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From the Editors...

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From the Editors...

by Meghan Block, Carlin Borsheim-Black, and Troy Hicks

It would seem that, in these unprecedented times, that if we didn't begin our letter with the phrase "in these unprecedented times," we would be missing an opportunity to signal the many, many challenges that our state, nation, and world has faced since the rise of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19. As we were collaborating on this letter, a meme hit one of our social media feeds, reminding us that "precendented times" would be nice to return to, and we found a small moment in which we could smile and refocus our work.



Meghan Block



**Carlin
Borsheim-Black**



Troy Hicks

Throughout the pages of this issue, then, we will see echoes of these pandemic times. With the stories of educators from Michigan (and beyond), we note that – even in times where new challenges related to health and safety arise each day – we can find new ways to embrace the work, and the students, that we love. Thus, in this “time of tension and transition,” where everyone is wishing one another “continued health and safety,” we share an issue filled with stories of resilience and hope, moving beyond platitudes toward action.

Before we go further, and as we begin our tenure as co-editors of the *Michigan Reading Journal*, we are grateful to the editorial team from Wayne State University – Dr. Kathryn Roberts, Dr. Poonam Arya, and their team, Sarah Schrag and Angela Harris – who have nurtured and grown *MRJ* for the past three years. Their time, talent, and dedication to the journal have been extraordinary, and they have made the transition process both smooth and inviting. With deep thanks to our predecessors in the editorial role, we now share our thoughts on this first issue in our tenure.

In our *Bridging Research to Practice* section, we feature two pieces. The first is an interview with one of the keynote speakers who we would have heard in March, Cornelius Minor. As an educator, author, consultant, and advocate, Minor’s work centers on equitable literacy reform. His mantra that we “go back to better” resonates with all educators at the beginning of each school year, and especially this one.

Then, Shaya Helbig and Dr. Susan Piazza (Western Michigan University) share both a survey of the research on interactive read alouds and [methods for] implementing them into classrooms. As researchers and educators, Helbig and Piazza underscore the importance of read alouds. Recognizing the unique situation of elementary education, the authors offer readers eight practices to effectively include interactive read alouds in both in-person and virtual contexts.

Moving into our *Voices from the Region*, we had asked for you to share your experiences of the COVID-19 shutdown, emergency remote teaching, and all the feelings that these changes brought. Here, we have

a collection of essays from educators across the state including Chelsea Berg (H.H. Dow High School), Melanie Love (Perry Early Learning Center in Ypsilanti), Dr. Sharon Murchie (Okemos High School), Kristin Scherkenbach (Cross Creek Charter Academy in Byron Center), Annie Spear (COOR ISD), Dr. Amanda Thorpe (Portage Northern High School, Cornerstone University), and a co-authored piece by Dr. Erica Hamilton (Grand Valley State University), Dr. Deb Van Duinen (Hope College), and Dr. Gretchen Rumohr (Aquinas College). Their stories speak to the resilience that educators brought to the task of emergency remote teaching in the spring, as well as the uncertain realities of face-to-face, virtual, or a hybrid model of learning that is playing out across the state this fall.

In our *Critical Issues* section, we hear from leaders related to Michigan's Literacy Essentials, both at the elementary and secondary level. Dr. Laura Gabrion (Wayne RESA), Michelle Renna (Muskegon Area ISD), Megan Schrauben (MiSTEM Network), and Jenelle Williams (Oakland Schools) provide us with insights on the work of Michigan's 6-12 Disciplinary Literacy Task Force, a sponsored sub-committee of the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators (MAISA) General Education Leadership Network (GELN). They offer an invitation for educators around the state to become involved in this work as it rolls out over 2020-21. Finally, Troy Hicks and Erica Hamilton consider some questions about "pandemic pedagogy."

In our final section, we round out the issue with our *Must Reads*. Lynette Suckow (Peter White Public Library, Marquette) offers Great Lakes, Great Books recommendations, this time focused on themes of change and adaptations to change. Annie Spear (COOR ISD) shares a review of *No More Teaching Without Positive Relationships*, a book that addresses the importance of relationship-building in student's academic success and offers educators activities for cultivating meaningful relationships with students. Dr. Raven Jones Stanborough reviews *Linguistic Justice: Black Language, Literacy, Identity and Pedagogy* by Dr. April Baker-Bell, which revolutionizes literacy teaching to challenge common forms of linguistic racism.

One more note... *MRJ* is now online! At our January 2020 meeting, the MRA Executive Board approved the transition to an online, open-access format. Many thanks to librarian Jacklyn Rander and education professor Dr. Erica Hamilton at Grand Valley State University for their collaboration in launching the partnership and building the site. For authors, this online system provides a more user-friendly process for publication through the Scholarworks system. For readers, it provides both single article and whole-issue PDF versions for reading, as well as clickable opportunities to quickly search for and share the work with other readers. For MRA, the online system provides visibility for all of our work with open access and indexing, searchable through tools like Google Scholar. As of the time of this publication, Rander and her team at GVSU Libraries were working to digitize the entire collection of back issues of *MRJ*, dating to Spring of 1967. Soon, all of these will be available, openly accessible, on our website: <scholarworks.gvsu.edu/mrj>.

With that, as a school year unlike any other begins, we do – at risk of repeating pleasantries from any email you may have received this summer – indeed wish you well. These times are challenging, yet our stories remind us that educators bring a strength of will to work each day, especially during difficult times, that is worth celebrating. This first issue, then, is a celebration of you, and we look forward to continuing *MRJ*'s tradition of excellence in the years ahead.

Sincerely,

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