Editorial

Inquiry in learning contexts that place the responsibility for learning on the students are based on John Dewey's philosophy that education begins with the curiosity of the learner. Lee et al. (2004) defined inquiry-based learning (IBL) as an "array of . . . practices that promote . . . learning through guided and, increasingly, independent investigation of complex questions and problems, often for which there is no single answer" (p. 9). Frequently referred to as project-based or problem-based learning, depending on the subject or discipline, it is a form of active learning scaffolded by educators to support learners in developing their abilities to ask good/essential questions, determine what needs to be learned and what resources are required to answer the questions, and share their learning with others. Inquiry-based learning builds valuable and transferable skills—goal setting, time and priority management, information gathering, critical thinking, meaningful communication and collaboration, reflection, and self-assessment, and it includes multimodal approaches for the sharing of information. IBL increases learner engagement because it builds learning authentically based on their interests, experiences, identities, and propensities. It does not abdicate direct instruction when needed, nor is it an all or nothing approach to learning. It can be developed incrementally, gradually transferring the responsibility for learning from teacher to students while closely monitoring, scaffolding, and differentiating expectations through formative assessment along the way. Importantly, it is a way of "living in the learning" which helps to develop the fundamental and necessary relational and ethical stance among learners (Perkins, 2009). Despite the fact that IBL and its "cousins" are grounded in evidence-based research that has shown the many advantages of learning this way, IBL rarely gets sustained traction in education systems. Bailey (2025) suggests that the philosophy behind IBL is incompatible with the traditional industrial structures and temporal rhythms of educational institutions. Unless these are changed, IBL will continue to emerge in pockets, only to eventually subside and succumb to the traditional forces so heavily ensconced in the structures of education.

Qualitative inquiry (QI) refers to the holistic and inductive processes of research used to explore how people make meaning of their lived experiences and social worlds in context. QI relies on open-ended observation, interviews (and frequently other genres of expression), and textual analysis to build deep, conceptual understandings of complex phenomena (Butler-Kisber, 2025). Rigorous QI is methodologically detailed and transparent. Results are considered trustworthy when they come from rich and multiple sources of data in which they are clearly grounded, create a plausible explanation of experiences or phenomena from the perspectives of the participants, and demonstrate the reflective, relational and ethical stance of the researcher. QI is a way of "living in the research" (Butler-Kisber, 2018) and can best be learned through active engagement in the "doing" of the research, not in "armchair" theorizing or by a "sage on the stage" presenting how to conduct research. The interesting submissions in this issue focus on examples of inquiry in teaching, learning and research. They should provide windows of possibilities for encouraging other educators to embrace a relational, ethical, and active inquiry stance in their work and foster it among those they teach and their colleagues.

The contents of this issue include two invited commentaries which address inquiry from the point of view of higher education research and secondary school teaching and learning. The peer-reviewed articles are then arranged alphabetically by last name of the first author, but for the purposes of this editorial are addressed thematically.

Commentaries

We invited two highly respected educators to provide commentaries for this issue. **George Belliveau** is a professor at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver and **Christianne Loupelle** is a PhD candidate in education at McGill and a secondary school science teacher in Montreal. Both have distinguished themselves in developing and sustaining inquiry in their work. Belliveau discusses Research-based Theatre (RbT) which he uses as a critical form of arts-based inquiry. He shares how, in a four-part workshop with a diverse range of 18 educators, he creatively and actively, in the imagined context of an airport, scaffolded a layered and braiding of identity memories of the participants, which they each created in one line and one gesture and then transformed them into short monologues. These converged with and built on Belliveau's own memories of his French Acadian youth which he had shared with the participants in "Baggage Carousel," a poem he used to ignite the activities. This individual story became refracted into multiple ones disrupting his personal narrative as new stories/memories were discovered by the participants. Belliveau argues that what emerged in this relational, co-created space were ways to "invigorate collective humanity." His commentary attests to the power of arts-based performance inquiry to actively, meaningfully, and collaboratively embody the meaning of memories/identity while retaining the "signature" of each creator.

