

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

What a year 2020 has been! To say the profession (in general) and we as educators (in particular) have been challenged is a gross understatement. The silver lining that struck me as I compiled this year's contributions to *The Texas Forum of Teacher Education* was, and continues to be, the amount of incredible grit and determination exhibited by educators across the PK-16 instructional spectrum. With little time to prepare parents and other stakeholders to take over an unsolicited portion of the instructional reigns, Texas teachers (in tandem with their national colleagues) worked tirelessly to ensure students were given opportunities to excel to the greatest extent possible in this "new normal".

It has been my pleasure to work with the TxATE Board members and reviewers through the creation of this year's TxATE *Forum*. It would take much more space than I am allowed here to thank each person individually. Know that no matter your role in this endeavor, I appreciate your guidance!

A common thread running through contributed manuscripts to this issue was the foundational principle that effective educators consistently strive to deliver effective research-based instruction (no matter the circumstances) in order to ensure student needs are met. A pandemic could not stop that goal as evidenced by educators who continued to:

- Show Care and Compassion through the Courageous Creation of Captivating instruction while Consistently Challenged by Continuous Change.
- Be Observant and Optimistic as they engaged students in Outstandingly Organized Opportunities despite Occasional moments when they themselves felt a bit Overwhelmed.
- Validate student and parent Voices by being Vigilant in the Virtual presentation of a Variety of Valued and Vibrant instructional strategies.
- Implement Incredible Instruction that was not only Inviting but Inclusive, Innovative and Impactful as well.
- Be Driven and Dedicated in their Desired creation of Diverse yet Distinct tasks which focused on Discovery and Dignified Divergent thinking.

In this issue:

- Using the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) theory developed to explain knowledge teachers need to teach effectively and with technology, Dr. Karman Kurban looked at adding robust data including videos and teacher reflections to the lesson plans utilized in the assessment of teacher quality. Results outlined in *Characterizing Middle Grade Mathematics Teachers' Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) Using a Robust Data Set* added to the knowledge base focused on translation of theory to practice.
- Recognizing the influx of locally certified teachers whose first career path was not education through Texas' District of Innovation designation, Dr. Brian Uriegas spoke to the importance of creating individualized, collaborative professional development programs to address their unique circumstances and needs in *identifying the Professional Development Needs for Teachers from Non-Educational Backgrounds*.
- Drs. Amy Barrios, Karen Kohler, & Lydia Gerzel-Short investigated the rapid shift in learning brought about by the pandemic that necessitated a change in school/family interactions. The authors provided strategies for teachers and teacher candidates to help parents/guardians and their children negotiate virtual learning spaces in their submission, *Shifting from Involvement to Engagement: Strategies for Supporting Families Virtually*.
- Academic calendar year 2020 saw standardized testing and accompanying accountability ratings waived for Texas schools. Indeed, Texas is currently discussing the possibility of a decrease in the number of standardized exams required for graduation. Dr. Erin Pierce followed the experiences of two secondary science teachers as they transitioned from teaching a state-tested subject to teaching a subject that was non-tested in *Now What? Teacher Perceptions of Their Instructional Practices in a Post-Standardized Tested World*.
- The pandemic forced teachers and teacher candidates to adapt quickly to constantly changing scenarios. In their article, *Teaching in Challenging Times: How Can Culturally Relevant Pedagogy Assist Teachers During COVID19?*

Drs. Laura Trujillo-Jenks, Rebecca R. Fredrickson, Karen Dunlap, and Sarah McMahan described strategies which help pre-service educators understand that culturally relevant pedagogy is essential.

- In their article, *Meeting the Needs of Secondary Students: One Teacher Candidate at a Time*, Drs. Amber Wagon & Heather Dean explored how teacher education programs may provide more active learning opportunities responsive to current trends in education; specifically targeting content literacy among secondary clinical student teacher candidates.
- Through solid pedagogical practices, Drs. Arren Swift, Robert Maninger, and Casey Creghan identified strategies preservice and in-service educators can use to increase confidence in both time management and classroom discipline when implementing project-based learning in the article, *Enacting PBL Without Fear*.
- Through their article, *The Impact of the Robert Noyce Mentoring Programs on Increased Teaching Effectiveness among Teacher Candidates*, Drs. Amber Wagon, Keith Hubbard, & Chrissy Cross examined the impact the mentorship program from the National Science Foundation had on recruiting and retention efforts of teacher candidates in STEM fields at their university.
- Drs. Maria de Lourdes Vilorio, Selina V.Mireles, Weam Al-Tameemi and Marcela Uribe in their submission, *Instructional Research-Based Practices Related to Agriculture Science*, investigated instructional practices that enhanced hands-on agricultural science lessons aligned to Texas curriculum standards.
- Finally, to enhance the writing skills of educator candidates, Dr. Thomas Hansen submitted a review of the book, *A Student's Guide to Academic and Professional Writing in Education* by Arosteguy, Bright & Rinard.

Therefore, as 2020 winds down, perhaps upon reflection, articles within this issue will continue to serve as reminders that even though COVID 19 forced the shutdown of schools, universities, and university teacher preparation programs, several insights did negotiate their way to the forefront of educators' minds. Standards matter...Schools matter...Teachers matter.... Training matters...Stakeholders matter...How Change is Addressed matters. TxATE has a pivotal role to play.

As TxATE prepares for the next edition, the call for papers to be submitted to the *Texas Forum for Teacher Education* will go out in spring 2021 with the deadline for manuscripts set for **July 1, 2021**. Authors are asked to direct submissions to the 2021 Managing Editor, Dr. Daniella Varela (daniella.varela@tamuk.edu) .

Respectfully submitted,
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Managing Editor, *Forum* 2020