

Editor's Dialogue

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**“Dialogue is, thus, an existential necessity.”
Paulo Freire (1970, p. 88)**

Schools serve as complicated sites that reflect society's complex sociocultural realities. The architecture of educational institutions is constantly co- and re-constructed by the humans invested in them. The permeable nature of schools means that they, at once, reflect society's promises and problems. Institutions of education are spaces in which broader issues show up and replicate themselves; they are also spaces where intentional deliberation transforms not only schools, but the communities in which schools are embedded. Many factors contribute to the messy reality of education and many remedies are necessary for schools to fulfill their liberatory potential. In this journal, we cultivate space for one of the most powerful tools for educational transformation: **dialogue/diálogo.**

Naming the world around us is an act of liberation (Freire, 1970). Words encode reality. Naming our daily realities, which are multiple, means that we simultaneously reflect on what is happening as we take action toward change. Once something we experience is named, we see the world in a new light. We think about things differently, and, because we've participated in reflection, sometimes collectively, we act from a place that - before dialogue - did not exist. Our realities are transformed. It is because of this that Freire (1970) asserts, “to speak a true word is to transform the world” (p. 87).

K-16 educational partners are constantly negotiating social forces and caught amidst school's dual aims of inculcation and liberation. Yet, much of the discourse regarding issues of justice and equity in education happens in silos. This journal upends that practice and, instead, cultivates an authentic dialogue towards a transforming of our realities amongst myriad people invested in education, including pre-service and in-service teachers and administrators, school counselors, staff, community members, faculty, and researchers.

Our intentions for *In Dialogue/En Diálogo* are to put K-16 educational partners in conversation with each other about critical issues in education, and to cultivate collective critical consciousness amongst educators in the greater Los Angeles region. Fostering community dialogue is integral to the process of advocating for more just schooling. As such, we feature voices not typically included in traditional academic journals but that are essential in the discourse toward equity and justice. *In Dialogue/En Diálogo* is aspirational as it integrates theory and practice through multi-voiced discourse and captures evolution of thought and practice. We embrace the messiness of efforts for justice within and through education through the voices of the very people who navigate the daily intricacies of doing the work. We honor the ways in which people name their realities and the languages that they use to do so.

Each volume presents a (sometimes multilingual) snapshot of contemporary, research-informed or reflective conversations and practices while capturing pivotal moments that strengthen collective critical consciousness while always centering our shared humanity.

We publish this inaugural volume of *In Dialogue/En Diálogo* in the fall of 2023, as the world transitions to living with the endemic of the COVID-19 virus. Schools, writ large, are back in-person. Despite reports of increasing numbers of infection and hospitalization, communities are largely expected enact pre-pandemic norms. Occasional nods to the option to mask or take the latest vaccines are made by our institutions. Much effort is made to put behind the unprecedented, difficult experience of living through a global pandemic that has taken the lives of nearly 7 million people (WHO, 2023) and has had lasting impact on our daily lives, our spirits and our humanity. Ongoing research continues to confirm that this pandemic has disproportionately affected communities of color, inside and outside of schools. As resistance to a “return to normal,” (a pre-pandemic normal fraught with injustice) we invoke authentic dialogue to name the grief and heaviness we lived through during the pandemic as educators and human beings as well as the joy, healing, and the growth we have experienced despite it and because of it. Grief, joy, and healing are intertwined in the chaos of living through a pandemic and are generating

a novel form of critical praxis and transformed ways of being.

We begin and end this first volume with teacher voices to recognize the depths of the professional and personal transformations PK-12 classroom teachers have, and continue to, experienced these last few years in a transformed landscape. Cynthia Lozano, a third-grade teacher, begins our dialogue by reflecting on how teaching through the pandemic as a first-year teacher changed her: “I feel that I have a stronger will to deal with hardships. I take what is thrown at me and just do the best I can within my power...” Joy and healing, which includes clear boundaries and discernment around the extent of professional involvement, are central to her journey as an educator in this post-pandemic context. Cynthia’s voice sets our intention for this volume.

We honor the messiness that comes with this post pandemic transformation through the dialogue that weaves together grief, joy and healing. We honor the seeds we planted, the roots that have begun to grow, and the sprouts we cultivate as well as those which have already begun to flower. While our existence has been in turmoil as we were forced to transform our realities as educators and as human beings, our humanity, and our ability to find joy and heal has persisted. Indeed, we planted seeds, literal and metaphorical, while the world around us was in shambles. We have innovated as educators and as human beings, even while so many

around us and around the world, sometimes those we loved, transitioned, were hospitalized or were in despair, directly affected by the pandemic. How we were forced to adjust to this catastrophic event irrevocably changed how we live and who we are.

The dialogue continues as Stephanie Cariaga offers a beautiful juxtaposition of love and loss in her melodic piece, the second in this volume. Cariaga's willingness to be vulnerable in sharing her story of grieving her mother's death as she transitioned to in-person learning not only captures her real and raw experience and reflection as a teacher, but also shows how ideologies embedded in institutional structures play out in day-to-day experiences and offers us a post-secondary teaching voice. Cariaga's writing is nurturing throughout and interwoven in her own grief, she reminds us that educators are above all human, and moves us to "clean pain" and compels readers to begin their own journey in moving from dirty to clean pain. She highlights an often-ignored aspect of education—disembodiment, the idea that emotion must be left at the entrance to our schools. Cariaga reminds us to resist this and offers a vulnerable, honest depiction of how so many of us were transformed ideologically through the pandemic. Though some wish to hold on to the hope that we will now "return to normal" after all that we have lived, we argue that our normal will never be what we once knew, and we embrace that

tension and our new realities and are grateful for the pieces herein that shed light on this tension and the dialogue that has emerged.

