

Editorial: Seeing Connections Across Holistic Education Perspectives and Pedagogies

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Abstract

In this, our opening editorial, we wish to guide readers through a delightful range of holistic education perspectives. One reason we enthusiastically embrace open-themed issues at the *Holistic Education Review*, is because of the rich diversity it brings in submissions. Open-themed issues allow our holistic education community to see into and across an abundance of approaches and pedagogies that are being implemented and reflected upon around the world. Further, it allows our journal to play an active role in “widening the circle” of holistic education, reflecting our values and mission as a space to share wisdom and disseminate knowledge.

The order in which the editors have written about each article is the order in which we suggest our readers read each article.

Keywords: *holistic education, philosophy, mindful leadership, alternative education, community building*

As we reflect upon the contributions of the spring open-themed issue, we find a fountain of stimulating ideas related to the diversity found across holistic educational practices and spaces. True to our mission, we continue to amplify holistic educator perspectives that are well known while also widening the circle to include emerging scholarship and community voices from fields that are often deeply holistic, but are not currently associated with the holistic education community. Including these pieces is a way to actively enhance

the field. We emphasize the wisdom that comes from prose, poetry, illustrations and dialogues (through interviews). Through multi-modal engagement with holistic education, we hope to increase the resonance of the work with a wider readership around the world.

We begin our issue with an intriguing dialogue featuring renowned scholar and author Margaret (Meg) Wheatley and *HER* Senior Editor, Paul Freedman. Meg has been a beacon in the area of leadership studies since the publication of her

seminal work, *Leadership and the New Science* (1992). Her work has been wide-reaching and deeply impactful.

In this dialogue, Meg and Paul take a brief look back at her earlier contributions, before Meg leads the discussion towards the imperatives of the current social crises. Meg explains her recent turn towards committing to creating and sustaining “islands of sanity” amid a sea of madness.

The reader will then be treated to a beautiful metaphoric tale by recently deceased New England scholar, philosopher, naturalist, teacher, and consummate storyteller, Ben Williams. Williams was a pioneer of experiential and place-based learning. 40 years ago, Williams put his Harvard EdD to work, converting a school bus to take undergraduate students on a cross-country Audubon Institute-sponsored adventure, an adventure that began his teaching-on-the-road for 13 years, before he settled down to more traditional teaching methods .

Here we honor Williams’ legacy with this lyrical never-before-published essay, *Crane Time* in which he paints a beautiful picture of transformative, experiential and place-based learning. Sometimes we discover that what we seek has been surrounding us all along. We just need to lift the fog and blink our eyes to see a glimpse of new worlds of understanding.

Following the poetic essay *Crane Time*, we shift to another form of poetic based understanding of the world with Ying Ma’s phenomenological paper, *The Possibility of Life in the Index: A Phenomenological Search in Online Zoom Teaching*. Ma opens up with her experiences as a teacher to our readers through poetry and goes on to unveil his truth for how, even within the online space we often find ourselves forced into as

teachers, “humanity still grows and thrives.” Reading through the phenomenological perspective is balanced out by Jwalin Patel’s piece, *Holistic Visions of Education stemming from Alternative Schools in India*, which engages with perspectives stemming from Indian philosophical tradition to teach holistically towards the achievement and sustaining of harmony.

Building upon the ideas emerging in Ying Ma’s and Patel’s work, we turn to our pieces that directly tie to how holistic education and arts practice allow for playful and meaningful learning. Our contributing author, Fiona McDonnell writes about drawing as an experiential means of knowing in her article, *Nurturing the Art of Seeing and Gift of Vision in Preservice Elementary Science Teachers*. Author, Lila Biswakarma, takes readers on a journey to see how artistic and culturally contextualized holistic practice fosters peace and decreases poverty in *Performing Artwork in Nature: The Praxis of Holism in a Rural Village of Nepal*. Jon L. Smythe provides a moving piece across that illuminates how the process of art creation can serve to heal pain students carry with them into learning spaces from other parts of their lives in *Aesthetics as a Curriculum of Holism and Healing*.

Continuing to dwell in the overlaps of creative expression and holistic educational approaches, Lulu Delphine, shares the positive work emerging from *Turning the Wheel*, a cross-state organization working with creative play and lifelong learning. Spanning across the artistic articles are throughlines that weave together demonstrating how the arts help us, as humans. Supporting self awareness, mindfulness of emotions, attunement to the present, and restoring relationships with the natural world around us.

