

# Journal of Teaching and Learning



## A Diverse Collection

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Volume 18, numéro 1, 2024

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1111981ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.22329/jtl.v18i1.8634>

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Éditeur(s)

University of Windsor

ISSN

1492-1154 (imprimé)

1911-8279 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce document

Smith, C. (2024). A Diverse Collection. *Journal of Teaching and Learning*, 18(1), 1–2. <https://doi.org/10.22329/jtl.v18i1.8634>

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## *Editorial Comments* **A Diverse Collection**

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In this issue, as with many general issues of *JTL*, we bring a diverse collection of papers from scholars—new, emerging, and established—on a range of topics and issues. We begin with a discussion of how higher education might be re-imagined to better meet the needs of today’s students. We then delve into teachers’ mental health during COVID-19 for a discussion of how stress and depression played out differently and similarly by gender during the pandemic. Two articles focus on teaching practice. One introduces the ‘Tricky Pickle,’ by exploring reading instruction in play-based kindergarten programs as a balancing act between the competing demands of stakeholders and the varied needs of young learners. Another talks about the opportunities for secondary pre-service teachers to experience productive struggle in the teaching of mathematics. We conclude with two articles that speak to the interplay of teaching and equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization.

For post-secondary educational institutions to better meet contemporary student needs, foster student mental health, and create interdisciplinary life-long learners who are prepared for the ever-changing workforce, fundamental institutional change is needed. Rebecca Collins-Nelsen, Michaela Hill, and John MacLachlan suggest changes that centre on the relationships among time, learning, and risk that consider a greater commitment to year-round learning, innovative courses that encompass various lengths, and an increase in ‘low-risk’ learning opportunities.

Teaching has long been known to be a stressful job that often results in high burnout and teacher turnover. Andrea Huseth-Zosel, Sarah Crary, and Megan Orr conducted a quantitative study to explore the impact of changes in teaching modalities resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of K-12 teachers, by gender, during the first year of the pandemic. Findings suggest that female teachers were more likely to experience higher levels of stress than male teachers, while male teachers were more likely to experience higher levels of depression than female teachers. Further, physical symptoms were more likely to be experienced by female teachers.

While the value of play in learning for young children has been recognized for many years, challenges have arisen in teaching young children to read in play-based learning kindergarten classrooms. Yvonne Messenger and Tiffany Gallagher present a mixed-methods study that provided context and explored kindergarten educators’ experiences, self-identified strengths and challenges to teach reading within play-based programs, and their goals for continued growth pedagogical-content knowledge. Findings suggest the need for researchers to engage in more

applied research related to reading instruction in play-based kindergarten programs that builds an understanding of educators' experiences, self-efficacy beliefs, and desire for professional knowledge for teaching reading in play-based programs.

Pre-service teachers need opportunities to productively struggle with mathematical concepts to support their future students' development of critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaborative skills. Shelli Casler-Failing reports on an action research study involving secondary mathematics pre-service teachers who completed mathematical tasks in weekly Zoom sessions to develop their understanding of productive struggle. Findings suggests that providing opportunities for pre-service teachers to experience productive struggle informs their pedagogical practice, and that this experience can be supplied in an online environment.

As we look to revise the curricula on engaging with critical socio-political topics, we need to centre our approach on students' voices in reshaping social-justice education and the need to provide such lessons within formal school settings. Shuyuan Liu, Kenneth Gyamerah, Claire Ahn, and Thashika Pillay present, using a case-study approach, three high-school youth's understandings and experiences about social-justice education during the pandemic, in both formal and informal spaces. Participants reflected a fragmented, but practical understanding of current events, what could be done, and what has yet to be done in everyday life, amid the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

The beginning years of a teacher's career can be an overwhelming experience, and combined with being in an isolated, fly-in community, can be exhausting. Jody-Ann Robinson and Patricia Briscoe use an autoethnographic method to identify key themes to better understand the experiences of 'surviving and thriving' as a Black Afro-Caribbean, early career teacher in a Northern Ontario First Nation community over a three-year teaching placement. Findings suggest that early career teachers who embark on fly-in placements need to be aware and prepared to engage in critical reflections, embrace vulnerability, and be humble to learn as they unlearn their colonizing ways.

This issue includes two book reviews. Scot Cowan and David Bell-Patterson review the book, *Where Research Begins: Choosing a Research Project that Matters to You (and the World)*, which provides a guidebook and workbook on helping students decide what to research. Anna Lippman reviews the book, *First-Generation Student Experiences in Higher Education: Counterstories* which highlights the accomplishments and struggles of group of first-generation university students as they navigate a university and its access program.

It is my distinct pleasure to thank our contributing authors, reviewers, and editorial team members for their commitment to educational scholarship and its dissemination in *JTL*. It really does 'take a village.' For those who may be picking up *JTL* for the first time, consider joining the *JTL* family as an author or a reviewer. You are always welcome!