This *In Dialogue/En Diálogo* volume introduces the dialogue between teachers, families, schools, as well as faculty, staff, university programs, and our students, none of which can exist on their own. Our grief has been collective and now so must our healing. The multiple voices that underscore our collective transformation capture the journey while generating new ways of being and doing in and out of our educational contexts. In "Talk Story: The Experience of Teaching", special education teachers come together with their former professor, Conrad Oh-Young, to discuss moving through their personal grief while supporting their PreK-12 students with theirs during and post lockdown. The teachers simultaneously struggled, innovated, exerted creativity, enacted pedagogies of care, and reconnected with the humanizing elements of teaching. The Talk Story framework underscores the critical need for space for this very human experience. The voices capture how we are grappling with institutional demands placed on educators, such as evermore alarming rhetoric about "data-driven" "learning-loss" that intends to circumvent the necessary human experience. This piece pushes us to think about what we want the educational landscape to be post pandemic, echoing Cariaga's thoughts on disembodiment and the discourse of power within our

collective healing. Who decides what schooling is like – should be like – if not the educators, families, students therein?

This volume not only reflects on the disorder of the pandemic but the dialogue also shows how, from death, hope rises as seeds eventually sprout and flower. It is up to us to decide what we want our new realities to be. In “Cultivating Comadrerismo for Collective Liberation” Barragan Santoyo and Perez show how “...transformation in the academy is possible when seeds are planted through building community, vulnerability, and the creation of an equitable and student-centered curriculum” through an innovative undocuresearch program for students at California State University Dominguez Hills. Harkening the energy of the vecindad (neighborhood), the authors’ work is showcased as an example of comadrismo, a bond of the soul that transforms the institution. Building a program around students’ intersecting identities and experiences, with comadrerismo at the center, has real implications to move toward liberation and joy, past the grief and through the healing, as we reimagine spaces in a post-pandemic context.

With this same comadrismo energy, Karlin, Stephany, and Reed deepen the dialogue about intentional planning for joy in elementary schools. “Coding to Connect: Centering Joy” shares a community-based account that features the work of a professor, school leader, clinical coordinator, teacher education students, and

elementary students participating in an innovative computer science learning experience. Authors question the dominant narrative around computer science education and displace neoliberal, work-force ready rhetoric with one of joy and experiential learning. There is a sense of post-lockdown, post-virtual schooling rebirth that actually moves computer science away from screens. Multifaceted dynamics of computer science are explored, including student-created un-plugged coding projects, and it is clear that curiosity drives the experience. Readers are left with a sense that there is possibility to disentangling from dominant discourse has been weighing down many typical, accepted learning activities in recent years and, as Barragan Santoyo and Perez also shared, there is joy in this liberation.

“Love, Joy, and Intimacy: One Family’s Response to 550 Days of Lockdown” a unique poem by a family of three that shifts focus to pedagogies of the home, both regarding academic learning during virtual schooling but also regarding other topics like death in the family and socio-emotional support. The family shares of their grief both in the sense of processing the death of their fathers/grandfathers and in processing the loss of in-person connection in schools. Interestingly, the poem highlights how lockdown and virtual schooling provided safety from unsafe spaces of school – especially bullying. The authors collectively paint a portrait of how myriad emotions were/are experienced at once and how joy is cultivated

through common practices like cooking and watching TV but mostly through being together. This piece gives voice to families across the world and shows us a glimpse to the homelives of our students during these tumultuous times.

We also gain a glimpse into the home lives of multilingual students during pandemic through this review of *Life as a bilingual: Knowing and using two or more languages* by Francois Grosjean. It captures the funds of knowledge of those who live bilingually everyday by compiling engaging blog posts accessible to a wide audience intrigued by plurilingualism. Greene walks readers through the topics covered in each chapter and explains how each explains, exemplifies, and nuances different theories/perspectives on bilingualism and even when and how the author challenges commonly accepted theories. This book review sets the tone for the holistic, dynamic approach of *In Dialogue/En Diálogo* and serves as a compelling resource for its readership. Most critically, this book addresses how to gain an understanding of funds of knowledge of our students and use it for bringing students' lives into our classroom – this learning from our changed realities through the pandemic is some of what we want to hold on to and continue to grow.

Natalie Nunez, a former teacher turned professional learning specialist, offers final thoughts to this volume, igniting the dialogue to continue amongst our

broader community. Sitting amidst the forces of joy, frustration, and sadness, she reflects on how love, solidarity, and grace served as her pillars during online instruction *and* return to in-person learning. Amidst institutional pressures that stem from deficit ideology, Natalie captures how, in the big and small moments, *la lucha sigue*. Our collective dialogue about our intricate experiences with grief, joy, and healing capacities fuels our ongoing pursuit of justice and our relentless desire to collectively transform our realities through the we've seeds planted while living in tumult.

Readers, as you embark on these pages, you now become part of the dialogue. Your thoughts, your experiences, your ideas are embedded in the force for change that this volume aspires to foster. Voice them. Engage in dialogue in your schools, in your communities, and in your home. Speak your reality, do not ignore the seeds you have planted and what has begun to flower so that you and those around you transform it.

References

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