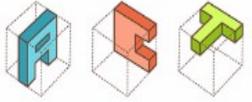


ASSOCIATION FOR
CONSTRUCTIVIST
TEACHING



2021 ACT Newsletter

- ✓ In this edition of the ACT Newsletter, memories from the October 2020 conference are shared.
- ✓ A message from the Association of Constructivist Teaching's Board, ACT's Solidarity Statement, is shared.
- ✓ Past ACT President **James Pelech** reflects on his history with ACT.
- ✓ From the Field – **Meir Muller** uses a constructivist lens to help children understand complex topics that can be difficult to discuss.
- ✓ Reminder: Submit your article drafts!
- ✓ Coming up: **2021 ACT Conference**
- ✓ We want to welcome newest ACT Board Member, **Dr. James Foss!**

Association for Constructivist Teaching, October 24, 2020 Birmingham, Alabama

In light of the many unpredictable challenges associated with COVID-19, ACT hosted its first-ever virtual conference focusing on the themes of peace, justice, equity, and equality in the classroom.

- Board members **Kelly Russell** (*pictured right*), **Gay Barnes**, and **Taylor Eads** from Alabama hosted the conference and organized meaningful opportunities for conference attendees.
- A special “thank you” goes to **Tim Constant** for his organizational, logistical, and technological contributions for the 2020 ACT Conference.



Conference Highlights:

Thank you to ACT Board Member Tim Constant, who:

- Contacted over 10,000 educators from PK through post-secondary by phone call, email, social media, and LinkedIn leading to 380 people registering for the conference, many for the first time, from 45 states, 2 U.S territories, and three countries
- Contacted faculty at colleges and universities about student scholarship opportunities leading to 64 students on scholarship
- Solicited educators to submit conference proposals with a focus on the diversification of speakers and topics
- Reviewed conference proposals and made recommendations for acceptance
- Identified the technology structure for the virtual conference and how information would be structured on the website
- Worked with the website developer to publish and update conference information including speaker pictures and bios to the website
- Conducted four conference speaker orientation sessions to prepare speakers for the conference
- Organized a conference and technology rehearsal session the day prior to the conference to review assignments and answer questions

2020 Conference Memories

- Conference-goers engaged in conversations about the meaning and role of “peace,” “justice,” “equity,” and “equality” in the classroom.
- A portion of the conference fee from the event was donated to the Southern Poverty Law Center.

- Pictured are Keynote Speakers:

- Dr. Christopher Edmin (*left*)

- Dr. Martin Nalls (*right*)





Some of the 2020 ACT Workshop Speakers...

ACT Solidarity Statement

- **A message from the Association of Constructivist Teaching's Board**
- The Association of Constructivist Teaching joins other organizations around the country who are outraged at the recent racial injustices including the murder of George Floyd. We stand in solidarity with the black community that have for far too long have suffered rampant racism and unfair applications of the law.
- We know that our words of love are not enough and action is required. Dr. Martin Luther King stated, "There comes a time when silence is betrayal." The following are some general and specific actions that our organization commits to:
 1. As constructivist teachers we pledge ourselves to working with students to construct an understanding of racial equity in our world.
 2. To foster this construction of knowledge we are refocusing our fall conference to include a strand on equity and activism. We will extend the proposal deadline to allow for robust submissions.
 3. During the conference we will have break out groups hosted by board members to discuss issues of racial equity in education.
- These are just a few examples of the type of work we commit to do. We do this because we are responsible to create space in our classrooms, schools, and communities to speak and act against injustice and racism in our world.

Past President Interview: James Pelech

When Pelech was working on his Certificate of Advanced Studies, he came upon the Constructivist philosophy while browsing through one of the text books. He started reading on his own and realized he was implementing those same principles without realizing it. He did his final CAS project on Constructivism, which also became one of the themes of his dissertation.

As a high school math teacher, he went to an ACT conference in Saint Louis to see what he could learn. There, people encouraged him to present the next year in Atlanta. On a whim, he submitted...and was accepted.



Making Meaningful Connections through ACT

At the Atlanta conference, he met Linda Kroll, a former ACT President who encouraged him to be on the Board, thinking that ACT needed more high school teachers. Pelech served on the Board and during this time moved from the high school to Benedictine University where he finished his dissertation.

