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In Celebration of Teaching and Learning

L A J M

The Michigan Council of Teachers of English

Language Arts Journal of Michigan

Fall 1996

Volume 12 Number 2

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ABOUT THIS ISSUE

We come together in many places. As we gather as teachers in staff meetings and committee meetings, at conferences or summer institutes, our conversations turn quickly to teaching and learning. As Mary and Diana find ourselves in these groups both large and small, close to home and far away, our thoughts always return to a common theme. One teacher tells of his struggles meeting the demands of a mandated curriculum. Another describes her day-to-day encounters with an emotionally impaired student. Others tell of programs they have created to engage their students. As we listen to these stories we think of all the hours of study and work we bring to our classrooms, and realize, over and over, each time with each group, that we are in the midst of dedicated and caring professionals

The media tells other stories of teaching and learning which portray teachers as ill-informed, unskilled, or at the very least ineffective. Bombarded, month after month with the stories the media selects, it is hard not to get discouraged.

In the story *Crow and Weasel* by Barry Lopez we are reminded "The stories people tell have a way of taking care of them.... Sometimes a person needs a story more than food to stay alive." The idea behind this issue of **LAJM**, In Celebration of Teaching and Learning, was to bring together a collection of teacher stories that would validate all of our efforts, describe some of our practices, and remind us of the larger group of dedicated and caring professionals to which we belong. Spanning all levels of schooling from elementary through college, the teacher stories featured here do just that.

As you read this issue of **LAJM** you will find three themes emerge. Some articles tell stories of particular classroom practices from entire courses like language study or composition to specific areas like revision or student discussion groups. Many of the pieces tell the story of teachers reflecting on their practices and then making changes. All of the articles provide a window into the complexity inherent in all language arts classrooms where teachers deal with not only classes but individuals, where teachers not only encourage students to achieve but trust them to learn, and where teachers use not only their tried and true best practices but take risks to find new ones.

We round out this issue with an article by Sheila Fitzgerald which continues the on-going professional conversation in **LAJM** about the MEAP writing test, and with our regular column by Peter Butts "From the Stacks."

Mary Dekker

Diana Mitchell