

The Association for Constructivist Teaching

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From the President:

Dear ACT friends and colleagues,

As I sit and write during the mid-semester, the busiest time for many of us, I reflect back on the many years I have participated as an active member of ACT. The rewards regarding friendship and scholarship are many, providing new information and resources that support my progress each year. I look forward to the time when we will join each other again to share new insights and experiences based on the diverse paths we each follow as constructivist practitioners.

Meanwhile, it is a joy to be sharing among our group with information from and about members. My apologies for the lateness of the issue, which was due for publication in February.

This month we have an interview of one of our newer board members, Jennifer Thompson, who teaches in Juneau, Alaska and through her broad outreach touches the work and lives of many constructivist educators nationally. Additionally, it is an honor to publish an article on Teacher Research, by Kathryn Castle. It is a rich source of information that is sure to support the work of our membership.

Looking ahead, our 2011 conference will be held at the University of Houston Hilton, on October 21 & 22. Also, plan for a pre-conference session on the 20th, including a visit to the University of Houston Charter School!

We still seek just the right recommendations for the two keynote speakers for our October conference. Please send any suggestions to me at broderic@etsu.edu and copy that to our conference chair, Carolyn Black at cfblack@uh.edu.

*Look for our call for proposals on our website:
<http://sites.google.com/site/assocforconstructteaching/Home>*

The website is still undergoing construction, nearing the point where data will be uploaded for a new view.

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BOARD MEMBER INTERVIEW *with Jennifer Thompson* By Jane Tingle Broderick

What brought you into your field?

Originally I thought seriously about never becoming a teacher, even though everything I did outdoors was involved in education. I have a degree in Recreation and Park Management, and worked for private businesses as an outdoor guide, and on a professional ski patrol team in the winter. So, what brought me into education was watching my two kids grow. I went back to school when they were 2 and 4.

I started in an elementary education program with one Early Childhood course that caught my attention. I really remember being fascinated with how social emotional development could hinder or help the child's learning. My advisor (who became my main professor and inspiration for all I was to take on later) helped me organize an M.Ed. program in Early Childhood, which was not a program offered at the university I was attending in Alaska.

Completing the program took three years and I was in many, many practicum experiences in the best K-1 classrooms in Juneau. These teachers, who had a constructivist approach, are still a strong influential community for me. Early on, when I was in school, I had an extended lab at home where I developed my ability to apply what I was learning into my practices with my children.

Where did you teach?

I substituted for one and a half years in the Juneau District before a position opened, and then I taught in a K-1 multi-age classroom. Chris Thomas was in the classroom next door to me. She was a skilled and generous teacher and became my mentor. I cried almost every day that first year. She fed and supported me with her experience, knowledge and beliefs. What became so engaging for us once I grew beyond the difficulties of the first year of teaching was that I was fresh and full of new ideas, and filled with energy. She was at the end of her career and was motivated to stay on those last years as a result of our partnership in learning.

After five years, when she retired I didn't feel I could stay at that school any longer and moved to another school where I also taught a K-1 group. This was a small school with a higher percentage of Alaska Native students. I was attracted by the principal's well-

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respected philosophy, which centers on her ability to support teachers. During that time she supported me in many ways; encouraging my use of centers for teaching math and science and nominating me for the Presidential Award, which led me to look at what I could do nationally. The Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching awards one math and one science teacher in each state annually.

One year the award goes to an elementary (K – 6) teacher, and on the alternate years a middle or high school (7 – 12) teacher receives the award. Winners go to Washington, DC for a full week of professional development and recognition activities. We also received gifts of technology, books and \$10,000 each.

I understand you've received other awards. Can you tell us about these?

