Language Arts Journal of Michigan

Volume 24
Issue 1 *(Re)Vision*

Article 2

2008

Finding Opportunities in Our (Re)Visions

W. Douglas Baker
Eastern Michigan University

Kia Jane Richmond
Northern Michigan University

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/lajm

Recommended Citation
Baker, W. Douglas and Richmond, Kia Jane (2008) "Finding Opportunities in Our (Re)Visions," *Language Arts Journal of Michigan*: Vol. 24: Iss. 1, Article 2.
Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.9707/2168-149X.1097

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@GVSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Language Arts Journal of Michigan by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@GVSU. For more information, please contact scholarworks@gvsu.edu.

Finding Opportunities in Our (Re)Visions

W. Douglas Baker
Eastern Michigan University

Kia Jane Richmond
Northern Michigan University

Editors

Since the keynote speaker at Michigan Council of Teachers of English's annual conference (October 3) is Barry Lane (author of *After the End* and *Reviser's Toolbox*), we decided that *revision* would be an appropriate theme for the fall issue of *LAJM*. However, through the call for manuscripts we encouraged writers to expand the possibilities of the theme to include "re-seeing" curriculum, or approaches to reading and writing, or policy issues, among other topics.

The opening three articles emerged from teachers who participated in a teacher research group. In the first one, **lisa eddy** describes classroom approaches to literature and composition study, including encouraging students to conduct research outdoors in order for them to reflect on their roles and responsibilities to themselves, to society in general and to the landscape, particularly for the purposes of building a more cooperative, democratic society—and classroom. **Angela Knight** invited her homeroom students to participate in research to learn how they would respond as writers when their writing was not graded. She discovered that students felt less pressure, yet strived to improve; and she realized that students needed a language of writing in order for them to participate more fully in their development as writers. **David Kangas** examined how wikis would provide opportunities for students to compose and to reconceptualize what it means to write, especially by making visible the collaborative nature of writing and how writers often arrive at new understandings of their ideas through interactions with others.

In the final article of this section, **Jeremy Francis** turns us towards a reflection of New Criticism in secondary school classrooms, where teachers often incorporate the theory as "part of a body of basic practices, familiar from their own secondary and undergraduate experiences, rather than [as] an explicit theory." He challenges teachers to consciously revise how they incorporate literary theories, such as New Criticism, and to "develop a more sound aesthetic value system that avoids the technological determinism offered by continued use of a tool that prescribes certain methods or products of work."

In the next section, three writers argue for ways that teachers can lead students to participate in local communities. **Ken Winter**, an experienced newspaper editor and publisher, encourages teachers to expand students' opportunities to engage with news, and he provides a list of possibilities. **Brigitte Knudson** describes how she guided students to respond to local media via letters to the editor by engaging students in a process that positioned them as writers, editors and evaluators of their letters. **Pamela Hollander** and **Justin Hollander** discuss how students can participate in *smart decline* of urban cities, or *shrinkage*, which better articulates "the changes that occur in cities when they depopulate." By engaging in literacy activities and learning a "new language [that] has allowed activists and planners to begin exploring creative and innovative ways for cities to successfully shrink," students can learn how to contribute.

The third section, *Ideas for the Classroom*, is designed to provide teachers with lessons or strategies for the classroom that other teachers have found useful. **Elizabeth Buckhold** describes how she led students to develop appreciation and respect for the classroom and of each other by learning to write notes of gratitude. **Amelia Walker** presents her "fast-paced" reading program and how it leads ELL students, among others, to make connections with texts across boundaries and to learn key reading strategies.

Melissa Israel describes how she discovered a mentor-text approach that energized her students to read and respond to nonfiction texts, an approach that fueled her interest in non-fiction texts. (Knudson and eddy both describe how they have used mentor texts also.) **Susan Anderson** shifts us back to revising written texts and presents an apparently simple, yet principled, strategy she uses with second graders. **Neha Shah** and **Jeffrey Taylor** share how they developed "writing buddies" to help students across grade levels (kindergarten and fifth) improve as writers and social peers. **Cassandra Korinek** shows how "wondering journals" guided her first graders to develop curiosity and research skills towards becoming "experts" on particular topics. Next, **Samantha Andrus-Henry** provides an ambitious curricular proposal that encourages us to re-see and reflect on possibilities for preparing students in high school English classes for reading and writing demands that will be expected of them in college and beyond.

We conclude this issue with a tribute to teacher by **Anne Rubin**, who realized after the passing of one of her teachers the indelible impression made by that educator. Finally, **Jennifer Buehler** invites us to listen to "Text Messages," an exciting new (free!) podcast program from National Council of Teachers of English that introduces perspectives on Young Adult literature, including recently published texts. As you contemplate your classroom, research, or students and read these articles, consider viewing ideas through Lane's metaphorical binoculars, "snapshots" or "thoughtshots," to clarify your vision or observe details that must be addressed in order to create possibilities for you and your students.

CALL FOR PROGRAM PROPOSALS

Michigan Council of Teachers of English
***Bright Ideas* Spring Conference**
Saturday, April 4, 2009
9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
MSU Union, East Lansing, MI

Theme: *The World in a Word*

Keynote Speaker:
Award Winning Young Adult Author
Donna Jo Napoli

Questions or more information:
Contact Reade Dornan at 517-355-7570 or e-mail
BrightIdeasConf@gmail.com

There are two ways to submit your conference proposals:
(1) Paper Submission Deadline:
Postmarked by January 15, 2009

(2) Digital Submission Deadline:
Midnight on January 22, 2009
Submitted online at http://writing.msu.edu/brightideas/