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The Education and Schools Our Children Deserve

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EDITORIAL

Fifth Anniversary Issue of the Journal of Educational Controversy

The Education and Schools Our Children Deserve

Lorraine Kasprisin, editor

This issue of the *Journal of Educational Controversy* will mark our fifth anniversary. When I first founded the journal in 2006, no one could have imagined its phenomenal growth in just five years. I think it is a testimony to the need for a journal that would bring scholars as public intellectuals into conversation with policymakers, teachers, legislators, and an informed public around the vital educational issues of our time. This issue of the journal will also introduce to our readers the new dean of the Woodring College of Education at Western Washington University --- the home of the journal. Dean Francisco Rios brings with him a vision of the public mission of schools in a democratic society and the kinds of teachers that can make that education possible. He shares that vision with us in his first published article for our journal, “The Future of Colleges of Education.”

It is fitting that an anniversary issue should touch on one of the most fundamental questions in education – the education and schools our children deserve, as well as engage those ideas in an experimental, innovative format. Readers will see some unique use of multi-media in this issue. For example, in addition to our usual printed book reviews, we have developed our first video review. Two college professors and a school teacher were filmed in our studio engaging in a conversation around Paul Shaker’s book, *Reclaiming Education for Democracy: Thinking Beyond No Child Left Behind*. The author then responded to the video review of his book in a printed article following the video. Likewise, we tried an experiment to see if we could get our readership to engage with the authors. Two reviewers were selected to review Grace Lee Boggs book, *The Next American Revolution: Sustainable Activism for the Twenty-First Century*. Each reviewer then responded to the other’s review on our journal’s blog. The author, Grace Lee Boggs and the co-author, Scott Kurashige, also join in on the conversation. We extend an invitation to our readership to engage the authors and the reviewers on our blog in a continuing, seamless conversation. It again exemplifies our attempt to generate an ongoing dialogue in the journal. And finally, our entire third section gives the reader a look inside a model school with video interspersed throughout the article. The school, the Whatcom Day Academy, is our partner school in the National League of Democratic Schools. Our partnership has enabled us to engage with actual practices and to share them with our readers.

We are dedicating this issue to Alfie Kohn, whose book, *The Schools our Children Deserve*, was the inspiration for this issue. In his prologue to this issue, Mr. Kohn reflects on the years since the publication of *The Schools our Children Deserve* and the need more than ever to be asking what kind of schools our children *still* deserve.

We believe that the political dialogue on education omits a discussion of the deepest questions we should be addressing. So we asked authors to address the following controversy:

The politicizing of education at the national level has centered on issues of standards, accountability, global competitiveness, national economic growth, low student achievement on worldwide norms, and federally mandated uniformity. There has been little discussion of the public purposes of our schools or what kind of education is necessary for an individual’s development and search for a meaningful life. There is a paucity of ideas being discussed at the national level around topics such as: how school practices can be aligned with democratic principles of equity and justice; how school practices can promote the flourishing of individual development as well as academic achievement; what skills and understandings are needed for citizens to play a transformative role in their society. Without conversation at this deeper level about the fundamental purposes of education, we cannot develop a comprehensive vision of the kinds of schools our children deserve. We invite authors to contribute their conceptions of the kind of education our children deserve and/or the kinds of schools that serve the needs of individuals and of a democratic society.

The issue is divided into three sections.

Section one is a series of articles that were written in response to the controversial scenario posed for the issue. Authors come at it from different perspectives and with different disciplinary tools, but together they form a vital chorus of important voices that look at “the education and schools our children deserve” from outside the dominant discourse that frames today’s political debates.

Section two is an “In the News” section. Here we took a very controversial issue in the news, namely, the Arizona legislation to ban ethnic studies in the schools. Under a copy of the legislation that our readers can read in its entirety, we published an article from the director of the school district that was under attack. Augustine Romero tells his own story about the events that took place in Arizona’s Tucson Unified School District. As a journal that provides a forum for conflicting views, we welcome accounts from respondents who may wish to provide other perspectives on these events for our Rejoinder Section.

Section three is our attempt to give readers an idea of what a “school meant for children” would look like. This section embeds a lot of video of actual school classrooms in an article written by Susan Donnelly, the head of the Whatcom Day Academy. The Educational Institute for Democratic Renewal, which houses the *Journal of Educational Controversy*, has partnered with the Whatcom Day Academy as part of a network of schools started by John Goodlad called the National League of Democratic Schools.

I want to especially thank Susan Donnelly for her work as co-editor of this issue and for giving us a glimpse of the philosophy and practices that make her school a model of schooling our children deserve.