

June 2012

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Recommended Citation

Van Belle, Leah (2012) "Letter from Leah: Editor's Note," *Michigan Reading Journal*: Vol. 44: Iss. 3, Article 2.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/mrj/vol44/iss3/2>

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Letter from Leah: Editor's Note

BY LEAH VAN BELLE

Dear Readers,

Think of two words: summer vacation. To the average person those words generally bring to mind long days filled with sunshine and the smell of sunscreen, perhaps with sandy feet thrown in. However, they mean something entirely different to teachers. For us summers are a time not only to recharge and renew ourselves for the next school year, but also a time to dream up amazing new teaching ideas. Yes, we may be at the beach, but often the book in our straw tote is *The Book Whisperer: Awakening the Inner Reader in Every Child* (Miller, 2009), and instead of catching up on cute kitten videos on YouTube, we're exploring teaching blogs, looking for even more great ideas to try in our own classrooms.



VAN BELLE

Nowhere does this seem more evident than on Pinterest (www.pinterest.com), the digital pin-board for discovering and sharing images, videos, and Internet links. If you're not already a member creating boards and pins, trust me, it's dangerously addictive. I've noticed that from about the third week of June onward, pinning activity among pinner's whose education

boards I follow increased faster than a popsicle melting under the August sun. The school year had ended and teachers now had more free time. And what were they doing with that free time? Finding exciting teaching ideas online and sharing them via Pinterest—spending their summer vacations engaged in research for the next school year. (Am I the only one who finds herself clenching her jaw and whose left eye starts twitching a little when people go on and on about “How nice it must be to be a teacher and have summers off?”)

Whether we use websites, books, e-books, journals, magazines, or talking in person with other teachers for finding ideas, one thing is for certain: we teachers are the poster children for lifelong learning. We just can't turn off our curiosity, our desire to learn more and grow our teaching practice. I remember a professor in my undergraduate days saying to the class, “When you stop trying to get better at teaching, when you think you've learned it all, it's time for you to leave.” A little harsh? Perhaps, but I think the heart of it is true. As with any profession, teaching requires us to grow our practice for our entire careers. The quest to grow isn't just about a sense of self-actualization, but also about the impact our teaching has on learners. When we grow as

teachers, we help our students grow as learners. Our learning translates into their learning.

This issue of the *Michigan Reading Journal* is filled with articles and pieces that I hope speak to you and can play a role in that learning. Inside you'll find a teacher-researcher pieces on using scaffolds to support students in content literacy, on using hybrid language to support students with reading disabilities, and on using home literacy bags to encourage home reading.. Linda Pavonetti, previous editor of *MRJ*, leads us in bidding farewell to Maurice Sendak and other beloved children's authors. Sue Sharma, president of MRA, presents an interview that shares what it's like for those who teach in a war zone, and you'll learn more about Ed Spicer, the author of the journal's *Well-Stocked Bookshelf* column. This is a full and rich issue; I hope you discover some ideas that will inspire you as you plan for the upcoming school year.

I'd like to close by thanking Katharine Renner, who has joined *MRJ* as the editorial assistant. An undergraduate student at Madonna University, Katie is an English major pursuing her teaching certificate in secondary education. Her dedication and eye for detail have made the journal even better for all our readers—thank you, Katie!

With warm regards,

Leah

References

- Miller, D. (2009). *The book whisperer: Awakening the inner reader in every child*. Hoboken, NJ: Joosey-Bass/Wiley.



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