I received the Teacher Educator Award from NAECTE prior to the Presidential Award. My main Professor at UAS, Marjorie Fields was in Atlanta to present it to me as well as introduce me to other Early Childhood Professionals and it remains one of my fondest memories to this day. The Einstein Fellowship came after the PAEMST experience. I had met someone from Alaska on the upstairs outdoor deck of the Department of State and I became intrigued with the idea of doing work with other teachers from across the country. Managed through the Triangle Coalition for Science and Technology Education (and funded through the Department of Energy) it involves an application, an interview, and a link to an agency that wants to host you. I sought and received support from the Office of Polar Programs at the National Science Foundation, which provided me with one year of study in Washington, D.C. In particular, this foundation looks for teachers who can advocate for science education. They spend a lot of money on K – 12 programs, and yet they don't have experience to know what it looks like in the classroom, so the recipients of the Einstein Awards are to provide the examples and connections from classrooms based on our experiences, in addition to attending many workshops and conferences for professional development. One of the highlights for me was to be on a panel on Capitol Hill informing decision makers on what science education looks like in the classroom.

How did you transfer this experience to your practice back in Alaska?

When I came back to Juneau in 2009 I became a science coach for six different elementary schools. The district worked with stimulus funds and agency funds to develop this position. Since it is an externally funded position, and not a district funded position, it ends in June 2011, when I look forward to going back to the classroom. I would like a primary classroom position. I still believe I can make an impact locally as well as statewide for science education by highlighting what I do in my classroom.

If I have the opportunity to return to my school with an excellent principal, I will be able to continue my work with collaborating with other teachers, Tlingit (Southeast Alaska Native)

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Tell about your service work?

I am active in my union and the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA). I use documentation to inform and advocate for better quality science education for all students. I believe that the best way to inform public schools about constructivist practices is through science education.

Please share the ways your teaching practices are constructivist?

The second year I was teaching I was hooked with a microphone and had a camera crew funded by a university group. They were looking at community building. The focus on community at this time helped me form a strong belief in the K-1 multi-age community, and the link to families and advocating for families and children. Today, in contrast, there is a very programmed approach that focuses on content (literacy, math, etc.), with no support for community because programs are the one aim, to teach to the subject and get the scores.

Right from the beginning of my teaching career, my naturalist environment background (stewardship and identification of plants and animals) fed my approach with children. I took my class outdoors at least once a week for fieldwork. I maximize the link to the location, and I really feel that, who we are, is identified through place & location. If I could I'd go back for a Ph. D. in science education through the lens of cultural education. I am interested in how culture affects children's experiences in school, because in Alaska we are losing many kids. Our dropout rate is high because children don't feel the relevance of school, even more so than in other American locations I am aware of.

I think that constructivist practices are integrated into my process. How I learn about children is related to where they are and their sense of place. I am drawn to attending the ACT Conference to see what research is taking place, to learn from people like Rheta DeVries about her work with ramps and pathways, with its scientific focus; or from Connie Kamii and her research on mathematical thinking. Bringing these new ideas back and having these conversations—with these experts, in my classroom, and with the teachers I mentor or collaborate with in Juneau—becomes my research.

NEW PUBLICATIONS:

Big Science for Growing Minds: Constructivist Classrooms for Young Thinkers

Jacqueline Grennon Brooks; ACT Member, professor of science education in the Department of Teaching, Literacy and Leadership at Hofstra University in Hempstead, New York

Foreword by **Doris Pronin Fromberg**: "We need to celebrate the birth of this book. It is a vivid embodiment of how young children learn scientific ideas when their teachers create conditions that match the ways youngsters are able to integrate meaning. Constructivist practice comes to life in these pages. At a time of narrow high-stakes tests, here is a model that preserves truly professional practice." — From the Foreword by **Doris Pronin Fromberg**, Hofstra University

Book Features: Shows teachers how to address fundamental biology, chemistry, physics, and Earth science concepts using easy-to-find objects; Describes constructivist learning environments that are aligned with emerging data on brain development; Includes guidance for adopting approaches and instructional strategies consistent with NSTA, NSES, and NAEYC guidelines. **Link to locate book online:** <http://store.tpress.com/0807751952.shtml>

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FROM THE FIELD: *Introducing ideas and activities from ACT Members in the field*

