From the Editors

Teaching is a complex interpersonal and intrapersonal activity that involves engagement in numerous spheres. It requires investment in intellectual, physical, psychological, social, and emotional domains; and, as we know from understanding childhood and adolescent development, growth in various domains is neither simultaneous nor parallel. Progress occurs in fits and starts—and entails errors, occasional regression, and critical reflection. To be meaningful and lasting, learning must be authentic, relevant, and connect to our lives in ways that reach beyond boundaries associated with cognition.

The journey from novice to expert is circuitous, slippery, and steep. It is also long. Experienced educators understand that there are no shortcuts; the work of teaching involves curves that cannot always be mapped or predicted. Teacher travelers need stamina, support, scaffolding, and comfortable shoes. They need regular breaks, areas where they can stop to admire the landscape, and—once in a while—a boost.

Given the challenges of the educator’s expedition, this issue explores how teachers can support one another on the journey from novice to expert. Authors consider strategies that have worked for them, investigate how mentoring affects the process of professional development, and ponder the ways in which novice teachers differ from expert teachers. In today’s political context wherein the autonomy of public educators is being systematically diminished, Peter Taubman argues for professional study as a means of reclaiming the complexities of our work. Coauthors Luke Rodesiler, Meenoo Rami, Gary Anderson, Cindy Minnich, Brian Kelley, and Sarah Andersen explore how the virtual world can support teacher development, and Dawan Coombs and Jonathan Ostenson consider how the reflective feedback process can contribute to the cultivation of dispositions related to continuous improvement. Addressing concepts such as poverty, empathy, reading books, and writing memoirs, the range and scope of articles in this issue signify the multifaceted nature of teaching and teacher growth. What the pieces have in common, however, is perhaps the most important lesson about learning: the more we learn, the more we appreciate how little we know. Teachers are perpetual students; no one understands more about learning than we do. And no one cares more about learning, and learners, than teachers.

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