

# New Ways to Think and Learn with Metacognition



# New Ways to Think and Learn with Metacognition

Edited by

Pamela R. Cook and  
Judith McConnell Mikkelsen

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## PREFACE

### “ENHANCING METACOGNITION FOR OUR DIVERSE WORLD”

FAWZIA REZA

Metacognition refers to understanding and monitoring your thoughts, developing greater awareness of why you take certain actions, and critically identifying areas of improvement. This approach creates a higher level of reasoning allowing individuals to better understand why they make certain decisions. Metacognitive skills develop reasoning, and provide an avenue to plan, monitor, and evaluate thinking and learning. John Flavell is credited for introducing the concept of metacognition. “In any kind of cognitive transaction with the human or non-human environment, a variety of information processing activities may go on. Metacognition refers, among other things, to the active monitoring and consequent regulation and orchestration of these processes in relation to the cognitive objects or data on which they bear, usually in service of some concrete goal or objective.” (p.232).

Effective metacognition skills are relevant across all disciplines. With increasing diversity, these skills have become especially important for educators. For example, teachers should deliberately utilize a deliberate cognitive approach to understand ever-evolving educational content (Mcmahon & Luca, 2006). Borkowski and Muthukrishna (1992) have opined that metacognitive theory has significant potential to assist teachers to create a classroom that is based on strategic learning opportunities. Research demonstrates there is a positive correlation between metacognition and academic success. For example, Georghiades (2000) conducted an experiment by dividing primary school children into control and experimental groups, wherein they were taught a science class for over a five-week period. While the control group did not receive any metacognitive prompts, the experimental group utilized leveraged metacognitive activities to enhance learning. Results demonstrated that students from the experimental group who



received metacognitive instruction showed significant improvements in these science performance.

Employing metacognitive approaches within teaching pedagogies can assist educators to develop skills necessary to navigate complex cultural dynamics within the educational systems. This is extremely important when working with diverse groups of students who have unique and special backgrounds. Providing equal space and opportunities for everyone requires teachers to develop self-awareness and think critically and sensitively. For example, based on a nuanced intersectionality of metacognition and accessibility, they can navigate the intricate corridors of cognition alongside our deaf and hard of hearing students, encouraging opportunities to ensure equitable access to education.

Metacognitive tools can also assist teachers to develop self-awareness and critical thinking such that all students feel welcomed and included. They facilitate clear and measurable goals to address and mitigate biases and foster a climate of inclusivity that respects and represents diverse students. Cultural metacognition enables a growth mindset through intentional monitoring of thought processes, to adapt, learn, and develop cultural competence. Many people make assumptions based on their own perspectives or values about someone's culture, which might be different from theirs, and this can create dissonance and intolerance. Such *ad hoc* judgements can be harmful if the goal is to create harmony and trust. These stereotypes can interfere with clear judgement and can sometimes cause prejudice. Demystifying why and how these attitudes occur can help people to understand and resolve expectation bias and can create greater opportunities to work with diverse people.

Consider two myths regarding minorities. Asian students are part of a model minority, they are smart and always get good grades. While many Asian students are certainly intelligent and hardworking, not every student who is also an Asian, fits into this stereotype and some feel isolated and even alienated if they do not perform up to expectations. In contrast, relatively few African Americans are encouraged to take advanced STEM courses, especially female African Americans. Effective metacognitive skills allow educators to understand the issue or the challenge, question their own assumptions and biases about their students, and critically reflect whether they contribute in some manner to why some students might feel marginalized or disconnected. They allow educators to hold up the mirror to themselves and reflect (see) truthfully on how the exclusion of certain minorities (whether implicit or explicit) within the curriculum and or their teaching practices can result in failure or lack of motivation for some

students, thereby providing them an opportunity to self-monitor biases and address their shortcomings.

Metacognitive knowledge can also assist students to learn and understand information based on facts which are not heavily influenced by stereotypical inaccuracies. It highlights the significance of self-awareness and understanding towards people from different cultures. If careful evaluation and monitoring is not practiced, the chances of accepting assumptions becomes a habit. On the other hand, with persistent monitoring and evaluation of thought processes, collaboration and trust is enhanced. Pausing to reflect and question ourselves regarding our own cognitive biases and considering that perhaps we are not considering other factors adequately can help hone metacognition skills.

Often students are taught in teacher-centric classrooms which does not allow them to develop into independent thinkers. Learning outcomes might be improved if they are provided a student-centric environment where there are greater opportunities for group projects and collaboration. For example, students within each group might be asked to share their questions (if they have any) with their fellow colleagues to see if they can understand a concept or are happy with the response their colleague provided, before reaching out to the teacher. Students who effectively apply metacognitive strategies might be able to better reflect on responses from their fellow students to adjust their thinking and analysis. This promotes a holistic educational experience, which is consistent with the Hebridean educational methods that value and emphasize collective voices and greater collaboration and leads to a dynamic and supportive learning environment.

