

Introduction to Spring 2024 Issue

A Timely Examination of Persistent Issues in Teacher Education

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This Spring 2024 issue of *Issues in Teacher Education* delves into the ever-evolving landscape and challenges of teacher education. While many of the challenges addressed in this issue are not new, the authors provide a critical analysis within the context of our current educational climate. The COVID-19 pandemic and the political climate have undoubtedly exacerbated these longstanding challenges, propelling the field of teacher education into a period of necessary adaptation and improvement.

This issue moves beyond simply acknowledging these persistent issues and, instead, offers fresh perspectives by highlighting key themes such as the national teacher shortage, the need for increased diversity and representation within the educator workforce, the insidious nature of implicit racial bias, and the importance of fostering inclusive learning environments.

The issue opens with a series of insightful commentaries that provide community, national, and international perspectives on the state of the teaching workforce and teacher education, then focuses in on the

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need to be responsive, not reactive in addressing these issues, and then moves to specific ways in which change can be actualized.

The commentaries offer a perfect segue into the research. With a particular focus on the nationwide teacher shortage and the underrepresentation of Black educators, the first article explores efforts in Pennsylvania to empower Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) to create positive change in diversifying the teacher workforce within their teacher education programs. The second article takes a deeper look at how racial biases manifest within classrooms, drawing specific attention to implicit biases against Black female students. This research underscores the urgent need for teacher education programs to equip educators with the tools and strategies to identify and address these biases. Building on the theme of representation, the final article explores the importance of anti-bias and inclusive curriculum practices within early childhood special education. It emphasizes the importance of embracing differences in the classroom without stigmatization. The researchers look closely at how classroom picture books represent disability.

Overall, through its blend of thought-provoking commentary and data-driven research, this Spring 2024 issue of *Issues in Teacher Education* offers a valuable resource for educators and stakeholders invested in the future of the field.