Teacher Research and Constructivism

Kathryn Castle, Oklahoma State University

"I don't look at myself as a researcher at all. Research is formal. I do it to make things better in my classroom." Second Grade Teacher (Castle, 2006, p. 1094)

Teacher research is the systematic study of one's teaching (Hendricks, 2009). The primary purpose of teacher research is to improve teaching in order to improve the educational experience for learners. Other purposes may be to deepen understanding of the teaching-learning relationship, provide evidence and documentation that learning has occurred, explore and study alternative approaches to teaching, or address issues of social justice. In defining teacher research it is noteworthy that some view teacher research as just good teaching (Hubbard & Power, 1999), while others emphasize that it involves a purposeful and systematic study including data gathering and analysis (Stringer, 2008). Hopkins (2002) defines it as the, "...kind of research in which teachers look critically at their own classrooms primarily for the purpose of improving their teaching and the quality of education in their schools" (p. 7). Hopkins views teacher research as an extension of the role of the teacher.

The professional literature in education uses various terms to name the systematic activity of studying one's teaching for the improvement of the educational process. In addition to being called teacher research, it is also called teacher inquiry, practitioner inquiry, practitioner research, self-study, and action research. My preference is for the term teacher research when discussing the work that teachers do in studying their own teaching because I think it is a term that best fits the phenomenon. The name given to it is more a function of who is doing it and whether it involves a clear political agenda. For example, both of the terms practitioner research and action research apply not only to teachers but also to those in other fields such as business, social work, and medicine. The term practitioner researcher refers to anyone in any field who is a practicing professional in that field and who is studying their own practice.

The term action research may mean different things depending on the context in which the term is used. For example, there exists a body of literature called action research focused on using research results to take political action and make social changes (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 2009; Noffke, 1997). Others who write about action research merely use the term to refer to the "action" that teachers engage in based on the results of their research (Hendricks, 2009). This type of action research involves making necessary changes that research shows need to be made. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) when referring to the study teachers do prefer the term practitioner inquiry because they claim it is more inclusive of all educators including administrators who engage in inquiry. They advocate for those doing teacher research to take an "inquiry stance" in their work:

The construct, inquiry as stance, is intended to offer a closer understanding of the knowledge generated in inquiry communities, how inquiry relates to practice, and what teachers learn from inquiry. ...In the discourse of qualitative research, 'stance' is used to make visible and problematic the various perspectives through

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which researchers frame their questions, observations, and interpretations of data. In our work, we offer the term inquiry as stance to describe the positions teachers and others who work together in inquiry communities take toward knowledge and its relationship to practice. (pp. 119-120)

Regardless of the names applied to it, the activity underlying the names has a common focus of the systematic study of one's own teaching. Teacher research is done at all levels of education from early childhood through the graduate level. The different terms used to describe it indicate there have been different parallel pathways for this type of activity over the years. The activity of studying one's own teaching is not a new phenomenon, but is growing.

Teacher Research Movement

Teacher research is not a new activity but has been increasing in this country since the 1970's. The teacher research movement is attributed to beginning in the 1970's (Stenhouse, 1975) in Great Britain, although teacher research has been done since there were teachers wanting to do it. It is being done in many countries with the current climate of teacher research groups collaborating on an international level across country boundaries (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Crawford & Cornett, 2000; Loughran, Mitchell, & Mitchell, 2002). The teacher research movement has been primarily a grass-roots movement and that is one reason it has continued to grow and exert a strong influence in the field of education.

In one sense, teacher research has been a reaction against the positivistic paradigm of control including the dominance of the scientific method in educational research. It represents a shift from a positivistic paradigm to an interpretist one including a constructivist approach. Teacher researchers construct professional knowledge through doing teacher research (Myers and Rust, 2003). Teachers who become teacher researchers are no longer passive recipients or consumers of other people's research but are active agents in creating professional knowledge (Paris, 1993). While it is possible to do positivistic teacher research, it is primarily a constructivist activity.

