

Editorial
Jo Williams and Tom Griffiths*

Welcome to the first issue of *Breaking Out. A Journal of Schools, Community and Social Justice*. This journal is intended for everyone who thinks that education is not a market good to be bought, sold and traded, but rather a public good that enables agency, social justice and change.

It is a journal for those who want to make a difference, but understand that our individual efforts are only as good as the collective action they are part of.

* Jo is a former secondary music and drama teacher now working in teacher education at Victoria University. She is a co-founder of the Popular Education Network Australia. Tom is an associate professor of comparative and international education at the University of Newcastle. His work is focused on the relationship between mass schooling and social transformation, and the potential for schooling to contribute to the transition of our current world-system towards a more peaceful, equal, just and democratic alternative.

We hope that this publication can follow and continue what is a long and rich tradition of radical, progressive and critical thinking and practice in education in Australia, and ideally make a contribution to the development of a stronger and better articulated critical, alternative, cross-sectoral voice in education. We also hope that the journal encourages and fosters dialogue between all those with an interest.

In this sense, *Breaking Out* takes inspiration from the *Radical Education Dossier/ Education Links* magazine. Created in June 1976, for 30 years the magazine linked teachers, activists and academics in progressive critiques of schooling, and in developing actions, interventions and practices to reshape schooling and its function in society.

The main purposes of *Breaking Out* are beautifully articulated by internationally renowned educator, artist and activist, Antonia Darder from the US. [Her introduction to this journal](#) reminds us what is at stake: the urgent need to tap into and expand the critical potential for education to build critical understandings of injustice; and to develop and promote the associated collective actions to transform social reality.

Our first issue is a humble attempt at kicking off such an ambitious project and includes articles on a diversity of key issues in contemporary education, written by students, teachers, parents, academics and community members.

Tony Kruger's work in schools and tertiary education in Melbourne's west has for several decades focused on how education affects and is affected by social and economic relationships. His article asks us to consider what [taking the standpoint of the least advantaged students](#) in our classes might mean for their authentic and successful participation - as a starting point for thinking through education for social justice.

Alex Stevens presents [a political critique of the aid funding the Australian government ostensibly spends on education projects internationally](#), revealing the increasing power of edu-business and the shift away from donations and programs of solidarity and capacity-building to a narrower agenda of privatisation and the commodification of every aspect of education. Lea Campbell's article raises issues around the [public provision of schooling](#), highlighting the experiences of the community-based campaign alliance '*Our Children, Our Schools (OCOS)*'.

Community education activist James Tonson puts the case for [why we must continue to oppose Australia's main standardised testing program, NAPLAN](#), given its diagnostic inadequacy and worse, its role in fostering competition rather than cooperation between schools, its anti-learning impact in schools and its grossly inequitable outcomes. We've also provided some [additional materials to support further education and action on this issue](#), drawing on resources made available by the *Say No To NAPLAN* coalition. Accompanying these two pieces is an article from an inner-urban parent explaining [why she chose to withdraw her child from the NAPLAN process](#).

Our first issue also showcases four pieces from local teachers. A secondary English teacher writes about [the power of reflection through creative writing](#), and how such creative work informs and inspires us as educators. All too often teachers' creativity is

stifled by the burden of heavy workloads and an ever-increasing amount of administrivia. She argues however, that it must be seen as fundamental to developing and maintaining good pedagogy, and that time and space for teachers to undertake this work together as a learning community is critical. Jorge Jorquera, a primary teacher, challenges us to think about the role of teachers as community leaders who [nurture working class intellectuals](#).

As part of our intention to provide space for teachers to share the ways they engage in critical practice in schools, Kate Habgood, a secondary English and Humanities teacher shares her thinking on [the question of students and political literacy](#). We also include '[The Dot Point Hunter](#)', a sharply satirical piece that takes a humourous look at the bureaucratisation of schools and leadership while also highlighting the dark side of the introduction of competition and performativity into teachers' work. It is critical that such voices are heard to counter the narratives of the 'good teacher' and 'effective management', and more than that, as the author suggests, humour is always an important coping mechanism in the face of dehumanising and disempowering work situations.

In an [interview discussing her and her kids' educational experiences](#), Amelia King points out that not only are Indigenous voices commonly marginalised in mainstream education conversations, but if and when they are included they often focus narrowly on Aboriginal people in remote areas. Teacher Danielle Sandler asks Amelia to reflect on her experiences as a postgraduate student and her key issues of concern in education.

Breaking Out is very much committed to providing a space for student voice, and our first issue includes a piece from the VicSRC on their '[Teach The Teacher](#)' program. The program is generating much discussion and the student authors explain its objectives and reflect on their objective of promoting and fostering student voice, agency and leadership in schools.

Finally, *Breaking Out* takes a distinctly international approach, seeking to make connections with and draw lessons from teachers, students and communities around the world struggling for a more equitable and quality education and indeed society. To that end, this first issue includes an article reflecting on [what teachers can learn from the ten year long Chilean student movement](#).

We hope that each reader finds something, perhaps many things, in this first issue to inspire you to consider distributing and contributing yourself by participating in the *Breaking Out* project; and to paraphrase Mark Twain: *never let your schooling interfere with your education*.