

Editorial

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Another year comes to a close, and as I pause in reflection, I acknowledge yet another challenging year. For most, the continued impact of COVID-19 has been felt again around the globe. Many countries have endured additional lockdowns and other restrictions which, in turn, have affected schools, educators, students, and the families they serve. In Aotearoa New Zealand, the re-opening of schools marked another transition from home based, online learning to face-to-face learning back in classrooms around the country. Our field of education continued to operate in uncertain times, often quickly changing. For educators, this uncertainty continued the trend of increased pastoral care needs and higher workloads.

With the recognition of the wider social and economic impacts of the pandemic this year, I emphasise my deep felt thanks to all educators and researchers for their persistence and professionalism in advancing the important work of teaching and learning. I extend a special thank you to all authors and reviewers for whom I know have met personal and professional challenges with courage and grace. Thank you for your time, expertise, and collegiality.

The authors in this 2022 issue of *Curriculum Matters* raise numerous questions about the curriculum—including traditional provocations about what is taught...and how, across different contexts and education sectors. We begin this exploration of curriculum overseas from two authors examining the topic of literacy in higher education. Associate Professor Jungyin Kim's study focuses on Korean students' transnational literacy and social networks when enrolled in American business colleges. Her innovative approach to the study employs Kakao Talk, a social networking application for mobile phones, to understand Korean international students' literacy practices while navigating transnational identities and social peer networks. Kim's research demonstrates how college tutors can strategically use KakaoTalk tutorial chat groups to help advance students' subject and theoretical knowledge. The research also identifies the

powerful influence of the cultural frame of “in-maek”, a form of cultural and social capital exchange, affects study participants’ literacy and social networking experiences.

Aaron David Mermelstein highlights the value of learning poetry as part of a communicative language teaching strategy for English as a foreign language (EFL) students’ language and higher order thinking skill development in Taiwan. His survey of Taiwanese EFL university English major students demonstrates the positive relationship between student-centred classes and perceived English language skill development. More specifically, Mermelstein’s study shows a positive correlation between learning poetry and English language reading, speaking, and listening skills and the enhancement of students’ interest in reading.

The next three articles direct readers to curriculum-based enquiries in Aotearoa New Zealand. The authors examine a range of subject- and citizenship-focused curriculum debates across early childhood, primary, and secondary sectors. Moving in descending order from Kim and Mermelstein’s studies in the tertiary sector, Drs Cathy Bunting, Azra Moeed, and Dayle Anderson, and Mr Richie Miller explore the online citizen science (OCS) and science capabilities within Aotearoa New Zealand’s secondary curriculum framework. Their study, set within a multiyear research project, examines the potential of online citizen science (OCS) projects for enhancing school students’ learning in relation to science and digital technology. Their research illustrates how emphasis on the use of evidence throughout a science unit provided students the opportunities to develop their science capabilities via hands-on learning and robust engagement with the curriculum content.

Meanwhile Dr Marta Estellés and Holly Bodman investigate the ambiguous nature of “safety” discourses set within larger debates about citizenship and democratic education during the COVID-19 pandemic. Estellés and Bodman highlight how the mantra of “keeping students safe” was central to school responses to the ongoing effects of COVID-19. Drawn from a larger qualitative research project that explores teachers and young people’s experiences of COVID-19 during the first year of the pandemic at twelve primary and secondary schools, their study indicates varied definitions of safety related to student health and wellbeing. Their research also identifies how safety often became teachers’ first priority over curriculum and learning. Estellés and

Bodman's research also suggests that schools were seen as "safe" spaces from the anxieties and challenges of pandemic life at home.

In the final article, Drs Rosemary Richards and Lisa Terreni make a compelling argument for the important contribution of visual arts in fostering children's learning within early childhood educational contexts. With reference to the national bicultural early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki*, the authors point to the curriculum's promotion of rich experiences with people, places, and things that can lead to abstract and creative thinking, as well as everyday sense making. Richards and Terreni's research offers six "proposals" for teachers to engage in visual arts education that revolve around key ideas such as the provision of different engaging spaces, resources, mediums, and processes for creation.

The choice to conclude the 2022 issue of *Curriculum Matters* with an article featuring the visual arts is purposeful. The global neoliberal education reform movement is quick to remove the arts, and even the humanities and social sciences; however, the disappearance of arts, dance, drama and humanities returns us to quintessential curriculum-based decisions about what to learn... and why. What do curriculum choices say about our values? Similarly, what are the wider long-term influences of curriculum on children and young people's learning, sense of self, and ability to thrive in a world that COVID-19 has proven to be increasingly uncertain? The authors in this issue all address these questions in various ways demonstrating yet again how while context and subject matter differ, the curriculum directly influences the knowledge and skills of our children and young people.

I choose to end my editorial on a hopeful note. The importance of curriculum has been cemented in debates about teaching and learning during COVID-19. The pandemic has also exposed long-standing educational inequities experienced by rural and remote learners as many learners in urban areas faced the same challenges of internet access and resourcing during lockdowns. Finally, calls for justice for marginalised people through curricular and pedagogical initiatives are being advanced in Aotearoa New Zealand and abroad. In 2023, Te Takanga o Te Wā and Aotearoa New Zealand's histories will be part of all schools' local curriculum. This update to the national curriculum again has also confirmed that indeed, curriculum *matters*.

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Editor