

# *Ever-Widening Circles of Holistic Education: An Editorial*

**Fawn Canady**

E-mail: [canadyf@sou.edu](mailto:canadyf@sou.edu)

Received November 2025

Accepted for publication November 2025

Published November 2025

## **Abstract**

An editorial written by our newest senior editor, Fawn Canady, to introduce the articles and themes found across contributions to the Fall 2025 Issue of the Holistic Education Review.

**Keywords:** *holistic education, cycles, circles, transformation, body*

---

This “unthemed”, or an ‘open-topic’ issue, has a particularly strong throughline of *humanizing* education through embodied, contemplative, and relational practices. Here, (re)humanization is about restoration of self-awareness and self-transformation through empathy and interconnection. Explicitly or implicitly, the authors in this issue position social and emotional learning (SEL) as a necessity— not an add-on to standards or learning objectives, but a way of teaching and learning that serves as the foundation for all learning.

In this spirit, I return to del Carmen Salazar’s (2013) “rehumanizing pedagogy” which resonates with many of the experiences and ideas emerging in this issue. Humanizing pedagogy is an ongoing process moving students and teachers from *objects* of schooling to *subjects* who think, act, and create in the world (del Carmen Salazar, 2013). This ongoing process of becoming runs counter to the ways school is traditionally done.

Paulo Freire (1970) called it the Banking Model. In this issue, Jardine says, simply: “We’ve been schooled.” In contrast, humanizing pedagogy offers a vision of becoming rather than a narrow either/or achievement.

“A humanizing pedagogy is a process of *becoming* for students and teachers,” del Carmen Salazar reminds us (2013, p. 128), emphasizing a journey rather than a fixed outcome. Our self-awareness evolves and enlarges ties with others, becoming ever widening circles of relation (Owen, 2021). As Bacquet notes, holistic practices such as non-judgment, empathy and compassion, reverberates toward social justice in education.

As you read this editorial, imagine the themes of each article are connected by a motif of circles or cycles— especially as they relate to our experience of place/space and t/Time. This thread binds each piece together by expressing *rehumanization*, by re-stor(y)-ing the dominant narrative of

contemporary education that focuses on linear, efficient, and extractive practices, and replacing it with one that is relational, recursive, and, importantly, *alive*.

### **Personal and Collective Transformation**

In this issue, many of the articles underscore the role of personal or self-transformation in the service of collective transformation.

In Bacquet's *Nonviolence Education as a Practice of Rehumanization*, teachers participate in nonviolence training grounded in contemplative pedagogy practices that center empathy, compassion, and reflection. This emphasis widens the scope of nonviolence education. The conceptual framework draws from Barbezat et al.'s (2013) contemplative practices, but also from bell hooks and Thich Nhat Hanh's Inter-Being. Especially relevant to educators is the integration of an awareness of how "as humans, we have tended to label, classify and identify groups in often one word or a combination of them..." and how labeling prevents inter-connectedness. In this, we are reminded of the power of words to shape different realities and futures. The participatory and experiential approach to nonviolence teacher training creates an opportunity for self-transformation. And, as Bacquet argues, self-transformation allows teachers to reimagine their own classrooms as "empathy-driven communities."

In Lossin and Shaoul's *Mindset Shifts in Public Education*, SEL and educational ecology is "where students, teachers, and their surroundings are all connected." They introduce *Etnachta* as a contemplative space to integrate SEL and Educational Ecology. It rests on the idea that "systemic change begins with personal transformation" and that personal transformation is relational. In this way, personal growth contributes to compassionate and responsive

school cultures. The authors share *Etnachta* as a routine contemplative practice for teachers and students.

Holistic education disrupts the linear approach. This reverberates with Bickart's "learn to return" stance in stories and fables. Across Bickart's *20 Opportunities to Transform Yourself While Teaching*, Brown's *Discovery Mindset*, and Rumjahn and Behrish's exploration of post-graduate grief, as well as Lossin and Shaoul's *Etnachta*, we see a shared commitment: inner work, presence, and contemplative practice as catalysts for inner and outer transformation.

### **Interconnection, interdependence and Inter-Being**

Another prominent theme that emerged in this "unthemed" collection is interconnectedness. While closely related to personal and collective transformation, several of the authors, such as Bacquet explored earlier, explicitly or implicitly include "inter" connections. Lyngstad's *Authenticity Authorship Authority* expands Parker Palmer's exploration of the common roots of these three words and reflects on how they connect to the educator's pathway as embracing one's own story.

In Maser, *Learning-as-Corresponding* is learning as responsive, co-responsence—a creative act through interaction with the world. Maser draws on anthropology, literature, philosophy, sociology, Indigenous knowledge, and animals like Ruby, the adopted stray dog, and the fledgling nurtured by an artist. This wide-ranging exploration of the concept of learning connects space, time, place, and language. Becoming attuned to individual learners' contributions, creativity, and interactions with the world. Teachers, students, and environments are inseparable and co-constructive.

In response to the dehumanizing aspects of education, such as standardized tests, accountability, and efficiency—echoed in several of the pieces in this issue—the various ways circles create space for transforming the current culture of a school “into a collectively visioned new reality” reverberate in In Menting-Wilson, DeCarlo, and Fanning’s *Circles Process: A Tool for Transformative Dialogue*. Like Maser and Khademhanmedani in this issue, language in *Circles Process* is generative and creative, and, like Lyngstad notes, a form of authorship. In this motif, Menting-Wilson et al. “explored the circle process as a strategy for cultivating teacher agency in a neoliberal school environment” and how deep listening and authenticity creates the conditions for real change.

