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Whole Language – Dead or Alive?

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About the *Language Arts Journal of Michigan*

The *Language Arts Journal of Michigan* is published twice a year (Fall and Spring) by the Michigan Council of Teachers of English, a nonprofit state affiliate of the National Council of Teachers of English and a member of the NCTE Affiliate Information Exchange Agreement. The *Language Arts Journal of Michigan* publishes articles which discuss issues, theory, theory-based practice, and research in the teaching and learning of the language arts at all levels, kindergarten through college. It publishes articles, interviews, annotated bibliographies, review-essays, research, poetry, and classroom practices. The *Language Arts Journal of Michigan* invites language arts teachers at all levels—elementary, secondary, college—to submit manuscripts for consideration. Articles from many perspectives on the themes are welcome.

Guidelines for Submitting Manuscripts. Manuscripts should be 4-12 pages in length, double-spaced, and use the new MLA style for parenthetical documentation and the NCTE Guidelines for Non-Sexist Use of Language. Send one original and one copy. If you wish your original returned, include a self-addressed envelope with first-class postage. The deadline for the Fall 1998 issue is June 15, 1998. See the Call for Manuscripts near the end of this issue for further information.

Submit Manuscripts to:

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The Writing Center, 300 Bessey Hall
Michigan State University
East Lansing, MI 48824.
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VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

EDITOR

FOR *LANGUAGE ARTS JOURNAL OF MICHIGAN*

The Michigan Council of Teachers of English announces it is seeking a new LAJM editor/editors for a two-year renewable term beginning with the spring issue of 1999.

The editor is responsible for all aspects of producing and publishing the journal twice yearly. Since the journal's audience is mainly English language arts classroom teachers, applicants who are classroom teachers or who work with classroom teachers are preferred. A wide knowledge of language arts issues and a familiarity with all aspects of English language arts teaching are expected. Applicants must also be a member of the Michigan Council of Teachers of English.

One of the major jobs of the editor is to solicit manuscripts from classroom teachers who often need encouragement to write. Thus, access to networks of teachers is essential. Knowledge about writing and developmental editing are also necessary.

The editor sits on the Michigan Council of Teachers of English Executive Board and is expected to attend bimonthly meetings.

Applicants should send a letter of interest along with a sample of published writing by July 1, 1998 to:

Rita Paye
8251 Hillpoint Dr.
Brighton, MI 48116

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

Several years ago at the NCTE conference in Atlanta, teachers sat around a table discussing whole language. At issue was whether or not it was wise in the current political climate to call yourself a whole language teacher. The discussion leader, a prominent and widely-published educator, told the story of a teacher who had gone through several changes in administration in her school. Each time, the administrators made big changes in the language arts curriculum. The teacher would learn the concept names and buzz words of the new programs, then teach whole language as she had been doing under the cover of these new labels. In this way, she could teach the way she thought she should without ever having to wage a political battle.

Almost ten years later many teachers still feel compelled to give creative names to the whole language they practice in their classrooms. And, while much has been written describing what whole language is and isn't, for many there is still a mystique that surrounds it. But not for the teachers you meet in the articles that follow. Whether in urban settings or rural, and from first grade through high school, the whole language teachers herein are clear about where they stand, what the term whole language means, and how it guides their teaching.

Reading the articles will take you into whole language classrooms where students share their perspectives on whole language; where they read, write about, and construct caves, write pen pal letters, publish collections of their writing, and read, write, and discuss within broad themes. What you will see are students engaged in meaningful and authentic activities.

We close the themed section of the journal with the NCTE Fact Sheets on Whole Language developed by Connie Weaver.

Next, Cooper provides an insightful examination of the ways teachers at different levels describe writing in portfolios, while Barnett explores the role of peer tutors at a college writing center.

We begin the column section of this issue with book reviews by Brockman and Steffel. Then, we feature Pam Waterbury in our teacher education column, where she demonstrates how to engage students in poetry.

We close this issue with Diana Mitchell's LAJM Resources, an annotated bibliography of fifty new young adult books.

Mary Dekker

Diana Mitchell