Loupelle describes how, feeling stagnated and dissatisfied with her high school science teaching, she evolved from an authoritative and teacher-centered "teaching as taught" approach to an exploration of a collaborative and facilitated learning called Student Directed Inquiry (SDL). She maintains that this evolution in her teaching emanated from formative, informal learning she acquired in sports and summer camp, not in hallowed halls of higher education. It was further inspired by the maker movement, a pivotal STEAM conference she attended, and an invitation from a university professor to participate in an SDL research project. For the past decade, Loupelle's students have chosen democratically a topic of focus by pitching proposals and then voting for their choice, validating agency and voice and stimulating engagement among them. These projects have had a wide and varied range while at the same time maintaining a connection to the science curriculum she teaches. They have included, for example, planning for, shopping, preparing and implementing a "dinner evening" for their families; changing their science classroom into a studio as they researched with the help of Indigenous community expertise and created attire to portray Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls; and the Graphical Storytelling Project, which expanded to incorporate mathematics and visual arts, and subsequently, English language arts teachers, forging connections and interdisciplinarity among subject areas. Loupelle offers advice to teachers, school leaders, and researchers for getting started in inquiry and the cognitive shift necessary for "living in the learning" alongside students. Her work has created a ripple effect that has permeated her school and beyond and offers hope for pushing and tweaking traditional structures and mindset to allow inquiry to flourish.

Reflective Inquiry

Avril Aitken, a professor in education at Bishop's University in Sherbrooke, Quebec, shares how she worked with five groups of undergraduate students in their final year during the program's capstone course over four years and gave them responsibility for and agency in assessing their learning and growth and assigning their final grade, a cornerstone of inquiry learning. This ruptured the traditional structures expected by students who misinterpreted and resisted the assignment to reflect upon and assess their learning because of their historical investment in grades. Aitken argues for continued pushback against an increasingly competency and grade-oriented accountability in institutions and society by fostering student reflection and responsibility for the assessment of their learning to create critical thinkers and doers. **Stephanie Ho**, a course lecturer at McGill University and an English Language Arts secondary school teacher in Montreal, describes how she used a compendium of daily photographs to analyze her professional identity and practices as a teacher. Ho categorized, then "played with her photos," and ultimately created themes that highlighted the importance she places on celebrating triumphs, on protecting and connecting with students, and on developing a critical stance among them. Her work suggests that in this digital age the ease of taking photos and their compelling portrayals auger well for a practical and powerful means of reflective inquiry. **Ty Riddick**, a PhD candidate, and **Douglas Gleddie**, a professor, both at the University of Alberta, co-constructed vignettes with Grade 8 physical education (PE) students to track and portray their experiences over time. They show with three examples how meaningful PE experiences were shaped by opportunities for choice, for social expression, identity expression, and engagement in outdoor activities. All were predicated on inclusive and democratic practices that enhanced belonging, motivation, and relevance. This study underscores how co-constructed vignettes contributed to reflection and identity shaping. It deepened teacher-student relationships as well as a greater understanding of Riddick's teaching practice. **Aleesha Noreen** and **Kashaf Noreen,** two University of Toronto PhD candidates, and **Mariam Al Ramadhan**, an MA student, used poetry to reflect upon and portray experiences shared by students affected by global conflict. Each poem reflects facets of conflict-induced experiences. The first addresses dealing with anxieties in the classroom created by conflicts. The second highlights the impact of conflict on learning. The third suggests that teachers must understand their own stories to enable them to empathize and support students affected by conflict. These authors conclude that poetry and collective reflection can create important spaces to process complex emotions, facilitate authentic and responsive teaching, and provide opportunities for diverse perspectives to co-exist. **Aimée Myers**, an associate professor at Texas Woman's University, shares how she used Community Cultural Wealth (CCW) Reflective Inquiry to empower teachers from marginalized backgrounds, more specifically women of color from immigrant families. She used free-writing based on Dewey's notion of the power of reflection in an MA course on literacy for diverse learners. These graduate students identified and subsequently categorized forms of cultural capital that are often overlooked or dismissed for marginalized populations. Their work highlighted experiences of marginalization and produced potential forms of resistance which they then shared. This study advocates for pushing back against social and cultural messages, looking to the past to change the future, and shifting the mindset from discouragement to critical hope.

