



## ***Policy Futures in Education* Special Issue: Educational Futures**

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### **Call for Papers**

This special issue of *Policy Futures in Education* asks authors to imagine educational futures. What do education, school, teaching, learning, curriculum, and pedagogy look like 10, 20, 50, or 100 years from now? What we are doing today will probably not be what we are doing 50 or 100 years from now. (If it is, we are in big trouble.) Teacher education programs today look much different than they did a century ago. One hundred years

ago they were rooted in the liberal arts, while today they are rooted in technocracy and how to get licensed. So if things look different today than they did 100 years ago, why do we think they'll look the same 100 years from now? There is no better time to consider the future of education than during the current COVID-19 pandemic, when schooling policies and practices around the globe shifted seemingly overnight in large and small ways. It is still unclear as to when and how there will be a return to 'normal' - and even if we want to return to the way things were at the start of 2020. What will society decide to do about education in a post-vaccine age?

One way to think about these issues is futures studies. Based on work developed in the second half of the 20th Century (Bell, 1997; Dator, 2002), futures studies asks a series of questions, the most significant being: what is probable (what is most likely to happen); what is possible (what could happen); and what is preferable (what do you want to have happen). While such futures thinking has often been the purview of policymakers, it has rarely been applied to education and educational policy. Part of the reason for this lack of educational futures thinking lies in the fact that many perceive futures studies to require some level of prediction about the not too distant future. However, I argue that futures thinking should be construed more broadly, and worry not about predicting the future but rather anticipating it, given our contemporary anxieties. There is a creative turn that is currently missing from futures thinking in education, an application of imagination that is evident in other disciplines (such as art, architecture, design, political theory, and technology – see Dunne & Raby, 2013; Frase, 2016; Grove, 2019; Lijster, 2019; and Montfort, 2017), and which education should draw from. This special issue asks authors to anticipate the future of education by imagining it.

Additionally, the best illustrations we have of futures thinking lie in science fiction, and educational futures should be no exception (see Kupferman, 2020a, and Kupferman, 2020b for examples). Science fiction often operates from a position of prefactual thinking - that is, anticipating what might happen should some future event occur. This is different from counterfactual thinking, in which the present is reimagined based on a past event (Sanna, 1996). Authors should adopt a prefactual perspective, and are encouraged to draw on examples from science fiction to imagine scenarios of the future of education.

Sample questions to ask about the future might include (but are by no means limited to):

What if, instead of defunding the police, we defunded all public education?  
What if all university teaching went online and the professoriate was reduced to tech support?  
What if Facebook bought Pearson, and Mark Zuckerberg became the global arbiter of educational content, curriculum, and delivery?  
What if the move to online learning for K-12 during the pandemic of 2020 resulted in a permanent sector of school-age children who never attended school again, either online or in person?  
What if online learning became the only form of schooling and net neutrality was eliminated?  
What if education was divorced from workforce development and future employment?  
What if human engineering eliminated the need for special education?  
What if robot teachers replaced human ones?  
What if knowledge came in pill form?

These scenarios may seem far-fetched or impossible. But, here we are in a pandemic, and schooling across the globe has been disrupted in a way no one would have imagined in the first few months of 2020. We are largely unable to respond to this shift, in both policy and practice, because we never anticipated it. This special issue asks us to imagine different educational futures, and to engage in what Isaac Asimov once called “worthwhile journeys into ignorance.”

Papers should focus on narrative rather than theory, although the narratives should be rooted in theory and the notion of what could be in educational futures. Additionally, authors should focus on one strand of futures thinking: the probable, the possible, or the preferable. Because of the conceptual and creative nature of this special issue, papers can range in length anywhere from 2000 to 10,000 words. All other conventions of academic writing and publishing apply.

Please send all inquiries to the guest editor, David W. Kupferman, at david.kupferman@mnstate.edu

### **Timeline:**

November 15, 2020	Abstracts due in to guest editor (250 words)
December 15, 2020	Notice of accepted abstracts to authors
February 15, 2021	Submission of full manuscripts

### **References**

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