



NARST 94TH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Science Education, a Public Good
for the Good of the Public?

Research to *Empower, Evoke, and Revolutionize*



April 7-10, 2021
Hilton Orlando Hotel
Orlando, Florida



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The Program Chair invites NARST members and others to participate in the 2021 NARST Annual International Conference and to contribute to the 2021 conference by submitting proposals.

THEME:

Science Education, a Public Good for the Good of the Public?
Research to *Empower, Evoke, and Revolutionize*

Science Education, a public good for the good of the public? Research to empower, evoke, and revolutionize is a fitting call for this era of drastic change (e.g., population shifts, prominence of technology, disappearing economies) and daunting challenges (e.g., increased frequency of life-impacting natural and human-inspired disasters). It is a charge to conduct science education research for a socially just world.

A critical look at outcomes reveals a socially unjust world resistant to transformation. Throughout time, science education has been a public good of great value, but only and fully accessible to those society regarded as worthy. For example, in some countries, agencies identified individuals early in their development and tracked them into educational experiences for a life in the sciences with all its privileges (e.g. esteemed status, monetary benefits). In the United States (U.S.), science education for much of its existence was overtly reserved for whites, especially those of economic means. It was a vehicle to develop intellectual disciplines to solve real-world problems, competencies to ensure privileged positions in society for its participants. A version less valued by society, designed to hone vocational skills and socialize for subservient roles, was later expanded to include the poor and provided in scarcely resourced segregated settings for those classified as non-white.

Fast forward to the present: the intent of past practices to exclude is not overt in some countries, including the U.S., but parity in group outcomes has been slow and the historical structures (e.g., financing of education, allocation of resources, segregation and tracking of students) that contribute to outcome disparities remain largely intact. For instance, whites exceed their representation in the U.S. general population in

science education of high currency (e.g., AP courses, science majors) and in heavily resourced settings where high-quality science education is provided from preschool to postsecondary. When viewed from a systems and group perspective, who gets access to which opportunities has remained mostly unaltered across time.

Substantial progress towards a socially just world in which science education is a public good for the good of the public—a public inclusive of all desiring to partake—is elusive. A call for research to empower, evoke, and revolutionize may be heretical to those who believe western science, one foundation of science education, is a universal, objective body of knowledge immune to the frailties of humans who construct it and the sociopolitical contexts in which it is constructed. It may be unsettling for others who see science education strictly through an individual rather than group and complex systems lens and it may be disconcerting to those who adhere to presentism, an ahistorical view that exclusively attributes current conditions to the here and now. Receptive or not, the drastic changes and daunting challenges at this time demand all hands on deck and warrant an equity- and equality-oriented criticality—an intentional, exacting examination to deconstruct and disrupt the status quo privileging a few in pursuit of a socially just world for the many. The time for research to empower (envision beyond the existing boundaries), evoke (think and act boldly in times of ease and turmoil), and revolutionize (abandon the idea good intentions are enough and institute change to achieve equitable and equal outcomes) is now. It is this kind of research the 2021 conference aims to inspire.

Conference Chair: Eileen Carlton Parsons, President

SUBMISSION DEADLINE:

A call for proposals will be distributed and will appear on the NARST website in June 2020 and the proposal system will open thereafter.

The Program Chair or designee must receive your proposals for the 2021 Annual International Conference by **August 15, 2020**.

This deadline allows sufficient time for processing, reviewing, and evaluating the many submitted proposals in a fair manner.