Dear Reader,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the first issue of the Mid-Atlantic Education Review, a peer-reviewed journal published by the Rutgers Graduate School of Education. Our aim is to publish interesting and accessible work that appeals to educational stakeholders in the Mid-Atlantic region and to build a readership not just of educational researchers, but teachers, administrators, and policy-makers.

Exciting things are happening in U.S. education, though you may not think that the cause of all the excitement is positive. Between accelerating interest in assessment and accountability, new and better knowledge of how children develop and learn, promising innovation in pedagogy and practice, increasing federal and state involvement in traditionally local decisions, and experimentation in classroom structure and school organization (that, in some cases, tears down the walls and digitizes the school), education is changing at a faster rate than at any other point in the history of U.S. public education.

Yet, as with many other academic disciplines, this vast increase in knowledge, in the development of theory, and in the exploration of methodology has accompanied increasing specialization and segmentation of educational research disciplines. This has created silos within educational research and built walls between researchers and administrators, teachers, and policy-makers. Despite some notable exceptions, “research” has become the exclusive domain of academics who complain that their findings aren't implemented or scaled beyond pilot projects. Meanwhile, their output is typically published as lengthy research papers in specialized and pricey journals that focus more on justification of data collection and analysis methodology than on exploration of the practical application of the findings.

The Mid-Atlantic Education Review seeks to challenge this dynamic. While maintaining the high level of rigorous review found in traditional scholarly education journals, we seek to publish succinct and thoughtful reviews, analyses, and studies of general interest to all educational stakeholders. This includes researchers writing for practitioners, practitioners writing for one another and other educational audiences, and researchers cutting across the boundaries of specialization. To appeal more to our busy readers, the target length of our articles is roughly half that of other research journals, which puts more onus on the authors to be concise and direct.

To provide focus for the journal, the mission centers on the dissemination of articles “of interest to educators and researchers in the Mid-Atlantic region.” This phrasing is deliberately fuzzy. Accounts of what constitutes the “Middle Atlantic” vary wildly, ranging as far south as Virginia, as far north as Connecticut, and sometimes leaving out intuitively middle states such as Delaware and New York. While the editorial board would argue that the greater metropolitan area of Washington, D. C., the suburbs of New York City, and the rural center of Pennsylvania all clearly fall under our region of interest, we
don't believe that arbitrary state or administrative boundaries capture it. Hence, we use the phrase “of interest to” to altogether sidestep the regional focus in regard to the location of the author or even where a study is conducted. Work done in Saint Louis may be of more interest to educators in Baltimore than work done in either central Maryland or New York City, as the size of the population, system of city governance, and demographic makeup are more comparable. To that degree, the regional focus of the Mid-Atlantic Education Review refers more to the target readership than the origin of the articles.

Our first issue makes a strong initial step in this direction. Della Leavitt et al. report on one case of transforming the typical teacher Professional Learning Community (PLC) required by the state of New Jersey into a more open and innovative, teacher-centered group. They find that such a structure is significantly more rewarding to the teachers and provides the potential to improve practice, but continuity can be challenging without formal administrative support. William C. Smith's article is a more general analysis of how the anti-union message that is becoming common nationwide is framing teacher unions in ways that portray them as acting against the best interests of children. He uses recent legislation in Pennsylvania to highlight the shift and argues that the national unions are not adequately responding to this political framing. In an exploratory piece, P. S. Myers looks at teacher-led and teacher-run schools from both a theoretical and a pragmatic view, noting that charter legislation opens the door for this organizational model in ways that have never been available before. Finally, Leman Kanimturk Kose reviews the organizational and operational issues that charter schools face in regard to their obligation to provide an equal education to students with special needs.

Designing a submission and review process that works best for our vision for the Review has been challenging, but we believe that this issue is a good initial step forward. We hope that the Review will grow to better connect policy-makers, administrators, teachers, and researchers in the Mid-Atlantic region, and we hope that you will continue to be a part of this community.

In addition to the authors and editorial team that contributed to the first issue, I would like to thank several people that have helped develop the Mid-Atlantic Education Review. Jennifer St. Pierre has been extremely helpful in publicizing the Review and in laying out a special print version of the first edition. Kaitlin Northey-Berg and Muteb Alqahtani, members of the initial steering committee, were critical to the development of the mission and setting the direction of the Review. Finally, William Firestone has been an instrumental resource, both in advocating for the Review and in giving guidance to the editorial team throughout the inception, design, and execution of the first issue.

On behalf of the editorial team, I thank you for reading the inaugural issue of the Review. I hope that you find it engaging and become a regular participant in our effort to better connect educational stakeholders in the Mid-Atlantic region.

Sincerely,

Kevin Crouse, Editor
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April, 2013