

## FROM THE EDITOR

*Whereas Western art focuses upon the freedom to move images around on paper or canvas to create fixed patterns, origami ignores the separation between the image and the paper. The paper becomes part of the image, and is twisted and folded until it is the picture, not merely the surface on which it lies.*

-John D. Barrow, The Artful Universe

**J**ust as the artist of origami has a different approach to perceiving the relationship between image and paper, the thematic focus of this issue invites inquiry as to whether assessment might adopt similar connecting paradigms. In establishing and executing assessment initiatives, there are places where our focus is predominantly one of separation - our rubrics have multiple levels of competencies, item correlation allows us to maximize the efficiency of our scales, and purpose statements or objectives are arranged in a structured hierarchy. We strive for increased validity and reliability, but even good research techniques possess implications regarding their social, psychological, and educational contexts. There is an ongoing tension between focusing on the trees while at the same time giving appropriate attention to the forest.

As such, it is worth considering, to what extent can assessment also function as a mechanism that connects broader realms rather than one which at times is noted for solely focusing on measurement or standardization? In addition to its dominant descriptive or defining properties, is it possible for assessment to also possess generative properties? I am not positing these philosophical assessment questions to establish rigid dichotomies. In fact, it may be more beneficial for me to ask these of my own assessment practices. While aiming to achieve the utilitarian ideals of efficiency and effectiveness, is it also possible for me to construct my assessments in a manner that advances good human behavioral, educational, and social theory? Is it really possible for me to look at a Scantron sheet in a manner that resembles the philosophical paradigm of the origami artist?

In this vein, the current issue of RPA begins with a special feature by Linn and Chiu who seek to advance the development of science tests in the form of “learning tests.” Learning tests function as learning opportunities to engage students in the knowledge integration process, while at the same time assessing student progress. A second featured piece by Michaels, Hawthorne, Cuevas and Mateev posits that assessment has the potential to connect disparate realms of education policy, specifically the existing information asymmetry between the P-12 and higher education systems. This is followed by a similar P-12/higher education collaborative effort where Barnes and Burchard focus on the construction of the multi-tiered instruction self-efficacy scale (MTISES) for the purpose of improving teacher preparation and development. In their qualitative study, Blaylock and Bresciani seek to explore connections between two-year and four-year institutions for the purpose of addressing transfer student needs. Finally, I would like to draw your attention to a generative art piece entitled “Assessment Day” that is showcased in *Ruminare*, the concluding section of this issue. In Jungian form, it highlights unsolicited student responses to their university testing experience.

Each issue has its backstage performers who warrant special recognition. In this case, I am grateful for the diligent and professional contributions made by: Patrice Brown, Katie Busby, Alysha Clark, Rachel Eby, Kathryne Drezek McConnell, Terrell Perry and each of the contributing authors. As you refine your own contribution for the larger assessment dialogue, I hope you might consider submitting your scholarly piece to *Research & Practice in Assessment*.

Regards,



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