennial conundrums that occupy our profession, giving rise to both personal passion and scholarly endeavor? Two that are probably close to the top of every teacher educator's list include literacy and *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB). A third might possibly be getting a better balance between universities and school districts. This issue of *Issues in Teacher Education* offers a range of views on each of these topics, both as scholarly articles and book reviews. Certainly it can be argued that in doing so we run the risk of becoming bland, offering a little something to please each of you and thus diluting or even disguising our own stance. It is quite the reverse. Each of these topics has generated a range of perspectives and opinions throughout the teacher education community. Honoring diversity, something we do believe in quite passionately, demands giving voice to this variety, and allowing each of you to make a personal decision about the merit and worth of what you read. In presenting this mix, we give voice to both qualitative and quantitative researchers, as well as theoreticians. Another thing we believe deeply in is scholarship, and you should see this undergirding stance throughout our journal.

Our first look at literacy offers a theoretical treatise on the roles and responsibilities of literacy teachers as they guide students on their journey to understanding the world. Laura C. Jones, P. Taylor Webb, and Maureen Newman write in "Claiming the Contentious: Literacy Teachers as Leaders of Social Justice Principles and Practices" of the need for literacy teachers to be aware of their stance as they engage in their

practice. Why and how one might move from subordinate to leader in our schools is explicated through a careful consideration of the philosophy that might inform our thinking and shape our behavior as educators. These authors examine the role of knowledge, particularly as it interacts with teaching as subject matter pedagogy, and how it functions in a democracy. They ask literacy teachers to examine their thinking and its implications for curriculum and instruction through this lens.

Switching gears radically, Courtney Crim, Jacqueline Hawkins, Jenifer Thornton, Holly Boon Rosof, Juanita Copley, and Emily Thomas applied classic survey research methods to examine “Early Childhood Educators’ Knowledge of Early Literacy Development.” Funded through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, they examined how deeply these educators had knowledge of (and therefore presumably could teach) a critical component of early literacy, phonological awareness. Randomly selected pre-kindergarten teachers who voluntarily participated in a three-year professional development program were queried on their knowledge of three aspects of basic early literacy—understanding of syllabication, morpheme knowledge, and sound presence. The study was informed by a literacy research base that draws on the work of researchers such as Louisa Moats and Barbara Foorman, one that examines the effects of specific discrete behaviors in the development of literacy, and interprets results and implications for professional developers from this perspective. Their results have implications for considering what we may be asked to do to bolster this field.

Developing strong educators is exactly what Dana L. Grishman turns her attention to in “Improving Reading Comprehension in K-12 Education: Investigating the Impact of the Reading Specialist Credential on the Instructional Decisions of Veteran Teachers.” Also using survey research methods, she examines the effects of a graduate reading program on teachers’ instructional practices. Employing both a written survey and follow-up interviews, she sought to find out what experienced teachers do in their classrooms, and the extent to which the content of the program she is examining contributed to graduates’ knowledge and practice. Providing a closer match between academic endeavors and practicing educator’s demands challenges all teacher educators. What Grisham does here is look closely at specific literacy strategies employed by graduates, whether they were attributed to the program, and how the overall graduate experience was perceived by graduates. This program evaluation and analysis suggests that even well-thought-of programs have additional hurdles to confront.

One of those hurdles is the ongoing tension between university and district cultures. While we constantly seek innovative ways to bring

the two to a synergistic harmony, the pathway is curved indeed. This is well known to Sandy Buczynski and Kendra Sisserson who examine this relationship in “School District and University Co-teaching: Toward Instructional Synergy in an Induction/M.Ed. Program.” They use a mixed methodology to evaluate a graduate level course co-taught by university and school district personnel. Their results suggest a sharp dichotomy between what candidates say they experienced and what they indicate on standardized course evaluation data. Sorting out these results leads the authors to consider how co-teaching presents both an ideal and a challenge to our most prevalent approaches to teacher development. We all endorse collaboration rhetorically, and even believe it can result in improved student results. The trick, of course, is getting there.

Perhaps we should begin by taking a closer look at teacher behaviors. Heidi Stevenson does this using a qualitative research approach. She examines how teachers respond to district, state, and federal requirements in “To Adapt or Subscribe: Teachers’ Informal Collaboration and View of Mandated Curricula.” Using a sample from local schools, she is able to create typologies based on teachers’ attitudes and then examine how this affects their relationships. Who among us is not curious to discover what happens beyond the classroom door, and how teachers’ perceptions of each other might affect what goes on in both classroom and faculty lounge? Questions of gaps between the mandated and implemented curriculum have long been with us, and this article begins to identify some of what happens as schools try to implement multifaceted requirements.

As we have come to expect, this issue concludes with book reviews. As ably described by Suzanne Soo Hoo, Book Review Editor, we again honor diversity by offering an eclectic set of reviews of books that teacher educators might enjoy and consider adding to their reading.

I hope the variety of viewpoints offered in this issue causes all of us to reflect and reexamine the basis for our professional endeavors.

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