

# Rooted in Legacy and Holding Space: Our Commitment to New Beginnings

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Since the mid-1990s, *Multiple Voices for Ethnically Diverse Exceptional Learners* (*Multiple Voices*) has been a beacon and a haven for special education scholars and practitioners concerned with disrupting oppressions experienced by youth at the intersection of disability, race, ethnicity, and language in the field of special education. We appreciate *Multiple Voices*' ongoing contributions to equitable, inclusive education and have tremendous gratitude for the work of immediate past editors Dr. Wanda Blanchett and Dr. Monika Shealey, as well as all of the journal's previous editors and editorial board members. We are perched on your tree tops and rooted in your gardens. We also are thankful for our *Division for Diverse Exceptional Learners*, and in particular, President Dr. Evette Simmons-Reed and current board members who have placed their trust in us as we take up the mantle of editorship.

As *Multiple Voices*' new editorial team, we are committed to producing a journal that counters and provides promising alternatives to troubling legacies in the education of students with disabilities: especially students of Color, im/migrant students, and those who are emergent English learners. In doing so, we will continue the work of past editors to position *Multiple Voices* as the leading scholarly journal in our field. We bring considerable support from Indiana University's premiere urban school of education in Indianapolis where we have situated the journal's operations within the Great Lakes Equity Center, a national educational equity research and service center led by members of the editorial team.

As longstanding members of DDEL, we will continue our collective commitment to improving access, participation, and outcomes for students with disabilities in our public school systems. To do so, we conceptualize the journal as a space to leverage the potential of scholarship toward building schools where student disability at the intersections of other marginalized race, ethnicity, and language (gender, sexual orientation, religion, income, national origin, etc.) identity markers is recognized, valued, and a source of strength and innovation for policy and practice. We are humbled to be in a position to uplift the ongoing work of students, practitioners, families, community members, and scholars who have built and led coalitions toward intersectional disability justice and solidarity in schools and society. At the same time, we recognize that such a mission requires we examine and reconcile tensions in our special education field that have contributed to the oppression of students at these intersections. We acknowledge many of those who have come before us and who have contributed to our own understandings of these tensions, including Alfredo Artiles, Wanda Blanchett, David Connor, Beth Ferri, Donna Ford, Beth Harry, Janette Klingner, Elizabeth Kozleski, Alba Ortiz, Robert Rueda, and Monika Shealey. We invite you to address these tensions with us: (1) Reliance on research and practice that emphasize a medical model of disability undergirded by notions of normalcy and grounded in White, European, middle-class, and English norms; (2) Application of this model to sort and stratify youth

across race, language, income, and disability hierarchies; (3) Understandings of culture, and in particular, cultural and linguistic diversity, as static and separate; (4) Neglect of disability culture(s); and (4) Limited attention to cultures of disablement in schools. We look forward to exploring each of these tensions and their potential solutions in issues to come.

In this first issue under our tenure, we have assembled a set of four articles that exemplify our goals for *Multiple Voices* over the next five years. In *Pursuing Inclusive Schools: The Case of Youth Researchers of Color Expanding a New Vision*, Taucia González, Melanie Bertrand, and Sarah Salinas examine how youth of Color with and without disabilities used youth participatory action research (YPAR) to enhance what they term as third wave inclusive education frameworks with youth-centered conceptualizations. Their study repositions youth at the intersection of disability, race, ethnicity, and language as those with knowledge worthy of recognition and necessary to advance our field. The authors move us toward a field where the voices of those who have been most affected and most marginalized are centered, and illuminate tensions in the purposes for centering youth knowledge between school adults and the youth themselves: the “YPAR youth re-envisioned an action-oriented school with new teacher-student relationships while school personnel wanted student voice but for academic rather than emancipatory outcomes” (p. 2). González et al. illuminate the potential contributions of research by and with youth, who in this study were Latinx and/or Black seventh- and eighth-grade students, some of whom were classified as English learners, received special education services, and/or were described as struggling academically or behaviorally by school adults toward a new, participatory era of inclusive education.

