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C2C Digital Magazine (Spring / Summer 2021)

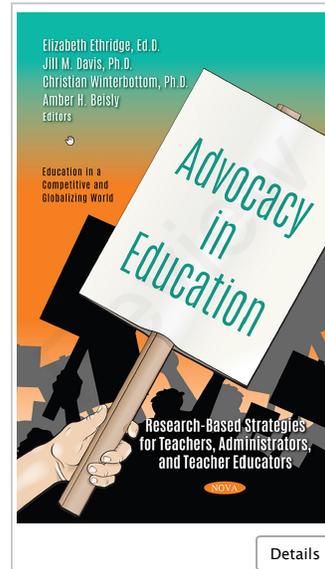
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Book review: Educators advocating for higher salaries, improved work and classroom conditions

By Shalin Hai-Jew, Kansas State University

Advocacy in Education (cover)



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Advocacy in Education: Research-Based Strategies for Teachers, Administrators, and Teacher Educators

Elizabeth Ethridge, Jill M. Davis, Christian Winterbottom, and Amber H. Beisly
Nova Science Publishers, Inc.

2020
360 pp.

Teachers hold positions of respect and influence in societies. They are often recognizable social figures. Some may have something of a bully pulpit based on their social roles. In many cases, there are policy restrictions against using formal position (and formal emails and other school-related communications platforms) to advocate for a particular political issue or political action. This is in part to maintain teacher neutrality in the world and not to enable them to use their outsized voices in perhaps impolitic ways that may bring in the organizational reputations of their employers. Some contracts stipulate the restriction against walkouts given the social disruptions.

Certainly, some types of messaging are particular verboten. Between the two extremes of full expression (as citizens) vs. public silence, how much should teachers use their positions in the service of social change? When does free speech become impolitic? Does social advocacy result in skewing of data and of research? What do respective societies expect from public education and those who provide it?

There is no bright red line against teacher advocacy, but if there is a line, it is something more dotted. Elizabeth Ethridge, Jill M. Davis, Christian Winterbottom, and Amber H. Beisly's *Advocacy in Education:*

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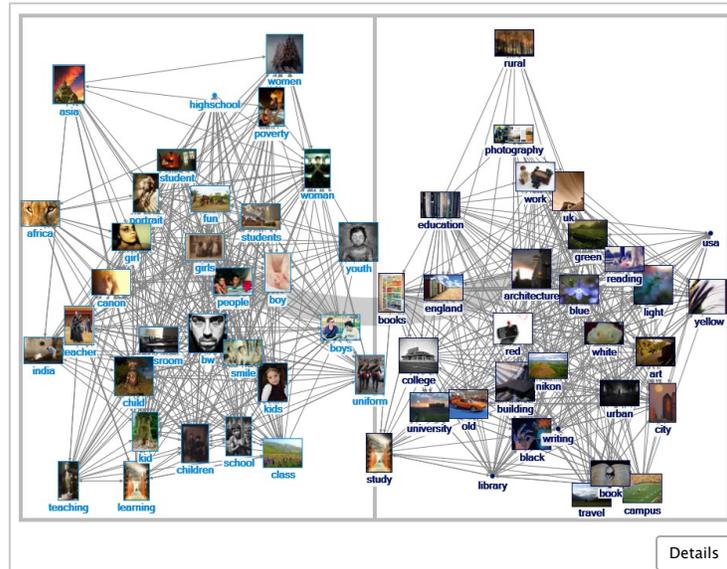
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Research-Based Strategies for Teachers, Administrators, and Teacher Educators (2020) builds on a 9-day teacher walk-out in Oklahoma, in the Midwest, as something of a seminal event for teachers finding their voices and advocating on their own behalf and those of their students. The event is portrayed in the context of a year of teacher walkouts and strikes in 2018, with varying outcomes.

Figure 1. "Education" Related Tags Network in Flickr

"Education" Related Tags Network on Flickr



Introduction

If history is any guide, creating social change requires leadership and resources; it can take generations to achieve. Educators have a career *raison d'être* to teach, and this role may extend to alerting larger society to areas that require change although how they do it requires finesse.

