

Message From the President

Greetings colleagues and readers! My name is Andrea Lachance, and as the new President of the New York Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (NYACTE), it is my honor to welcome you to the Spring 2021 edition of our professional journal, *Excelsior: Leadership in Teaching and Learning*. While *Excelsior* was first published in 2006, it was moved to a fully online, open access journal in 2018.

Remember 2018? Teacher education was in a very different place back then. At that point in time, it never would have occurred to any of us that only two years later, teacher preparation would become a completely online enterprise due to a global health crisis. Soon after the start of the pandemic, NYACTE's treasured annual fall 2020 conference, co-sponsored with the New York State Association of Teacher Educators (NYSATE), was cancelled and replaced this past fall with a speaker series conducted over Zoom. And back in 2018, I'm not sure any of us would have imagined how altered the 2020-2021 academic year would be, with little "in-person" contact with our students and colleagues, let alone with many of our family members and friends. Extraordinary times indeed.

Although difficult, I have been inspired both professionally and personally by the innovation and perseverance demonstrated within our teacher education community during this pandemic. The buzz word of these times seems to be "pivot," and despite the loss and isolation so many of us have experienced over the past year, pivot we did. As a profession, we collaborated with P-12 partners to support the virtual learning of children as well as pre-service teachers by creating online and alternative field placements. We adjusted our teacher preparation curricula to be sure our candidates were not only understanding how learning happens in typical classroom settings, but in virtual ones as well. All of these transitions were supported by the extraordinary regulatory flexibilities provided by the New York State Education Department for which NYACTE, NYSATE, and others throughout the state advocated.

As a professional organization, NYACTE also needed to adapt to continue to serve the needs of New York's teacher education community, and I am proud to say, we did so in new and innovative ways. As mentioned above, our fall 2020 NYSATE/NYACTE conference morphed into a well-attended series of online speakers and panels focused on anti-racist pedagogy, teaching and learning online, and regulatory updates. Because we anticipate that the restrictions caused by the pandemic will continue to alter our ability to gather in person for quite some time, our fall 2021 conference will be offered virtually as well, with more details coming soon.

In addition, thanks to the innovative thinking and quick action of *Excelsior* editors Christine Ashby and Julia White, a call for papers for this special edition of *Excelsior*, focused on teaching in the pandemic, was made last summer. In under a year, papers for this issue were submitted, reviewed, accepted, and now, published. The resulting set of papers provides multiple perspectives on and insightful analysis of the impact of the pandemic on various aspects of teacher preparation.

Several of these papers reflect upon the use and impact of online pedagogy both in P-12 schools and in teacher education. Sandra Stacki, Zerine Bay, Andrew Flynn, and Jessica Hermann explore the experiences of middle school teachers shifting to fully online instruction in Spring 2020, while Selenid Gonzalez-Frey, Keli Garas-York, Corinne Kindzierski, and Julie Henry focus on teacher candidates' responses to shifting from in-person to fully online coursework. Taking a faculty perspective, Lindsay Stoetzel and Stephanie Shedrow discuss their experiences moving a literacy methods course online while also trying to support their candidates' ability to teach online themselves. Given that online teaching may be with us for some time, Denise Grandits and Tina Wagle, who are

experienced online instructors, provide models of effective online and hybrid teaching for use in teacher preparation.

Other papers offer perspectives on the pandemic's impact on the experiential aspects of teacher preparation. Kathy Doody, Katrina Fulcher-Rood, and Pamela Schueltze discuss how they effectively moved an in-person service learning project to a meaningful virtual assignment. Michael Rosenberg, Loretta Mason-Williams, Lois Kimmel, and Paul Sindelar explore ways in which challenges in getting candidates the field experiences they need, both before and during the pandemic, can be reduced when schools and host teachers see pre-service candidates as assets whose presence in virtual and/or physical classrooms can help support the learning of children.

While it looks like we have a ways to go to get to the end of this exceptionally difficult time, the research and insights shared in this special edition demonstrate our profession's resiliency as we continue to maintain high quality teacher preparation despite the challenges. These articles, along with the on-going efforts of the New York state teacher education community, document the innovative work for which our profession is known and of which we can all be proud. I hope this work will provide all of you with new ideas, insights and inspiration for moving your own work forward into a future that will hopefully be a bit brighter than today.

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