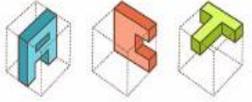


ASSOCIATION FOR
CONSTRUCTIVIST
TEACHING



Spring 2021 ACT Newsletter

- ✓ In this edition of the ACT Newsletter, hear from President **Dr. Seong Bock Hong** and meet your 2021 speakers! **Dr. Cris Lozon** and her team plan this year's conference.
- ✓ Past President **Dr. Jacqueline Grennon Brooks** reflects on her history with ACT and shares goals moving forward.
- ✓ From the Field: **Sonia Semana** shares work from the Child Development & Educational Studies Lab School at Fullerton College in Fullerton, CA.
- ✓ ACT remembers Lifetime Board Member, **Dr. Calvert Schlick, Jr.**
- ✓ Welcome to our newest board member, **Dr. David Kritt!**
- ✓ Reminders:
 - ✓ 2021 Conference registration
 - ✓ Submit article drafts to Dr. Kelly Russell
 - ✓ Send newsletter announcements to Dr. Randa Dunlap (Randa.Dunlap@usca.edu)
 - ✓ Follow ACT on social media, or check out our website: <https://acteducators.com/>

From the President: **Dr. Seong Bock Hong**



Dear ACT Friends and Colleagues,

I hope this newsletter finds all of you and your family well. This past year has been incredibly trying for all of us. However, despite the difficulties it has brought this organization, the ACT has not been without its successes this year. A silver lining of challenging times is that it often presents an opportunity for experimentation and growth that would not occur as quickly in its absence. The pandemic spurred considerable work in updating the organization digital and social media footprint. In particular, despite real fears that we would be unable to hold our annual conference, the ACT board rose to the challenge and held its first all-virtual conference with spectacular results. We were able to gather more of our colleagues from across the US to continue our discussions about social justice issues in a constructivist setting that proved timely given the concurrent events.

To build on last year's success, the ACT board is in the process of preparing the 38th annual, and second virtual, conference that will be hosted by St. Margaret's Episcopal School, San Juan Capistrano, CA, on October 23 and 24. As a leader in constructivist education, the ACT has been actively extending and deepening the focus of the organization on social justice issues for some time now. As such, we will be expanding our focus on this area and the theme of the conference will be, "Constructivist Teaching is Social Justice Teaching." We are also incredibly excited to announce our three keynote speakers for the upcoming conference. The lineup of keynotes are Dr. Cathy Fosnot, Dr. Carolyn Hildebrandt, and Dr. Sandra. J. Stone. Each scholar's work is inspiring and thought provoking, further details about our speakers can be found in this issue and on the ACT website. A great conference requires not just great keynote speakers, but great session presenters. If you are interested in presenting at the 2021 conference, please check the proposal submission guidelines at <https://acteducators.com/2021-conference/>

Also, in this issue, we have an interview of Dr. Jacqueline Grennon Brooks, a former president of the ACT discussing her history with the ACT and her latest published book. It is a rich source of information that is sure to enhance the work of constructivist education. Another highlight that I also hope you will enjoy is a field interview piece with Sonia Semana who is the director of the Child Development and Educational Studies Lab School at Fullerton College. On a personal note, I had the pleasure of working with her this past year and found her to be a critical thinker and reflective leader and I thoroughly enjoyed working with her.

Last, it is with great sadness that I must announce the recent loss of our dear friend and colleague, Dr. Calvert Schlick, Jr. He has touched the lives of so many of us through his dedication to the ACT organization and he will be missed.