Educators as Self- and Other- Advocates

Societies may seem like they just trundle along, but humanity has a voice in how it shapes out. Jill M. Davis, Elizabeth Ethridge, and Amber H. Beisley's "Empowered Educators: Lessons Gleaned from the Oklahoma Teacher Walkout" (Ch. 1) suggest that teachers can be part of leading societal change. At the heart of their work involves their marching to "protest decreases in per-pupil expenditures, low teacher pay, growing class sizes, and increased accountability and mandates without proper funding" (p. 3). Their efforts point at the challenges of unfunded and poorly funded mandates from the state legislature. Indeed, for all the rhetoric about teachers being critical to society and building people for the future, they often are asked to work hard and long hours with less material support. The march in Oklahoma occurred in the context of nation-wide mass advocacy to improve education funding in K12. The respective walkouts and strikes occurred in a domino effect. Initially there were "walkouts and strikes by 35,000 workers in West Virginia, followed by 45,000 in Oklahoma, and 26,000 in Kentucky" (Hackman & Nunn, 2019, as cited in Davis, Ethridge, & Beisley, 2020, p. 4). Some 267,000 teachers walked out in "Arizona, Colorado, and North Carolina" (p. 4). Thirty-six strikes followed Virginia's in February 2018.

Indeed, the respective teachers were working under pressure, with the challenges of "low pay, large class sizes, rising insurance premiums, outdated textbooks, lack of counseling and social services for students, and increased testing and accountability" among other issues cited from multiple sources (Davis, Ethridge, & Beisley, 2020, pp. 4 - 5). Earlier cases triggered various union actions and waves of activism (p. 5). A trend of dropping per-student expenditures occurred between 2008 – 2015. Many of the teachers striking were in the states where the investments per student were well below the national average of \$12,756 per

student in the U.S. There were shrinking teacher salaries nationally from 2000 to 2017 (1.6%) (Wolf, 2019, as cited in Davis, Ethridge, & Beisley, 2020, p. 7). One study finding that “female teachers made 15.6% less than comparably educated women, and male teachers made 36.8% less than comparable educated men” (Allegratto & Mishel, 2019, as cited in Davis, Ethridge, & Beisley, 2020, p. 7). Many educators work second or third jobs to make ends meet.

The low funding exists not only in terms of salaries: “Retirement pay and benefits are another concern. Some state legislatures, such as Wisconsin, have stripped teachers of their pensions, and others such as Colorado have cut benefits and raised the retirement age” (Reilly, 2018b, as cited in Davis, Ethridge, & Beisley, 2020, p. 8). Some states have chosen to “pay down unfunded pension obligations” instead of raising teacher salaries (Turner, 2018, as cited in Davis, Ethridge, & Beisley, 2020, p. 8).

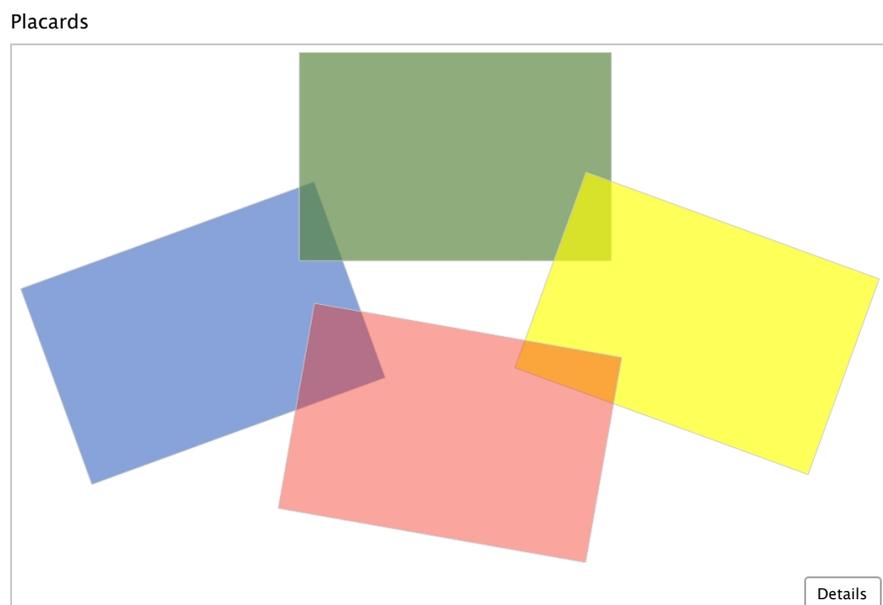
Some 80% of the nation’s school budget goes to teacher pay and benefits (Davis, Ethridge, & Beisley, 2020, p. 8). Many non-teacher school staff had not received pay raises either.

