

Introduction

by Paddy Bowman and Lisa Rathje, editors

Educators stand at the forefront of social change. Whether the issue is immigration, migration, economic downturns, trending naming traditions, health, bigotry, civic engagement, or civil society, teachers are often the first to recognize cultural shifts that directly affect their classrooms. Thus, they are often the first who must develop responses to change.

In Volume 4 of the *Journal of Folklore and Education*, *Newcomers and Belonging*, we highlight how educators in K-12, college, museum, and community settings are working positively and successfully with refugees and immigrants across the United States. At a time of heated rhetoric and both heinous and heroic acts surrounding the topics of immigration, inclusion, and diversity, this theme has taken on even deeper meaning than when we chose it months ago. Our aim has been to shine a light on what “belonging” means, not only on refugees and immigrants. Everyone has been and will be a newcomer throughout our lives, whether through a job change or moving in the middle of a school year, emigration or being expelled from a homeland. Everyone wants a sense of belonging, and at the same time “belonging” connotes a privilege that may often operate invisibly in our classrooms and communities.

The U.S. defines refugees as people forced to flee a home country to escape war, persecution, or violence. More than 850,000 have resettled in the U.S. since 2001. The 18-month process involves referral by the United Nations and vetting by our State Department. In comparison, about a million immigrants arrive annually. The top five nationalities of refugees who have resettled here are Burmese, Iraqi, Somalian, Bhutanese, and Iranian (Alpert and Hussein 2017). New Americans is a term that several authors in this volume use to connote both immigrants and refugees. JFE Volume 4 includes articles by New American authors and about curricula and programs developed with and for New American teachers and students. These many perspectives provide a multilayered look at the ways education intersects with *Newcomers and Belonging*, yet we find that consistently a larger thesis can be found throughout: The knowledge, including community and cultural “texts”¹ that diverse individuals bring to an educational setting, offers pathways for inquiry and engagement. Tapping this expertise also meets many types of learning objectives, including in English language acquisition and other literacy arts, workforce development, health and physical education, and community outreach initiatives that encompass both bridging and bonding goals.

The mission of Local Learning has as its central premise that the field of folklore offers tools, strategies, and resources to help educators understand how culture influences ways of learning; creates and strengthens communities; and expresses itself in our schools, universities, museums, and community organizations. By extension, folklore-in-education tools make more visible the cultural texts that students know and illuminate how dominant sociocultural narratives work and are perpetuated. We argue that “there is a pedagogical advantage in teaching students who know

¹ By “texts” we mean not only written or narrative texts, but also texts of material culture such as weaving or basketry and performative texts such as music, dance, or theater.

that their epistemological capital is a valid currency in the classroom” (Rathje 2017). It is not always easy to establish this as a part of classroom culture, but authors in this issue provide examples and proven paths to this goal. Paddy Bowman coins the term “reciprocal pedagogy” to name the “deep collaborative relationship that good teaching involves” in which teachers and students learn “from and with each other” (2011, 20). The authors also demonstrate that educators can get outside the “helping” mindset and move more critically into an “empowerment” mindset that includes academic and personal growth for students of all ages and backgrounds.

Below we have curated a short, but incomplete, list of resources to complement the articles you find in these pages. These resources are not necessarily folklore specific and include sites beyond JFE. Those of us working in folklore and education continue to critique and build our understandings of authenticity, context, and narrative, with the goals of reaching new audiences, addressing the needs of diverse age cohorts and cultural groups, and building accessibility into curricula and program design. We benefit from interdisciplinary partnerships and dialogue. The sharing of tools and strategies through partnerships across disciplines and organizations can help address the challenge of staying relevant and vital in our complicated, interconnected world.

