

A Many Faceted Journey: *Education in a Democracy, Volumes 1-3, 2009 - 2011*

*Thomas S. Poetter, Miami University
Managing Editor*

As Managing Editor of the third volume of *Education in a Democracy: A Journal of the NNER*, I wanted to take the liberty of using some space to express several heartfelt thank yous and to comment briefly on the journey of getting to this point of handing the journal to the next set of editors.

Thank you to the NNER and its various governing bodies, who over the years saw fit to grant permission and support for the dream that many in the NNER had, that is of establishing a scholarly journal fitting the mission of the network, especially as that dream was driven through action by my wonderful editing colleagues John Skillings and John Anderson for several years before the first edition appeared in 2009.

The work by Skillings and Anderson behind the scenes, at so many meetings, and so patiently over time, led to a formal proposal to begin the journal, to house it at Miami University, to set up an editorial board, and to put out the first three volumes over a three-year period, 2009-2011. Ann Foster, Dick Clark, Tom Bellamy, and John Goodlad supported the work from the ground up, carefully

guiding and coaching along the way. Ann was particularly helpful in making the project a reality by supporting the effort with an openness that included not only strength of imagination for what was possible, but also for addressing head-on the worries about resources and getting started that come along with any new project. Thanks to all, named and unnamed, who had a hand in getting this journal off the ground, especially to those who quietly encouraged other writers to submit manuscripts or to those who wrote specific items that have been included here (or perhaps even not) over the journal's first three years.

And thanks to those, in particular, who actually made the journal something you can see and in some cases touch if you happened to get your hands on a hard copy at the conference each of the past three years. Our editorial board members and our reviewers looked at multiple manuscripts and without exception delivered helpful reviews and guidance for authors. All of these wonderful colleagues are all named in this journal. And on the home front at Miami University, thanks to our valued colleague, Kellie Pennington, who formatted the journal each of its first three years and shepherded the website after our very capable web consultant Todd Quincy designed and installed the online journal portal. No matter what would have happened with the journal at any varying stage along the way, Kellie would have made sure it was finished and of high quality.

Any new academic journal always has a distance to go to generate excellent scholarship. Typically, the problem of generating enough quality manuscripts applicable to the work and to the members at hand becomes a foremost concern. We have been fortunate to receive enough quality manuscripts to complete three volumes of this journal, one issue per year for three years. As an editing team, we feel as though the new editing team and the membership must be vigilant in recruiting and producing many manuscripts for review each year. It is possible to do, and if we keep working together in this area the journal will take its next steps in terms of impact and quality.

Speaking of impact and quality, In Volume 2 I asked for members to send short, personal vignettes illuminating how the journal is actually being used in educational settings across the network, in ways beyond personal consumption. I promised to include them in Volume 3 as a bit of evidence of the journal's impact out in the network. In response, Dick Clark sent a short statement about using an article from 2010's Volume 2:

In preparation for the January 27-29, 2011, meeting of the Agenda for Education in a Democracy (AED) Scholars, I sought articles and book chapters that would help those in attendance gain a better understanding of the stewardship required to sustain the simultaneous renewal of schools and the education of educators. One of the pieces I selected was Vanessa Domine and Julianne Bello's, "Stewarding Urban Teacher Education in Newark: In Search of Reflection, Responsibility, and Renewal," that appeared in *Education in a Democracy: A Journal of the NNER*, vol. 2, October 2010. We asked five of the Scholars to read the article in advance of the meeting, then to explain to the others in attendance what the authors were saying and what the implications of the article were for their work. The Scholars include professors from Colleges of Education and Arts and Sciences and teachers and administrators from P-12 school systems. The article generated energetic discussion by this professionally diverse group of the specific work that is needed to implement the AED and stimulated participants to share their experiences with challenges similar to those faced by the authors as they work in challenging urban environments.

I happened to be at that meeting and was especially impressed at how much conversation the piece generated and how powerful it was in use. To me, one particular way that the journal can be useful is when members use it in professional development settings such as the one Dick generated with the AED Scholars.

Another strong potential use for the journal is in teaching. I was teaching a course for undergraduates on teacher leadership last fall at Miami, and one of my students, a potential special educator, asked me how principles of democratic education were specifically related to issues in special education. I immediately referred her to Rose Rotuno-Johnson's article in Volume 2 entitled, "Democracy and Special Education Inclusion" by handing her a slip of paper with the journal website on it and Rose's name. I invited her to find the article at the website, skim the piece before our next class, and promised that we would discuss it in whatever manner she saw fit. The student read the paper before the next class, had many questions, and stayed after class to discuss it with me.

She commented later on her course evaluation that it was one of the best professional development experiences she has had as a student. I was just glad that I had a strong article at my fingertips to discuss with her. I could have named many sources on that topic, but here was one close to home of high quality that would take us deeper into the salient issues at hand for her development as a young professional teacher. The journal and my teaching moved ahead hand-in-hand. It was a great moment in our work together. Congratulations to Rose for having such a profound impact on student development and the teaching field with her scholarship.

Over the years I have found that my personal orientation to scholarship fits very well with working on journal articles, especially with those seeking publication early in their careers. I enjoy the process of taking manuscripts from rough drafts to scholarship quality pieces. Perhaps it's because I learn so much in the process. Perhaps it's because I'm indebted to scholars who nurtured and transformed me early in my career; maybe it's about paying that forward. I will really miss working with authors and learning so much as a result of working on the journal. I hope that the future editors view the work of those submitting manuscripts as "on the way to publication," not necessarily as finished pieces merely to be accepted or rejected, and work with authors to get their work up to

speed if at all possible. It is a very rewarding process, and fitting of our mission and orientation as educators in this network.

Last, I want to thank the NNER, all of the friends and colleagues inside and outside our network who helped with the journal and who were encouraging. I especially feel honored that John Skillings and John Anderson trusted me to take a leadership role with the work, and that in the end, the journal established what I think to be a strong start toward next steps. In transition, look for changes, but also look for continuity, and good work, and helpful scholarship to continue coming forward. Please support the new editing team by reading the journal, reviewing manuscripts, and submitting an article for review!

Thomas S. Poetter May 2011

Thomas S. Poetter is Professor of Curriculum at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. He is a member of the AED Scholars group and co-editor of this journal.