Some of the lower educational expenditures came from the 2008 recession with tax cuts instantiated to meet that moment; however, as economies recovered, some states “increased funding to match” while others continued cutting taxes (p. 6). Education funding for K12 comes from a complex mix of federal, state, and local (including property) taxes for funding.

Ultimately, the nine-day shutdown resulted in “a modest pay raise and the promise of new revenue intended to help increase school funding. Little headway was made to try to restore educational funding or rollback some of the tax cuts the state had enacted over the years” (Kilgore, 2018, as cited in Davis, Ethridge, & Beisley, 2020, p. 10). Actual long-term wins sound minimal even as the walkout raised teacher confidence for political self-advocacy. Their activism communicated important messages to legislators, citizen-taxpayers, colleagues, and students. The teachers showed how a healthy democracy works, with non-violent mass communications and bringing on of allies for changes. The public space is a contested one as is the future.

The co-authors suggest that advocacy education may be integrated into a curriculum for political awareness (Davis, Ethridge, & Beisley, 2020, p. 20). They write: “The most important lesson learned is that advocacy never ends. The people in office are always changing, so educators must continue to build relationships and share information when bills are being written and when they are up for a vote” (p. 20).

Figure 2. Placards



Promoting Social Justice and Liberation in and with Education

If everyone is working towards an optimal future, certainly, not everyone has the same sense of what that would look like. In the same way, “justice” and “liberation” may look different to different people, even as society has various demographic and other measures for both constructs. Paul Parkison and Christian Winterbottom’s “Justice and Liberation in Teacher Education” (Ch. 2) conceptualizes schools as part of the larger communities of which they are a part. Where education is a public good, teachers are a physical embodiment of that public good. Prior research suggests the importance of the perception of “fair treatment” by teachers (“teacher justice”) is related to “student engagement, academic success, the pleasure of learning, and a positive classroom climate” (per the work of Donat, Peter, Dalbert, and Kamble, 2016, as cited in Parkison & Winterbottom, 2020, p. 31). Teachers can have a “generative presence” in how they embody and interact with others and so affecting both justice and liberation, their own and others.

This work suggests that the authentic identity of teachers has an impact on the everyday world, through public pedagogies and public dialogues. The co-authors write:

The danger in excluding a discussion of meaning and authentic being from the politico-social world-horizon involves the fall into the hegemonic and ideological-self that finds reason, science, and technology to be the ordering thematic of society and politics. We fall into precisely *the crisis* identified by Edmund Husserl (Husserl, 1965): we have lost our connection to a spiritual/transcendental or aesthetic ethical ground that grants meaning to human existence. Occupying an authentic position disengages the emergence of the subject from the logic of negation and attaches subjectivity to affirmative otherness. (Parkison & Winterbottom, 2020, p. 35)

Within the educational realm, there has been a long history of striving towards shared justice and shared liberation: more equitable schools, inclusion of diversity, and other values. Teachers are “agents of change” with idealisms integrated in the discipline (Parkison & Winterbottom, 2020, p. 39).

This work concludes with a call to action: “If we truly believe that justice and liberation are processes grounded in public pedagogies and dialogue then we must decide what we are to bring to the table. It is through these dialogues with the community, legislators, and the public that teachers can continue to advocate for the right to be present” (Parkison & Winterbottom, 2020, p. 40).