The increase in teacher research activity can be seen in the work of various teacher groups such as the National Writing Project (NWP) and their subgroup, the Teacher Inquiry Communities (TIC) and the National School Reform Faculty (NSRF) group. In addition, many teacher research journals, mostly online, now exist including *Networks: An Online Journal for Teacher Research* and NAEYC's journal, *Voices of Practitioners*. The *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education (JECTE)* recently devoted a theme issue to teacher research in early childhood teacher education (Castle and Paris, 2010). Some professional associations now have teacher research subgroups such as the American Educational Research Association with its Special Interest Group, Teacher as Researcher, the National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators (NAECTE) with their ResearchNet on Teacher Research, and as previously mentioned, the TIC's of the NWP.

Teacher Research Impact

Evidence currently exists showing the impact of results of teacher research on making a difference in schooling and in the professional knowledge and actions of teachers (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 2009; Flake, Kuhs, Donnelly, & Ebert, 1995; King & Newmann, 2000; Loughran, Mitchell, & Mitchell, 2002; and Richardson, 1994).

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Teachers are far more likely to apply the results of teacher research to their teaching than to apply the results of more traditional educational research. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) say that traditional research is done from an “outsider” perspective and that teacher research is done from an “insider” perspective that speaks more to teachers in influencing their work. Teacher research has been shown to impact school change, student achievement, and the professional development of teachers participating in the research. For example, Grimmett (1996) found that one teacher research collaborative group had a positive impact on teachers' engagement in professional discourse, provision of support to colleagues, critical learning, and professional growth.

An interesting phenomenon currently exists with two very different movements at cross-purposes. Along with an increasing teacher research movement with its emphasis on the teacher as the knowledge creator is the accountability movement with its emphasis on mandated curriculum and teaching including the proliferation of testing and the use of scripted curriculum. Some teachers accustomed to exercising professional decision-making have chosen to leave teaching rather than to be forced to do things that they think are not appropriate for their students (Taubman, 2009). As Grimmett (1996) has found, the more autonomous teachers are becoming in their ability to make professional decisions, the more they are being forced to adhere to mandated external standards for education.

Teacher Research and Teacher Autonomy

Along with the teacher research movement, the National Writing Project, and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification process has come increased teacher control of the teaching profession (Mohr, Rogers, Sanford, Nocerino, MacLean, & Clawson, 2004). Teachers who do research on their own teaching can be considered active agents in the process of educational decision-making including creating curriculum (Paris, 1993). Teachers who engage in teacher research exercising their professional decision-making are continuously involved in constructing their professional knowledge and growing in their confidence as responsible professionals. The more knowledge they construct, the better able they are to know what to do and why to do it and to justify their decisions to others including other teachers, administrators, parents, and the community. Flake, Kuhs, Donnelly, and Ebert (1995) write, "By becoming researchers, teachers can take control of their classrooms and professional lives in ways that confound the traditional definition of teacher and offer proof that education can reform itself from within." (p. 407).

Through engaging in teacher research, teachers become more autonomous or self-regulating in a Piagetian, constructivist sense. They are able to construct their professional knowledge to the point of not having to rely on others to tell them what to do and how to do it because they know what they know and can articulate it to others.

Kamii (2000) and DeVries (1987) have written about intellectual and moral autonomy in reference to knowing the right thing to do. Kamii writes,

In a Piagetian sense, autonomy means the ability to decide for oneself between right and wrong in the moral realm, and between truth and untruth in the intellectual realm, by taking relevant factors into account, independently of reward and punishment. (Kamii 2000, p. 57)

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DeVries (1987) writes,

The autonomous constructivist teacher knows not only *what* to do, but *why*. She has a solid network of convictions that are both practical and theoretical. The autonomous teacher can think about how children are thinking and at the same time think about how to intervene to promote the constructive process.

