

Editorial

When we were planning the call for the 2023 issue of *LEARNing Landscapes* in spring 2022, we hypothesized that education was in a pivotal moment as we emerged from the pandemic and began to take stock of what was happening as a result.

The 2021 OECD Education Survey suggested there were six post-COVID-19 challenges in education (OECD, 2021).

1. The inequalities in education and the “digital divide” that existed before were exacerbated by the pandemic.
2. The gap in educational performance among countries was amplified.
3. Students suffered from loss of in-person teaching and learning academically, socially, and emotionally.
4. Teaching workloads became excessive.
5. There were vast differences in access to digital professional development and support for teachers.
6. It became apparent that online learning should not become a substitute for teachers.

In many ways, the pandemic brought into high relief and heightened the challenges that already existed in education. It has been a wake-up call that cannot be ignored. Hopefully, this critical moment in time will be used widely to incorporate the positive digital benefits gleaned from the pandemic that can support teaching and learning in engaging and positive ways, maintain academic, social, and emotional wellness for both teachers and students and create socially just and equitable learning spaces for all. Our call for submissions was purposely broad to throw a wide net around the topic and get at a range of experiences at different levels of education, places, and from a variety of perspectives. We hoped the call would stimulate authors to think deeply about their research and practices before and during COVID-19 and, as a result, help to articulate and shape what now seem to be the most important innovations and changes needed for educational contexts as we move forward. We were not disappointed.

Five themes emerged from the work of the authors in this issue of *LEARNing Landscapes*. The varied experiences highlighted in these articles weave together a tapestry of nuances for reflecting upon directions for innovation and change in education. They suggest the need for:

1. Practicing empathy
2. Cultivating community
3. Addressing learners’ needs uniquely
4. Shifting gears
5. Examining values

It should be noted that while articles are published in alphabetical order in all our issues of *LEARNing Landscapes*, for the purposes of the editorial they are arranged and discussed thematically following the two invited commentaries which are discussed below.

Commentary

We reached out to two educators whose work focuses on the theme of the issue to provide their perspectives on education during this pivotal time. Each of them is doing innovative and important work to help meet the needs of diverse students in this post-pandemic world and reflect the themes that emerged from the articles published in this issue. **Debbie Pushor** is a Professor in the Department of Curriculum Studies at the University of Saskatchewan. She describes in vivid detail how her child's experiences in grade one, which were very positive, brought to light how little the school knew about them as a family and why it is so critical for educators to have this contextual knowledge. She argues convincingly for a shift to "family-centric schools" during this post-pandemic and "pivotal time in society" where learning is recognized as a "from birth-to-forever process" and families and parents are valued and included as collaborators throughout this educational journey. She concludes this is the most important way to eliminate the deficit notions about students and families that are so prevalent in schooling. **Sabrina Jafralie** is a gifted, secondary teacher at Westmount High School in the English Montreal School Board, and course lecturer at McGill University in Montreal. She describes her educational experiences as an Afro-Indian Canadian student when little or no attention was paid to the challenges facing diverse student populations. The impact of these and the values of her activist family have contributed greatly to her long-standing passion for social justice. Following the teachings of Desmond Tutu, Jafralie argues strongly for positivity, but also action, in the currently highly politicized educational context. A starting point of action is with each teacher, which necessitates self-reflection and awakens an understanding of biases and assumptions that can bring harm into the classroom. She shares, in particular, how her journey in teaching the Quebec Ethics, Religion, and Culture (ERC) program at both secondary and preservice teacher levels has allowed her to promote critical thinking, create a space for a multitude of perspectives, challenge dominant narratives, find new ways to present curriculum meaningfully and empathetically, and help to ensure that new teachers will be agents of help, not harm.