When used regularly, metacognition skills can serve as a powerful tool for empowering students from marginalized backgrounds to feel connected, valued, and represented leading to greater student success and a transformational educational experience. A challenge that new and veteran teachers sometimes face when evaluating whether their students are developing metacognition skills is how to gauge their students understanding of their own learning process. Activities such as *Think Pair Share* wherein the student shares their thinking aloud with their peers, and then shares with the classroom can help both teachers and students think about the thinking process and develop greater metacognitive skills. Metacognition can help educators become more culturally competent practitioners who are better equipped to meet the needs of their diverse students and foster an inclusive and equitable learning environment. It serves as a broad framework for

educators to develop self-awareness, critical reflection skills, reflection, and empathy to effectively work with their diverse student body. Metacognition and reflection have an alliance, a symbiotic relationship.

Developing metacognitive skills does not require significant capital resources or time, only a genuine desire to help students develop more effectively. Activities such as group projects, discussed above, which allow students to interact with diverse groups where they explore why certain approach or presentation models might be best suited for a particular learning concept. Such opportunities allow students to think about thinking and become self-aware of their thought processes and at the same time understand the processes of others who might be different from them. For example, Montessori methodology encourages children to be independent learners and has developed educational materials which have a built-in control of error or an inherent mechanism for error detection so that children could work with materials at their own pace and without adult assistance and intervention. Reflective journals can also enhance metacognition skills as students become aware of what worked for them during a project, what challenges they overcame, and how they would execute the project if given a second chance. Margaret Mead’s quote summarizes this concept beautifully, “Children must be taught how to think, not what to think.”

Morris (2012) shared a study which aimed to test whether higher cultural metacognition can lead to successful collaborations across cultures. Two hundred and thirty-six students were asked to participate in a study where they were shown ingredients utilized in different cuisines around the world and asked to create a recipe for a unique chicken dish. After they successfully completed this task, they were paired with someone from a different background and were asked to collaborate with them and create a recipe that neither of them had created previously. Students with a higher level of metacognition collaborated more effectively and created a unique recipe combining tastes and approaches from both cultures, demonstrating that metacognition skills can foster trusting relationships and better outcomes.

During adolescence, young adults are better able to manage self-regulated learning (SRL). However, SRL can further improve with metacognitive monitoring and reflection. Although individuals require intrinsic motivation for success, external stimuli, including communications and interactions with others can further enhance metacognitive skills. Parents are the first teachers of their children and, therefore, play a critical role in their development throughout their educational trajectory. A Spanish study

examined the role of metacognition in the relation between parent involvement and academic success and included 1,398 high school students, out of which 47% were females and 53% were males. Results demonstrated that metacognitive strategies were an important mediator for parental involvement and even during adolescent years, parent involvement played a critical role in the development of their children (Veas, et al., 2019)

Many of us are susceptible to a bandwagon effect, wherein we follow behaviors, styles, or attitudes of the majority without giving much thought to whether these are correct. Effective metacognitive skills allow us to develop awareness of our biases, understand and develop the uniqueness of each culture, and learn to un-learn our biases to work cooperatively. One strategy to improve metacognition is to actively become exposed to diverse literature, which will provide an opportunity to develop an appreciation of other cultures. Another example related to considering alternate solutions is well illustrated by the video, *The Broken Escalator*. Two people are on an escalator which stops abruptly. Instead of trying to resolve the issue, both start to scream for help. However, if they had collaborated, one of them might have realized that they could just walk up (or down) the escalator. This simple example demonstrates how it is often possible to discover innovative ways to work through our challenges creating positive and collaborative team results by deliberately thinking through options and considering alternate viewpoints.

Although this Preface has primarily focused on educators and students, metacognition is equally relevant across many other disciplines. For example, successful tap dancers utilize a metacognitive skillset to enhance their performance. They can break down complex steps into smaller chunks, assess their progress, identify areas where they need more work, adjust, and improve their performance. Metacognition skills are also relevant in the performing arts since in movies and television performers engage in dramatic enactments to harness the power of the entertainment medium and unravel complexities. Consider a performance wherein the performer portrays someone marooned on a desert island. An effective performance allows the audience to vividly experience what someone might feel under these circumstances and become vested into possible avenues of escape. Metacognitive skills are even relevant when playing board games. For example, in the popular game *Monopoly*, players make decisions throughout the game to buy and trade properties to become successful and wealthy. The best players continuously leverage their metacognitive skills to determine the best strategy at every move.

This book includes a variety of perspectives regarding metacognition from scholars living all over the world, each chapter highlighting unique insights and experiences to this discourse. Collectively, the chapters navigate a wide range of topics related to metacognition, transcending geographical boundaries and cultural divides, with concrete examples on how to achieve cognitive mastery.

