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Editorial Introduction

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Recently I've been reading *Unwritten, The Story of a Living System: A Pathway to Enlivening and Transforming Education* by Lori Desautels and Michael McKnight. There is a quote from the forward that continues to resonate with me as I read through this issue's articles. Desautel and McKnight state, "Schools are not machines. Schools are a network of human beings who feel, think, behave, and function within a human system that is alive and never static. Schools are living systems" (2016, pg. xi). Slowly we are moving from a factory model of education to a human model. We see it in the renewed focus on social-emotional aspects of schooling, personalized learning for students, teacher-driven professional development, increased collaboration with both students and colleagues, and a more critical look at labels and standardized testing. This issue of *Networks* provides some insights on these topics across the grade levels.

Co-designing curriculum with graduate-level early childhood educators is the focus **Aviva B. Dorfman's** article. If we would like teachers to embrace a constructivist model of teaching, as teacher educators, Dorfman argues, we need to model methods of instruction that support student input, exploration, and discovery. In her blended master's level course, Dorfman invites her students to co-construct the goals and purpose of the course, select topics, and negotiate the responsibilities of the instructor and students. Although the ambiguity of the initial syllabus can be uncomfortable, Dorfman finds that the end result provides for deeper, relevant learning for students and a foundation for developing stronger instructional and peer relationships.

As we move from the factory model of education to a human model, active learning is an essential method of instruction. However, successful active learning activities require intentional scaffolding by the instructor to ensure student success. **Sharon Heilmann** illustrates how she uses intentional scaffolding for her graduate research methods course when she pairs data collection through interviewing and narrative inquiry as a restorying reporting method. Through their active participation in developing interview questions, transcribing, restorying the interview, and reflecting, students recognize the complexities of using interviews for data and the need to carefully prepare.

Students' human networks extend beyond the classroom and finding ways to involve family members in children's education is often a struggle. **Ashlee B. Hover** reports on her action research project that provides iPod Shuffles loaded with over two dozen stories to her kindergarteners and families. Her inquiry seeks to understand the students' and families' preferences with regard to types of stories and use of the iPods and how using audio books might promote literacy activities at home.

The diversity of learning needs in classrooms is receiving a welcome and overdue focus at all grade levels. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a promising practice that can be implemented from pre-school to higher education and supports student success through providing systematic adjustments to the curriculum. Building a strong affective network, especially in online classes is one component of UDL that was designated as a topic of interest for the authors of the next article. **Marla J. Lohmann, Kathleen A. Boothe, Andrea R. Hathcote,** and **Amy Turpin** collaborate in an action research project that seeks to understand how providing intentional and scheduled communication with students, using a variety of platforms, during online Special Education teacher preparation courses might impact the students' engagement with the courses. Having a human touch in a digital environment provides a sense of community and the students feel more connected to the instructors and each other.

Collaboration is the key word in **Leila A. Ricci** and **Joan Fingon's** examination of their co-teaching experience in two different reading/language arts courses over two academic terms. A SPED instructor, Ricci, and a literacy instructor, Fingon's collaboration resulted from a collaborative teaching award from their college's innovation, curriculum, and assessment committee. The authors reflect on their own experiences through this collaboration and examine student survey responses about collaboration and the co-teaching experience. Overall the experience seems to be a positive one for both GE and SPED university students as well as the faculty involved.

I would like to close the review of this issue with a quote from Stephanie Pace Marshall in her book *The Power to Transform* that I hope will inspire you to think about how you can make your own teaching practices more human:

To educate our children wisely requires that we create generative and life-affirming learning communities, by design. These communities are grounded in the principles of life and learning and have their roots in: purpose, not prescription; meaning, not memory; engagement, not transmission; inquiry, not compliance; questions, not answers; exploration, not acquisition; personalization, not uniformity; interdependence, not individualism; collaboration, not competition; challenge, not threat; and trust and joy, not fear. (Marshall, 2006, xvi).

References

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