

Editors' Note:

Julia Hillman, an English Language Development teacher, aptly expresses a sentiment we hear from many teachers who have seen their professional autonomy stifled under the pressure of top down policies and testing performance:

Teaching and learning were beginning to feel meaningless. I started to question the purpose of education.

However, when presented with an opportunity to collaborate with other educators for a common purpose, she found herself energized as she positioned herself as a learner within a literacy community. Together, this community of educators explored the instructional potential of using global literature as a means for students to pursue critical questions around issues such as immigration, social movements, and the recent, highly contentious US presidential election. This collaboration was transformative for both Julia and students.

It wasn't until I learned new strategies and started using multicultural and global books to develop text sets that I became excited again. This felt like a natural way to teach.

This special issue of *WOW Stories: Connections from the Classroom* presents vignettes authored by educators who engaged in inquiries with their students into issues many teachers feel insecure about examining within their school contexts. Fear that raising such issues will create discord in and among students, administrators, and parents, coupled with insecurity about their knowledge of culture, history, and social issues, often discourages educators from examining provocative questions significant to children. Within this special issue educators tell stories that demonstrate how together they felt empowered to innovate, and includes detailed descriptions of instructional processes will that provide educators with ideas and strategies to engage in similar inquiries with students in their respective contexts.

It is with great excitement we present this issue featuring the work of a literacy community in the Tucson Unified School District and how they discovered, together, ways of engaging in critical inquiries with purpose, efficacy, and enthusiasm.

Tracy Smiles and Mary Fahrenbruck, Editors