Works Cited

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Bowman, Paddy and Lynne Hamer, eds. 2011. *Through the Schoolhouse Door: Folklore, Community, and Curriculum*. Logan: Utah State University Press.
Rathje, Lisa. 2017. “The Serious Art of Fun: Reading Leisure “Texts” with a Folklore Framework in the Classroom.” Paper presented at the Asian Heritage Forum, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok. August 6-7.

Critically Engaged and Cultural Education Resources

Journal of Folklore and Education

While this issue of JFE is a great place to start to gain some good ideas, frameworks, and learning applications, articles in previous JFE volumes are relevant to conversations about inclusion and diversity in educational places.

Volume 3 Intersections: Folklore and Museum Education (2016) several authors looked at topics of racism, social justice, and education. We particularly highlight:

[Dismantling Racism in Museum Education](#) by Marit Dewhurst and Keonna Hendrick

[The Urgency of Empathy and Social Impact in Museum](#) by Mike Murawski

[Heritage Repatriation and Educational Sovereignty at an Ojibwe Public School](#) by

B. Marcus Cederström, Thomas A. DuBois, Tim Frandy, and Colin Gioia Connors

Volume 2 Youth and Community (2015) a number of articles examined student agency in learning.

Linda Deafenbaugh’s piece has become a core text cited in a number of other articles and publications, [Folklife Education: A Warm Welcome Schools Extend to Communities](#). Two other

articles specifically included work in Newcomer communities: [Bridging Collaborative Ethnography and Democratic Education](#) by Alison Kinney and [Developing Relationships with New American Communities](#) by Julianne Morse.

Outside Resources

Some of these come from partners or colleagues in the field, others were shared with us with good intentions. We did not develop a rigorous peer review but hope this list proves helpful for our readers. We also note that almost every state has folk arts programs and folklorists who have developed useful resources and could advise educators wanting to think deeply and carefully about culture in their classes. Please visit the curated [Local Learning Regional Resources](#) list to learn more about what may be happening near you.

A recent **National Council of Teachers of English** (NCTE) recent blog headline reads, “There is no apolitical classroom” (August 15, 2017). NCTE’s Standing Committee against Racism and Bias has curated a list of resources and helpfully outlined by topic the resource sets, including *Resources for Working with White Students* and *Resources for Understanding Bias*.
<http://blogs.ncte.org/index.php/2017/08/there-is-no-apolitical-classroom-resources-for-teaching-in-these-times>.

Teaching for Change developed [SocialJusticeBooks.org](#) to identify and promote the best multicultural and social justice children’s books, as well as articles and books for educators.

The Atlantic contributor Melinda Anderson created the Twitter hashtag [#CharlottesvilleCurriculum](#) to serve as an ongoing list of resources to teach responsively to current events. Sources highlighted include the [Equal Justice Initiative](#) and the [Citizenship and Social Justice Curriculum](#).

[The Southern Poverty Law Center](#), which publishes [Teaching Tolerance](#) (reviewed in this issue), offers a full complement of resources crafted with real teachers in mind. We highlight [Ten Ways to Fight Hate](#), [Alt Right on Campus](#), and [Responding to Everyday Bigotry](#).

[Our Stories in Our Voices](#) addresses perennial questions: “Who am I?” “Where do I come from?” “Where am I?” and “Where am I going?” through stories of ethnic identity development, historical events important to people of color in the U.S., use and misuse of land, and coalition building across ethnic communities for social justice and self-realization. In addition to essays, this anthology and accompanying workbook include photo essays, reality-based comic strips, interviews, and narratives from high school students.

[United Nations High Commission for Refugees](#) offers a variety of resources, including teaching tools: <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/teaching-about-refugees.html>. We also find their feature article on the state of education for the world’s refugees and related materials regarding education Relevant: <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/missing-out-state-of-education-for-the-worlds-refugees.html>.

The **American Federation of Teachers** (AFT) has pulled together “Addressing Racism & Stereotyping” via their sharemylesson website:
<https://sharemylesson.com/collections/addressing-racial-profiling-stereotyping?theme=284956>.