Autonomous teachers do not just accept uncritically what curriculum specialists give them. They *think* about whether they agree with what is suggested. They take responsibility for the education they are offering children. (DeVries, 1987, p. 380)

In educational literature there are many references to the term autonomy, not all of which imply a constructivist definition. The word autonomy is derived from the Greek word, *autonomia*, the condition or quality of self-governance or self-direction within a broader community. The professional literature in education contains diverse definitions of autonomy from self-governance to a feminist definition of self-authoring to a critical theorist perspective of agency. Piaget's view of autonomy as self-regulation is most closely related to the notion of teacher research because it implies intellectual and moral decision making (Kamii 2000; DeVries, Zan, Hildebrandt, Edmiaston, & Sales, 2002). In addition, teacher research is generally done within a broader community of teachers working as a collaborative group on educational problems.

Autonomous teachers exercise their professionalism by making intellectual and moral decisions by considering various perspectives and deciding based on what is in the best interests of all. It is not clear if autonomy leads teachers to question and engage in teacher research or if engagement in teacher research leads to autonomy. It is probably more likely that the two are interrelated and result in an interactive cycle of professional development.

Autonomous teacher researchers are informed by research on how children learn, such as Piaget's research and the research of other constructivists, such as Kamii (2000) (arithmetic), Chaille (2008) (science), Ferreiro and Teberosky (1982) (literacy), and DeVries and Zan (1994) (sociomoral development) to name a few. Autonomous teachers are also informed by their own teacher research and the teacher research of others. Autonomous teachers can set their own goals and can do their own planning based on knowledge they have constructed (Kamii, 1985; DeVries & Zan, 1994). Autonomous teachers learn to make better teaching decisions by doing their own thinking about educational issues. Teachers who are not autonomous depend on others to tell them what to do. This makes them susceptible to educational fads that come and go.

Teacher Research, Autonomy, and Pedagogy

In a study I conducted on autonomy through pedagogical research (Castle, 2006), I described a new professional stance, teacher as pedagogical researcher, a stance that has emerged from the intersections of three different frameworks: pedagogy (van Manen, 1991), teacher research, and autonomy in teaching. Teacher as pedagogical researcher focuses on "...a strong movement toward teacher research that gives voice to practitioners, allows them to communicate their wealth of knowledge to other practitioners, and helps them improve their practice" (Richardson, 1994, p. 5). My work, focused on researching the lived experiences of teacher researchers, holds that pedagogical research refers to inquiry done by teachers to increase their understanding of the relationship of teaching and learning resulting in action taken by them in light of what is educationally appropriate and good for students. Pedagogical research doesn't just focus on the study of teaching, but on research that

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is done in children's best interests and to improve education for them. Pedagogical researchers don't just accept the demands for compliance to mandated standards unless they deem them in children's best interests.

Teachers do pedagogical research not because it is generally accepted practice or because it has institutional rewards,

...but because it is the morally appropriate thing to do, particularly when macro- and micro-level social and political contexts related to teaching produce conditions unsupportive of a focus on the learner and the learning process...

By contrast, when teachers develop their practice according to what is important and of value to learners, the struggle becomes one of grappling with how to act morally in an uncertain and constantly challenging educational context. This moral quest, transcending the traditional and alternative forms of struggle to continually grapple with perplexing dilemmas of practice in morally appropriate ways, constitutes the struggle for authenticity. (Grimmett, 1996, p. 57)

Pedagogical research may be considered as a strong catalyst for change and a form of democratic action (Crawford & Cornett, 2000).

Themes of Autonomy in Teacher Research

In my study of pedagogical research, I selected three teachers (first, second, and fourth grade teachers) because they were recognized by their peers and faculty at my university as being model teachers who do teacher research. I interviewed them about their past and present teacher research experiences in terms of what teacher research has meant to them. I conducted a hermeneutic phenomenological theme analysis of the data searching for patterns or themes of meaning embedded in the data (van Manen, 1990). I identified seven common patterns that indicated themes of meaning on what it means to do pedagogical research. All seven themes reflected teacher autonomy through pedagogical research. The seven themes included:

perceiving that something is wrong; questioning; seeking out knowledge from others; risk taking; reflecting on results leading to understanding and confidence; increased understanding of children's understanding; and taking action including the four sub themes of sharing results with others, articulating a rationale for teaching and doing teacher research, responding to criticism from others, and extending research with students.

