Murmuration
Fall 2026 Editorial

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Abstract

An editorial for the Fall 2026 issue of the *Holistic Education Review*.

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Murmuration: A massive, swirling flock of birds that move in synchronized, shape-shifting patterns across the sky.

You may have seen them in video clips, if not in person. Vast communities moving in three dimensions, in undulating patterns – coming together, separating briefly, but somehow embodying a collective synchronous wisdom of sorts. What is happening here? Where is the locus of leadership? Intelligence? As observers, can we shift our attention from the individual to the whole? How many birds must flock together before this kind of group-organismal consciousness emerges? Jan Smuts, who coined the term "holistic" in the 1920s, explored the idea of a tipping point when, during the process of evolution, energy transforms into matter, matter into life, etc., in ever-increasing complexity. What is the tipping point as these individual birds emerge into a larger whole? Or, as Parker Palmer suggests, is the "hidden wholeness" always there? In West African Igbo philosophy, there is a phrase, "igwe bu ike," which reminds us how every beautiful, whole individual bears a connection to a larger whole, providing greater purpose, more profound meaning, and deeper connection to each individual.

Now, in the United States, is there an emerging pattern? A growing shift in awareness or consciousness? Might we be witnessing an awakening to care for community – for Earth?

Back in 1991, authors Ron Miller and Nancy Wallace called for a broad movement of social change; they wrote in *The Holistic Education Review*:

> We cannot succeed at this huge task as educators alone, nor as academic critics alone, nor as families alone. We are convinced that the entire culture, the entire worldview that supports this culture, is the true source of our alienation and pain. And the only way we will have the remotest chance to change this culture and truly heal ourselves is by joining forces with all

> people who hold humane, democratic, life-affirming values" (Wallace, p. 33-34).

Miller and Wallace here called out for a *murmuration*. A collective movement – a self-organizing shift of consciousness.

In Angela Spayde's beautiful article from the current issue, we are again reminded of a murmuration: "A mosaic is the harmony of individual pieces finding flow, creating something more beautiful and complex than any one of us could make alone."

Erick Gordon, also in this issue, echoes this idea. Though he is referencing the insights of a 20th-century French anthropologist, it seems he could equally be describing the movement of starlings when he writes, "To give, to receive, to reciprocate. These are not isolated acts. They are part of a system that sustains community across time."

Bearing witness to the apparent nascent murmuration of this month's "Blue Tsunami" in America's midterm elections may give us hope; are we glimpsing our evolving consciousness and deepening complexity? I urge you to embrace this sense of optimism as you read the impressive scholarship in this Volume VI, No. 2 issue of *The Holistic Education Review*. Enjoy!

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Editor Bios

Dr. Paul Freedman -- I am the father of two amazing young adults, my greatest mentors. I have been a K-6 teacher for 28 years. I am the Founding Head of Salmonberry School on Orcas Island, WA. I have served as President of the Graduate Institute for Transformative Learning and am currently a member of the faculty of TIES (The Institute for Educational Studies) and the Transformative Learning Foundation. I have served as a Contributing Editor for Encounter: Education for Meaning and Social Justice. My TEDx Talk is on "Deep Education." I am the Co-Director of the Holistic Education Initiative. It is an honor to accept the reins for The Holistic Educator from Susan and Gary, and to share the leadership of this project with my friends and colleagues, Renee and Laurel. I look forward to serving the needs of the holistic education community.

Katherine Holden is a lifelong educator and advocate for holistic, student-centered learning. She began her career as a teacher and co-director of Wilderness Charter School, spending ten years immersed in experiential, community rich, place-based education. She later taught WAMS, an innovative project-based video production program for middle school students, before becoming a school leader. As Associate Principal of Ashland Middle School, she was recognized as the 2022 NASSP National Assistant Principal of the Year. She subsequently served as Principal of Talent Middle School and Director of The Siskiyou School, a Waldorf-inspired K-8 independent school. Katherine has served on the boards of Madrone Trail Charter School, TRAILS Outdoor School, and the Oregon Middle Level Association. Currently, she teaches at Southern Oregon University, supporting aspiring teachers and school leaders while completing doctoral research at the University of Oregon on grading reform, rubrics, and the essential role of feedback for student learning.