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Message from the President

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Message from the President

by Mary Howell



Step onto any campus at the beginning of the year, whether it is an elementary, middle school, high school or college campus, and notice the hum of anticipation for the start of the new school year. The energy is tangible at the launch of the year because beginnings bring with them vitality. When a project is at the start, all things are possible. My year as Michigan Reading Association (MRA) president is at the beginning. All things seem possible.

As this year begins, MRA is poised to advance many undertakings. The website (www.michiganreading.com) continues to grow and change as members and office staff express a need for improvements. We have heard your desire for changes and are working on improving the digital MRA experience for our members. I invite you to visit the improving website in order to connect with various literacy events throughout Michigan. Learn about MRA and all of the local councils and special interest groups as you peruse the digital window of MRA.

Professional learning opportunities can be found in the *Michigan Reading Journal* and *News and Views on Reading*. Both publications offer members opportunities for professional growth through their articles and features. The learning opportunities continue with the annual conference in Grand Rapids, MI, March 14-17, 2014. Many national speakers will be at Michigan's annual reading conference to share research, practice, and knowledge. Local authors and literacy experts will also share the current best and next practices. Join thousands of MRA members who use the conference as a time to learn and grow with colleagues throughout the state. You can find more information about the conference at www.michiganreading.org/annual-conference-march-8-10-2013.

In addition, the association's board is revitalizing the strategic plan of the organization. We will put into place goals that will refresh the organization and further engage our members. MRA is a vital organization filled with energetic people. We all have the goal of promoting literacy throughout the state of Michigan. As we begin this year together, consider MRA and the role the association can play in keeping you revitalized. For information on membership, see www.michiganreading.org/join.

Sincerely,

Mary S. Howell, Ph.D., President

Mary Howell is a curriculum coordinator at Genesee Intermediate School District. Dr. Howell teaches Reading Recovery to veteran and new teachers and works with first grade struggling readers and writers and adolescent struggling readers. She will also put into action Multi-Tiered Systems of Support for the county. Previously, Mary worked with elementary and middle school students before becoming an early childhood curriculum coordinator. She holds a doctorate in reading education from Oakland University and currently teaches part-time at The University of Michigan-Flint.

Message from the Past President

by Grace Velchansky



Each person experiences a time when s/he takes on a new venture not really knowing what to expect. I can say that being president of the Michigan Reading Association has been one of the most rewarding experiences I have had. There was hesitation and fear of taking on the role because the responsibility can be overwhelming. Working with an outstanding group of professionals alleviated those fears and highlighted the great talent we have in our state.

As MRA moves forward, you can expect to see a few changes. First, our website will be updated and registration for events will be more user-friendly. Members can also expect to receive information, such as membership renewal, publications, e-mail blasts, event notifications, and election packets, in a seamless fashion. Second, we anticipate growing MRA with the possible addition of two new councils and one special interest council, which has already begun to lay the foundation for approval. Finally, Dr. Mary Howell will assume the position of president effective July 1, joined by the board of directors, committee chairs, and appointments.

It has been a tremendous honor to serve as president. There are great things on the horizon and the leadership of MRA could not be stronger. I hope you will continue to look to MRA as an organization that can support your professional and personal growth at all levels. I know that I will.

With warm regards,

Dr. Grace B. Velchansky, Past President

Grace Velchansky is a consultant with the Macomb ISD in the areas of language arts, instruction, and teacher leadership. She has taught special education and Reading Recovery. Grace served as the director of special education, pre-school, and at-risk programs prior to working at the county level. She holds master's and education specialist degrees in leadership and a doctorate in K-12 Studies in Education. She is Past President of the Michigan Reading Association.