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# FOREWORD

JUDITH McCONNELL MIKKELSON

## **“Thinking about Thinking: New Ways to Think and Learn with Metacognition”**

“I cannot teach anybody anything. I can only make them think”

Socrates (470-399 BC) (Kirov, B., 2015, 23)

*New Ways to Think and Learn with Metacognition* marries a powerful reckoning of 33 contributing authors from the countries of Belize, Canada, England, Malaysia, Russia, Scotland, and the United States of America. Eighteen chapters comprise topics related to metacognition such as, its interconnectedness with children’s thinking and learning as evident in the Montessori Method; the lives of culturally and linguistically diverse students; to its role in drama, dance, and television programs including its role in epistemic trust in educational pedagogy; and, as a bridge to those who are deaf and hard of hearing. Metacognition is everywhere; one can see it, feel it, hear it, move with it, and if given the opportunity taste the success of metacognition.

Kirov, B. 2015. *Socrates Quotes & Facts*. Monce, IL.

## EDITORS' BIOGRAPHIES

**Pamela R. Cook**, Ph.D. earned a double degree in Bible and Early Childhood Education, Fort Wayne Bible College, Indiana; an M.A. in Education, Indiana Wesleyan University; and a Ph.D. in Child Development and Educational Studies from the University of Windsor, Canada. In Indiana she was an early childhood education classroom teacher for years and later served as an adjunct education professor at Indiana University, Indiana Wesleyan University, Washburn University, and Ivy Tech Community College. Dr. Cook was an active professional. She was the author of 5 books on early childhood education one of which was published in hard back and paper back, wrote numerous articles and chapters in books, and served as a consultant for Montessori and Reggio Emilia focused schools. She was an international conferences presenter. For 14 years she was the developer and director of the *Belizean International Symposium on Education*, a gathering of international professionals dedicated to the welfare of the teachers and children of Belize, Central America. Twice she hosted a similar international symposium in Puerto Rico, a territory of the United States of America. Dr. Cook continued her commitment to the betterment of global education at the *International Round Table Symposium*, Oxford University, England, where she was a recurring delegate 12 times during the past 20 years. Dr. Cook unexpectedly died on February 18, 2024 in Michigan, USA. Upon her death, portions of the chapter titled, “The Montessori Method Links to Metacognition”, in this book were the last of her unpublished writings.

**Judith McConnell Mikkelsen**, Ed.D. is an Emeritus Professor of Education at Washburn University, Topeka, Kansas, and the Coordinator/Facilitator of the *International Round Table Symposium* at Oxford University, Oxford, England. She earned a B.S. in Elementary Education at the University of Kansas, a M.Ed. in Elementary Education at the University of Virginia, and at Teachers College, Columbia University she received a M.Ed. and Ed.D. in Early Childhood Education. Dr. Mikkelsen was a preschool teacher and a kindergarten, first grade, and second grade teacher in Kansas and Virginia for 10 years. She has been a professor in higher education at the City University of New York, New York City; William Paterson State University, New Jersey; Emporia State University, Kansas;

and at Washburn University, Kansas. Administratively in Kansas, she has served as a university's Chair of the Division of Early Childhood and Temporary Chair of a university's department of education. At Washburn University she directed the CDA Program in Early Childhood Education, the B.A. Program in Early Childhood Education, and the B.A. Program in Early Childhood Education for the Elementary Education Program. While at Washburn University she developed and led 20 university student study abroad programs to the following locations: Belize, Central America; Jamaica, West Indies; and, in Europe, to England and France. She is the Facilitator of 56, four-day *Oxford Round Table Symposiums* at Oxford University, England, which she currently continues as a Coordinator and Facilitator. As a faculty member of *People to People International* she led groups of North American educators to China (twice), Cuba, the Czech Republic, Spain, and Russia. She is the Immediate Past President of the *USA Organisation Mondiale pour L'Education Prescolaire (World Organization for Early Childhood Education, OMEP-USA)* and has presented more than two hundred international conference papers. Dr. Mikkelson is co-editor of the book, *Teacher Renewal: Professional Issues and Personal Choices*, Teachers College Press, NYC, USA and the editor of the following three books for Linton Atlantic Books, Urbana, IL, USA: *The Education of Young Children: Research and Public Policy*; *Adventures, Fantasy and Dreams in Children's Literature*; and the *World of Children: Perceptions, Connections and Sustainability during the Pandemic*. She is a Board Member of the *Missouri Policy Journal*, USA; the *Belizean International Symposium on Education*, Belize, Central America; Board Member of the *Institute of Global Harmony (HFH)*, Sardarshahar, Rajasthan, India; Advisor of the *Nepal Education Support Trust USA (NESTUSA)*; and, Oversees Program Advisor and Board Member of the *Association for Childhood Education Practitioners, Nigeria (ACEP)*, Africa. She is a Gold Award Girl Scout and received the J.L. Jones Award for Service to Children.



## BOOK CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS' BIOGRAPHIES

**Nahed Abdelrahman**, Ph.D., is the Assistant Director of Assessment and Evaluation at the College of Education and Human Development at Texas A&M University. Dr. Abdelrahman holds a Ph.D. in Educational Administration. Her research focuses on education policy, women's leadership, and principal preparation. She was a Barbara Jackson Scholar (2015-2017). Dr. Abdelrahman has authored numerous publications on topics such as mentoring, educational leadership, and policy analysis. She has co-edited several books on mentoring, including the Wiley Handbook of Mentoring and Women of Color in STEM. She has presented at prestigious national and international conferences like AERA, UCEA, and ICPEL. She is an editor for several journals, including *Advancing Women in Leadership*, *Educational Law and Policy Briefs*, *Dual Language Research and Practice*, and the *Mentoring and Tutoring Journal*.