Sincerely,

Seong Bock Hong

President, Association for Constructivist Teaching

Meet your keynote speakers for the 2021 ACT Conference:

Following the momentum of last year's first-ever virtual conference, **Dr. Cris Lozon** (*pictured lower right*) and her team have taken the lead in planning the 2021 conference with a powerful lineup of keynote speakers:

- **Dr. Cathy Fosnot**
 - *Presentation topic – Social Justice during Math Workshops*
- **Dr. Carolyn Hildebrandt**
 - *Presentation topic – Our Journey Towards Justice*
- **Dr. Sandra J. Stone**
 - *Presentation topic – The Social Constructivist Context of Play*



Dr. Cathy Fosnot

Cathy Fosnot is Professor Emerita of Childhood Education at the City University of NY and the past Founding Director of Mathematics in the City. She is currently President of Catherine Fosnot & Associates: New Perspectives and the senior author of *Contexts for Learning Mathematics* (now a core curriculum k-5, comprised of 54 units). She is also the author of many journal articles and 10 books, the most recent *Conferring with Young Mathematicians at Work*. Her work has received many awards, among them the Significant Contribution Award from the American Educational Research Association SIG on Constructivism (which she received twice) and the Teacher of the Year Award from CCNY. She is a frequent keynoter around the world.



Dr. Carolyn Hildebrandt

Carolyn Hildebrandt is a Professor of Psychology at University of Northern Iowa. A long-time member of ACT, she has served on the Board of Directors and as Editor of *The Constructivist*. She coauthored the book, *Developing Constructivist Early Childhood Curriculum: Practical Principles and Activities*, along with numerous articles, chapters, and curricular modules with Rheta DeVries, Betty Zan, and other members of Regent's Center for Early Developmental Education. Her main areas of interest are social and moral development, musical development, group games, critical thinking, and constructivist approaches to early developmental education.



Dr. Sandra J. Stone

Dr. Sandra J. Stone is Professor Emeritus at Northern Arizona University. She founded the National Multiage Institute, an international leader in providing professional development for educators from all over the world. Dr. Stone is the author of the books *Playing: A Kid's Curriculum* (GoodYear Books), *Creating the Multiage Classroom* (GoodYear Books) and *Understanding Multiage Education* (Stone & Burriss; Routledge, 2019). Based on her research, she has written multiple articles on play, symbolic play, and literacy and play. Dr. Stone is past editor for the *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*.



Remember to register for the 2021 ACT Conference!



OCTOBER 23-24, 2021

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

Conference Theme –

**Social Justice Teaching
is
Constructivist Teaching**

38th Annual
ACT CONFERENCE 2021

Interview with Dr. Jacqueline Grennon Brooks:

Past ACT President **Dr. Jacqueline Grennon Brooks** shared her history with ACT along with some of her views on education and goals for this organization moving forward. Brooks came to her very first ACT Board meeting nearly thirty-three years ago, and she remembered this time fondly. Recalling that she was starting her family and expecting her second child, she referred to this first meeting as a “vacation day” to be able to discuss such important topics with her ACT colleagues.

When Brooks joined ACT, it was a regional organization primarily focused in the Northeastern United States (Brooks herself has spent much of her professional career working with Hofstra University in Long Island, New York). She remembers early collaborations with constructivist colleagues such as Catherine Fosnot (this year’s keynote speaker for the annual ACT Conference), Lifetime Board Member Calvert Shlick, Jr., George Forman, and others. Now, ACT serves members across the entire United States and is recognized as an international organization. Dr.

Brooks recognized the need to continue to be proactive with the use of technology and social media as platforms to reach larger populations of educators.



“This has been the best day of my life...”

When asked to describe some of her career highlights related to constructivism, Dr. Brooks explained how she has offered multiple teacher preparation programs and created labs with the goal of ensuring that curriculum and approaches were aligned with the understanding of student learning. She has been quite versatile in her career, working with young, new teachers as well as senior, veteran teachers and children—all with an emphasis on creative thinking of the next generation. This work has given her the opportunity to “remain optimistic” about future generations of learners. Brooks remembered working at one of the lab schools, and a child came up to her and said, “This has been the best day of my life!” Brooks explained this child had not had the best day because of “expensive entertainment, fancy dinners, or frills”; instead, it was the best day because the child had the opportunity to build something based on own designs with the challenge of solving problems by collaborating with friends.

Goals moving forward...