I concluded that the autonomous teacher researchers in my study acted out of a commitment to do what is right and good for their students and continually ask themselves: How can I do this (teaching) better?

Teacher Research and Teacher Education

Teacher educators who do their own teacher research set an example for their students and develop a teaching practice that is evidence-based. Further, they can promote autonomy in their students by helping them learn about teacher research and how to do it. Teacher educators can develop undergraduate and graduate courses in teacher research and/or devote portions of other courses, such as methods courses to teacher inquiry. Teacher educators can give teacher research assignments in courses and in practicum experiences. Supervision of student teaching can involve helping student teachers conduct their own teacher research projects. The student's culminating project of the program

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can be a teacher research study. Teacher research can be incorporated in all courses, practicum experiences, and culminating projects in a teacher education program. In addition, teacher educators can help form teacher research collaborative groups with teachers in the field interested in partnering with others in teacher research.

Professional Development through Teacher Research

Through the process of doing research, teachers learn specifically how students are affected by their teaching (Stringer, 2004). Teacher reflection and teacher research are activities within the certification process of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (1994). Dana and Yendol-Silva (2003) found that, "By cultivating this inquiry stance toward teaching, teachers play a critical role in enhancing their own professional growth and ultimately the experience of schooling for children." (p.6)

Teacher research enables teachers to study policy and its effects on students (Mohr et al, 2004). Teacher research gives teachers a voice helping influence education policy. Meyers and Rust (2003) found that teacher research provides evidence from systematic inquiry and assessment of teaching to justify teachers' involvement in making policy. Myers and Rust (2003) found that teachers doing teacher research involved in the Teachers Network Policy Institute (TNPI) were able to influence policy "...in the following domains: resources needed to meet standards, conditions of the workplace, and the status of the teaching profession." (p.158)

Conclusion

Teacher research often goes against the grain (Cochran-Smith, 1991) in challenging traditional practices and top-down mandates. It emerges from teachers' worries about what is wrong with education and may result in a shake up of the status quo (Meyers & Rust, 2003). Because it is the type of research that goes against the grain, it requires courage and determination on the part of teachers who do it.

Teacher research and the knowledge gained from it help teachers to be autonomous (self-regulating) in their approach to making decisions such as choosing appropriate approaches to curriculum and teaching that will be in students' best interests in terms of their overall development.

Second Grade Teacher: *This year I plan to do research everyday. I plan to reflect on what I do every day and constantly change to meet students' needs. I work to promote autonomy as I provide activities to challenge children and encourage them to be risk-takers in their own learning. I do not do things just because that's the way they've always been done. I am interested in cutting edge, innovative educational practices and am willing to go beyond what is required to implement these practices in my classroom.*

Fourth Grade Teacher: *Teacher research begins with the courage of an initial question. Researching questions and getting results leads to deeper understanding, continued research, and the knowledge base to support your teaching which can be shared with others. Teacher research then becomes the tool of the autonomous teacher. (Castle, 2006, p. 1102)*

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Resources

Guidelines for forming a teacher research group: George Mason University Teacher Research website: Teacher Research, George Mason University, <http://www.gse.gmu.edu/research/tr/>.

Organizations that support and fund teacher research: Met Life Fellows, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, the Reading Teachers Network, and the National Education Association (NEA) Foundation for the Improvement of Education.