Inquiry Pedagogies

Brittany Ouellette, a K–12 educator in Alberta, and **Trudy Cardinal,** a professor at the University of Alberta, explored the existing Indigenous scholarship that can support non-Indigenous educators in rethinking their approach to literacy education and decrease the gap that results from pedagogical structures that fail to support Indigenous learners. They share with examples how Indigenous literacy is fostered in community and land-based learning rather than isolated classroom practices. They advocate for pedagogies that honor Indigenous students' lived experiences, cultures, and traditions, and a relational space for "living in the learning." **Sharla Mskokii Peltier** is an associate professor at Lakehead University and **Janice Huber** is a professor at the University of Alberta. Alongside each other and community members, they share with wonderful visuals how they have built on Peltier's previous work in *Odenang* (heart place) inquiry, an Indigenous pedagogy rooted in Anishinaabe culture. Odenang nurtures the "individual and collective growth of critical thinking in response to colonial, taken-for-granted beliefs, values, and discourses." They show with helpful details how they implemented Odenang practices while working with pre-service students in social studies and citizenship education. Central to their work was attending to truth-telling and relationship-building to honor the key constituents of reconciliation and resist the Eurocentric, colonial, and assimilative approaches so embedded in social studies and multicultural curricula. **Kathleen Hare**, an associate professor, and **Gitanjaly Chhabra**, an assistant professor, both from Canada West University, share how their responsibilities as settler educators inspired them to create an "arts-based praxis" for international undergraduate students to learn about Indigenous knowledges in Canada and decolonizing educational practices. They braided together literature material, shared narratives and experiences and practices, such as erasure poetry, which they had implemented with students to carry out a collaborative inquiry. A highlight of their inquiry was that the selection of a source from a text is not simply material for shaping later teaching, but rather "living" and "being" sites of teaching and learning. Instructors are present in the sources they choose. Course sources shape students' epistemological access to the discipline, understanding, and subsequent applications. They concluded that "our task was not to frame the stories into pedagogical use, but to remain present with them through story, accountable to what they asked of us, and open to the ways they shaped our relations with students and with each other." **Danielle Butville** is assistant director for the Hammel Family Human Rights Initiative at Pennsylvania State University, **Logan Rutten** is an assistant professor at the University of North Dakota, **Alyssa Hockensmith** is a social studies teacher in Florida, **Melissa Kreider** is an English language arts teacher in Pennsylvania, and **Farrell Kelly** is an English and history teacher in Virginia. **Melissa Bryan** is an English teacher in New Jersey and **Boaz Dvir** is director of the Holocaust, Genocide and Human Rights Education Initiative (part of the Hammel Family Human Rights Initiative) at Pennsylvania State University. They posit with narrative examples that the "hard stories" of history are best taught using inquiry pedagogy to foster an engaging and dynamic context for learning while maintaining the integrity of content knowledge. This is illustrated by Kreider who used survivor and victim accounts to show how diverse experiences intersected during the Holocaust, strengthening historical knowledge accuracy and student empathy. Hockensmith's students designed research projects to connect Holocaust experiences to current ethical concerns nuancing the subject matter more deeply. Bryan had students select, design, and implement social justice projects to deepen

their individual understandings of the world. Kelly pivoted from a representative approach to engage students in projects on the Holocaust through the lenses of human cruelty, abuse of power, and responses to injustices. They argue that these approaches to inquiry pedagogy transform Holocaust education into ethically engaged and dynamic learning but do not eliminate the emotional responsibilities and intellectual uncertainties in teaching "hard history." **Theresa Christine "Techie" Benitez-dela Torre**, one of the pioneers of the Deaf program of De La Salle College of Saint Benilde in the Philippines, shares her journey and learnings she gleaned in teaching English Sign Language (ESL) to Deaf Filipino students. They resisted ESL and communicated in Filipino Sign Language (FSL), leaving her outside their conversations. She came to realize that the humiliation they felt when having to use ESL far outweighed the importance of her teaching approach, and she decided to eliminate the presence of an interpreter. She began the process of learning their language with them. This transformed the interaction between them as they opened their personal worlds to her and produced learning opportunities for all of them. Benitez-dela Torre's advocacy did not end there. She began teaching hearing students FSL through Deaf-led teaching and created materials with her students that were products of successful communication. She argues vehemently and advocates for the linguistic and cultural rights of Deaf learners and for practices that dismantle oppression and support empowerment.

