



# **Volatile Knowing: Parents, Teachers, and the Censored Story of Accountability in America's Public Schools**

*Kaia Tollefson*

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## **Volatile Knowing: Parents, Teachers, and the Censored Story of Accountability in America's Public Schools** Kaia Tollefson

Volatile Knowing refers to the potential for positive change that can result when parents and teachers talk with each other about the politics and policies of externally defined accountability mandates in education. This text tells the story of twelve teachers and parents who breached the unofficial but deeply inscribed home/school divide to discuss the current accountability-for-uniformity movement that has overtaken the nation's educational agenda at federal, state, and local levels. This kind of volatile knowing offers hope for progressively-minded citizens: that together, parents and teachers can ignite a new, child-centered movement for accountability and creativity in America's public schools. Volatile Knowing is based on a qualitative case study of a particular group of parents and teachers who studied and discussed information about the accountability movement that is typically censored in mainstream media coverage. The themes that emerged in this study are presented through the lens of Foucault's analysis of the workings of modern power. By making the exercise of hierarchical power visible to readers, it is hoped that Volatile Knowing will prompt an expanding conversation and ongoing study of the ways in which the people's definitional authority in their schools and society can be both lost and found.

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