

# Disrupting Silos, Reimagining Inclusion and Belonging: New Scholar Perspectives on Education's Emergent Questions

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In this issue of *The Canadian Journal for New Scholars in Education*, we bring together emerging voices that courageously interrogate education's most pressing and persistent challenges. Contributors from across Canada explore how systems of schooling are shaped by and in tension with issues of identity, inclusion, epistemic legitimacy and social responsibility. The articles in this issue resist disciplinary silos. They span topics from inclusive language instruction for deaf and hard-of-hearing students in China to reflections on anti-Islamophobia pedagogy, systemic barriers facing Indigenous students in higher education and the complex intersections of mathematics and language learning. Others reimagine teacher identity in French Immersion, explore the relational dimensions of nature-based mental health support, or offer frameworks for decolonial research grounded in Indigenous methodologies,

Three central themes weave through this collection including: (1) language, identity and learning through exploring how language shapes inclusion, literacy, and belonging across disciplines and learning contexts; (2) curricular and epistemic shifts which confront Eurocentrism, neoliberal logics, and institutional inertia through critical policy, treaty education as well as decolonizing pedagogies; (3) well-being and resistance which center the mental health of students and educators, while proposing relational and community-based practices for care and resilience. This issue reminds us that the work of educational research is not only analytical, but also pulls together ethical, political and imaginative dimensions. We are proud to amplify new scholars who dare to ask difficult questions and offer grounded, critical insights that reframe how we understand, teach, and learn.

## In This Issue

This Spring 2025 Issue includes 13 articles:

**Jeisil Aguilar Santos** contributed a conceptual paper entitled *The Construction of the Political Subject in the Educational Discourse: From the Theoretical Definition to the Cuban Case*. Drawing on critical theory and personal reflection, Santos explores how Cuban educational institutions shape political subjectivity through symbolic power embedded in curricula and textbooks. The study argues that Cuban schooling often constructs subjugated, passive citizens rather than critical, participatory subjects. Grounded in theorists like Foucault, Apple, and Freire, the paper calls for a dissenting, participatory curriculum that enables students to engage politically and critically with systems of power.

**Yintong Lu** contributed a qualitative case study entitled *Challenges of Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Students in English Learning in Higher Education*. This study explores the English learning experiences of three deaf and hard-of-hearing (DHH) students enrolled in inclusive postsecondary institutions in China. Findings reveal barriers such as inaccessible instruction, exclusionary assessment practices, poor classroom acoustics, and limited institutional support. While multimedia and visualization tools were helpful, they also posed risks of information overload. The study calls for inclusive pedagogical reforms and offers insights applicable to Western educational contexts navigating accessibility in English language learning.

**Sarah McAllister** contributed a phenomenological study entitled *Walking with Mother Nature: Mental Health Benefits of Regular Nature Walks for Women and Implications for Female Post-Secondary Students*. Drawing on a hermeneutic interview with a long-time nature walker, McAllister explores how regular walks in natural environments enhance mental health. The study identifies benefits such as increased mindfulness,

creativity, gratitude, and stress reduction. Framed by ecotherapy, positive education, and phenomenological psychology, the paper offers insights into how nature walks cultivate resilience and well-being, particularly for post-secondary women navigating academic stressors.

**Abdullah Najjar** contributed an autoethnographic reflection entitled *Combatting Islamophobia: A Reflection of Anti-Racism Pedagogy*. Drawing on Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed, Bakhtin's dialogic theory, and Kendi's stance on anti-racist engagement, Najjar reflects on an ESL project implemented in a Montreal high school that used literature and dialogue to address Islamophobia. Through reading, writing, speaking, and listening tasks, students explored lived experiences of anti-Muslim racism and engaged in critical discussions. The project fostered student agency and empathy while highlighting the importance of inclusive pedagogy and teacher reflexivity in confronting religious-based discrimination.

**Alexandra Pulchny** contributed a case study entitled *Tackling the Wicked Problem of an Evolving Curriculum: A Case Study on Social Studies and Treaty Education in Nova Scotia*. Using discourse analysis and educator interviews, Pulchny explores how curriculum implementation in Nova Scotia struggles to integrate Indigenous perspectives into Social Studies and Mi'kmaw Studies. Framed as a "wicked problem," the study reveals systemic challenges including lack of professional development, resource gaps, and Eurocentric legacies. Pulchny draws on decolonizing methodologies to advocate for collaborative, community-engaged curriculum design that reflects diverse knowledges and fosters inclusive education.