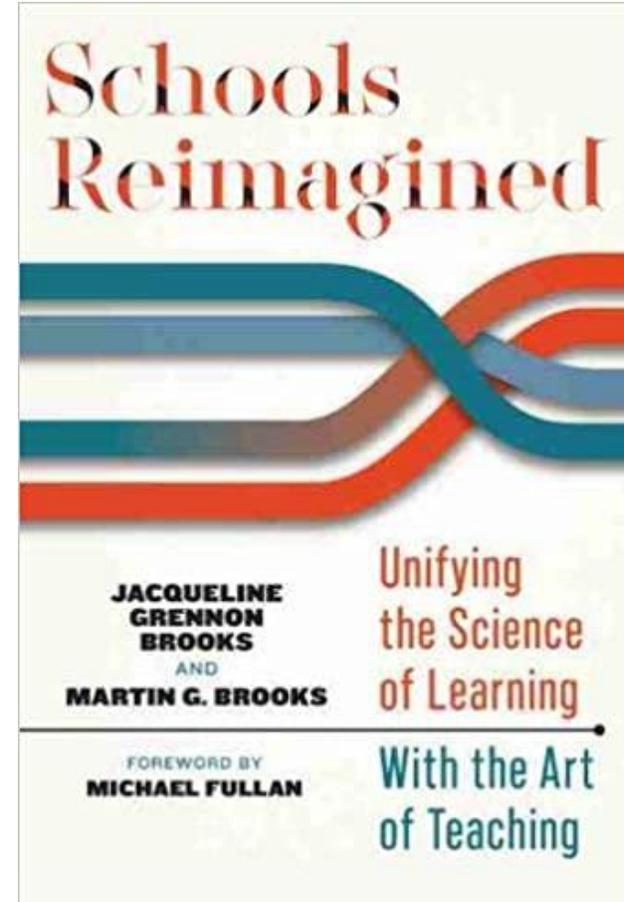
Dr. Brooks was asked to identify her goals for ACT moving forward, to which she answered, “For young people to carry on the rebirth of our organization” and to “reach a larger audience.” This particular question brought up the fact that a couple of major themes for ACT’s first-ever virtual conference last year were equity and social justice. Brooks reiterated that “Social justice teaching is constructivist teaching,” and it is “critically important” that we as educators “value each learner as a unique thinker.” She explained that social justice teaching means that everyone in the classroom “has the opportunity to grow, without constraints, without labels, and without prejudice.” Thus, a goal that Dr. Brooks has for ACT is to raise awareness and to help the general public reframe their understanding of education. She continued, “All of us can learn in many ways and help the general public to understand divergent educational purposes.” She also referred to school as a “concept,” not a “building.”

When asked what one thing she would change in education if she could, she believed this to be a “fascinating question,” and she thought about the need for teachers to meet learners where they are; moreover, she emphasized the need for teachers to listen to children’s understanding of specific topics so that they could make the learning environment “more inclusive, more robust.” She did mention assessment, expressing the belief that eliminating tests “will not necessarily change the teaching dynamic,” meaning that teachers will still address all content, but perhaps in more meaningful, authentic ways or meeting learners where they are.

New publication and current work with ACT:

Dr. Brooks has a new publication—a book she co-authored with her husband, Martin G. Brooks (foreword by Michael Fullan), entitled *Schools reimagined: Unifying the science of learning with the art of teaching*. Brooks and Brooks previously wrote their first book together, *In search of understanding: A case for constructivist classrooms*, almost twenty-five years ago. Both books could serve as excellent resources for educators teaching all grade levels with the user-friendly format and plethora of helpful visuals.

Currently, Dr. Brooks is playing an integral part in helping to plan this year's conference, and she has proven to be an asset to ACT for over three decades and counting.



From the Field with Director Sonia Semana

Sonia Semana, Director of the Child Development & Educational Studies Lab School at Fullerton College (Fullerton, California), shares her work with teachers and the Cycle of Inquiry.

The Fullerton College Lab School has been a research and forward thinking institution since 1959. The CDES Lab School is a constructivist, Reggio Inspired and Nature Based School. We have a mixed age group environment with children between the ages of 2-6 years old in both Lab School classrooms. Our license capacity is 60 with diverse children from both student, faculty, and community.

