

A Commitment to Open Access

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It is interesting to note that some of the *unique* early features of the Electronic Journal of Science Education have become commonplace. I recall John Cannon and David Crowther (the founders and first editors) being very excited that they set up a review process that was completely electronic. This facilitated a more efficient review process and certainly was a sign of things to come. I can't recall the last review I did from a hard copy. A second groundbreaking feature was that the journal was set up to be *open access*. There was no fee and anyone with a web browser and internet access was a subscriber.

I am proud to be affiliated with EJSE and the forward thinking of John and David. There are now a growing number of open access journals supporting the distribution of scholarly writing including research findings, position papers, theoretical discussions, and discussion of research methods. EJSE has been part of that movement and maintains a commitment to open access. This seems more important than ever as the world is shrinking and budgets are tightening. Journals affiliated with professional organizations often have financial, political, and contractual constraints to be able to publish an open access journal. I see the EJSE serving an important role in both the dissemination of research and in pushing the agenda for open access.

As an unfunded journal, everyone working to publish each issue does so as an added job responsibilities. A priority is to give thoughtful and helpful reviews that will aid the authors in their research whether ultimately published in the EJSE or elsewhere. And of course the biggest priority is to maintain high standards and publish quality manuscripts that add value to the knowledge base of the science education community. I encourage you to consider supporting this effort. I invite published authors interested in joining the editorial review board to submit their vita and a brief letter of interest to EJSE. We would welcome additional reviews to help facilitate a quick review time, provide quality feedback, and support the implementation of a peer-reviewed open access journal in science education.

The articles in this issue reflect the diversity that is possible in an open access international journal. Keil, Haney, and Zoffel report on research about a teacher professional development program to help middle school teachers design and implement a problem-based environmental health curricula. This paper adds to the discussion about how teachers navigate the tension between supporting a problem-based instructional model and preparing students for a content-driven state exam.

The second manuscript brings us to issues of cultural learning environments in Brunei. The importance of culturally sensitive curriculum and teacher preparation is highlighted by Harkirat Dhindsa and Khadija-Mohd-Salleh. Their exploration of cultural

learning issues from Brunei will help science educators from around the world gain perspective of similar issues in their own country.

Jonathan Way presents a research study on the implementation of a unit on Coyote behavior. This thoughtful and creative paper presents a case from two classrooms that will have utility for others implementing a similar curriculum. It also continues the discussion on the inclusion of state standards into a highly motivating unit of study. In addition the description of the research methods and the author's role as teacher/researcher/scientist will serve others navigating the complexities of these combined roles.

In another article relating to environmental issues, Meagher uses a quantitative analysis of concepts maps drawn by community college students to document students' growth in understanding environmental science content. This article will provide help to anyone wanting to use concept maps in a systematic way to gain insight into students' understandings. The author provides significant insight into a sophisticated use of concept mapping and some of the benefits and constraints of this approach.

Bhattacharyya and Bhattacharya report on a qualitative study to integrate a technology-integrated project-based approach into a graduate elementary methods class. Some very interesting results relating to the atmosphere during the class and the role of *banter* emerged during the study.

Del Carlo and Bodner also discuss the social relationships and community building as an important element in science learning. The social interactions which could be perceived as "off task behavior" is reported as being a positive factor in the classrooms studied. This article prompts additional thoughts and questions, along with Bhattacharyya and Bhattacharya's findings about the value and range of social interactions in a classroom setting.

And finally, Reis and Galvao report on a case study of a teacher who enthusiastically includes discussions on controversial issues in her biology class. The case is made that the teacher's conviction about the value of this approach adds to the success she had.

These articles together speak to the importance of thinking about what is happening for the students we teach. From their engagement with Coyotes to joking with friends to debating about the merits of stem cell research, how we allow students to engage with each other and the content does matter.