Teaching for Equity: The Role of Folklore in a Time of Crisis and Opportunity

The 2020 Journal of Folklore and Education (JFE) titled "Teaching for Equity: The Role of Folklore in a Time of Crisis and Opportunity" is now accepting submissions. This issue speaks directly to the national crisis of equity, representation, and access in our zip codes and our cultural and educational institutions. Folklore includes the traditions, arts, and stories that make cultural communities unique and strengthen social bonds within our communities. The tools of folklore—such as observation, identifying important traditions and rituals, and deep listening to diverse narratives through interviews and ethnographic fieldwork—create opportunities for addressing significant social justice questions because the study of folklore and folklife centers students’ linguistic, cultural, social, and racial pluralities. The terms “inclusion,” “diversity,” “equity,” and “access” are often used to critique privilege and hierarchy to address long-term effects of infrastructural and lived inequity. Yet as buzzwords these terms sometimes mask inaction and perpetuation of the status quo. This special issue of JFE asks how folklore and paying close attention to culture in our learning spaces can equip educators with tools and resources to engage more fully diverse students and audiences.

We seek submissions that present case studies, lessons, and research on the significance of arts that are based in community cultural life that may be useful for:

- Educators in diverse settings or contexts;
- Curators and program managers at museums, community centers, and cultural institutions addressing issues of representation and access in content creation and program development;
- Administrators addressing the complexities of equity and access in teacher preparation and professional development, as well as in curriculum development and sustaining community relationships; and
- Students and community members who want to see their cultural knowledge valued in educational practices and policy.

The Journal of Folklore and Education (JFE) is a peer-reviewed, open-access journal published annually by Local Learning: The National Network for Folk Arts in Education. JFE publishes work that uses ethnographic approaches to tap the knowledge and life skills of students, their families, community members, and educators in K-16, higher education, museum, and community education. Our intended audience includes educators and students at all levels and in all settings, folk culture specialists, and those working in community-based organizations.

As a digital publication, the Journal of Folklore and Education provides a forum for interdisciplinary, multimedia approaches to community-based teaching, learning, and cultural stewardship. It is found at www.locallearningnetwork.org.
Essential questions that contributors may use to inspire their writing, interviews, and media submissions include the following:

~ Culturally responsive teaching asks educators to recognize students’ cultural displays of learning and meaning making (Gloria Ladson-Billings 2007). Culturally sustaining teaching sees culture more deeply as an asset that should be explicitly supported (Django Paris 2012). How might folklore in education, with an attention to local knowledge and arts, enhance pedagogy in diverse learning spaces?

~ What are best practices in Indigenous/indigenous methodologies to bring traditional ways of knowing, creating, and learning into a classroom, museum, or community?

~ How can the tools of folklore such as observation, identifying important traditions and rituals, and collecting personal experience narratives through interviews create opportunities for addressing significant social justice questions? Describe and unpack classroom activities, exhibition design protocols, resources and curriculum development, public program formats, and other engagement methods that use these tools for social justice.

~ What does a culturally safe space look like for diverse and equitable classrooms or cultural institutions and organizations?

~ How can educators from multiple disciplinary areas, including science, health care, social studies, composition, or literacy, use culture in their teaching to create inclusive, differentiated learning environments?

~ How does a folkloristic, ethnographic approach in a classroom or other educational setting connect learners with cultural knowledge systems different from their own and deepen understanding of their own community—from early childhood, to K-12, to adult learners?

~ How can higher-education teacher-preparation programs incorporate cultural ways of knowing, creating, or learning as a key part of their pedagogy?

~ How can the field of Folklore help address “tough conversations” or controversy in contemporary discourse surrounding the education achievement gap or structural racism in schools and the communities where they are situated? How might this practice help serve learners with diverse perspectives in our classrooms?

~ What lessons and activities can help educators address stereotype threats?

~ Describe models for incorporating mindfulness, restorative justice, and uncovering unconscious bias in school-based classrooms and other educational settings. How might such practices meaningfully connect with folklife and cultural knowledge?

More about Submissions: We seek submissions of articles, model projects, multimedia products, teaching applications, and student work accompanied by critical writing that connects to the larger frameworks of this theme. We particularly welcome submissions inclusive of perspectives and voices from represented communities. Co-authored articles that include teachers, administrators, artists, students, or community members offer opportunities for multiple points of view on an educational program or a curriculum. We publish articles that share best practices, offer specific guides or plans for implementing folklore in education, and articulate theoretical and critical frameworks. We invite educators to share shorter pieces for “Notes from the Field.” Nonconventional formats are also welcomed, such as lesson plans, worksheets, and classroom exercises. Media submissions, including short film and audio clips, will also be considered. When considering a submission, we highly recommend reviewing previous issues of JFE (see www.localslearningnetwork.org/journal-of-folklore-and-education/current-and-past-issues). We
encourage you to be in touch with the editors to learn more and see whether your concept might be a good fit and to discuss submission and media ideas.

Research-based writing that theorizes, evaluates, or assesses programs that use Folklore in Education tools and practice are also welcomed. These research articles may intersect with the theme, but all submissions with a research component will be considered. We expect that, regardless of the format, all projects presented in submissions will have appropriate institutional permissions for public dissemination before submission to JFE, including approval from Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) and/or data licensing for the acquisition of existing data, as may be required. See the protocol for publishing a study used by ArtsEdSearch for guidance.

Format: Articles should be 1,500-4,500 words, submitted as a Word document. We use a modified Chicago style (not APA) and parenthetical citations. Contact the editors for our formatting requirements and citation style template. All URL links hyperlinked in the document should also be referenced, in order, at the end of the article in a URL list for offline readers. Images should have a dpi of at least 300.

Contact editors Paddy Bowman at pbbowman@gmail.com or Lisa Rathje at lisa@locallearningnetwork.org with ideas for stories, features, lessons, and media productions. You may also request a citation style template. Initial drafts of submissions are due April 1, 2020.

Please share this announcement with colleagues and educators in your community. This endeavor is supported by the National Endowment for the Arts.

We are grateful to our Advisory Committee for this special issue:
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