Early Childhood Education

The preschool years for a child are critically important for their development, given critical developmental windows. In some cases, missed opportunities to promote child development early on and into childhood may result in irretrievable losses. Karen Walker and Lindsey L. Wilson’s “Building a System: Advocating for Early Childhood Education” (Ch. 3) identifies five general steps for advocating for change in early childhood education: “identifying desired outcomes, building an inclusive team, designing a system, utilizing multiple branches of government, and creating a strategic plan” (p. 43). The broad public has a better understanding of the importance of proper teaching and learning in early years. However, there are still challenges around the expense of preschool care, with families unable to pay more and teachers unable to earn less (p. 44). The thinking then is that perhaps government can be the source of outside funding to ease the tensions between stakeholder interests. The five proposed steps, which are elaborated on here, are towards persuading government to better fund early childhood education teachers on par with preschool and elementary teachers. This work includes a summary of various federal government initiatives in this space, such as Head Start and grant funding, and other endeavors.

Another work that deals with advocating for early childhood education is Rebecca J. Pruitt, Marie Ann Donovan, Nancy Latham, Catherine Main, Kathleen M. Sheridan, Elizabeth A. Sherwood, and Patricia Steinhaus’ “From Inaction to Action: How One State Formed a Grassroots Organization to Impact Early Childhood Teacher Preparation” (Ch. 4). This work points to the report *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth through Age 8: A Unifying Foundation* (2015) as “a blueprint for action to advance our

nation's early care and education workforce, with a set of recommendations directed to stakeholders at the local, state, and national levels" (p. 65). At heart is the well-being of children and families based on ethical and professional practices.

This work follows the work of the Illinois chapter of the National Association for Early Childhood Teacher Educators (ILAECTE). The organization has a core Commitment to the National Association for the Education of Young Children's Code of Ethical Conduct. Of concern is the broader "indifference to the need for providing quality, reliable early education for all children" and the resulting negative consequences on the profession and on the services for many years (Pruitt, Donovan, Latham, Main, Sheridan, Sherwood, & Steinhaus, 2020, p. 64). To advocate effectively for improvements to early childhood education, the authors here point to the importance of "a strong, collective voice of experts...to advocate for the critical and complex needs faced by the young children and families" of Illinois and beyond (p. 71). They also emphasize the importance of having a diverse early childhood education workforce (p. 72). There is advocacy for adjustments to the academic proficiency licensure regime for early childhood educators and the removal of potential barriers for new workers (p. 74). They propose expanding pathways into the field, perhaps through less formal paths of certification (p. 76). To be real, the authors note that the chapter was written in a time of postsecondary institutions "closing or reducing and consolidating ECE programs" (p. 78). They summarize various initiatives to advance in a time of budget cuts and belt tightening.

Educational Policy Advocacy

Annalee Good, May Hara, Gerald Dryer, and Jonathan Harper's "Teachers and Educational Policy Advocacy: Capacity, Agency, and Implications" (Ch. 5) suggests the importance of building in teacher capacity to advocate for various (unspecified) policies for societal good and the good of education. "Teacher capacity" is defined as "knowledge, skills, dispositions, and self-efficacy with respect to policy" (p. 94), and "policy advocacy" refers to their work towards "equitable systems change" per Dubetz and De Jong, 2011, as cited in Good, Hara, Dryer, & Harper, 2020, p. 94).

For the systematic review of the literature, based on search terms including "policy, agency, capacity, and *teacher as policy advocate*" (Good, Hara, Dryer, & Harper, 2020, p. 91), this team studied academic research into teacher capacity for policy influence, at local, state, and federal levels. They explored the contexts in which teachers become policy advocates. They describe "radical democracy" in which teachers collaborate with students, families, and communities, for policy change (p. 95). They point to the harnessing "experiential and applied learning" to help pre-service teachers build the skills for policy advocacy (p. 99). Teacher unions play an important role in "building teachers' knowledge, skills and networks around policy advocacy" (p. 100).