### **Embodied, Multisensory Presence**

Learning is felt, lived, sensory experience and not entirely cognitive—we think with our bodies as well as our minds. Trace the word “think” back to its ancient roots in Latin, *tongēre*, to know—you will find that “think” has a surprising relative: “thanks.” *Thanks* is also drawn from *tongēre* (Meriam-Webster, n.d.). Thanks. Gratitude. Presence. *Thinking*.

Brown’s *Discovery Mindset* explores everyday novelty and discovery—another way of being present, such as walking, practicing “bare awareness”, paying sensory attention and being fully present in our bodies in order to *think*. Brown’s discovery mindset was a term they coined in *A Pedagogy of Surprise* to “describe the state of mind that is primed to discover new things in all situations, even the most mundane.” Inspired by Dweck’s growth mindset, Brown suggests:

*“fostering a discovery mindset entails more than simply bare awareness of any given situation. What makes the discovery*

*mindset different from bare awareness is that it is more attuned to the transformative aspect of unfolding happenings, as well as the ability to synthesize elements of the present moment in infinite possibilities. A discovery mindset expects synergies and actively prepares for connections between diverse aspects of an issue (Goldstein, 2021; Grossmann et al., 2020) rather than simply observing immediate cause and effect situations.”*

Prepare for “integrative complexity”, embodied experiences in the classroom ranging from serendipity, or “happy accidents,” to slowness, immersive experiences that engage multiple senses.

Another example of embodied, multisensory experience in this issue is Khademhamedani, *Mindfulness and Body Language in Holistic Education*. This work is centered in a primary school in Iran. Khademhamedani explores body language through a holistic education lens to increase children’s mindfulness, body awareness, and emotion management. Similarly, the teacher, as an active listener, “can have a significant impact” by attending to body language, becoming *listeners* of body language. Khademhamedani provides examples of listening and storytelling practices that engage the whole body, like “listening posture” and “talking sticks” and “body language feedback.” The article includes strategies for cultural sensitivity and inclusivity when using methods for body awareness. Students showed improved focus, stress management, and communication and greater development in social-emotional skills and well being.

Along this thread, Morris’s book review of *Toward a Re-Emergence of James Moffett’s*

*Mindful, Spiritual, and Student-Centered Pedagogy* by Marine et al. (2023) brings Moffet into “holistic learning circles,” underscoring his advocacy for the spiritual, cognitive, and emotional dimensions of education essential for learners. Morris includes key ideas from each of the chapters and interjects Moffet’s own voice into the review.

Rumjahn & Behrish’s *Contemplating Post-Graduate Grief* explores the experience of crossing the bridge from graduate student to post-graduate: grieving, emptiness, acceptance, letting go, and healing. Specifically, the authors explore *ambivalence*. Here, “cyclical time” is contrasted with linear temporal ontology and emphasises how this contradicts human experience of time as experienced in cycles. Our readers will see the symbolism of circles emanating from this and other pieces, such as Menting-Wilson et al. discuss the lack of preparation for what Behrish calls “a darkness,” or the unexpected feelings that counter the expectation of joy or relief in the thesis, or “finishing.” In this, we see how the ideas of the forward march of time denies “impermanence and the ongoing non-discreet phases of life” and likens the graduate learning process to “alchemical” change. The “co-arising of joy and grief” can open up to a presence and, as Maser notes, co-respondence with the idea of completion.

### **Conclusion: Relational, Recursive, and Alive**

The work of the authors in this *unintentionally*-themed issue points to the relational, recursive, and rehumanizing aspects of holistic education that seeks to engender agency and creativity in learners. Teachers are included in this circle around learners, too. This work never ends. In Hidalgo and Jardine, for example, education is yet again “stuck” and they wonder at how little has changed. And yet, in this

conversation between a preschool teacher and her mentor, we glimpse the circular nature of teacher and learner. Just as Hidalgo learned from Jardine, Jardine learns from Hidalgo, and Hidalgo learns from her students... and on it goes—ever-widening circles.

Moffett saw living and education as a continual becoming through spiritual growth and Morris’s review brings this into the holistic circle. Lyngstad’s reflection on authenticity, authorship, and authority explores this same idea. These frameworks and processes are tools for transformative change “in response to the dehumanizing aspects of education” (Menting-Wilson et al., this issue).

Let us come full circle, to the very first issue of *Holistic Education Review*: “*Our theme for this first issue—Broadening the Circle of Holistic Education—represents the past and present of holistic education, while gazing toward the future*” (Owen, 2021, p. 1).

### **References**

- Goodman, Y. M. (1978). Kid Watching: An alternative to testing. *National Elementary Principal*, 57(4), 41-5.
- del Carmen Salazar, M. (2013). A humanizing pedagogy: Reinventing the principles and practice of education as a journey toward liberation. *Review of Research in Education*, 37(1), 121-148.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Herder and Herder.

Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Think. In  
Merriam-Webster.com dictionary.  
Retrieved November 19, 2025,  
from  
[https://www.merriam-webster.com/  
dictionary/think](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/think)

Owen, R. (2021). Broadening the circle of  
Holistic Education. *Holistic  
Education Review*, 1(1).

### **Author Bio**

**Dr. Fawn Canady** is Assistant Professor of Literacy Education, Chair of Undergraduate Education Studies, and Co-Director of the Oregon Writing Project. She was recently awarded a Faculty Fellowship with the Institute for Applied Sustainability. In this capacity, she is working on a community mapping project called Collective Cartography. She is co-founder of the Future Earth Story Project, a National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institute. Her current projects explore the role of storytelling in bridging differences and building community for socio-ecological sustainability.