

# Editorial: Launching *Theory & Practice in Rural Education*

Laura Levi Altstaedter, *Executive Editor, TPRE*  
Kristen Cuthrell, *Director, Rural Education Institute*

East Carolina University's (ECU) Rural Education Institute, in partnership with ECU Library Services, is pleased to share with you the inaugural issue of its scholarly publication, *Theory & Practice in Rural Education (TPRE)*. This new online, peer-reviewed, open access journal, publishes articles focused on issues related to rural schools, students, educators, institutions of higher education, and communities. *TPRE* was originally the *Journal of Curriculum and Instruction (JoCI)*. Published between 2007 and 2014, *JoCI* was envisioned as a forum for scholars and practitioners in the fields of education and teacher education to disseminate and access relevant literature related to PreK-12 education. After a 4-year hiatus, faculty associated with ECU's Rural Education Institute took on the challenge of re-envisioning the journal, shifting the focus to rurality and rural education.

ECU's Rural Education Institute—established more than 30 years ago—was charged with increasing awareness of the unique strengths and needs of rural schools in eastern North Carolina. North Carolina has the second highest enrollment of students in rural schools in the United States, approximately 40% of its overall percentage of public school enrollments. Our student population is also poorer and more diverse than most other states. Since its inception, the Rural Education Institute has continued to provide invaluable outreach educational services including facilitating research-practice partnerships that address educational disparities and ensuring access to high-quality education within rural regions. Most recently, the institute has developed research-practice partnerships to increase access to mental health services and resources, attract and retain educators to fill the high number of vacancies in rural eastern North Carolina school districts, and

invest in technology and extending STEM opportunities to elicit critical thinking. Intent on improving educational outcomes for rural students, schools, and communities, the Rural Education Institute seeks to widely disseminate information and new knowledge to inform practice and policy. *TPRE* is an essential component in fulfilling this work.

*TPRE's* scope and focus evolved through extensive conversations and collaborations among ECU faculty from various disciplines, which resulted in one of the key features of *TPRE*: its interdisciplinary nature. This is also reflected in the composition of the Executive Editorial team, which includes specialists in curriculum and instruction, instructional technology, educational psychology, library sciences, and applied linguistics. One of the key decisions made was that the journal would include distinct sections that would encourage various types of scholarly contributions, ranging from research manuscripts, practice manuscripts, scholarly manuscripts focused on digital projects, and book and media reviews. In addition, in an effort to reach international scholars and audiences, the Executive Board made the decision to accept manuscripts in both English and Spanish.

*TPRE* is hosted by ECU Library Services and its publication is currently supported through the Rural Education Institute and the Thomas W. Ross Fund Publishing Grant from UNC Press, Chapel Hill, NC. From this project's inception, many people have been instrumental in contributing to its success and the publication of our first issue. Thus, we would like to express our sincerest appreciation to Dr. Grant Hayes, Dean of the College of Education; Dr. Ron Mitchelson, Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs; Dr. Jan Lewis, Director J. Y. Joyner Library; Dr. Diane

Kester, Managing Editor; Dr. Jessica Chittum, Associate Editor for the Practice Forum; Dr. Jesús Trespalacios, Associate Editor for the Research Forum; Dr. Irina Swain, Associate Editor for Digital Projects; Alan Bailey, Head, Teaching Resources Center, Joyner Library; Ms. Elizabeth Japczyk Schuler, Assistant Managing Editor; Dr. Lori Flint, Rural Education Institute Associate Faculty; and Joseph Thomas, Assistant Director for Collections and Scholarly Communication, Joyner Library. In addition, we would like to thank the reviewers on our editorial board and the authors who contributed their work to this issue.

Moving forward, we encourage scholars and practitioners specializing in areas that intersect with rurality to contribute their work for our general issues and for our upcoming special issues on Co-Teaching, Trauma-Informed Schools, Motivation,

and Gifted Education. Manuscripts for our general issues are typically due in October with publication dates expected in May. Manuscripts for our special issues are due in June with publication dates expected during the fall.

We are also currently seeking additional reviewers. If you are interested in becoming a peer reviewer, please go to the journal's website (<http://tpre.ecu.edu>) to register. Edit your profile and navigate to the tab "Roles" where you may select "Reviewer" and submit your interests concerning rural education.

The *TPRE* editorial staff welcomes this opportunity to provide another peer-review venue for scholars in rural education to share their work and engage readers in exploring the complexities of rurality and rural education.

### About the Authors

**Laura Levi Altstaedter**, PhD, is an Associate Professor in Hispanic Studies Education. She holds degrees in Curriculum and Instruction, Second Language Education (PhD), and Latin American Studies (MA) from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Additionally she holds Traductorado Público en Idioma Inglés, University of Buenos Aires, Argentina. Her research focuses primarily on second language writing at the college level. She is particularly interested in peer feedback and how it impacts students' writing proficiency. She is also interested in researching the effects of technology-enhanced language instruction on students' perceptions and language proficiency. [levialtstaedterl@ecu.edu](mailto:levialtstaedterl@ecu.edu)

**Kristen Cuthrell**, EdD, is a Professor at East Carolina University in the Department of Elementary Education and Middle Grades Education and serves as Director of the Rural Education Institute. Her research interests include reform in educator preparation, innovation in clinical experiences, and professional development in rural schools. [cuthrellma@ecu.edu](mailto:cuthrellma@ecu.edu)

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