The co-authors suggest the importance for teachers to see themselves as "policy agents" and for the disciplines "to recognize policy and advocacy as part of teachers' professional practice" and for activist educators to connect with "advocacy-oriented practitioners" (Good, Hara, Dryer, & Harper, 2020, pp. 101-102). Indeed, they highlight the room for further research in this topic.

Raising Critical Consciousness

For others, critical consciousness is important for motivating teachers to work in urban cores, and both attracting and retaining them. Kim Pennington's "Developing Critically Conscious and Wide-Awake Teachers: Advocacy and Urban Educators" (Ch. 6) suggests a need for efforts to slow the flight of teachers from urban centers. This work describes the advocacy work of an organization in Oklahoma City to recruit and retain teachers. Of particular focus, the organization shifted its recruitment messaging to raise the "critical consciousness" of preservice teachers and teachers to the injustices of the world by promoting shared reading of books, inviting public speakers, and changing their marketing materials to raise awareness. They engaged with the larger community. The author writes:

In the last three years, our CPD sessions have focused on trauma informed schooling, emergent bilingual training (ESL/ELL), the legal rights of undocumented students and families and the challenges they face, statewide advocacy and educational policy, food insecurity in Oklahoma City neighborhoods, special education services and more. CPD (Community Planning and Development) situates our classrooms within the context of

structural and systemic inequities, which in turn helps teacher members develop a critical consciousness about their work. (Pennington, 2020, p. 121)

From this effort, they achieved various types of program success: increased teacher retention, higher teacher engagement in social issues, improved fund-raising, and heightened member interest. The organization also made alliances with other advocates in the larger society. The work of this group was enhanced with the teacher walkout of 2018 in the state. The hope is that the widespread teacher shortage in Oklahoma may be addressed constructively through various means.

Improving the Workday of Public School Teachers

Lawrence Baines, Coleen Baines, and Jennie Hanna's "Advocating for Change in the Workday of the Public-School Teacher in America" (Ch. 7) describes typical heavy workloads and high stress in the lives of public teachers and an ecosystem with "few legal protections" and often not even a livable wage (p. 133). This study suggests ways to advocate effectively for change including "building coalitions, gaining public support, strategically using social media, and engaging more purposefully and more directly in the political process" (p. 133). Even if teachers often enter into and stay in the profession based on altruism, they stand to benefit by speaking out about their work conditions and pressing for improvements.

Nationally, the various factors that affect a public teacher's workday such as "class size, required instructional time, extracurricular duties, school infrastructure, and support staff" vary widely (Baines, Baines, & Hanna, 2020, p. 136). Non-teaching responsibilities may include "recess, lunch, evening activities, sports, hallways (hall duty), before school, after school, bus area, parking lot, and monitoring the classes of absent teachers" (p. 137). A referenced study on teacher burnout points to the following contributing categories: "volume (too much to do in too little time), environment (poor facilities or inadequate resources), tedium (paperwork, obstructive bureaucracy), student (mis)behavior, administration (ineffective or antagonistic), and community relations (angry parents, high scrutiny)" (Rankin, 2017, as cited in Baines, Baines, & Hanna, 2020, p. 137). The pressures from standardized testing are a major reason for teacher stress and attrition. The coauthors cite various studies that show that dissatisfaction affects a majority of teachers in different regions.

To retain teachers, various funding increases, building maintenance, educational policies, leadership, and work practices may be applied to improve work conditions. Teachers should have reasonable breaks, for the bathroom, for lunch, and other needs. Livable wages may decrease some of the life pressures on teachers.

Eight suggestions were offered to teacher advocates:

1. Build a Network
2. Find Your Voice and Use it
3. Fight for Substantive Professional Development
4. Step up your Social Game
5. Learn to Play Well with Others
6. Know Your Limits
7. What Do You REALLY Want?
8. Don't Demand Without a Promise (Baines, Baines, & Hanna, 2020, pp. 146-148)

The advice seems powerful for socio-political empowerment.