We use Delphine's work as a bridge between our pieces focusing on the arts and our pieces looking at the plentiful possibilities for lifelong learning through holistic education pedagogy and practice. Beginning this exploration is Christopher Nye with the article, *The Gap Year Frontier*, where the concept and evolution of overseas exchanges for students between secondary school and university is anchored by the values of *bildung*, which translated from the German means "deeply transformational learning."

Following Nye, we have placed two studies on teacher education. The first study by Luz Carime Bersh, *The Psychosocial, Intellectual and Emotional Impact of Classroom Community Building in Teacher Candidates: A Holistic Approach*, focuses on the social-emotional learning of elementary teacher candidates attending university. The second research study, *Exploring Possibilities for Holistic Professional Development: Reflections on an Experimental Program*, by Lincoln Smith recommends the integration of holistic education within professional development content for educators as a means to nurture wisdom, inspire awe, support a sense of purpose, and gain mastery in the art of advising.

Our last two articles delve deeply into how holistic education, in various forms and contexts, is essential to helping students make connections in their brains and to see connections across our inherently interconnected world. In *SNAP - Scaffolding for Numerical Synapses*, Sheryl Morris builds upon ideas for awe and wonder back to the center of learning numbers. Turning to the words of mathematician Benoit Mandelbrot who said, "Learning mathematics should begin by learning the geometry of mountains," Morris shares a curriculum supplement that aids in the restoration of numbers to the natural world and the

relationships in abundance around us. Going from the inner connections of the brain to seeing the connections in the cosmos, John Bickhart, shares his thought-provoking essay, *The Possible Role of Intuition In Education*. In this article, Bickart returns to Piaget's 20th century analysis of interviews with children and his ascribing specific developmental stages to children's cognitive expressions. Bickart suggests that perhaps Piaget, and by extension all educators, may be viewing this kind of observable data through a particular positivistic lens. Bickart suggests that part of what Piaget and contemporary teachers may be missing is children's capacity for remarkable intuitive thinking.

We offer you four book reviews to round out this Spring's issue. The first of these comes from longtime leader and advocate in the democratic and free school movement, Chris Mercogliano. Here he reviews a new book from Deb O'Rourke, *Can This Be School?* Deepa Srikantiah then reviews Bob London's latest offering, *Introducing Nonroutine Math Problems to Secondary Learners*. Finally, this issue concludes with a corresponding bookend to the interview with Margaret Wheatley with which we opened. First is a review by Katherine Ross of the new revised edition of Meg Wheatley's *Who Do We Choose To Be?* And finally, Steven Arnold reviews Wheatley's brand new book, *Restoring Sanity: Practices to Awaken Generosity, Creativity, and Kindness in Ourselves and Our Organizations*.

We hope this collection of scholarship will add sunlight to your pedagogical garden this Spring and allow you to cross-pollinate your own ideas with those of our authors. Just as gardeners steward the growth of a garden, we trust that time spent reading and reflecting upon the articles in this issue will nourish your spirit while you cultivate holistic education in your local context.

May your individual and collective practice in this field blossom in abundance. Consider documenting your work and your insights. We'd love to hear about it.

Enjoy!

Author Bios

Annie Rappoport, Ph.D. is part of the HER senior editorial team. They are currently teaching and researching for both the University of Virginia (UVA) and the University of Maryland (UMD). Annie received their Education Ph.D. with a concentration in International Environmental and Peace Studies from UMD in 2022. Annie is a current research fellow at UVA's Karsh Institute for Democracy where they are collaborating on holistic approaches to civic education. Annie's research portfolio reflects a commitment to holistic education, arts education, peacebuilding, mental health, listening leadership,, and the application of Indigenous wisdom and environmental education within universities.

Paul Freedman was an elementary classroom teacher for 28 years. He is the Founding Head of the Salmonberry School on Orcas Island, WA, where he has worked since 2001. He is a Senior Editor for the Holistic Education Review, a peer review open access journal he helped to re-launch in 2021. Paul serves on the faculty of The Institute for Educational Studies in their Integrative Learning MEd program. He is a doctoral candidate in the School of Leadership Studies at Fielding Graduate University. His current research centers on the question, how do school leaders infuse their holistic pedagogy into their work in organizational leadership?