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Editors' Message

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Doors swing, hang, slam, and creak. But ultimately doors open and close, providing us an entrance or exit. Doors serve a tangible function in our world. We exit the doors of our houses each morning. Many of us walk in and out of the coffee shop door on our way to our morning activities. And those of us who are teaching enter the school door, walking on through the doors of our classrooms. We move physically in and out of doors throughout each day. However, doors also function metaphorically. Doors can mean hope, opportunity, and invitation when open; mystery, regret, and brokenness when closed. We can experience the sting of having one shut in our face. We also speak in metaphorical clichés, saying "the door shut on that opportunity," or, "walk through the door and into the light."

Linguist George Lakoff and philosopher Mark Johnson in their seminal text *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) provide convincing evidence that metaphors may actually be people's primary mode of mental operation. They also suggest that the metaphors through which people conceptualize abstract concepts influence the ways in which they understand them.

In education, we use the door metaphor to conceptualize our understandings of reading and writing. As literacy educators we say things like: "reading opens doors to new places and ideas" and "writing opens the door of our mind to alternative perspectives." In fact, many ultimately believe literacy is the door to success. That is, they understand education to be the key factor in one's ability to experience social mobility. Brian Street (1984, 2005) combats this notion through his ideological model in opposition to his autonomous model. The autonomous model assumes that literacy in and of itself is autonomous; literacy alone can create positive effects, social mobility, and success for students. Alternately, the ideological model is more culturally sensitive by positing that literacy is a social practice, not just a technical and neutral skill. Readers create understandings based on needs, background knowledge, and ideological beliefs. Literacy learning is socially constructed and grounded. That is, we need each other and learn from each other. Therefore, education can act as a door for opportunity, but that door is situated in a social context with multiple variables in play.

When discussing metaphors, one of the most important aspects to consider are the roles it creates for self and others (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). In the metaphor of the door, action seems to be a requirement. That is, individuals open and close/slam doors, walk in and out of doors, and push/pull others in and out of doors. In this issue of the *Language Arts Journal of Michigan* we want to consider this metaphor of the door. A hundred years ago a group of educators concerned about the narrowing of the literary canon took action to open a door by organizing the National Council of Teachers of English and launching a tradition of support and advocacy that continues into a new century. The creation of NCTE opened a door, bringing hope, opportunity, and invitation to many who have experienced doors closing in their faces, locking them out and creating brokenness. Today NCTE and affiliates like the Michigan Council of Teachers of English work to keep the door of hope, opportunity, and invitation open to all educators. As NCTE celebrates its 100th anniversary, we invite you to join us in thinking about where we have been, where we are currently, and where we'd like to be in the future. This issue celebrates the ways educators are moving through open doors, working to open closed doors, and exploring the landscape for new doors to enter.

In "Fragmentation, Standardization, and the Wild (Mother) Goose Chase for Educational Productivity and Accountability," Brian White takes a historical look at thinking that has influenced educational practices. He recalls Frank and Lillian Gilbreth, whose innovative parenting practices focused on efficiency were chronicled with good humor by two of their children in the book *Cheaper by the Dozen*. The Gilbreth's scientific, if fanatical, focus on efficiency and standardization serves as a metaphor for current educational practices in which scientific-like study of curriculum has led to standardized assessment and instruction – and fragmentation of curriculum.

Amanda Stearns-Pfeiffer picks up the discussion of standardization of assessment and instruction by distinguishing between the standards and standardization. She argues that while "the standardization of education via the standards is detrimental," standards can be useful. Stearns-Pfeiffer encourages teachers to examine the new common core standards in a spirit of reflection, using those standards as a catalyst to consider the purposes for which they conduct their own classroom practices.

It was a master's level class in media for children and young adults that served as a catalyst for Jianna Taylor to examine her instructional practices in her own middle school classroom. In "Selling Literacy: A Young Teacher's Tale of Getting (and Keeping) Her Students Excited about Text," Jianna Taylor describes how she used technology and professional development in reading workshop to inspire students to read. Once engaged, students further engaged peers with their own reviews of what they were reading, simultaneously developing communication skills as they worked with such tools as book commercials, podcasting/digital recording, and movie trailers. Such communication also served as authentic means of assessing student learning.

Elizabeth Petroelje Stolle shares another example of technology facilitated communication, in the context of a well-establish ('tried and true') literacy practice that also produced authentic means of evaluating student learning with text. Stolle teaches in-service teachers in graduate level reading courses. In "Moving to Online Literature Discussions: Putting a New Twist on a Practice Tried and True," she reports on her experience in guiding graduate candidates to apply their newly learned skills by facilitating literature circles in middle school classrooms. Shifting the context of graduate candidates' experience from face-to-face to online literature circles, lent a new kind of authenticity to middle school students' experience and provided in-service teachers with an opportunity to reflect and re-conceptualize their instructional practices.

In "Four Decades Ago: Learning from Mina Shaunessy," Gregory Shafer discusses his approach to creating authetic environments for writing in the college classroom for students whose writing reflects their use of non-standard dialects of English. Shafer emphasizes the rich complexity of students' home languages and their potential for enabling students to communicate in very powerful ways. Rather than place students in 'developmental' writing classes, Shafer begins to address students' needs by providing faculty with workshops on the topics of African American English, code switching, and language prejudice. Then, he provides students with instructional experiences in which they develop understanding of, and pride in, their own dialects.

Clearly, a recurring theme in this issue of LAJM is communication, and Leigh Gardner continues to explore that theme in "A Kindle in the Classroom?: E-Reader Devices and Reading Habits." Gardner examines the pros and cons of e-readers in this review of recent research. While e-readers have features that have the potential to distract, many of these same features have the potential to customize the text and the reading experience in ways that really engage the reader. Gardner recommends that teachers embrace this technology for its potential to motivate and engage students–certainly the students already have.

In "Teaching Writing Today: Creating Writers, Not Just Students Who Write," Bean Kinney Klusendorf writes about engaging students in writing, not to analyze literature (though that is important), but to analyze "the ideas that keep them awake at night." Read how Klusendorf helps writers find good ideas, conduct an inquiry around those ideas, and immerse themselves in writing to communicate about what really matters.

"Investigating Critical Numeracy," by Phyllis Whitin and David Whitin, discusses the use of critical literacy practices in guiding students to interpret and critique numerical data. The authors have developed strategies and guiding questions to be used to interrogate numerical data by focusing on the data gathering process. These strategies, which may be adapted for different age groups, include "critiquing how the wording of questions affects the data that are collected" and how the visual representation of data reveals or conceals information, as well as "how the relationship between the ways data are displayed and reported" are likely to affect readers' interpretation of the message.

Finally, in "From Consuming to Producing: The Potential of Preservice Teacher Scholarship in English Teacher Preparation," Sarah Hochstetler presents a case for moving undergraduate pre-service teachers from consumers to producers of research and scholarship.

So, enter into this new issue of LAJM and read about the doors of opportunity for you and your students.

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