Promoting Organizational Change in Schools

Schools are social organizations, and teachers can be powerful change agents within them, particularly if they are so empowered through teacher education. Teachers can identify problems and develop creative solutions while being aware of micropolitical aspects of their work and onboarding stakeholders in Wesley Henry's "Empowering Change Agents: Creating Organizational Change in Schools" (Ch. 8). This work suggests that a pedagogical strategy may benefit the building of capacity for change. To this end, the author describes an instructional design that systematizes organization change in a teacher preparation

master's program course on educational policy. With student-teachers working in place in schools, many have locales at which to apply the learning. This chapter offers a series of well-formed and well-reasoned "formative task" assignments towards achieving organizational change, starting with an analytical case narrative, then a stakeholder analysis, and then a culminating organizational change plan. This work suggests rich course readings from books and policy documents at the state and federal levels. There are well-designed activities and assignments. Supplemental activities are also offered. Ultimately, what student-teachers can achieve in their respective locations may be the ultimate assessment of the learning.

Pedagogies of Activism

Karen Embry-Jenlink and Amber Wagnon's "Learning to Advocate for the Profession: Pedagogies of Activism" (Ch. 9) asks what it is like to enact pedagogies of activism in educator preparation as teacher education faculty themselves engaged in political advocacy "at the state and federal levels while also preparing pre-service teachers as social agents who are equipped for activism" (p. 183). This work is comprised of four reflective self-authored / autobiographical narratives of their own experiences in this space, based on qualitative narrative inquiry. One person observed how few students were aware of who their legislators were. The learning involves, for some, identifying various systems of oppression, conducting research (both primary and secondary), designing a socio-political change strategy, and implementing it. One research participant observed the importance for legislators to hear a diversity of opinions (p. 197). Some of the narrations convey the excitement of engaging the system and coming out with some wins. One name-dropped a high profile and controversial legislator whom that individual met in the work of petitioning the Congress. Another lesson is the importance of talking but certainly also listening.

Principals Advocating for Positive Change

While teacher voices are important, those of the school principals are as well, in Christopher E. Trombly and David Griffith's "Leadership beyond the Schoolhouse: Preparing Principals to Engage in Advocacy" (Ch. 10). Here, advocacy is a "professional obligation" because they are seen to be "honest brokers" who focus on the needs of the children, their families, and the larger communities (p. 207). They have critical data at hand that may inform legislators. The co-authors of this work include a former principal and a senior director of government affairs for a professional association of educators; the two reflect a deep bench of expertise on the respective topics in this collection. They emphasize the importance of not seeing "politics" as a negative thing but as a necessary part of the democratic process that has to be engaged to enable positive change and social advancement (p. 209). Decision-making is a process that evolves with new information and voices, not a one-off discrete event (p. 210).

Based on their survey research, the coauthors found "policymakers at all levels of government are uniformly receptive to, and grateful for, input that is shared by school principals, whose unique position within the education system enables them to provide feedback that is at once specific and holistic" (Trombly & Griffith, 2020, p. 217). They warn against engagement in "partisan politics," which is specifically prohibited for those in public work and the executive branch (p. 219). Policymakers have to be made aware of policy effects in "housing, healthcare, nutrition, transportation, criminal justice, employment, job training, and childcare, in addition to education" (p. 221), for the well-being of children and the larger society.

First Amendment Considerations and Teacher Advocacy

School management may not take well to educators who engage in political advocacy and may engage in retaliation against staff. Those advocates who go to the First Amendment for cover may find that it only offers "tepid protection for educator expression," according to Phillip Buckley's "The First Amendment and Educator Advocacy" (Ch. 11). There are three relevant questions for the educator in this context: "Was the educator speaking as an employee or as a citizen? Was the educator speaking about a matter of public concern? And was the educator's expression overly disruptive or detrimental to the interests of the educator's employer (the school district)?" (p. 226) Specifically: If the educator spoke as a citizen about a matter of public concern, courts balance the educator's interest in the expression with the employer's interest in restricting that expression to determine if the expression is protected under the First Amendment" (p. 226). Those prior assertions in the abstract are then explicated in the body of the paper with analyses of various court cases. [This work brings to mind that if an issue makes it to court, given the many financial costs, time investments, and potentially negative headlines, the stakeholders may have

already lost.]

