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President's Message

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President's Message...

by Sean Kottke, President 2016-2017

In a classic scene from Orson Welles' masterpiece, *Citizen Kane*, millionaire newspaper owner Charles Foster Kane points to the flames of a turn-of-the-century gas lamp and boldly declares his desire "to make the New York Inquirer as important to New York as the gas in that light" (Welles, 1941). He proceeds to draft a "Declaration of Principles" to emblazon the front page of the first issue published under his ownership, articulating a commitment to provide New Yorkers with "a fighting and tireless champion of their rights as citizens and as human beings" in the pages of his newspaper.



Sean Kottke

In May, the Michigan Reading Association adopted an ambitious Strategic Plan that serves as MRA's very own Declaration of Principles. Among its goals, MRA is dedicated to improving literacy access and achievement across Michigan and matching the resources it offers to the evolving needs of its members. The *Michigan Reading Journal* is an instrumental vehicle for MRA to achieve these goals and pursue its mission of empowering all Michigan students and educators through literacy.

In this issue, you will find articles matching some of the hottest topics identified in the "What's Hot, What's Not" survey of MRA members: Common Core State Standards, close reading, informational texts and differentiated instruction (Hopkins, White, Wright & Edwards, 2015). You'll also find a major article addressing a topic that a significant number of MRA members identified as "Not Hot" in that survey: serving the needs of English Learners. Although this topic didn't make the "Should Be Hot" top ten, recent data on Michigan's capacity to serve the needs of this burgeoning population should cause us to reconsider that assessment. In the 2015-2016 school year, 90,121 students were identified as English Learners and eligible for ESL or bilingual education programs in Michigan schools, yet only 733 full-time instructional positions were devoted to serving this population by teachers with English as a Second Language or Bilingual Education endorsements (Michigan Department of Education, Center for Education Performance and Information, 2016b, 2016a).

Furthermore, survey data collected annually by the Michigan Department of Education's Office of Professional Preparation Services show that new teachers perceive their level of preparedness to serve the needs of English Learners lower than any other area of preparation. Here, quite clearly, is a vast mission field in which the Michigan Reading Association and the *Michigan Reading Journal* can match resources to member needs, and I challenge all MRA members to empower their fellow educators who are not yet MRA members by giving them access to the ideas contained in this issue. Share your copy of *MRJ* and document it via social media using the hashtag #mraaccess.

It is a distinct privilege to welcome you to the first issue of *Michigan Reading Journal's* 49th volume, and let me boldly proclaim my vision that *MRJ* be as important to Michigan as the gas in the automobiles that have powered our state's economy for a century. Do not mistake this vision for hubris; our editors, Patricia Edwards and Tanya Wright, share this vision, and have worked relentlessly over the past two volumes to provide educators across Michigan with a fighting and tireless champion of the best research-based information on effective literacy instruction to be found in any state association journal. This, the third volume

to be published under their editorship, promises to surpass the high mark of excellence established over the past two years. To paraphrase another cinematic classic, fasten your seatbelts; it's going to be an amazing year.

Dr. Sean Kottke is the 2016-2017 President of the Michigan Reading Association. Sean is employed as an Education Consultant in the Office of Professional Preparation Services of the Michigan Department of Education, where he leads activities related to the development of teacher preparation standards, programs, assessments and placements in literacy, world languages and arts education. He holds degrees from both the University of Michigan and Michigan State University, and is a former high school Humanities and Spanish teacher, gifted/talented specialist, professor of reading teacher education, and college dean.

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