Examples of Teacher Research Journals and Networks:

- Action Research for sharing teacher research studies,
 - <http://actionresearch.altec.org/>
- AR Expeditions: Action Research Journal
 - <http://arexpeditions.montana.edu/index>
- Collaborative Action Research Network, CARN international network for promoting collaborative action research
 - <http://www.did.stu.mmu.ac.uk/carnnew/>
 - <http://research.edu.uea.ac.uk/links/care/>
- Early Childhood Education Teacher Research Online Journal:
- *Voices of Practitioners* (<http://www.naeyc.org/publications/vop>)
- Educational Action Research
 - <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/09650792.asp>
 - Fairfax County Virginia Public Schools for online teacher research support, <http://www.fcps.edu/plt/tresearch.htm#>
- National School Reform Faculty
 - <http://www.nsrffharmony.org>
 - *Networks: An Online Journal for Teacher Research* (<http://journals.library.wisc.edu/index.php/networks>)
- Teacher Research, George Mason University
 - <http://www.gse.gmu.edu/research/tr/>
- The United Kingdom National Teacher Research Panel,
 - <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/ntrp/?version=1>
- The United Kingdom Teacher Research.net for support and mentoring,
 - <http://www.teacherresearch.net/index.htm>
- University of New Hampshire at Manchester for information about the annual teacher as researcher conference,
 - <http://www.unhm.unh.edu/community/teachers-as-researchers-conference/index.php>

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Websites of Teacher Research Groups

- Berkeley Teacher Research Group
 - <http://csmf.ucop.edu/programs/view/73775/meeting-at-berkeley-teacher-research-group>
- LSJTRG Literacy for Social Justice Teacher Research Group, St. Louis, Missouri
 - <http://www.umsl.edu/~sjtrg/>
- NWP: Teacher Inquiry Communities Network: national network that links sites interested in developing leadership and resources for teacher inquiry and in sharing information and disseminating practices with other sites (Western Massachusetts Writing Project; South Carolina WP; Tennessee WP)
 - <http://www.nwporg/cs/public/print/programs/tic>
- University of California, Davis, School of Education, CRESS Center Teacher Research Group (classroom teachers)
 - <http://education.ucdavis.edu/cress-teacher-research>

Seeking Upcoming **From the Field** articles.

Submit articles for review to: broderic@etsu.edu. We seek stories of practices suited to a diverse audience. We've published many early childhood features and hope to elicit news from our colleagues working in other contexts.

Guidelines: 3 – 10 pages, double spaced; include information about constructivist context in your pieces that includes examples.

JOURNAL UPDATE

Amy Malkus reports that we should expect a journal to be published this spring. She has a number of reviewers and is seeking more so that we can raise the number of publications over time.

- Any members who would like to serve as reviewers can please contact Amy so that their names can be added to our list of reviewers: malkus@etsu.edu
- Anyone who presented at the conference who would like to adapt their presentation into a journal article should consider that and contact Amy with a proposal or submission advice: malkus@etsu.edu

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RESOURCES

Jennifer Thompson
Science Coach
Juneau School District

One of my passions as Science Coach, in working with Early Childhood Teachers as well as with children in the classroom, is to advocate for authentic learning experiences through investigations of the world around us. Young children explore the world in every way – why not guide and facilitate this learning with appropriate materials and resources so that adults learn along with children?!

NSTA (National Science Teachers Association) has a website with a wide variety of resources; articles, research, webinars and published books. <http://www.nsta.org/>

I invite you all to become members of NSTA to promote science in early childhood classrooms, but the website is also open to non-members. I encourage you to browse this site as well as take a closer look at many of the books offered through their bookstore, see recommendations below. In particular, I'd like to highlight the Early Years Blogs, facilitated by Peggy Ashbrook (author of *Science is Simple: Over 250 Activities for Preschoolers*). <http://nstacommunities.org/blog/category/earlyyears/> Each month in the NSTA Journal, Science and Children, Peggy writes about how to support young children with specific open-ended science investigations that invite inquiry in her column, *The Early Years*. <http://www.nsta.org/elementaryschool/?lid=hp>

Bold statements are often made about Early Childhood and Elementary School Teachers – and their lack of content and/or background experience to teach science education. Through the NSTA website and the many resources available, teachers, parents and community members can access content and specific experiences for teaching and learning together. I am currently the District XVII Rep (AK, WA, OR) and I invite your questions and comments!