**Shenette Alexander** has been the coordinator for the *Oxford Round Table Symposiums* for over thirty years. She plays a key role in organizing and facilitating high-level discussions on global educational issues. With a background in educational administration and event management, Shenette enjoys bringing together scholars, practitioners, and policymakers to address pressing topics in education. Her expertise in logistics and program development ensures the smooth execution of these education symposiums. Her work at the *Oxford Round Table Symposiums* reflects her dedication to enhancing education around the world.

**F. King Alexander** is a distinguished leader in higher education. With a career spanning over three decades, he has held President roles at Murray State University, California State University-Long Beach, Louisiana State University, and Oregon State University. Dr. Alexander is recognized for his commitment to enhancing student success, promoting diversity, and strengthening community partnerships. His visionary leadership continues to shape the future of higher education and inspire positive change within universities and the education sector.

**Alberto Luis August**, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor and Director of Undergraduate Studies with the School of Education at the University of Nottingham, Malaysia. He is the founder and owner of La Isla Carinosa Academy, a private and international preschool and primary school located in the country of Belize. For 3 years, he served as the Dean of the School of Education at Galen University. For 4 years, he carried out the role of Assistant Professor and the National Coordinator for the Teachers' Field Experience at the University of Belize. He holds a Doctor of Education degree in Educational Leadership from the University of North Florida. He has over 30 years of teaching-learning-research experience at the preschool, primary, secondary, and tertiary level of education.

**Ana I. Berdecia**, M.Ed., and Certified Coach, is the director of the Center for the Positive Development of Urban Children at the John S. Watson Institute for Urban Policy and Research at Kean University, New Jersey. Throughout her career, Ana has worked in early childhood education, higher education, and leadership. For the last 19 years, Ana has taught and worked in educational public policy and culturally responsive pedagogy research. She has written extensively on culturally responsive practices and designed a mentoring program to develop teacher's cultural competence. Ana earned a master's in education with a concentration in early childhood and a BA in Sociology from The College of New Jersey. Ana owns a private training and coaching company, Potential Pathways, LLC., and is a published faith-based author.

**Lauren Bruna** holds a Bachelor of Science in Life Sciences from Kansas State University's College of Arts and Sciences and is pursuing a degree in Occupational Therapy at the University of Kansas Medical Center. As an undergraduate researcher for the Tap To Togetherness Across Populations organization she explore the intersection of dance and therapeutic practices and to contribute significantly to the field. Her commitment and insights were presented at the International Education Symposium in Puerto Rico in 2023 where she shared her findings and experiences with an international audience, highlighting the program's impact on community health and cohesion. Lauren serves as a board member and the social media specialist for the Tap To Togetherness Across Populations organization.

**Suzanne Carroll** is a Lecturer in Hospitality and Events from City of Glasgow College in Scotland, UK. After a career in hospitality management and airline services, Suzanne transitioned into teaching following completion of a teaching qualification in Further Education at the University

of Stirling and has been lecturing for over four years. Experiencing first-hand the diverse learning needs of students in a digital age motivated Suzanne to complete a Master's Degree in Digital Pedagogy at the University of the Highlands and Islands. This book chapter relays findings from Suzanne's dissertation project, from which she earned distinction for the quality of her research and reflection on contemporary educational challenges.

**Priscilla Brown Castillo**, Ph.D. is the former Dean and Department Chair of the Faculty of Education and Arts at the University of Belize, has had a distinguished career. She started as an elementary school teacher in 1987 and later became a curriculum coordinator at the Ministry of Education, significantly contributing to Belize's National Competency-Based Curriculum Initiative. Dr. Brown Castillo holds a Master's in Secondary Education and a Doctorate in Assessment. She is internationally recognized for her research and serves as the Dean of Academics at the National Police Training Academy in Belize. Her focus is on improving the quality of law enforcement officers and developing educational resources to raise awareness among youths and young children about the dangers of gang-related activities.

**Joseph A. Cernik** (PhD, New York University). He is the Editor of the Missouri Policy Journal and writes a twice-monthly political column called American Eclectic on Substack. In addition, he is an Adjunct Professor of Business & International Relations at Webster University. His publications cover a range of issues from nuclear strategy to health care reform, to Negro League baseball. Some of his publications can be found in *The Artifice*, *Social Science Research Network*, *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, and *The St. Louis Journalism Review*. In addition, to chapters in eight books, he co-edited and contributed to *The Reagan Years: Perspectives and Assessments*. For eighteen years, he was a regular political analyst for two television stations in St. Louis, Missouri.

