

Editor's Introduction

Educator preparation programs in the state of Texas and across the country have been under scrutiny for some time. Continual changes in policy, a lack of funding resources, unfunded state mandates, and higher accountability measures influence the profession on a daily basis. Despite this scenario, as teacher educators, the challenge is to keep advancing our mission of educating teachers to meet the complex realities of 21st century students and schools. To effectively embrace and serve, no matter what lies ahead in terms of policy changes, it is imperative to engage in scholarship that informs the profession and positively impacts K-12 student growth.

This edition of *The Forum* includes articles from scholars and practitioners who are implementing innovative and meaningful practices that better prepare preservice teachers for entry into the field and deepen K-12 students' learning experiences. As teacher educators, we are tasked with employing innovative and engaging research-based practices to deepen preservice teacher candidates' knowledge of teaching and learning. An article by Aimee Myers addresses the employment of meaningful digital tools to develop critical literacy as students engage in robust and meaningful sociocultural experiences. Karen Dunlap's article sheds light on the importance of teaching preservice teachers how to disaggregate testing data in order to create more effective instruction and meet specific K-12 student needs. Not only do teacher educators prepare preservice teachers to use evidence-based instructional practices to better facilitate student learning, we also ensure beginning teachers are prepared to deal with pressing social challenges. Over the past years, the issue of bullying behavior in schools has received a lot of attention. Katie Lewis and Lorraine Dinkel discuss the importance of providing more training to preservice teachers on preventing and addressing bullying in the K-12 classroom.

Even though educator preparation programs have limited time to teach the vast amount of information preservice teachers need to know before entering the field, we continue to find authentic and creative ways of deepening students' learning within our allotted time frame. To this end, Catherine Barber and colleagues discuss ways to maximize course learning experiences by implementing evidence-based strategies that assist preservice teachers in improving and deepening their academic writing ability.

Lindsey Vasquez and Jodi Pilgrim add depth to the current issue of *The Forum* with a follow-up to their 2017 study on teacher knowledge and skills needed to meet the needs of ELLs. Their current article reaffirms the importance of all students having opportunities to practice what they have learned in their coursework. Having the necessary content knowledge to pass a test is necessary for our preservice teachers but being able to transfer that knowledge to another situation in a different setting is critically important to their future success as educators.

As teacher educators, we must continue to examine impactful teaching practices that deepen K-12 student learning. Heather Olson-Beal and colleagues add perspective about finding authentic ways to teach writing, so students can be more positive and productive. John Kennedy and Jackie Vogel suggest that just because students are exposed to complex concepts and tasks, they may not use critical thinking skills to solve problems. These two articles provide insight into how teacher educators can approach structuring authentic activities in the classroom.

This issue concludes with two articles discussing the importance and value of developing and teaching care and compassion to colleagues and K-12 students. Ruben Garza and Jim Van Overschelde's article discusses how a Faculty Caring Instrument can be used to help preservice teachers assess their own degree of care and used to better understand and meet the needs of all students. Rebecca Fredrickson's article reaffirms the importance of modeling care and collaboration instead of competition in educator preparation.

It is our hope that this collection of manuscripts will inspire and promote critical discussions that enhance teacher preparation. We will continue to engage in meaningful work that improves the profession and positively impacts K-12 student success. In concert with Linda Darling-Hammond's recommendations, teacher preparation has the power to transform teaching and learning and we are doing it.

Respectfully,

Dr. Sarah McMahon

2018 Managing Editor