

Letter From the Editors

Firstly, let us apologize for the lateness of the publication of this issue—our publishing platform has moved to a different way of assigning DOIs to articles, so we've had a bit of a delay as the platform catches up to the new system. However, another academic year has come to a close, which inspires a look back to where we have been and the drastic changes of the last two years. I glanced back at our past letters from the editor in preparation for writing this and I was struck by the difference in tone from the Fall 2019 issue and letter and all those that followed. In 2019 we were preparing for the upcoming NYSATE/ NYACTE Conference and writing about social emotional learning and perspectives of teacher education faculty toward issues of social justice. Then everything turned on its head. When our issue came out in May of 2020, we were neck deep in a global pandemic, assuming and hoping that it would be short-lived, that we would all be back to business as usual in the fall and shaking off the dust of the COVID crisis. How wrong we were. Here we are two years later, back in person, mostly vaccinated and often unmasked, but we have not fully returned to old ways of operating. The past two years have also seen a racial reckoning and political divide unlike anything most of us have experienced in our lifetimes. School board meetings are contested sites, where discussions of race, sexuality, and justice are weaponized. Recent school shootings have brought issues of safety and gun control to the foreground. The business of education and teacher education is forever altered. And some of the lessons have been helpful - we know how to use digital and hybrid technologies to increase access and meet students and parents where they are. We have attended to the social and emotional well-being of students in new and important ways. We have learned to be flexible and nimble in the face of constantly shifting landscapes and demands. But we have also lost so much—preservice teacher connections with students, collaborative initiatives to meet student needs, concerted focus on social justice and student safety, and we have witnessed the de-professionalization of the field.

This issue features five articles and one book review that in many ways addresses how to examine and mitigate these losses. The articles in this issue address topics including collaborative efforts to address the English learner teacher shortage, engagement and Universal Design for Learning, student research groups, the politics around addressing school shootings, and teachers sharing expertise through blog postings, and more equitable grading systems. Each article offers hopeful strategies to continue to re-engage with our students and re-envision our field.

In the spirit of continued engagement, we would like to extend an invitation to our readership to contact us and propose special issues—we recognize that so many of you are engaged in networks that are doing such important work, and we would like *Excelsior* to be a venue in which you can highlight those efforts and outcomes. So please, let us know if you are interested in proposing a special issue—you can email either of us (jmwhit02@syr.edu or ceashby@syr.edu) and we would be thrilled to explore this.

Best Wishes,

Christy and Julia