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President's Message

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President's Message...

by **Elizabeth Gates, MRA President 2017-2018**

The mission of the Michigan Reading Association is to empower all Michigan students and educators through literacy. As we continue to define literacy in the 21st century, the Michigan Reading Association Board of Directors is working to meet the increasing needs of its membership through its publications and professional development. As we continue to evolve and grow as an organization, we will use our comprehensive strategic plan to guide our work for the ensuing year. The MRA Board of Directors have been entrusted by you, its membership, to govern the organization with transparency and duty of care, loyalty, and obedience. Their work in the governance of our organization is foundational to its future success.



Elizabeth Gates

My communication for this issue is focused on updating members on the International Literacy Association (ILA) transformation progress. As you are aware, the International Reading Association recently changed its name to the International Literacy Association. This was done, in part, to expand its role beyond reading to the many new and evolving literacies of the 21st century. The second reason relates to the governance of ILA's many charters. As nonprofit regulations strengthened and the IRS tightened its hold on EIN numbers (employer identification number), it became clear that many state and local councils did not have proper governance practices in place. Some state councils had dissolved or deactivated. Many local councils dismantled without notification to ILA nor any contact information on assets or liabilities. ILA became responsible for any outstanding contracts or debt held by a council they chartered—whether it was a state, provincial, or local association. This became the impetus for transforming the International Reading Association to the International Literacy Association with a new EIN number and nonprofit status under IRS guidelines. With this move, all state charters under the International Literacy Association now have a timeline of September 2018 to redefine their affiliation to their chartering organization. The International Literacy Association determined it would limit the number of chartering councils using their nonprofit status due to the liability it had caused. As ILA began this process and discussion with state and provincial councils, Michigan Reading Association evaluated its own governance practices to strengthen and confirm its capacity as an organization.

I am pleased to reassure members that the Michigan Reading Association is a healthy and robust organization with stringent standards of oversight and governance practices. MRA's relationship will change from a chartered association under ILA to a "limited non-group affiliation." Under the new affiliation agreement, Michigan Reading Association will become more autonomous in its governance while preserving its relationship with ILA. The process during this transition period will include newly written and adopted bylaws voted by membership, revised Michigan Articles of Incorporation voted by membership, MRA's own EIN with the IRS instead of operating under ILA's number, and the procurement of our own 501(c)(3) for nonprofit status. The process is underway and the paperwork has begun. We have consulted with our attorney and accountant for clarification on procedures to make sure we follow Michigan laws and alignment with our bylaws, mission, and affiliation agreements. As a member of the Michigan Reading Association, it is unlikely you will be impacted by the transition in any way.

Lastly, I encourage you to check out the new features on the MRA website. The first webinar on Public Act 306 of 2016 (known as the third-grade reading law) can be viewed from the link on the website. We are in the planning stages of more to come. Special interest groups such as literacy coaches, early literacy, family resources, and advocacy et al., have pages with links to resources and supporting links.

I am grateful for the opportunity to serve in the role of Michigan Reading Association President for the 2017-2018 year.

Elizabeth J. Gates

Elizabeth Gates is the 2017-2018 President of the Michigan Reading Association. Elizabeth is employed by Greenville Public Schools as the high school MTSS Instructional Coach. She is a graduate of Aquinas College with a B.A. in English and reading. She has an M.Ed. from Grand Valley State University as a Reading Specialist. Elizabeth has been twice nominated for Michigan Teacher of the Year in which she placed as a regional and semi-finalist in 2012 and 2014 respectively. She can be reached at elizabethgates66@gmail.com.