Practicing empathy

Keely Cline, an Associate Professor at Northwest Missouri State University, **Maureen Wikete Lee** and **Merlene Gilb**, assistant professors at St. Louis University, and **Lauren Bielicki**, Director of the Family Center in Webster Groves School District, St. Louis, share how a preschool predicated on the basic tenets of Reggio Emilia schools intentionally gave voice to these young students and fostered empathy among them. Triggered by an unhappy moment for a mother and her child when sharing birthday cupcakes with classmates, the school ended the practice of food-giving and refocused on birthday celebrations where the children together made the choice to make gifts for each other. The authors include delightful images of the gifts demonstrating the empathy gift-making developed, which fostered equity and a sense of inclusion. **Jackie Marshall Arnold** and **Mary-Kate Sableski**, associate professors at the University of Dayton, Ohio, posit that there is a dearth of research on how to select children's literature to help initiate important and needed discussions on difficult topics and/or traumatic events. Their class of 26 preservice teachers chose from a range of children's literature provided by the authors and practiced with peers to learn how to use the literature to connect meaningfully with students. They argue that intentional and careful book selection to connect with children's lives builds empathy and community among them as

well as the needed English language arts skills. **Dany Dias**, Assistant Professor at Université de l'Ontario français, in Toronto, Ontario, explored for her dissertation the potential of literature to expand the worldviews of her grade eight students. This article shows, with very interesting examples, how the students developed empathy and the ability to take the perspective of others.

Cultivating community

Jody Dlouhy-Nelson, a doctoral candidate at the University of British Columbia Okanagan School of Education, and **Kelly Hanson**, a teaching consultant in public education, were invited to design a curriculum guide to accompany the traveling Witness Blanket exhibition during its stay at the Kelowna Arts Museum. The exhibition (2015) was created by Indigenous artist Carey Newman in response to an invitation by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to tell the story of residential schools in Canada. The authors worked for 18 months with the Syilx Indigenous community in what became a “Syilx and Settler Pedagogy Circle” highlighting local perspectives, experiences, and voices. The work was necessarily emergent, a living project. Realizing that a written product of the research would not be welcomed, they focused on rich, oral stories of the Syilx experiences of residential schools, which were accessibly portrayed on a website and available to everyone. They share candidly their vulnerabilities and challenges, suggesting that building community during a project requires more than sensitivity alone.

David LeRue is an artist, educator, and PhD candidate located in Montreal. He bases his work on his experiences as an art teacher to adults. He provides an excellent overview of Community-Based Research Creation (CBRC), which emerged from Community-Based Art Education (CBAE), generally defined as art education that takes place outside of school and university contexts. He suggests that his work differs from CBRC. For example, CBRC consults the community during the work, but the final product is that of the researcher. Alternatively, he works closely with each participant to create a piece of art that can stand on its own. While his work is similar to oral history research, which records oral personal/community experiences, it is different because it documents personal/community experiences in an art form that requires much more commitment and time. LeRue helpfully diagrams his research process and provides powerful examples of art that have been produced. Ethical threads which run throughout his arts-based research encourage emancipatory practices that create participant agency, foster reflection and action, and avoid deficit notions about communities. **Candance Doerr-Stevens** is an Associate Professor in Education at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, **Teresa Layden** is a 12th-grade teacher at the Arizona School of the Arts, and **Stephen Goss** is an Assistant Professor of English and English education at Kennesaw State University, in Georgia. Although very comfortable in the digital world before the pandemic, they realized, once teaching totally online, that to build relationships and foster community with students and colleagues in this context required much more than the use of words alone. They turned to arts-based approaches to engage students more actively and fully and modify the “airtime” they spent together. They share in this article wonderful, visual examples of digital poetry, selfie collage-making, and reflections on curriculum sharing via videoconferences. These arts-based, multimodal approaches motivated students to turn on their screens, transformed their learning, and forged collective inquiry as well as a collaborative community. Their work highlights how creative and active learning can be reimaged to work successfully in digital spaces. **Sumer Seiki** is an Associate Professor at the

University of British Columbia Okanagan School of Education. She shares how her narrative inquiry with two participants explored the practice of “hung dee moy,” a Toisanese-Chinese support system in which women family members share traditions, offer practical support, and build community through connectedness. Felicia and Mary were interviewed by Sumer between 2016 and 2022. During this time, they explained how their mothers, who came to California in the 1950s to work in cannery factories, created a sisterhood using *hung dee moy* to mitigate the overt racism they experienced as well as the extreme isolation they faced due to living restrictions that barred them from moving freely in their daily lives. These compelling stories show the power of connectedness for building a sense of community, even in dire circumstances, and the intergenerational learning that occurs about both the political and the personal when this tradition is preserved and passed on from mothers to daughters.

