

## **Pandemic Considerations in Literacy Research & Teaching**

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and reimagining our future

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[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

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## *Pandemic Considerations in Literacy Research & Teaching*

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### *Introducing the Special Section*

The COVID-19 pandemic shifted the ways in which language and literacy teaching and learning were facilitated and negotiated: at a distance, online, with social distancing, and in hybrid spaces. Wong et al. (2022) demonstrated how the pandemic brought about rapid change in teacher development particularly in relation to digital literacies. Li and Sun's (2023) research during the pandemic found that students' social emotional learning, student driven design and multimodality were important aspects of English Language Learners' educational experiences. We know that language and literacy practices are instruments of power and are inherently political (Comber, 2001; Janks, 2009; Luke, 2018)—within and beyond the COVID-19 Pandemic. With a return to classroom spaces, we are curious to see how these new insights and learning impact teaching language and literacy in the classroom. This has led us to ponder how have language and literacy researchers and teachers adapted and responded to Pandemic conditions?

Building from the 2022 Language and Literacy Researchers of Canada pre-conference that took place online, this special section of *Language & Literacy* includes new and established language and literacy scholars writing about the intersections between language, literacies, and pandemic pedagogies, both face-to-face as well as in the digital realm. Together, the authors in the special section have offered multiple reflections on language, literacies, and teaching amidst the pandemic and building from the “exquisite conversations” held at the 2022 Language and Literacy Researchers of Canada pre-conference.

### *Overview of the Contributions*

The first article in the special section is Sylvia Chanda Kalindi, Susan Brigham and George Frempong's “It takes a village: Investigating the scaffolding strategies of writing development to support early literacy among Nova Scotians of African descent communities.” The authors detail that numerous stakeholders, including community organizations, government officials, parents, guardians, and educators, who have expressed concerns regarding the educational “achievement gap” between learners of African descent and white learners in Nova Scotia. Theorizing alongside the African proverb “It takes a village”, the article details research with parents, extended family members, and caregivers of children aged 4 to 6 years. The authors investigate the strategies stakeholders employed and the experiences they encountered while supporting children's emergent writing skills during the COVID-19 pandemic through surveys and focus groups. They discuss the important role of community and technology in supporting literacy development, specifically, writing skills in children. The second contribution in the Special Section, “Beyond the Observable: Conceptions and realizations of enacted multiliteracies in Ontario Social Studies Curriculum - One Multi-verse of Madness” comes from Carol Doyle-Jones and Terry Loerts. Their article delves into the personal experience of a single teacher, shedding light on their role in expanding our comprehension of the opportunities and limitations presented by technology, materials, and relational dynamics during the recent transformation in pandemic-era teaching. The pandemic wrought substantial changes in curriculum implementation, affecting the learning environment, subject matter, and the dynamics between educators and students. This article explores a

teacher's pandemic-driven pedagogical landscape within a sixth-grade classroom. The insights gleaned from this experience contribute to helping us learn from the past, navigate the present, and continue shaping the future of effective instruction in an elementary school setting.

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