**Michael Tuan-Khang Dang**, Ed.D. is a seasoned educational leader with a comprehensive background in school administration, instruction, curriculum development, and professional development. A graduate from the University of Texas at Austin, Dr. Dang has dedicated his career to enhancing educational outcomes across various school districts, including Dallas Independent School District, Garland Independent School District and Faith Family Academy, Texas. Michael is known for his strategic oversight and commitment to fostering academic excellence and leadership

in both students and faculty. His work emphasizes data-driven decision-making, collaborative leadership, and community engagement, making substantial impacts on educational standards and student success.

**Mary Schmidt Duncan**, PhD, an esteemed educator with over three decades of experience, holds a Doctoral Degree in Education with an emphasis in Early Childhood, alongside a Master of Arts in Teaching. Driven by a passion for educational empowerment, she excels in inspiring learners of all ages and abilities. Graduating with Honors from an International PhD Program, Dr. Duncan is a published author and a distinguished member of Who's Who in America and Marquis Who's Who Humanitarians. As a former Chair of a State-Level Early Childhood Council in Kansas, she advocated tirelessly for children's needs, even testifying for increased funding. Dr. Duncan's expertise extends globally, having presented research at prestigious conferences worldwide and led workshops on Social Emotional Development, Mathematics, and Science in Early Childhood. As an independent advocate and consultant, she continues to shape early childhood education through innovative training programs and workshops.

**Maria Erykina**, candidate degree in pedagogy, senior lecturer at FL Department, National Research University Higher School of Economics, Moscow, Russia; singer, author of educational videos and articles on benefits of singing in the classroom; coauthor of audiobooks with educational songs.

**Nora J. Fabela**, M.Ed., is a visionary leader in education, serving as the Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources and Professional Development at Faith Family Academy, Texas. With a robust background in education administration, she orchestrates strategic human resources management and professional development initiatives aligned with organizational goals. Nora's expertise spans developing performance evaluation systems, overseeing professional development programs, and ensuring compliance with legal standards. She is also the co-founder of EL Saber Enterprises Inc., which aims to improve instruction for emergent bilinguals. She spearheads the creative and publishing process of instructional resources, as well as providing professional learning that supports across various educational levels.

**Melissa P. Garcia** currently holds a Ph.D. and is a Clinical Assistant Professor at Baylor University in the Online Graduate Communication

Sciences & Disorders program. She is an active member of the Texas Speech-Language-Hearing Association, American Speech-Language-Hearing Association and International Association of Communication Sciences and Disorders. She has presented her research at the state, national and international levels. Most recently, she presented at The University of Oxford, OMEP Peru and IALP World Congress in Auckland, New Zealand. Editorial contributions include *Teaching and Research During a Pandemic*, (March 2021), *Educational Trends V4: Diverse Learning in 2020 and Beyond*; *Examining Intercultural Competence in Students Participating in International Service-Learning*, (2019), (V3, 90-114); and *International Service-Learning in Belize*, *Discovering New Educational Trends V3 A Symposium in Belize, Central America*, (V3, 358-368).

**Tonie Garza**, M.Ed., is a distinguished educator and leader with a deep commitment to Dual Language and ESL education. With a career starting as a bilingual teacher and progressing to significant leadership roles, Tonie has dedicated her expertise to enhancing educational outcomes for emergent bilinguals. As the Assistant Superintendent of Community Outreach and District Initiatives at Faith Family Academy in Texas, she has pioneered comprehensive marketing, communication strategies, and educational initiatives that align with district goals, including the significant expansion of Dual Language/ESL Programs. Her work extends beyond traditional education settings, as she co-founded EL Saber Enterprises Inc., aiming to improve instruction for emergent bilinguals through creating and publishing instructional resources, and providing professional learning that supports across various educational levels.

**Anoop Gupta** is social scientist and philosopher instructing in the Faculty of Education, where he is an Adjunct Associate Professor, and Department of Psychology at the University of Windsor, Canada. His research spans several areas: Reason and rationality in human existence, embodiment in the cognitive sciences, and a cultural philosophy of life—he constructs his ideas about the world based on studies of it, archival research, and his experiences. Gupta is the author of: *Kierkegaard's Romantic Legacy: Two Theories of the Self* (University of Ottawa Press, 2005), *A Common Link: Meaning-Making in Algebra and the Visual Arts* (AV Akademikerverlag GmbH & Co. KG, 2012), *Heidegger and Moral Realism* (Pickwick, 2015), and articles across disciplines and in several countries. He obtained a doctorate in Educational Studies from the University of Windsor and earned a PhD in Philosophy from the University of Ottawa.

**Katherine Sheppard Huskey**, M.S. received an B.S. in Elementary Education, specialty in Early Childhood Education from the University of Kansas and a M.S. in Curriculum and Supervision at Emporia State University, Kansas. She taught kindergarten through fifth grade for 35 years in Ft. Leavenworth and Leavenworth, Kansas. Katherine taught a Social Studies Methods course for non-traditional students for 3 semesters at the University of Saint Mary's, Leavenworth, Kansas. She was a participant in the Washburn University Student Study Abroad Program in 2018-2019. Katherine is a mentor to students at Basehor Linwood Schools (K-12), Basehor, Kansas since 2014 and continues to mentor there to this day.