My name is Sonia Semana and I am the Fullerton College Lab School Director and College Professor at Grossmont College.



COI: Tool for digging deeper into children's thinking...

When the pandemic hit, Lab School had an opportunity to really think about what working with children really meant. We have always considered this, but the pandemic helped us think about this topic in relation to a new changing climate. How do we value children's ideas and thinking during a time of a pandemic? What support system do we create to help children find their voice? What is driving our work and who are we doing this for?

Early in the pandemic, we had the opportunity to work with Dr. Broderick and Dr. Hong on the cycle of inquiry (COI). The COI became a tool for us to truly dive into our work with children. We expanded this work by inviting other adults to think with us. We created a five part seminar series for educator and invited educators from around the United States to think together. We used (COI) as our tool for digging deeper into children's thinking. What we learned was that we all wanted the same thing. What is the best way to support children thinking?

NAMES:	PHOTO IMAGE	MEMOS:
Distinguish teachers' names from children's.	Insert images that capture the processes of children's play noted in preceding pages. Consider the way the child sees the processes, steps in the child's thinking process, and the child's technique with materials.	Raise your questions about the meanings of children's actions and words. Why did they do/say this? What do they know?

	<i>Tim walks with group to Speedy's habitat and brings him down to the riverbed.</i>	
Tim	Okay, watch closely and see how Speedy moves across the rocks. I wonder if your ideas will be right?	
OWEN	Look, see?! He can climb the rocks. It just the little ones!	
		
ELLIE	Oh yeah, good guess Owen.	
OWEN	Teacher Tim, I know Chippy is only 1 years old. How old is Speedy?	
Tim	He's twenty years old.	
OWEN	Twenty is bigger than one, right?	
Tim	Yes, twenty is more than one. Are you wondering something about their ages?	
OWEN	If twenty is bigger than one, and Chippy is only one, how come Chippy is bigger than Speedy?	
Tim	Hmmm...that's a great question. Does anyone know?	
JACKSON	Not me. I don't know that.	
OWEN	I think maybe...maybe because Chippy lived at the pet store longer? And maybe he grew there because Speedy was living here?	
Tim	Let me see if I understand what you're guess is. You think that Chippy lived at a pet store longer than Speedy <u>did</u> ? And that living at a pet store for longer times helps turtles and tortoises grow bigger?	
OWEN	I don't know. I think maybe...	

Example of the teachers documented children's thinking...

NAMES:	DESCRIPTION:	MEMOS:
Distinguish teachers' names from children's.	WORDS —Not in parentheses ACTIONS —(in parentheses)	Raise your questions about the meanings of children's actions and words. Why did they do/say this? What do they know?

JACKSON	That was actually my idea Teacher Tim. Can I tell you?	
Tim	Oh yes, please do. What were you thinking about when you were wondering about Speedy and Chippy?	
JACKSON	Actually...I was just thinking that Speedy cannot climb so good like Chippy does. You know why? It's because he can't even reach the rocks? You know why? It's because his legs are super tiny short! Does anybody have any questions?	<i>Jackson seems to be agreeing with Owen that size does effect skill set. His thinking is different, though, because he is stating that size does not inhibit using a specific set of skills, just in a different way.</i>
RAYLYNN	But he [Speedy] can still climb! Just smaller rocks; the smaller rocks only!	
OWEN	Yeah like if I'm smaller, I have to climb smaller rocks but like...like my Daddy, he can probably climb bigger rocks because he's bigger. Or any grown up. Bigger people can climb bigger rocks so just like...bigger turtles can climb bigger rocks. And also because of the feet.	<i>Owen is relating tortoise sizes to his own life.</i>
ELLIE	Feet?!	
OWEN	Because...you know...Chippy has bigger feet. So he can climb better because of his feet.	
RAYLYNN	And he has bigger claws for grabbing things.	
Tim	Okay, so what I'm hearing from all of your ideas is that bigger turtles are better climbers than smaller turtles because they have bigger legs, feet, and claws? But smaller turtles can still climb too as long as the rocks aren't too big?	
JACKSON	Oh yeah, isn't that a good idea?	
ELLIE	It's a great idea!	
OWEN	Yeah! I can sketch the idea!	
	<i>Owen's sketches of Speedy and Chippy and a "close up" of their feet and claws:</i>	
JACKSON	Maybe we should let Speedy climb around here. Does anyone have any questions about that?	
ELLIE	Oh sure, let's do that. Can we go get him Teacher Tim?	