Addressing learners’ needs uniquely

Melissa Daoust is a teacher who works with refugee and immigrant students and is a doctoral student in education at the University of Ottawa, **Lee Schaeffer** is an Associate Professor at the University of Saskatchewan College of Kinesiology, and **Vera Caine** is a Professor and Director of the School of Nursing at the University of Victoria. Their narrative inquiry took place with two Nipugtugewei kindergarten teachers, Brenda and Joyce, with whom they co-created an “out-of-doors curriculum” in a Mi’gmaq community in northeastern Canada where the study was conducted. The term “out-of-doors” was purposefully used in lieu of “outdoors” to underscore the actual and metaphorical nature of the curriculum, which was rooted in the land and uniquely designed to honour, engage, and connect students with their community, language, and culture. They share how one young student experiencing learning difficulties flourished when the curriculum shifted in this way. The reflections of the participants, shared in found poetry, show profoundly the important role that the personal practical knowledge of teachers plays in curriculum spaces. **Andrea Van Vliet** is a program manager for early childhood education at the Ministry of Education in Saskatchewan. She shares poignantly how her personal and professional journey in education has made her aware of the long-term existence of the attitudinal differences that exist in society towards childcare education and formal schooling. She found that these became even more apparent to her during the pandemic when she and her partner had a child in daycare and another in elementary school. Van Vliet provides a very helpful overview of the general history of childcare and more specifically that of Saskatchewan, concluding that the lack of value and respect for childcare is grounded in economics and social class. She posits that the basic tenets of childcare—kinship, playful engagement, and interrelated content—are consistent with good teaching practices at any level and suggests that educators have much to learn from the field of childcare education for addressing the unique needs of each learner. **Diane Montgomery** is a PhD candidate at the University of Prince Edward Island, **Matthew Montgomery** works in the field of audio engineering, and **Molly Montgomery** is an undergraduate health sciences student at the University of Western Ontario. This article recounts the schooling experiences of Matthew and Molly, who were challenged respectively by autism and anxiety, and includes the perspective of their parent Diane. Diane recounts how her philosophical stance about her children’s experiences was shaped by the work of Rogers (self-directed learning) and Dewey (experiential learning) and then, together, the authors examine Matthew’s and Molly’s experiences through the lenses of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997), self-determination (Deci & Ryan,

1985), and implicit theories of intelligence/mindset (Dweck, 2016). The compelling stories are situated and shared in audio files of a rap song, and an oral account, as well as in poignant excerpts. These bring the work to life. The authors conclude that the widely used Individual Education Plans (IEPs) developed to help to direct and support teachers in meeting the diverse and unique needs of “exceptional” learners often neglect the important need to engage students, build on student interests, foster independence, and provide a variety of approaches to learning that help to do this. **Rabab Abi-Hanna** is an Assistant Professor of Mathematics Education. **Tiffany DeJaynes** is an Associate Professor and **Amanda Gulla** is a Professor, both in English education. All are at Lehman College, Community College of New York. The power of poetic inquiry is the main thrust of this article and is supported with engaging examples grounded in an overview of the field. These authors, all of whom are clinical education professors who were supervising students’ fieldwork during the pandemic, turned to found and black-out poetry to help support each other during these demanding times. They describe how creating poetry was a “discovery process, a way to explore challenges and reveal unarticulated concerns” many of which were the same—challenges, sensibilities, and goals for students—despite coming from varying disciplines. They became learners with their colleagues, who were able to address and respond to unique and individual challenges as well as common ones in a supportive environment, through the poetic process. No doubt the willingness to be vulnerable enhanced their feeling of community. A bonus of the work was that they shared their process and products with their preservice teachers to help them understand and appreciate experiences from many different perspectives.