Empowered Graduate Students for Socio-Political Advocacy

Mary Barbara Trube and Tina Dawson's "Call to Advocacy: Expanding Graduate Students' Leader-Advocate Identities" (Ch. 12) expands the advocacy bandwagon to early childhood education graduate students. Here, advocacy is seen as part of the necessary leadership in the profession. The study here includes purposive sampling with 34 graduate students participating. The leadership identity framework is applied, with six LID stages: awareness, exploration/engagement, leader identified, leader differentiated, generativity, integration/synthesis" (p. 251). The co-researchers apply multi-cycle coding to the reflection papers of the learners to assess the state of the students' leader-advocate ideas. From the learning, students may internalize the advocacy and act from inner motivations to improve education. The higher stages are the "Leadership Differentiated" stage when students show "commitment, empowerment, courage, collaboration, and advocacy" (p. 253), "Generativity" stage when they show "both commitment to high ethical standards and promoting social justice and understanding of the need to model such commitment in order to expand positive change," and the highest level of "Integration/Synthesis" in which the persons achieve "leader-advocate identity" and show confidence in their ability to enact positive change towards social justice (p. 254).

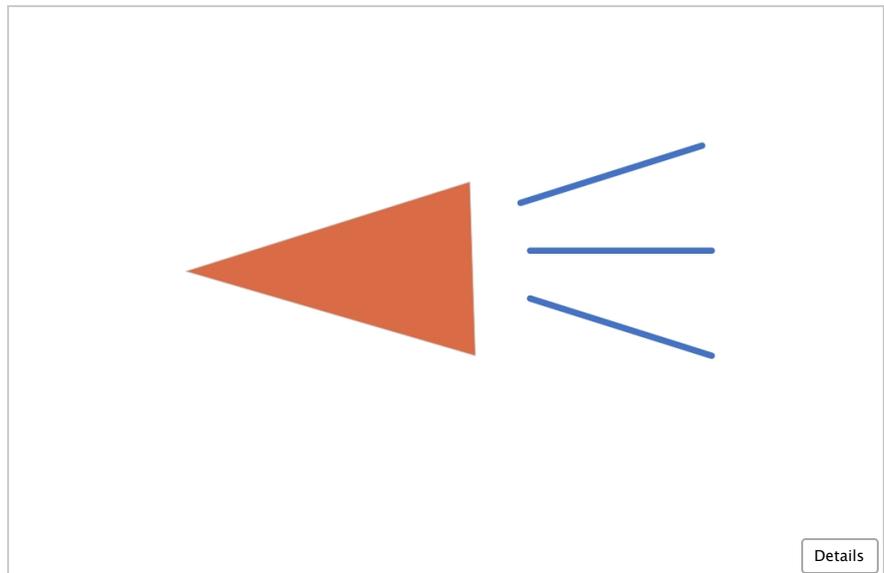
Following the analyses of the papers, the researchers conducted selected semi-structured interviews. These were conducted with "six students who completed the course 18 to 24 months prior to the interview and who were in the dissertation phase of their doctoral work" and showed comments in the Stages 4 – 6 levels (leadership differentiated, generativity, and integration/synthesis) (Trube & Dawson, 2020, p. 255). The researchers found that they had commitment to continuous learning and advocacy practices for the well-being of young learners.

An Ethnographic View of the 2018 Oklahoma Teacher Walkout

Keith Higa's "From Dust Storms to Tornadoes: The Climate of Education in Oklahoma, an Ethnographic View of the 2018 Oklahoma Teacher Walkout" (Ch. 13) brings in non-public K12 classroom teacher perspectives of this seminal walkout event to capture a broader community view. In this work, the author conducts his own auto-ethnographic explorations while also engaging 7 individuals (students, a café worker, a faculty member in higher education, an employee at a media company, and others) in the community about the then-contemporaneous events. He presents the framing of the walkout not as a single one-off incident but a culmination of "several years of lawmakers' ongoing policy changes, cuts and reallocation of funds, and the seeming indifference towards public education—all of which de-professionalized, devalued, and dismissed teachers' voices" (p. 274). One point of contention is the prevalent nationwide "accountability reform" in schools, with some metanarratives seeding "images of an unqualified and unprepared teacher" and moving towards the instantiating of "high stakes teacher performance assessments" (p. 276). The accountability push may provide a "misguided understanding about the profession, i.e., that good teaching can be categorized and quantified" (p. 277).

