

Critical Questions In Education: A Welcome From the Editor

The Academy for Educational Studies
Missouri State University
Springfield, Missouri

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Dearest Colleagues:

As I sit here in my office freezing, along with everyone else in North America (I thought it was called *Global Warming*), I have one thing to say on this the official launching of the Academy's newest venture, its online journal, *Critical Questions in Education*: **YAHOOOOO!** I was beginning to think I would never get my proverbial ducks in their proverbial row and get this thing up and going. Fortunately, there are several incredible people without whom this day would never have come.

First and foremost, kudos to the most wonderful graduate assistant ever, Becky Migas. Becky is as responsible for this new Academy venture as anyone. She has given us invaluable input, both technically and creatively (and, thankfully, with no punches pulled); and, most importantly, has the web "know-how" necessary to getting us finally online. Becky will be with us for only a short time, as she will graduate in the spring, and (even though she is an Ohio State Buckeye fan) we will miss her dearly.

I would also be remiss in not extending a heartfelt thanks to our Dean, Dennis Kear, as well as our department chair, Fred Groves. In the short time that the Academy for Educational Studies has been in existence, we have been continually encouraged and supported by both—and this newest endeavor is no exception. Without this kind of administrative and institutional support, we certainly could not have grown in the ways that we have.

The growth of the academy has also been greatly enhanced by the recent establishment of our board of directors whose members have provided both moral support and sage advice: Jeff Cornelius-White, Tom Deering, Lynda George, Kathryn Richardson-Jones, Karla Smart-Morstad, and Jerry Whitworth (could you imagine a board of directors with more hyphenated last names?). A big thanks also to our unofficial advisor/mentor, Chris Lucas, who has been kind enough to lend his experience and expertise to growing the academy wisely. I also extend my personal gratitude to those who have volunteered to do what, in the end, is a truly thankless job: our manuscript reviewers (you know who you are), without whom a blind peer reviewed journal could never come into existence.

Finally, a *qualified* thank-you to my friend and colleague, Steve Jones, Director of the Academy for Educational Studies; I say "qualified" because Steve is an idea guy, as my father would say it, and to be honest, if he comes to me with one more of his ideas...Ok, to be *really* honest, the

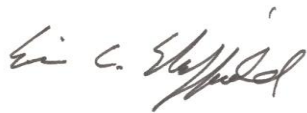
work of the Academy has thus far been nothing but fulfilling...so keep the ideas...trickling (rather than flowing), Steve.

All right, enough of that; and now a few words about this first issue of *Critical Questions in Education*. Within these pages you will find four “traditional” articles that take up what I would call spiritual aspects of teaching and learning. The first article addresses the specific question we asked at our conference in 2007 concerning the role of religion and public schooling. In it, Steve and I have outlined some historically important “visions” of religion, God, Goodness, and the role public schools have played in the moral instruction of America’s youth. Following that, Don Hufford suggests in his essay that teachers learn to be “agnostic” in their approach to teaching difficult or contentious issues such as evolution/creationism and that foundations courses incorporate an agnostic disposition to their list of instructional goals. Thirdly, Barbara Michaels, Ching-Wen Chang, and Debra Maxwell present an interesting historical discussion as well as research findings on utilizing labyrinths to teach (you can never go wrong with a bit of paganism on these cold winter days!); and finally, Barbara Clark outlines an aesthetic approach to teacher education that she believes can be “emancipatory.”

In addition to these four traditional manuscripts, you will also see a section of the journal entitled “Video Essays.” These are precisely what they sound like: video taped presentations of manuscripts, typically from well-known scholars. In this first issue you will find a talk by Nel Noddings on the value of teaching *unbelief* in our public schools and a presentation by Jordan Lorence on seven things the establishment clause of the constitution does not require. We hope to continue this section in the future, relying mainly on keynote speakers from our annual conferences, though we would certainly be open to video submissions for review. Finally, you will see a link ostensibly leading to book and/or film reviews. We have none for this first issue, but we hope to have a strong selection of such reviews for future publications.

We at the Academy for Educational Studies here at Missouri State University (and beyond) hope that all who enter this online journal find some tasty food for thought and that you spread the word, as we will now begin doing, because our first issue is up and running....**YAHOOOOOOO!**

PAX,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Eric C. Sheffield".

Eric C. Sheffield, Editor
Critical Questions in Education