**Beverly J. Irby**, Regents Professor, Department of Educational Administration and Human Resource Development, serves as Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and the Marilyn Kent Byrnes Endowed Chair for Student Success in the College of Education and Human Development at Texas A&M University. She is Director of the Educational Leadership Research Center and Co-Director of the Center of Research and Development in Dual Language and Literacy Acquisition. Her transformational contribution, grounded in the rethinking of theory, is the first published leadership theory of the 21st Century, *The Synergistic Leadership Theory*. It was the first leadership theory *purposefully to include female voices*, has been validated, with diverse leaders in various positions, across ethnicities and internationally. Additionally, she is noted as the developer of The Reflection Cycle.

**Jean D. Kirshner**, Ph.D., is a professor of Education at the University of Northern Colorado. Dr. Kirshner began an education exchange between classroom teachers in Belize and Colorado through a non-profit, Belize Education Project in 2008, and continues her work in Belizean classrooms. She was also a classroom teacher for Colorado public schools for 27 years. In addition to multiple journal articles and chapters, Dr. Kirshner published her first book which chronicles her work with Belizean educators, *Decolonizing Transcultural Teacher Education through Participatory Action Research: Dialogue, Culture, and Identity* (Routledge, 2022). Her second book, which is in production, discusses global connections and democratic principles in the classroom, *Teaching Social Studies in the Early Childhood Classroom: Nurturing Democratic and Global Citizens*, (Bloomsbury, 2025).

**Julia Kuzmenkova**, doctor of cultural studies, professor at FL Department, National Research University Higher School of Economics, Moscow,

Russia; author of over 150 works including monographs, course books, articles, poems, translations (both literary and scientific); coauthor of books for children and audiobooks with songs and plays for (young and not only young) learners engaged in ELT educational theatre drama activities.

**Christine Kyser**, Ed.D. Is an associate professor of Teacher Education at the University of Northern Colorado where she teaches graduate and undergraduate courses in reading methods, children's literature, and multiliteracies. Her passion for literacy stems on her extensive elementary teaching and coaching experiences in Florida and Colorado. She began traveling with the Belize Education Project (BEP) in 2022, fell in love with the amazing teachers and students, and joined the board of BEP in 2024.

**Rafael Lara-Alecio**, Ph.D. is a Texas A&M University System Regents Professor and Director of the Center for Research & Development in Dual Language & Literacy Acquisition. He earned his doctorate in Educational Psychology from the University of Utah and has served as a math teacher, professor, and university president in Guatemala. Dr. Lara-Alecio's contributions to bilingual education include the influential Four-Dimensional Bilingual Pedagogical Theory and Model. He has authored or co-authored over 175 refereed publications and secured more than \$121 million in external funding. He has received numerous University awards in research, teaching, service, and mentoring. His primary research areas are assessment, evaluation, and bilingual content area instruction.

**Betty Liebovich**, Ed.D. is a Senior Lecturer and early childhood education specialist and coordinator of early years study in the Educational Studies department at Goldsmiths University of London, England. She received her Ed.D. in Curriculum and Instruction—Early Childhood from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Betty has taught children of various age groups in Wisconsin and Illinois. She has presented her scholarly work worldwide and has multiple publications in the area of early childhood education, early childhood teacher education, the history of early childhood education and Margaret McMillan and the open-air nursery. Currently, Betty is involved in research about student teachers' perceptions of a play-based curriculum and the impact culture has on their perceptions with colleagues in Australia and Turkey.

**Pamela Malone**, Ph.D. is a speaker, educator, author, entrepreneur, business professional, and advocate. Her career includes experiences in public and private sectors, particularly in the areas of leadership, strategy,

engagement, training/education, and innovation. She is currently Dean of Teaching, Learning and Academic Support at Ivy Tech Community College. Pamela serves local, national, and international organizations, and supports stakeholders working together to find ethical solutions for real-world challenges. She passionately promotes the intentional, ethical development of people, processes, and products and services for individual and organizational excellence.

**Mollie Jo Purcell Mozley**, Ed.D., is an accomplished and visionary education professional with an extensive background in school administration, special education, and bilingual instruction. She has significantly transformed educational institutions through leadership roles, most notably as Superintendent of Faith Family Academy Charter Schools, where she led the district from an unacceptable academic standing to an A-rated district. With a strong foundation in education, holding degrees from The University of Texas at Austin and Texas Woman's University, Dr. Purcell Mozley's career spans roles from teacher to superintendent. Her visionary leadership has transformed Faith Family Academy into a place where children thrive inside and outside the classroom that are recognized across the United States. This highlights her dedication to improving educational outcomes and her ability to effectively manage large-scale educational operations.

**Morag Nimmo**, MEd THE; TQFE; PGCert; MA (Hons) Psychology, University of Highlands and Islands: North, West and Hebrides, Scotland. She is a Lecturer of psychology across a range of stages from senior high school through to masters (post-graduate) level. Prior to teaching, clinical and research interests included neuropsychology, in the rehabilitation of dysexecutive syndrome, epilepsy, non-epileptic seizure disorder, and drug and alcohol services. Most recent research interests have seen a return to the field of attachment disorders and to the emerging area of epistemic trust. This is in response to the Scottish Government's 'Attainment Challenge' to enable more care experienced young people into education. Epistemic trust in the teacher-student relationship is of relevance therefore, if it can maximise student engagement, ultimately, tackling statistics of the attainment gap.

