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## From the Editors

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# From the Editors...

by **Kathryn L. Roberts and Poonam Arya**

As we write to you this winter, we are full of the optimism that a new year brings and full of resolutions to do great things in our professional lives, personal lives, and spaces where the two intersect. The topic of this issue is Literacy and Social Justice, and working on it over the course of the last several months has been a true pleasure and labor of love. As we prepared this issue to go to press, we challenged ourselves to step back and look at the bigger picture of literacy education, and we hope that you will do the same.



**Kathryn L. Roberts**



**Poonam Arya**

In classrooms across the state, a great deal of time is focused on literacy instruction, teaching students to read, write, listen, speak, view, and create. We also spend a great deal of time—and rightly so—thinking about whether our students are being taught and learning the grade-level standards. Thinking about literacy learning in this way is important, a fact we don't intend to minimize. But it is also important to step back and take the long view of why literacy is so important. Language is power. We have succeeded in our jobs as teachers of literacy only if our students have learned to read, listen, and view in ways that help them better understand their worlds and those who inhabit it; and only if they have learned to write, speak, and create in ways that allow them to shape the world in which they live. Literacy instruction, when done well, can support students to be agents of social change, using their voices to advocate for themselves and others. In this issue, we walk the line between realism and optimism. We take a hard look at areas in which we haven't done enough to create a more socially just world, but also the power we have to use literacy to do so.

In this issue we have included two Bridging Research and Practice articles. The first one is by Dr. Michael Wenk (Instructional Coach at Dunstan Middle School, CO) about interruptions during writing conferences, and the second is by Kellie Freese (First grade teacher in Central 301 School District, IL) on teachers' scaffolding of conversations during read alouds to inspire deeper thinking. For the Voices from the Region section, we have an article by Dr. Candice Moench (North Dakota University, Graduate of Wayne State University) in which she advocates for the value of out of school literacies as a pathway for empowerment as well discusses how educators can support their students in exploring and negotiating a wide range of identity issues through literacy. Similarly, Dr. Hiba ElHajj (Crestwood School District in Dearborn Heights, MI) shares some ways that literacy teachers can honor the cultural values, out-of-school literacy practices, and funds of knowledge of Arab-American immigrant students. Finally, Linda Pinder (Special education teacher at Old Redford Preparatory High School in Detroit, MI) provides tips on how to empower students to think critically and deeply through instructional conversations. For the popular Critical Issues section, we interviewed Dr. Yetta Goodman (Regents Professor Emerita at the University of Arizona) about the concept of social justice in education and specifically how literacy can be used as a tool to achieve social justice and equity. Additionally, we have an article by Dr. David E. Kirkland (New York

University) in which he discusses the need to move beyond instruction that fosters chronic disparities and refocus on practices that advance equity in literacy education and promote reading proficiency amongst children of color.

In this issue, we also provide reviews of four professional texts for teachers in a column titled “Professional Books of Interest” by Drs. Tanya Christ (Oakland University), Geneva Scully (ELA teacher at Pierce Middle School), and Meagan Shedd (Michigan State University). Finally, we have included a column titled “A Closer Look: Children’s and Young Adult Literature,” led by Dr. Kristin McIlhagga (Oakland University) that includes reviews of children’s books that are appropriate and engaging from a social justice perspective.

We encourage our readers to read updates and information about the journal by liking the Michigan Reading Association page on Facebook, following @michiganreading on Twitter, and searching and following Michigan Reading Association on Pinterest. Also, we hope to see you at the 62nd Annual Michigan Reading Conference at Cobo Center in Detroit, March 17-19, 2018. The conference theme is *Literacy Drives the Future*.

Our journal email address is [mrj@wayne.edu](mailto:mrj@wayne.edu). We invite you to join the conversation by contributing to MRJ. Please email article submissions that are appropriate for any of the sections in our journal to our email address. We look forward to hearing from you.

Many thanks to our Wayne State University editorial team of Angela Harris and Sarah Schrag, who have done a fantastic job of supporting the work for this issue. We would also like to thank Laura Guzman and Charissa Elmer from the Michigan Reading Association office; our MRA president, Elizabeth Haan Gates; and the MRA board for all of their hard work.

We hope that you enjoy this issue of MRJ, and that you will continue to tell your friends and colleagues about us.

Happy Reading!

Kathryn L. Roberts and Poonam Arya

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