Figure 3. Bullhorn

Bullhorn



The researcher's interviews capture a "person on the street" sensibility, with unique voices, lived experiences, and engaging narratives. One saw legislators as being "bullying" in their approach towards educators (Higa, 2020, p. 284), thus sparking the mass teacher walkout. Not only are there comments IRL but also in the virtual. On social media, there were polarized comments about the walkouts, with some surprise suggestions for the community to just home school their children and lessen the need for public education (p. 293). Certainly, in any large population, there will be a range of opinions on current events.

Leaving Teaching...to Serve as the Local Union Representative

Holly Magaditsch's "Advocacy through Attrition: Educators Who Step Away from the Classroom to Serve as Local Union Representatives" (Ch. 14) focuses on three teachers who left their teaching profession to become union representatives. This work offers a history of unionization in education. For all the important work of unions, they are not yet seen as sufficiently powerful to improve working conditions sufficiently to curb attrition from the teaching field. All three had similar reasons for transitioning to union work:

All participants noted a discrepancy in perceived working conditions versus actual working conditions. Essentially, educators noted a lack of support (Emotional, Instrumental, Informational, or Appraisal) existed in their professional life. The working conditions in their current assignment were less than satisfactory. As a result, the educators pursued union work to not only fill a personal professional void they were experiencing, but also to aid in the satisfaction of the working environment and climate of their members that they represent. (Magaditsch, 2020, p. 317)

All also found positions as union representatives as "very flexible and fluid" (Magaditsch, 2020, p. 318). Union representatives engage in a range of work including attending different conferences, filing grievances, conducting mediations, serving on committees, holding meetings, solving problems, membership recruitment, and other efforts (p. 319), with differing roles based on whether the work is local or national. When mediating, the union representatives strive to create win-wins between the union membership and other parties (p. 321).

Parent Voices in Special Education Advocacy

Parents are so important for children, and especially so for those with special needs. Terese C. Aceves and Symoné Pinedo's "Special Education Advocacy: Diverse Parents Making a Difference" (Ch. 15) describes the cases of two individuals who went through a year-long "special education advocacy" parent training

program that educated parents on “key areas of special education and parent advocacy” (2020, p. 329). Parents of children with special needs play an important part in the Individualized Education Program (IEP); they “must consent to initial and re-evaluations to determine the appropriateness of services, supports, and placement recommendations” (p. 332). Culturally and linguistically diverse families with children in special education may have challenges understanding their rights and responsibilities (p. 333). They may be more hesitant to exercise parental rights on behalf of their child because of this lack of information and knowledge. Both parents of this study are mothers and do not have English as their main language. Both became more sophisticated in their knowledge about the educational system and activist about the specialized education provided to their children over the span of the year-long program.

Conclusion

Those who take on the myriad challenges of teaching are informed by, perhaps, idealist streaks and values. They can imagine a better world beyond the status quo and do not defend the present unthinkingly or uncritically. Many teachers play larger roles in their communities and engage socially and politically. They focus on ways to move society forward and to better the lives of people. Their positions are important ones socially, and they do not come with silencing although what teachers do on their own time does come under broad scrutiny and awareness. Teachers are people, and they have to be able to live with themselves and their actions and their advocacy. (This includes teachers who offer “secret” podcasts that promote antisocial values.)

Advocacy in Education: Research-Based Strategies for Teachers, Administrators, and Teacher Educators, edited by Elizabeth Ethridge, Jill M. Davis, Christian Winterbottom, and Amber H. Beisly, asks important questions about what issues are critical in the K12 education space and how to achieve better ends for teachers and learners, and the larger society. This collection also shows the importance of teachers recruiting allies to the issues, so as to achieve better outcomes.

About the Author

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