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## From the Editor's Desk

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# From the Editor's Desk

## What Can We Achieve Together?

BY PATRICIA GALLANT

*Minga.* That single word sits within a colorful paper border, propped on my desktop in a clear frame. Julia Reynolds, our MRA president, gave an identical framed *minga* to each MRA board member at our strategic planning meeting. What is a *minga*? Some words nearly describe it: *unity, rally, collaboration, alliance, synergy.* But a story conveys it best.

Craig and Marc Kielburger (2006) were in Ecuador with a group of young volunteers to build a school for an impoverished indigenous community. Time and supplies ran short. Their return trip airplane tickets were already set, and they feared they would have to leave before they completed the project. They went to the hut of a village elder and explained the dilemma. In local dialect, she replied, "No problem. I'll call a *minga*." Then, she took a few steps outside her door and shouted, "Tomorrow ... there will be a ... *minga*!" Nothing visible happened right then. In fact, people who were working close by did not behave as if they heard her.

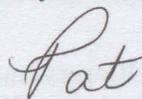
The next day, however, hundreds of men, women, and children arrived to help build the community school—many from faraway towns. Some even lived too far away for their own children to attend that school. Each brought tools and supplies to help and food to share. They worked together to complete the job, asking nothing for themselves in return.

When I think about this concept of *minga*—a community coming together for collective action for a worthy cause—I think of teachers, school administrators, and other educators. We work daily to benefit our students and the community, often going well beyond the requirements of our jobs, because we believe passionately in the importance of literacy. We contribute to a *minga* by our individual efforts each time we: instill a love of reading and writing in our students, their families, and community members; learn about and apply current research and pedagogy; become

actively involved in local, state, and national literacy education issues; conduct action research and share results; participate in a professional learning community; provide mentorship; and so much more.

And then I think of our MRA community. Our mission states that we are "a dynamic and diverse organization whose mission is to promote literacy." Collectively, as with a *minga*, we can become greater than the sum of our individual actions and create an important voice and positive results for literacy in Michigan. What does that suggest that we must do as a professional community? What are our challenges? What can we achieve together?

I invite you to ponder these questions as you read the excellent articles by educators in this issue, and I welcome your thoughts and responses in an e-mail or letter.



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### Reference

Kielburger, C. & Kielburger, M. (2006). *Me to we: Finding meaning in a material world.* Fireside.

*Note: As Mary Jo and I enter our third and final year as co-editors of the MRJ, we are each taking a turn to solely edit one issue. Mary Jo will edit the winter issue and we will again co-edit our final issue in the spring.*

