

## From the Editors

### August 2015

Greetings. We at *MWER* hope you have been having an enjoyable summer and have been able to carve out some time that gives you the opportunity to truly relax for a while. As usual, the days pass quickly, and we are looking at the imminent beginning of the school year once again.

Our third issue of the *Mid-Western Educational Researcher* is a bit shorter than what is typical, due to some shifts in editorial staff responsibilities. We present four strong papers and one commentary for our readers, addressing varied policy and practice issues. Balancing the scales a bit, there are approximately ten articles related to English language learner, immigrant, and bilingual education in the pipeline for our fourth issue of 2015. Final work is being done on these manuscripts and our guest editor, Pamela Konkol of Concordia University-River Forest, is excited about the quality of scholarship she has received. We look forward to sharing this special issue with you.

We continue to work on current manuscripts with authors, and also anticipate strong papers from the upcoming MWERA conference in Evanston in October 2015 (see program information at <http://www.mwera.org/program-information.html>). As done last year, one paper overall will be chosen to receive the Distinguished Paper Award for 2015, and promising work submitted to any Division will be invited to submit to *MWER* for publication.

### Feature Articles

Beverly J. Dretzke, Timothy D. Sheldon, and Alicia Lim's paper "What Do K-12 Teachers Think about Including Student Surveys in Their Performance Ratings?" is a Division L Distinguished Paper selection from MWERA 2014. Their work describes the responses of K-12 teachers' to the use of student survey feedback as a component of a teacher evaluation system. Comparison of data from fall and spring surveys shows a decline in support for use of such data, with elementary teachers in particular expressing concern about students' ability to distinguish between effective and ineffective teaching behaviors. This article raises important questions about reliability and validity regarding this evaluation tool and suggests that, at minimum, teachers' input regarding construction of such tools be sought and incorporated.

Susan E. Ramlo introduces "Q Methodology as Tool for Program Assessment" to *MWER* readers. Program assessment is now commonplace at most colleges and universities and is required for accreditation of specific degree programs. Ramlo's study demonstrates the weaknesses of survey methodology, commonly used for such assessments and argues for Q methodology as a more effective option for obtaining student perceptions. She describes how Q is a mixed method that reveals the multiple unique views as well as consensus within the group of participants, and demonstrates how Q was used to investigate student views of a construction engineering technology program as well as how the results will be used to improve the program.

We have another UIC Research on Urban Education Policy Initiative policy brief to share. Rebecca Woodard and Sonia Kline focus on the tensions inherent in externally imposed standards for teaching with "Moving beyond Compliance: Promoting Research-based Professional Discretion in the Implementation of the Common Core State Standards in English

Language Arts.” They describe several potential implementation problems, based on a comprehensive review of research, policies, and practices related to CCSS for ELA. They argue, for example, that the standards’ content does not always align with research findings, possibly leading to gaps between research-based instructional practices and what teachers actually do in the classroom, and overall express concern about standards limiting the opportunity for educators to exercise professional judgment—critical for strong implementation in the classroom. The findings indicate needed policy actions in five areas: curriculum and instruction, teacher education and professional development, program/school leadership, assessment, and research.

### **Graduate Inquiry**

In “The Influence of Momentary Goal Structures,” Diana Janet Zaleski reminds us of the momentary variation found in these environments and how this variation can affect student cognition. In her study, she examines the momentary variation of goal structures in high school science classrooms and their influence on students’ cognitive engagement, using objective observations and the Experience Sampling Method, a data collection method that elicits students’ momentary subjective experiences related to the momentary classroom goal context. She finds that goal structures significantly vary from moment to moment and have a considerable impact on student cognition, and discusses the significance of this for teachers.

### **Commentary**

Finally, Daniel Quinn, with “Creating a Better Funding System for Michigan,” considers Michigan’s current educational funding system, explores two recently released national school finance reports, and offers recommendations for funding reform. His analysis is relevant to states facing similar problems with regard to the issues of adequacy and equity funding for public education.

### **Opportunities with *MWER***

As always, we continue to look for strong scholarship, both quantitative and qualitative, and extend an invitation to you to submit your work for publication, to serve as a reviewer for the journal, or to do both. With *MWER* online, there is more space to accommodate outstanding work and we do our best to offer a timely review and publication process. Please see our information for authors at <http://www.mwera.org/MWER/info-for-authors.html> and information for reviewers at <http://www.mwera.org/MWER/info-for-reviewers.html>, and let us know if you have any questions.

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