NAMES:	DESCRIPTION:	MEMOS:
Distinguish teachers' names from children's.	WORDS —Not in parentheses ACTIONS —(in parentheses)	Raise your questions about the meanings of children's actions and words. Why did they do/say this? What do they know?

Tim	Does anyone remember when we were watching Chippy the other day? He was walking and climbing the rocks in the riverbed?	
OWEN	I remember! I remember because I was climbing next to him!	
Tim	That's right! I remember that too. Can you tell me more about that? What were you thinking when you were climbing next to him?	
OWEN	I was thinking that I better be careful because I don't want to slip and fall of the big rocks.	<i>I wonder if Owen was thinking about what Chippy might have been thinking about?</i>
Tim	Oh yah, I'm so glad you were being thoughtful about that. Can you tell me anything else? Did you fall?	
OWEN	No.	
Tim	What about Chippy? Did Chippy fall?	
OWEN	Nope. He was climbing so good.	
Tim	I noticed that too! He was a great climber. What do you think makes Chippy a good climber?	
OWEN	It's because he has long legs...yah...that's what I think. <u>Wait, wait</u> , that's what I know.	
Tim	Yeah, I was wondering about his legs and if they helped him climb well. Ellie, you were there too, look. See? That's you in this photo. Do you remember anything about this?	<i>Where did Owen come up with this idea that size directly correlates with having a better skill set?</i>
ELLIE	Oh <u>yes</u> I do. What I remember is that Chippy is such a good climber. I saw people climbing rocks when I went to Zion and then Chippy...well he's just here but he was climbing so good. And then I climbed the rocks next to him, but I move fast and Chippy is just a little bit slower than me.	
Tim	I remember the other <u>day</u> , you were saying something about Speedy? How Speedy is different <u>than</u> Chippy? Can you tell me about that idea?	<i>Ellie focused on Chippy's speed the other day and brought it up again today. Why is this important to her?</i>

Reflections on what was learned:

We quickly found out what is best for children can only be learned by listening to children and creating a space to for their ideas to grow. We learned that it was only through intentional observation and reflection that we were truly going to be able to design an environment that can support children.

For the Lab School team, this meant building an online platform to encourage children to ask questions and work collaboratively. This required much reflection and documentation. The Lab School team learned much about what children were capable of through their ongoing reflective pedagogical practice. Children in the online platform used open-ended materials or loose parts to create their own stories and characters. They designed ramps from found material to test their theories on velocity and worked though understanding the impact of inclines.

Onsite, the children explored how weight might impact movement by observing and engaging in a month study of movement with a tortoise and box turtle. Children worked with spatial understanding by creating maps of the our outdoors environment to locate “hidden treasures.” Children also worked with a landscape architect to create what the children called, “a rainbow garden.”

We see our work with children as a pedagogical approach to ongoing professional development. There is much to see and learn if we take a moment to analyze children’s thinking. This is also has given us an opportunity for a better pedagogical understanding about learning.

In Remembrance:
ACT Lifetime Board Member
Dr. Calvert Schlick, Jr.

ACT would like to honor the memory of Dr. Calvert “Cal” Schlick, Jr., who passed away in February this year.

“Cal was a man of extraordinary talents who touched the lives of many people. His intelligence, his creativity, his athleticism, his sense of humor, his empathy, and his zest for life were hallmarks of his long, rich life.”

Special “thank you” to Dr. Joanne Falinski for sharing Cal’s photo and story.

