

Message From the President

Greetings colleagues and readers! Welcome to the third issue of Volume 13 of *Excelsior: Leadership in Teaching and Learning*, the professional journal of the New York Association of Colleges for Teacher Education. In general, *Excelsior* tends to publish only two issues per volume. But because of the number of high-quality papers that have been submitted over the past year, along with the hard work and extraordinary leadership of *Excelsior* editors Christy Ashby and Julia White, we are able to bring you a third issue this year.

In many ways, the three issues of *Excelsior*'s thirteenth volume have marked the various turning points of this rather long and challenging academic year. When the first issue was published in Fall 2020, educational institutions all over the world were struggling to balance health and safety with delivering high quality instruction amid an ongoing pandemic. Many of us had to continue shifting from in-person teaching to hybrid or fully online teaching depending on the viral spread and positivity rates in our communities. And although we were still struggling with viral surges in Spring 2021, when the second issue of this volume was published, circumstances were generally improving, especially given the roll-out of vaccination programs which held the promise of a return to in-person activities, travel, and reunions with family and friends. It is heartening that with the publication of this third issue, we are seeing that promise fulfilled with many of our campuses planning a return to "normal" in-person operations for Fall 2021. While we know that the devastating losses of this pandemic will be with us for the foreseeable future and will require a long period of healing, we do appear to be entering more hopeful times.

If the topics covered by the papers in this issue are any indication, we as a profession continued to ask and explore critical issues related to our work in spite of lockdowns, excessive time on Zoom, and limited social outlets. These papers reflect the field's on-going attention to some of the most important themes in teacher preparation, including building partnerships with P-12 schools and strengthening the preparation of teachers in an increasingly diverse world.

Two papers in this issue focus on the important role school leaders play in supporting teacher preparation. In their piece, Shelley Wepner, Diane Gómez, and Diana Quatroche discuss the motivations school leaders have in pursuing partnerships, such as Professional Development School relationships, with educator preparation programs. In a similar vein, Vance Austin, Stephen Caldas, Micheline Malow, and Andrew Ecker report on the results of a survey which revealed the critical skills that school administrators believe are most important for teacher candidates and new teachers to develop in their preparation programs. Both of these papers reflect the value of the feedback and insight that school leaders provide to educator preparation programs.

This issue also includes two papers that explore how teachers and teacher candidate strengthen their disciplinary instructional skills through classroom practice and reflection. Krystal Barber discusses how using lesson study, a process whereby a group of teachers plan, implement and reflect on a lesson together, enabled a set of sixth grade mathematics teachers to engage more deeply with the concepts of fractions. Elise Langan and Salika Lawrence also report on classroom-based research in their exploration of how middle and high school teachers used primary sources in their social studies classes as a means to strengthen their students' literacy skills while they were engaging with social studies content.

Two additional papers in this issue address the importance of learning across communities. In their paper on teacher identity, Brittany Aronson, Esther Enright, and Tasneem Amatullah analyze their own

learning and growth experiences and suggest that helping teachers develop an “angled perspective” is critical to enabling them to build coalitions to effectively address equity issues in their classrooms. MaryAnn Dunn offers a review of Jolene Malavasic’s book *Learning Communities in Middle School Literacy Education* which describes a model for increasing the learning of both middle school students and literacy graduate students through collaborative learning communities.

All the articles in this issue reinforce the driving force that motivates research in teacher education: With study and reflection comes improvement of teaching, learning, and ultimately, life outcomes for children. The work of these authors demonstrates that our profession’s commitment to this ideal remained strong despite the challenges of the past fifteen months. I hope you will find these engaging pieces both informative and thought-provoking, and that they will in some way contribute to your own professional pursuits.

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