



## A Message from the Editorial Team

This year, the focus of *RiaN* is on bridging the often-isolating gap between education researchers and practitioners. *RiaN*'s new direction focuses on our own Faculty of Education with the hope that you will be inspired to engage with the research as well as the researchers. In this issue of *RiaN*, we spotlight the research of our newest faculty members: Dr. Pamela Beach, Dr. Lee Airton, Dr. Alana Butler, and Dr. Kristy Timmons.

Sincerely, Clarissa de Leon, Stephen MacGregor, and Andrew Coombs (RiaN@queensu.ca)

### Are children colour-blind?

#### Implications for elementary school educators

Dr. Alana Butler, Assistant Professor

#### Why is this important?

- Empirical evidence suggests that North American children recognize racial differences by age three and understand race as form of social hierarchy by age five.

#### What did the article uncover?

- Eighteen early childhood educators were interviewed for this qualitative study.
- Early childhood educators avoided discussing race with children, even after observed racial incidents such as name-calling, bullying, or social ostracism.
- Educators reported that they had received no training about how to address race in early childhood or elementary school settings.

#### Why does this matter?

- Creating classrooms that support the inclusion of diverse children requires that teachers address incidents when they occur through “teachable moments.”

Berman, R., Butler, A., Daniel, B., McNevin, M., & Royer, N. (2017). Nothing, or almost nothing, to report: Early childhood educators and discursive constructions of colorblindness. *International Critical Childhood Policy Studies Journal*, 6, 52-65.

### What do teachers know about supporting transgender and gender-creative students?

Dr. Lee Airton, Assistant Professor

#### Why is this important?

- Ontario teachers are legally required to provide an environment free from discrimination on the grounds of gender identity and gender expression.
- 95% of Canadian transgender teenagers report feeling unsafe at school (Taylor et al., 2011).

#### What did the article uncover?

- Many alternative schools are acting as sites of refuge and support for transgender and gender-creative children and youth. Analysis of teacher interviews yielded some reasons: interdisciplinary, flexible and student-centered curriculum including project-based learning; a general valuing of creativity and nonconformity; few/no sex-segregated activities or facilities; and restorative justice programs.

#### Why does this matter?

- Welcoming gender diversity doesn't only or always mean 'teaching the transgender lesson' or connecting a trans student with resources. It means loosening rigid curricula, customs, structures and routines in your classroom, wherever you practice.

Meyer, E., Stafford, A., & Airton, L. (2016). Transgender and gender-creative students in PK-12 schools: What we can learn from their teachers. *Teachers College Record*, 118(8), 1-50.

## How do elementary teachers use online learning environments to support their literacy practice?

Dr. Pamela Beach, Assistant Professor

### Why is this important?

- Online educational resources can offer teachers access to information about teaching literacy.
- Sharing resources used by elementary teachers provides new teachers with a range of resources that have been tried and authenticated.
- Understanding what motivates teachers to use online resources can lead to the development of more effective online learning environments.

### What did the article uncover?

- Forty-five different online learning environments were identified by participants to support their professional learning in literacy.
- Online video resources and content sharing networks were the top learning environments.
- Participants reported feeling motivated to use online learning environments to support their literacy practice; they appreciated the autonomy, wealth of information, and accessibility of online environments; they felt inspired by other teachers, and valued spaces for sharing.

### Why does this matter?

- Access to high-quality online learning environments can foster a teacher's choice, autonomy, and motivation for learning about literacy practices.
- Meaningful professional learning that is directly connected to a teacher's literacy practice can lead to student engagement in reading and writing.

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Beach, P. (in review). Optimal online learning environments: Examining informal professional learning in the context of literacy education. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*.

## Does self-regulation and engagement differ among classroom grouping, play, and transition contexts?

Dr. Kristy Timmons, Assistant Professor

### Why is this important?

- Children's early self-regulatory and attention skills are among the strongest predictors of future academic success.
- The importance of play and self-regulation is discussed in research and policy documents worldwide; however, effective implementation means understanding how research and policy are translated into everyday classroom experiences.

### What did the article uncover?

- Kindergarten students responded to opportunities for self-regulation significantly more often in small group and play contexts.
- Children's self-regulation scores were highest in small group contexts, followed by play then whole group, with children demonstrating the lowest self-regulation during transitions.
- Engagement scores followed a similar pattern as self-regulation; however, children demonstrated the highest engagement scores in play, followed by small group, whole group and transition times.

### Why does this matter?

- Given lower levels of engagement and self-regulation in whole group contexts, educators can look for ways to better engage students, possibly by reducing the time spent on more mechanical aspects such as taking attendance.
- Educators may want to consider employing more small group activities when providing instruction.

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Timmons, K., Pelletier, J., & Corter, C. (2015). Understanding children's self-regulation within different classroom contexts. *Early Child Development and Care*, 186, 249-267.

## How does a grade two teacher foster critical literacy within an inquiry-based setting?

Dr. Pamela Beach, Assistant Professor

### Why is this important?

- Inquiry pedagogy and critical literacy share goals of developing critical thinking through exploration, analysis, and action.
- Teachers are encouraged to collaborate with students to explore issues that are relevant to our social world.
- A student-centred approach to examining social justice issues in various forms of text and media.

### What did the article uncover?

- An illustration of critical literacy within an inquiry-based classroom.
- Seven instructional strategies to foster critical thinking.
- Combining critical literacy and inquiry pedagogy is an active process that considers students' questions, curiosities, and the unpacking of misconceptions.
- Teaching through a critical lens requires the right amount of scaffolding, the use of purposeful prompts, and the careful selection of texts and media.

### Why does this matter?

- Students who experience critical literacy through an inquiry approach are given opportunities to ask questions, deconstruct stereotypes, co-construct knowledge, and examine multiple perspectives.
- Students' questions are at the centre of the learning experience.
- Early experiences with critical literacy and inquiry fosters critical thinking skills and collaboration.

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Beach, P., & Cleovoulou, Y. (2014). An inquiry-based approach to critical literacy: Pedagogical nuances of a second grade classroom. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 60, 161-181.

## Contributing Researchers



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