

## **Editors' Welcome and Comments**

The publication of this first issue of the *International Journal of Research on Service-Learning in Teacher Education (IJRSLTE)* represents a significant milestone in a process that began in 2009 with the work of Kathleen Wasserman at the University of Scranton. In 2011, the Service-Learning Special Interest Group (SIG) of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) and the International Center for Service-Learning in Teacher Education (ICSLTE) located at Duke University assumed collaborative responsibility for publication of this new journal. The establishment of this partnership was soon followed by the appointment of the three current co-editors, the addition of *International* to the journal title, and the recruitment of an experienced cadre of reviewers.

We would like to thank the AERA SIG and the ICSLTE for their encouragement and support. We also want to extend our appreciation to Virginia Jagla, who provided guidance as we made the transition to a new forum. Our efforts to move to the new forum would not have been possible without the technical support of Ramona Holmes and her staff at the University of Texas at Arlington who have shared our vision. Finally, we want to thank our authors and the reviewers who have worked with us through the transition.

### **Current Status of Service-Learning in Teacher Education**

The use of service-learning in teacher education grew rapidly in the U.S.A. from 1990 until early in the twenty-first century. A national study of all institutional members of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) in 2003 found that 59% reported including service-learning in their curriculum. Since that time the integration of service-learning in teacher education has expanded to include programs in dozens of countries located on

six continents. Despite this growth in quantity and gradual improvements in the quality and sophistication of service-learning practice and research, numerous critical challenges remain.

In addition to confusion regarding distinctions between service-learning and traditional teacher candidate field experiences, differences of opinion exist regarding the importance of preparing teacher candidates to use service-learning as a pedagogy with their future elementary and secondary school students. Other challenges also remain unsolved. One challenge is a lack of time in the preservice curriculum for any additional content, especially with the ascendance of the edTPA and other high-stakes preservice teacher performance measures. A second issue relates to the perceived lack of time and space in the curriculum of elementary and secondary schools for service-learning due in large part to the intense focus on standardized test scores as the primary measure of educational success. This situation contributes to a third issue, a lack of high-quality placements in schools for teacher candidates to gain practical experience and guidance from master teachers knowledgeable about service-learning. Finally, lack of time, knowledge, and ability of beginning teachers to build a support system for educational reforms such as service-learning helps ensure that these types of practices will remain on the margins. In addition, in the U.S.A., the elimination of funds to support service-learning from the federal Corporation for National and Community Service has precipitated a sharp decline in K-12 service learning.

The good news is that many strategies have been identified that can improve the status of service-learning in teacher education. One strategy is advocating for service-learning with accreditation organizations such as CAEP and state departments of education. Another strategy involves conducting and disseminating high-quality research to demonstrate the positive impacts

of service-learning participation on K-12 students, teacher candidates, and communities. Research can help determine the best methods to implement service-learning in teacher education and how to institutionalize it to ensure its sustainability.

Teacher educators need to seek creative approaches to service-learning and expand their vision of how it can be integrated into the pre-service curriculum. For example, the use of co-teaching in the student teaching internship offers possibilities for achieving some of the most important goals of service-learning. When the co-teaching model is employed in a manner that provides K-12 schools with chances to identify the needs which co-teachers will address, teacher candidates have a say in the details of their co-teaching placements. Moreover, these experiences are carried out in a context that includes critical reflection and an emphasis on enhancing the civic responsibility of the teacher candidates, a potent form of service-learning. As contributors to our current issue demonstrate, teacher educators also can partner with others in their universities to participate in the growing number of initiatives in which the university serves as an “anchor institution” to work for improvements in surrounding neighborhood.

### **Highlights of the Current Issue**

Notably, all of the studies have shown how service-learning can help preservice teachers develop understandings needed to work successfully with students from diverse backgrounds. Lund, Lee, Bragg, and Kaipainen offer a promising model of a community-led collaboration and an effective model for preparing pre-service teachers for working with children and youth from immigrant backgrounds. The research of Zygmunt-Fillwalk, Clark, Clausen, and Mucherah also documents a project where prospective teachers participated in community-led projects that served low-income families and contributed in substantial ways to greater understanding of this

population's needs. Gourd's study demonstrates that community-based learning projects, integrated with other program components, support candidates' development as teachers of students with diverse backgrounds and promote an orientation toward social justice. Yang, Anderson, and Burke show that service-learning can contribute to prospective teachers' ability to teach science to students from diverse backgrounds and to gains in efficacy beliefs in teaching STEM courses. The work of Colby, Clark, and Bryant supports the design of a teacher preparation program that provides an articulated sequence of service-learning experiences, thereby enhancing preservice teachers' commitment to using service-learning in their future

### **An Invitation**

The *IJRSLTE* publishes articles that focus on expanding knowledge and understanding of theory, practice, and research regarding service-learning in teacher education. Special emphasis is placed on developing a global community of scholar/practitioners who share research and practice to enhance international understanding and use of service-learning in teacher education. We are excited to publish this issue of the *IJRSLTE*, and we hope you find the articles informative, provocative, and helpful in shaping your research and practice. In addition to research articles, future issues also will include book reviews and interviews with individuals prominent in the fields of service-learning and teacher education. We invite you to submit your manuscript to the *IJRSLTE* for publication and also to consider becoming a reviewer. Please contact us with your questions and suggestions.

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