Collaborative Inquiry

Teresa Troyer, a doctoral student at Ohio State University, **Sally Coons**, an English educator, and **Rosalinda Godínez**, a postdoctoral researcher at Cleveland State University, examined how multilingual learners in a high school English language arts classroom engaged in a School-based Youth Participatory Action Research (SchYPAR) project. It integrated arts and narrative-based practices connecting English language development to collective meaning-making and agency. The results of their work show the importance of using arts-based approaches to create multimodal avenues for meeting the needs of language learners. The project provided active and meaningful engagement among the learners, building confidence and a critical perspective. This collaborative inquiry required risk taking by the educators but also allowed them to test new ideas and connect with each other in supportive ways. **Deborah Toope** and **Marie-Christina Edwards** are assistant professors at Acadia University, while **Darlene Barr**, **Nisha Langford**, **Emily Fultz**, and **Jessica Martin** are elementary teachers in Nova Scotia. Their article reflects upon their collaborative action research (CAR) inquiry between a university and a rural school. Their results show that a trusting community is necessary to shift pedagogical perspectives among teachers, who need to relate to and be active participants in the change process. Collaborative inquiry fosters professional growth and enhances professional identity agency when grounded in shared knowledge and lived experience. **Linda O'Donoghue** is a teaching and learning advisor at Okanagan College in British Columbia, and **Beverlie Dietze** is an early childhood education consultant. They share how they moved from a top-down pedagogy and actively pursued the interests of and engaged alongside young children in sustained outdoor play. Collaboratively, the educators, in a dynamic of mutual empowerment, respect, and shared control, gave agency to the children to lead creative exploration as the educators responded attentively and reflectively, valuing the evolving nature of play.

Enhancing Literacies

Erin Reid is an assistant professor at St. Mary's University in Calgary. She explored how religious diversity is included in social justice teachings within undergraduate teacher preparation programs in the context of a small, liberal arts, Canadian university where she interviewed a group of five instructors. Her results suggest that there is a big gap between personal religious knowledge among preservice teachers and what they will encounter in the diverse classrooms in which they will work. Second, preservice teachers experience a dissonance when faced with a religious perspective that does not align with their own. Finally, there was a sense among the participants that religious beliefs do not have a place in post-secondary institutions. She argues for safe and equitable spaces for difficult discussions in teacher education programs and the need to integrate religious literacy into preservice courses to help navigate social justice practices for teaching increasingly diverse student populations. **Karen Larwin** is a professor at Youngstown State University and **Joshua Sektnan** is a fourth-grade elementary teacher. Building on the premise that spelling is an important component of literacy learning, they surveyed 168, K–6 teachers in suburban Pennsylvania. Their results showed that teachers struggled to differentiate spelling instruction for the wide range of needs of their students, suggested that ongoing targeted spelling instruction is needed particularly for multilingual students who struggle with the inconsistencies in English spelling, and indicated that hands-on, multisensory activities increased student engagement. They argue for culturally responsive, multisensory spelling instruction to ensure equitable results for all learners. **Mireille Ukeye** is an assistant professor at St. Mary's College of California whose work responds to the need for stronger and more equitable literacy instruction to increase confidence and engagement among English-language learners who face learning challenges. She discusses the interrelated nature of oral language, language development, and reading comprehension and suggests the need for explicit vocabulary and syntax instruction, the inclusion of multisensory spelling activities, scaffolded writing approaches, and ongoing assessment practices. She urges educators to move beyond the "one-size-fits-all" pedagogy to instead "create inclusive, language-rich, and culturally affirming classrooms to support the complex needs of students with learning challenges."

Ethical Inquiry

Strong themes that emanate from the articles in this issue are the relational, connecting, and collaborative dimensions that are fundamental to all approaches in inquiry teaching, learning, and research. Active, meaningful, and authentic approaches build reciprocally on these dimensions and provide an ongoing, ethical means of "living in" the learning and/or research. The authors provide a host of interesting, helpful, and multifaceted ways in which teachers, learners, and researchers implement ethical inquiry. **Sandra Gibbons** is a professor, **Kenna Miskelly**, a research ethics facilitator, and **Eugenie Lam**, the manager of human research ethics, all at the University of Victoria. They share how their university is implementing experimental learning strategies across course assignments in which are embedded the core principles—Respect for Persons, Concern for Welfare, and Justice—of the Canada Tri-Council Policy Statement on ethics. They advocate strongly for embedding ethics early in curricula and revisiting it regularly through scaffolded assignments and using diverse modalities such as interviews, surveys, and

reflective writing. They provide a helpful lens for thinking about ethics in all contexts and the ways in which we can carefully and consistently monitor and sustain ethical practices of living through truly equitable practices.

We hope you enjoy the read and wish you a joyous summer.

LBK & AV

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