**Roya Pashmforoosh**, Ph.D., is an Accountability, Climate, Equity, and Scholarship (ACES) faculty fellow and assistant professor in the Department of Educational Psychology of the School of Education and Human Development at Texas A&M University. She obtained a Ph.D. in



Educational Psychology (2021) with an emphasis on Bilingual/English as a Second Language (ESL) Education from Texas A&M University. She also holds a master's degree in Applied Linguistics with an emphasis on TESL from Sharif University of Technology (2011). Her scholarship is centered on researching Virtual Professional Development (VPD), Virtual Professional Learning Communities (VPLC), and Virtual Mentoring and Coaching (VMC) for teachers and school leaders who serve large numbers of emergent bilingual students (EBs), English learners (ELs), and economically challenged students (ECs) in high needs schools.

**Julie L. Pentz**, Professor of Dance at Kansas State University, has an extensive international teaching career in Italy, Taiwan, Spain, Ghana, and Kuwait. Her expertise spans tap and jazz dance, dance appreciation, and teaching methods. Pentz serves as President of the National Dance Educators Organization. Her research focuses on enhancing family relationships through physical movement, with her program Tap To Togetherness Across Populations, which has produced two children's books: *Tap Tap Tap Your Toe* and *Tap, Tap, Tap. Like a Rhinoceros*. Pentz has published articles in several esteemed journals and released textbooks *Dance Appreciation* and *Educational Trends (V4): Diverse Learning in 2020 and Beyond*. She continues her research in Parkinson's Disease and serves as Director and CEO of Tap To Togetherness Across Populations.

**Joanne Rahn** has enjoyed a 30 year career as an Early Childhood Professional. The main focus of her work is in Montessori pre-primary both as a teacher and consultant. She studied the Reggio Approach having completed three study tours at Reggio Emilia, Italy. She had the privilege to have studied Piker, at its origin in Budapest, Hungary. This opportunity led her to concentrate on infants and toddlers. Along with her state side opportunities she worked in Belize, Central American, Vietnam, and Hong Kong. During the past decade she has been working with trustees in her Indiana community to enhance programming for young children.

**Fawzia Reza**, Ed.D., has a doctorate in Educational Leadership from California State University in Long Beach. Her doctoral thesis topic explored the experiences and expectations of immigrant Pakistani parents regarding parental involvement in schools and highlighted social justice shortcomings faced by these parents after the September 2001 terrorist attack on the United States. Her first book, *The Effects of the September 11 Terrorist Attack on Pakistani American Parental Involvement in U.S. Schools*, was released by Lexington Books in 2015. She published her first

children's book *Mary and Her New Friends* in 2019 and the sequel, *Mary and the World Table* was released in 2024. Dr. Reza also edited *Diversity and Inclusion in Educational Institutions* which was released by Cambridge Scholars Press in 2022. She is often invited to review manuscripts from various journals and publishing companies and currently serves as adjunct faculty in education and holds a full-time appointment as the DEI manager at American College of Education. For more information regarding Dr. Reza's interests and publication, please visit her website: <https://fawziareza.org/>

**Olivia Schwantner**, from St. Louis, Missouri, is pursuing a degree in Agricultural Communications with a minor in Agricultural Sales and a secondary major in Dance and the Human Experience at Kansas State University. She has been passionate about tap dance since the age of two, competing extensively throughout her youth. Olivia is an active member of the K-State Tap Dance Ensemble, showcasing her skills in various performances. Additionally, she contributes to the undergraduate research team for the Tap To Togetherness Across Populations program, blending her love for dance with her academic pursuits. Olivia aims to merge her expertise in agriculture and dance to make a meaningful impact in both fields.

**Jae Seefeldt**, originally from Leavenworth, Kansas, is pursuing a bachelor's degree in music education with a minor in dance at Kansas State University. Their passion for tap dance has led them to perform in the spring and winter dance concerts as a member of the tap ensemble. Jae is also an active participant in the Tap To Togetherness Across Populations research team, contributing to the program's initiatives and outreach. With a strong commitment to both music and dance, Jae plans to become a music educator after graduation, aiming to inspire and educate future generations through their combined expertise in these artistic disciplines.

**Kara Ghobhainn Smith**, PhD, SFHEA, OCT, GTCS is a senior lecturer of Education with the University of Highlands and Islands (UHI), Scotland, and a professor emerita of Education from the University of Windsor, Canada. Her Hebridean learning contribution here honours Dr. Cook's dedicated service to teachers and warm fellowship with the University of Windsor.