Next, Steve Przymus and Manuel Alvarado demonstrate the importance of purposefully centering the cultural and linguistic practices of emergent bilingual youth in dynamic assessment practices in their study entitled *Advancing Bilingual Special Education: Translanguaging in Content-Based Story Retells for Distinguishing Language Difference from Disability*. Working toward understandings of speech and language differences that move

away from notions of disorder and which view the language practices of emergent bilingual youth as resources for learning (Ruiz, 1984). The authors expand the research on dynamic assessment with culturally and linguistically responsive practices that allow emergent bilingual youth to demonstrate their multilinguistic competence when given the freedom to translanguage (Otheguy, García, & Reid, 2015). They also expand the research on the language practice and ability of multilingual individuals to “utilize their full linguistic repertoire, that includes features of multiple named languages, but are all part of an individual’s sole linguistic idiolect” (p. 6). Przymus and Alvarado position this expansion of dynamic assessment practices with translanguaging as a potential tool in the prevention of disproportionate representation of emergent bilingual youth in special education.

Next, Jacqueline Rodríguez extends existing literature on the education of refugee youth in conflict and fragile areas by attending to how students with disabilities and special educational needs are considered by educational agencies, if at all. In her study entitled, *Exploring the Challenges and Benefits to Inclusive Education in Jordanian UNRWA Schools*, Rodríguez examines stakeholders’ perceptions of inclusive education as operationalized in three schools run by the Jordan field of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, or UNRWA. The author finds several factors associated with the challenges of enacting inclusive education in this context, from deficit-based cultural parameters to how disability is defined, related under enrollment of students with disabilities and limited financial and personnel resources. Rodríguez applies these findings to generate possibilities for informing the agency’s new Inclusive Education Policy with concerns and tensions expressed by local stakeholders, including students with special educational needs and their families, in defining the function and purpose of inclusive education.

Finally, Kathleen Farrand, Megan Troxel, Sultan Kilinc, and Michael Kelley describe the rewards and pitfalls one Southwestern public school experienced during the implementation of a dual language (DL) program for all pre-K students, including students with disabilities. In their article entitled, *Voices in Transition: Perspectives on Implementing*

*a Dual Language Pre-K Program to Support the Inclusion of all Students*, Farrand et al. explore what Richard Ruiz (1984) meant by language being both a right and a resource. By analyzing focus group data with multiple stakeholders including teachers, paraprofessionals and administrators, the authors studied participants' discourses to uncover different perspectives of implementing a DL program. The authors discover that certain fears among stakeholders exist around how to assist DL learners, particularly those with disabilities, with language acquisition and development. Some of these fears stemmed from a deficit orientation of language grounded in a "language-as-a-problem" (p. 31) perspective and reflected through restrictive language policies that often "limit when and how languages other than English can be used" (p. 3). The authors shared these concerns with district leaders and provided several recommendations including: "a need for more training and communication in regard to the benefits of DL programs for all children" (p. 31). At the heart of their study, Farrand et al. are successful in communicating the ways society at large remains tethered to mythologies of language acquisition that limit DL learners' overall potential for growth. At the same time, they provide concrete examples of practitioners moving beyond these myths and into practices that value language as both a right and a resource.

We hope readers will find that our assemblage of articles in the current issue demonstrates that, as much as we are committed to countering troubling legacies and contributing innovations in the education of students with disabilities at other identity intersections, we strive for the same within our special education scholarly community. In addition to those qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods approaches commonly valued and applied in our field, we hold space and value those epistemologies, methodologies, and forms of expression that fall outside those historically associated with "normalcy" in an academy which has diminished contributions by scholars of Color, emerging scholars, disabled scholars, and those who engage in creative work with and in activist and advocacy communities outside the academy. It is a space of growth and expansion, both rooted deeply and soaring upward and beyond our immediate imaginings. This is a space for all of us. To learn. To grow. To become.

## REFERENCES

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