Pelech worked with Dr. Jane Broderick as her President-Elect, who gave him a great opportunity to learn and grow in terms of Constructivism, ACT, and leadership. Pelech states, “Anything that was accomplished while I was President was due to the fabulous people who were on the Board and the great members.”



Pelech reflects on ACT's Accomplishments

- Updated ACT's technology/web page and administrative procedures.
- Initiated the practice of honoring founding members/past presidents at the annual conference.
- Reached out to European educators and had them attend (Poland and the Czech Republic) the conference. It must be noted that the educator from Poland invited Pelech to be a Fulbright Specialist to Charles University in Prague the Spring.
- Worked with another Constructivist organization and had them present at a couple of conferences.
- As President, Pelech made it a priority to meet with every presenter at the conference.
- “What I have learned from Board members and from conferences has helped me write two books on Constructivism and Board members have encouraged me to write my third book on using Constructivism as the foundation for Action Research (hopefully out in Fall of 2020).”



From the Field with Meir Muller

As Head of the Cutler Jewish Day School and assistant professor in USC's College of Education, I work daily with children and future educators on difficult topics such as antisemitism, racism and bias. I am often asked if children are too young to discuss these complex issues or if they are too "innocent". I use a constructivist lens and Piaget's semi-clinical interview to understand what schema young children have of these topics. However, unlike a less emotionally charged issue there are steps I offer that might assist educators or families in speaking with children about these topics.

Dear Legislators,
We think you should
Move Ben Tillman's monument
HE WAS MENANTO BLK
PEOPLE.
HE WAS VERY SELFISH.
He didnt let BLK
people vote.
Why did you make Ben Tillman
monument?
If we can't move the monument,
maybe you can inform people that
he wasn't a good man and make
sure people know the whole story.

To Whom it may concern,
Ben Tillman was a Bad MAN! So please get rid of
his monument! Because.....

1. he was Bad!
2. he did NOT like Black people and he make fun of them
3. if people come they could fillon comfortable and they may not like hear.

Sincerely

P.S. once you get Bidot it make
it of hillry Clinton.

Bye
↙ ↘

Dear legislators,

Hi, we are

and we are
3rd grade students
in Columbia. We think
that there shouldn't be a
monument of Ben Till-
man on the State house
grounds because he believe
that white people are
better than the black
people. People might assume
that we support this, but
we really want everyone
to be treated like
equals. We thank you
for your time and hope
you can get back
to us on this

Steps for Families and Educators:

- Adults should first process their own feelings so that when they speak to younger people, they are clear on what they feel and think.
- With very young children, a simple message of a few sentences is more appropriate than a story with details. For instance, “A bad thing happened at a synagogue, church, mosque, school it is very sad because people were hurt and people were killed.”
- Next, allow children to ask questions. Remember that children process information by asking questions repeated times.
- It is important to validate the child’s feelings and respond with a message that will help the child feel secure. For instance, one might say, “I understand that what happened was scary but know the adults in your life will do as much as they can to keep you safe and that most people will never have something like that occur to them.”
- Check back with the child at a later date (a day or even week later) to see if there are any other questions or unresolved feelings.
- Discuss and plan actions that the child and family can do to counter intolerance and prejudice.
- The last suggestion can facilitate children in being activists against injustice. The photos accompanying this article show children’s letters to legislatures requesting the removal of racist statues, a similar approach can be used to confront anti-Semitism. Using this type of method is consistent with best practices of constructivist educators, enabling adults to understand children’s thinking, and co-constructing ways to make our world a more just place.

Coming Up – 2021 ACT Conference



OCTOBER 23-24, 2021

ST. MARGARET'S EPISCOPAL SCHOOL
SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO, CA

38th Annual
ACT CONFERENCE 2021

*Constructivism: Innovating, Improvising, Assimilating
and Accommodating in Our Changing World*

Proposal Submission: TBA
Learn More at acteducators.com

Announcements & Reminders

- Congratulations to Dr. Hong and Dr. Broderick on their new book, *From Children's Interests to Children's Thinking: Using a Cycle of Inquiry to Plan Curriculum*.
- Congratulations to Dr. James Foss for joining the ACT Board!
- Remember to register for the upcoming 2021 ACT Conference...
- For Newsletter announcements, please send to Dr. Randa Dunlap at Randa.Dunlap@usca.edu.