## DEDICATION

### “DR. PAMELA R. COOK: A DEDICATION TO *DEVOTION*”

SHENETTE ALEXANDER, F. KING ALEXANDER,  
JUDITH McCONNELL MIKKELSON,  
AND KATHERINE SHEPPARD HUSKEY

Dr. Pamela Cook's involvement with the *Oxford Round Table Symposiums* spans over two decades, during which time she significantly impacted education at a global level. Her role as a presenter allowed her to contribute thought-provoking research and insight on various educational issues. Many of her papers were featured in the publication, *The Forum on Public Policy*, a testament to the depth and relevance of her work in advancing education. Beyond her academic contributions to our Round Table, Pamela's presence at the symposium was felt on a personal level by her colleagues and peers alike. Pamela was always one of our most valued participants and she was always there with a smile, a hug or to lend a helping hand. Her laughter was often heard throughout the hallowed halls of Oxford and everyone couldn't help but join in! Her dedication, *devotion*, wisdom, and enthusiastic spirit enriched the intellectual environment of the *Oxford Round Table*, and her absence has left a notable void in the hearts of our *Oxford Round Table Symposium* community. Shenette Alexander and F. King Alexander, friends and colleagues



Dr. Pamela R. Cook (1959-2024)

### **Remembrances' From Family, Friends, Students, and Colleagues...**

My dearest sister would be overjoyed with this collaborative effort. She was *devoted* to Belize, her symposium, and the books that grew from this passion. Her life was full and I cherish our many adventures. I will endeavor to continue her legacy by being as devoted about education as she was...I have been blessed!

Koleen Schlatter, sister

Dr. Pamela's bountiful energy and *devotion* to the education of children, parents, university students, and professional educators transcended borders. Her commitment to nurturing minds has left an indelible mark on many lives around the world and a trail of beautiful memories.

Tina Williams, colleague.

My children and grandchildren loved Pam (Grandma Pam) for her laugh, her stories and her genuine interest in each of their lives. She was *devoted* to her people. Her enthusiastic love of life was contagious and positively impacted those around her.

Irene Fullmer, friend

Pamela R. Cook was an invaluable colleague and a steadfast supporter of my writing and research. Her wisdom, encouragement, and kindness profoundly influenced my work and will continue to inspire me. She will be deeply missed but her *devotion* to education will live on in the many lives she has touched.

Julie L. Pentz, colleague "Tap To Togetherness Across Populations" and  
Kansas State University.

Dr. Pamela Cook was a *devoted* educator, a close friend, and an erudite scholar. She always went the extra mile to help everyone. Her devotion to fostering an equitable learning environment for all will always be remembered.

Fawzia Reza, colleague and a presenter at several symposiums organized  
by Dr. Cook in Belize and Puerto Rico.

Although Dr. Cook was my student, she gifted me more resilience and living a life of compassionate joy than I ever taught. A *devoted* sister of Belize, Michigan and Windsor, she was ever present in each place, laughing, sharing and appreciating each person and the gifts they give. This book is a dedication from a selection of the many writers, educators and contributors along her pathway; and when a person has touched your work and life in this way, they remain with you.

Kara Ghobhainn Smith, PhD GTCS SFHEA, friend and colleague

While reminiscing about the many achievements in Dr. Pamela Cook's life, this verse from the Bible came to mind: "Be *devoted* to one another in brotherly love" (Romans 12:10). Pamela poured her heart and soul into the students she taught, the teachers she mentored, the professors with whom she partnered, and the educational events she directed, even if it required

exhausting her meager finances to fulfill the mission God gave her. I can only hope that my time on this earth will be as exciting as the brimming life lived by Dr. Cook.

Mark L. Schlatter BME, brother-in-law.

Dr. Cook had a contagious passion for sharing the Reggio Emilia philosophy of education. She was instrumental in assisting me while I opened the doors to my own Reggio-inspired early childhood center in Topeka, KS. I will forever be grateful for her *devotion* to mentor me, her positive spirit and kindness shared along the way, and the overall wealth of knowledge that she shared with me and my staff.

Christina Turner, friend and colleague

Dr. Pamela Cook was a dear friend and colleague, whose passion for education touched countless lives in the country of Belize. Her love and *devotion* for educating others was inspiring and will continue to resonate in our hearts. Though she is no longer with us, her legacy of kindness, wisdom and commitment to education will endure forever.

Melissa P. Garcia, Ed.D., CCC-SLP, friend and colleague

Pamela Cook started out as a colleague of my mother's and quickly became a friend to my family. Her *devotion* to helping my son stay positive and healthy until his adoption from Belize to Michigan could be completed allowed him to feel loved and cared for at the times we could not be there for him.

Dana Shaff, friend

Closing my eyes I see you. I hear your laugh - I feel your passion and *devotion* to young children. Your journey continues, may it guide mine.

Joanne Rahn, friend and colleague

The people of Belize greatly appreciate the commitment and *devotion* to them in the field of education and especially that of early childhood development. Personally, I am grateful for the personal and professional memories of being, not only a friend, but a "brother from another mother" to me and my family. You will forever be in our memories.

Alberto August, friend and colleague

I met Dr. Pamela Cook approximately six years ago on an educational trip from Washburn University to Belize. I immediately could tell how dedicated