**Le Vy Vu** contributed a cross-case study entitled *Examining Vietnamese EFL Teachers' Perceived Impact of the 'Global Success' Textbooks on Their Teaching Practices and Learners' Language Proficiency in Public Secondary Schools: A Cross-Case Study*. This research explores Vietnamese EFL teachers' perceptions of how the Global Success textbooks influence their instructional practices and their students' language proficiency in public secondary schools. This study indicates that teachers' positive view towards the textbooks, while identifying several challenges in teaching practices. This study offers insights into curriculum implementation through textbooks within the Vietnamese EFL context.

**Bobbi D. Wiechers** contributed a phenomenological study entitled *Teacher Perceptions of Class Climate and its Connection to Student Mental Health*. Through interviews with teachers, Wiechers examines how fostering positive teacher-student relationships, setting clear boundaries and expectations, and implementing supportive resources and strategies contribute to a positive classroom climate. Such an environment serves as a preventive measure to support and enhance student mental health. The study offers valuable insights into building a more supportive classroom atmosphere.

**Jamie Del Paggio** contributed a literature review entitled *Towards a Market-Based Vision: Canadian Universities in the Era of Neoliberalism*. This review explores the current landscape of Canadian universities and examines how neoliberalism influences their structures and operations. Del Paggio situates neoliberalism within a socio-historical context, tracing its global dissemination and analyzing its deepening presence within Canadian higher education. This review demonstrates how Canadian universities are adapting their objectives with market-driven priorities.

**Roxanne L. Olsen** contributed a literature review entitled *Connections Between Language and Mathematics in the Elementary Classroom*. Olsen explores how language impacts students' numeracy development, particularly for English language learners. Drawing on 21 peer-reviewed studies, the review highlights the role of vocabulary, multimodal communication, and dialogue in mathematical understanding. Framed within literacy and numeracy integration, the paper identifies translanguaging and culturally relevant instruction as key strategies. Olsen calls for further research on early elementary word-problem instruction and the transfer of literacy skills into math learning.

**François-Daniel Portelance** contributed a literature review entitled *The Intersection of French Immersion Teachers' Identities and Teaching French Immersion*. In this scoping review, Portelance examines how FI teachers' identities intersect with bilingualism, pedagogy, and access in Canadian education. Key themes include challenges integrating language and content, barriers to inclusion for Allophone and exceptional students, and tensions around linguistic authenticity. The review highlights structural issues such as teacher isolation and limited support, drawing on identity theory to explore how educators navigate competing

language ideologies. Portelance calls for expanded research and more inclusive, context-responsive FI practices.

**Catherine Tardif, Geneviève Carpentier, and Normand Roy** contributed a literature review entitled *Awareness-Raising Tools Regarding Violence Against Students in Schools*. The review examines 15 empirical studies to identify common features of tools designed to raise awareness about violence against students, with a focus on ordinary educational violence—harmful behaviours by adults framed as disciplinary. The review highlights the scarcity of tools addressing this specific form of violence and emphasizes the need for universal, school-wide strategies. The authors call for more comprehensive, context-specific tools to foster cultural shifts in school environments and promote inclusive, non-violent practices.

**Sierra Sumner and Justin Heenan** contributed a literature review entitled *At Promise, Not At Risk: A Literature Review of Special Olympics Impact on Early Childhood Health*. Drawing on 17 empirical studies, they examine how participation in Special Olympics supports the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of children with intellectual disabilities. Framed by the medical and social models of disability and disabled children's childhood studies, the review highlights improvements in fitness, self-esteem, and social inclusion, while also critiquing the exclusion of children's voices in existing research. The authors call for inclusive, rights-based approaches and expanded research in Canadian contexts.

**Steffie Dmello** contributed a book review entitled *Book Review of Kaandossiwin: How We Come to Know*. Dmello reviews Kathleen E. Absolon's influential work on Indigenous research methodologies, highlighting the Petal flower framework as a holistic model rooted in Indigenous epistemologies. The review discusses how Absolon centers land, spirit, relationality, and oral knowledge, challenging the dominance of Western paradigms in academia. Dmello emphasizes the book's value for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars, particularly in fostering reflexivity, decolonial ethics, and respect for oral traditions in research.

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