

**Research Issues in Contemporary Education (RICE) Special Issue**  
**Navigating Complexity and Seizing Opportunity Amid COVID-19:**  
**Lessons Learned and Implications for Practice**

**Foreword**

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The onset of the 2020 COVID-19 global pandemic and associated stay-at-home orders abruptly turned our worlds from bustling to practically apocalyptic. By Spring 2020, it was rather obvious that the COVID-19 virus outwitted the best of our science and thus became scientifically uncontrollable. Science is indeed persistent but even our most scientifically elite needed an indefinite amount of time to develop a vaccine capable of eradicating COVID-19. In the interim, human behavior was identified as the strongest defense against the rapid dispersion of the virus. Physical and social distancing, face-mask wearing, frequent hand-washing, and frequent use of hand sanitizer all become requisites for curbing the spread of the virus. Those collective efforts contributed to slowing the virus' spread but unfortunately, by Fall 2020, the US had cumulatively tallied over 14 million positive cases and 270,000 deaths from COVID-19.

As the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated restrictions morphed into prolonged uncertainty, patience waned and skepticism surged. In addition to grappling with the pandemic, Americans were also coping with a racial reckoning centered on years of social injustice and a presidential election filled with contentiousness. In the midst of the pandemic, America was in a perfect storm of divisiveness and no entity, including K-12 schools and higher education, were exempt from its wrath.

Regardless, higher education and K-12 school systems were among the first large group entities to prioritize health and humanity above all else during the Spring 2020 COVID-19 global pandemic. Nationwide, K-12 public schools closed weeks ahead of schedule and universities resorted to teaching classes remotely for the final weeks of the semester. This necessary disruption of both university and K-12 teaching and learning presented educators with a plethora of dilemmas. The spectrum of qualms ranged from curriculum and instruction to social/emotional needs of K-16 students, teachers, administrators, and faculty.

This special issue serves as a vehicle through which educators (broadly defined) reflected on ways in which they navigated complexities and seized unexpected opportunities during COVID-19's impromptu hiatus. Starr (2020) pointed out that very few (if any) educators had formal classes or curriculum to appropriately prepare us for the colossal COVID-19 pandemic situation. Therefore, we will draw upon the work and experiences of scholars and practitioners who can offer the kind of efficacious practices that are likely to provide direction through this uncharted space (Rebora, Thiers, Laskowski, McKibben, 2020).

This issue speaks to challenges, opportunities, and lived experiences of educators as they managed the complexity of K-16 teaching and learning outside of the authentic classroom contexts they expected (Aries, 2020). The range of topics for this issue include the lived experiences of international students during the pandemic, social deprivation, dialogic teaching remotely, teaching science and mathematics in a virtual camp, the role of instructional coaches during the pandemic, remotely teaching middle school during the pandemic, and literacy instruction during the pandemic. It is hoped that this collection will provide readers with inspiration, guidance, and strategies for negotiating what many believe to be the "new normal" for educators.

### References

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