Jennifer's favorite NSTA Publications:

- *A Head Start on Science: Encouraging a Sense of Wonder* by William C. Ritz
- *More Picture-Perfect Science Lessons: Using Children's Books to Guide Inquiry, K-4* by Karen Ansberry and Emily Morgan
- *Everyday Science Mysteries*, by Richard Konicek-Moran

If your colleagues have not received this newsletter, please encourage them to join ACT by downloading a membership form from: <http://sites.google.com/site/assocforconstructteaching/Home> and send to the address listed on the form.

Can't get to our conference? Member benefits include "soon to come" online webinars!

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COMMITTEE REPORT

Conference Committee

- Conference Chair Carolyn Black, has the rooms reserved at the Hilton at the University of Houston. We are still seeking keynote speakers. Please send any suggestions to *Carolyn* at cfblack@uh.edu and copy to *Jane Broderick* at broderic@etsu.edu

Conference Program Committee

- Jennifer Thompson and Christina Sales, our program committee, are ready to review proposals. The call for proposals is available on our website. Click the link at the bottom of the page:
<http://sites.google.com/site/assocforconstructteaching/Home>

Webinar Committee: Organize and host a minimum of three online webinars per year; manage online survey.

- Karen Lindebrekke has researched potential resources to host our upcoming webinars. News of the lineup will be available to members soon. Kate Chechak and Alice Wakefield will be helping Karen with the promotion of our ACT webinars. We agreed not to charge for webinars, keeping them open as invitations for non-members to join ACT.

Newsletter

- Editor, Jane Broderick is seeking “From the Field” articles from members, non-refereed works about your practice. Send submissions to broderic@etsu.edu
- **Interview Authors:** Volunteers interested in writing interview articles of Board members for upcoming newsletters please contact Jane at: broderic@etsu.edu

Membership Committee

- **Chair:** Jim Pelech has taken over this role and we have a number of new members who registered in January and February!

Website Committee:

- Michael Garrett, a new member and Ph.D. student at East Tennessee State University, has agreed to support the organization as a website manager. With his background in digital media he has the skills to take over once our site redesign is complete.

Thank you all for your support in the work of ACT,
~ the ACT Board

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Our Mission: is to enhance the growth of all educators and students through identification and dissemination of effective constructivist practices in both the professional cultures of teachers and the learning environments of children. It is also to advance educators' understanding of Piaget's constructivism as a scientific theory that explains how human beings construct knowledge and moral values.

Membership: is open to anyone who is interested in the field of education. ACT Members are classroom teachers, administrators, supervisors, consultants, college and university personnel, students, parents and retired educators. They live all over the USA and in Mexico, Japan, Australia, Canada, Brazil, and China.

Benefits of Membership...

THE ACT BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER ... interviews, articles on practice, and book reviews

THE CONSTRUCTIVIST...An educational e-journal and journal archive.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE...discounted registration fee and early notice of call for presenters

AFFILIATION...with an association committed to supporting you. To join, please fill out the [membership form](#) on our new

website: <http://sites.google.com/site/assocforconstructteaching/Home>

WEBINARS FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ... *new in 2011 – dates to be announced in our next newsletter.* We plan on three per year, free to members and for a fee to non-members

Our Website: Our new site is currently under construction as we move locations from our previous site. Our most current journal can be found at the new site while our archives are still located at our former location. We will update with information as this transition finalizes.

- New site: <http://sites.google.com/site/assocforconstructteaching/Home>
- Former site: <http://www.odu.edu/educ/act/>

2011 Annual Conference in at the University of Houston Hilton. Download the Call for Proposals at: <http://sites.google.com/site/assocforconstructteaching/Home>

Our Journal: *The Constructivist*

As we continue our reviews for the next edition of *The Constructivist*, we encourage you to consider sharing your experiences and inquiries with us. Whether in the area of practice or research, we welcome your submissions.

- Contact our editor, Amy Malkus, at malkus@etsu.edu for more information.

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Rosemary Geiken, ACT Newsletter copy editor: geiken@esu.edu