Michael Dubnewick and **Tristan Hopper** are assistant professors in kinesiology at the University of Saskatchewan, **Sean Lessard**, is an Associate Professor and Adjunct Professor at the University of Alberta and Regina respectively. **Brian Lewis** is the Executive Director of Growing Youth Movers (GYM), a youth development program. The GYM after-school program is located in a community high school in Regina and is currently integrated within the high school curriculum as part of the Leadership Pathway Program for students in grades 10, 11, and 12. The aim is to integrate school-based curricula—leadership, arts, land-based, outdoor, and physical education with GYM to help meet the needs of learners in preparing for life after high school. This narrative inquiry was conducted with 10 Indigenous youth who were part of the program. It was through discussions over time with these students that the authors were able to uncover the “threads” of responsibilities that these youth face daily that push back against those of school. They emphasize the extensive weight and resulting tensions these responsibilities place on students’ shoulders each day, month, and year. Through “reconstructed poetry” and compelling excerpts from their research conversations, the authors suggest that GYM acted as a liminal, or in-between space between school and home/community, where youth could destress and did “not have to worry so much . . . about getting the right requirements and stuff for the future.” They discovered in their research not only the need to reimagine education, but also to “resist reproducing research and practice that begins and ends in concepts” in order to attend to the unique needs of students.

Shifting gears

Bhawana Shrestha is an Echidna Global Scholar at the Brookings Institution in Washington, DC. **Mahima Poddar** is an instructor with the US Embassy Book Bus, in Nepal, while **Samaya Khadka** is an undergraduate in business administration at Kings College Nepal. These authors describe how they have shifted from top-down teaching approaches to those with a student-oriented focus. The study explores how five mostly higher education classrooms used Design Thinking as a process to work collaboratively, creatively, and iteratively on problem solving where prototypes are produced and tested with users to find solutions that are practical. Initially, this student-oriented approach produced substantial frustration because of its huge pedagogical shift. Later, the benefits of this collaborative and creative work were realized and embraced. **Ralph Adon Córdova**, an educational ethnographer and consultant who is working with **Nikki Gamrath**, head of school, and **Sarah Colmaire**, assistant head, describe their post-pandemic, collaborative shift to a learner-oriented professional development initiative titled Depth of Study (DOS) in a K-8 school in Berkeley, California. They share, with very helpful examples, how DOS precipitates making the invisible visible, creates a culture-in-the-making, and demonstrates the over-time nature of change. The ethnographic practices of keen observation, documentation, and analysis helped students to discover and understand more deeply. Concurrently, through this professional development, the teachers witnessed the benefits of DOS and changed their approaches to teaching.

Examining values

Lori Rabinovitch is a researcher and a retired educator from the English Montreal School Board. She suggests strongly that education reform is a very complex process that requires a diligent examination of the often very entrenched and taken-for-granted Western values that dominate change. More specifically, she draws on her own local and international experiences and provides compelling examples to argue that curriculum reform is doomed to fail if not contextually grounded in locally articulated values. Her work illustrates the need for time to build collaborative relationships to truly understand local community needs and values for positive change to occur. **Stephanie Ho** is a PhD candidate in education at McGill University and an English language arts teacher at St. George's School in Montreal. As part of her doctoral research, she had intended to explore, through in-person, paired interviews, the perspectives of seven secondary five students about a form of Surrealist-inspired pedagogy that she uses in her teaching. Then COVID struck. She had to pivot and arrange for consent to conduct these interviews online. She found their online discussions naturally shifted from the topic of Surrealism to big, real-life questions that arose because of the unknown and constantly changing situation everyone was facing daily. Their discussions wove together their personal and school lives and went deeper than she ever could have anticipated, suggesting there are good reasons to use digital and intimate online spaces to explore deeply the perspectives of participants. Last and certainly not least, **Türker Kurt** is an Associate Professor in Science Education at Gazi University in Ankara, Türkiye. **Pinar Ayyildiz** is a translator, sociologist, professional development teacher, and language instructor. **Tuncer Fidan** is working as an internal auditor at Burdur Mehmet Akif Ersoy University. These researchers identify the practices that perpetuate inequities in student access to universities in Türkiye. These, and the values undergirding them, are the tracking and stratification of students, socioeconomic status, and a "qualifying-elimination system" that ensures that students ranked in the top three categories stay on top. These authors recommend eliminating a

single-entry exam and qualitatively changing the nature of exams to embrace more open-ended questions and a range of modalities for expressing knowledge. Their hope is that their work in Türkiye will inspire other countries to work collaboratively with them to eliminate global inequities in student access to higher education.

I wish you an enjoyable summer and an invigorating read.

LBK

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