

Editorial Introduction: Better Together

Suzanne Porath ~ Kansas State University

Editor of *Networks*

One of the major slogans of the COVID pandemic has been “Better Together.” Public Service Announcements across the country encouraged their community members to act responsibly and work together to support others during a difficult time. As the world continues to emerge from the pandemic, hopefully some of the positive lessons learned from the pandemic will continue both in communities and in education.

This issue of *Network* touches on both topics – the continued impact of COVID on teaching and learning and the importance of collaboration during educator inquiry projects. Adult learning theory, also known as andragogy (Knowles, 1980) is an approach to learning that is problem-based and collaborative. Each of the articles in this issue highlight the importance of educators guiding their own professional learning in collaboration with others.

Like most action research projects, **Broughton’s** inquiry into the implementation of a differentiated word study curriculum came from an authentic question of practice. As a student teacher, she recognizing that her students were frustrated with having great ideas for writing, but stumped when it came to spelling words. With the support of her cooperating teacher, she implemented *Words Their Way* as a method to meet students in their developmental spelling stage and build on their knowledge. As with good action research projects, Broughton left this project with even more questions to investigate.

According to **Moore, Simonyak, and Ruzicka**, reading and music can form a symbiotic relationship to impact literacy instruction and student engagement. This cross-curricular action research project investigated how music might impact phonemic awareness and student

engagement in class activities. The symbiotic relationship of the collaboration was mutualistic, where students made advancements in both literacy and music classes.

As a form of teacher inquiry, self-study is founded on the use of collaborative interactions to foster deeper reflection and impact on practice. **Schmid, Price-Williams, Anderson, and Townsley** report on a year-long self-study project that continued through COVID disruptions to typical class structures. Their key research question epitomizes the purpose of teacher inquiry, “How can the teaching practices of four pre-tenure faculty members be improved through observation, feedback, and reflection?” But, most importantly, for the authors, was the collegial connections they were able to foster through the project.

Three years after the COVID pandemic began, the far-reaching consequences are continuing to be documented. **Seeger, Fredde, O’Neal, and Stewart** provide a perspective on how the shift to remote instruction in schools across the country impacted graduate student teacher-researchers in completing action research. Through adaptability, flexibility, and personal resilience, the teacher-researchers believed their teaching was stronger and they were inclined to continue action research projects and their graduate studies in spite of the hurdles of COVID disruptions.

Grounded in adult learning theory, where teachers direct their own inquiries, it is clear that both novice and veteran teachers benefit from teacher inquiry projects. **Stebick, Hart, Glick, Kindervatter, Nagel, and Patrick** report on a cohort of nine educators who engaged in a year-long professional learning project to investigate their own practice. Key components of this profession learning opportunity was collaboration, community, and peer accountability.

Helen Keller famously stated, “Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.” As you read this issue of *Networks*, I hope that you find inspiration to reach out to your own

professional learning network and find a collaborator to work together to better your own teaching and your students' learning.

Reference

Knowles, M. S. (1980). *The modern practice of adult education*. New York: Cambridge, The Adult Education Company.