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From the Editors' Desks

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From the Editors' Desks:

BY PAT GALLANT & MARY JO FINNEY

Dear Readers,

Summer has arrived! Soaking up life outside the classroom—basking at the beach, pedaling into the sunset, pruning and plucking the garden—has a magical way of replenishing our energy. Life in the summer gives our minds time to wander and wonder, expanding our views of the world. Learning doesn't slow down in the summer—it merely changes location. Whether you want to be informed, inspired, motivated, or entertained, this spring-summer issue has it all!

If you are looking to tackle some professional reading, consider our first feature article, "What Should Teachers Know About Research?" a perfect place to start. Andrew Domzalski and Boguslaw Gatarek guide us through the complexities of quantitative and qualitative research in their article written with K-12 classroom teachers in mind. The competitive stance these two modes of research often elicit comes into view through these authors' explanation of the general aspects of the strengths and limitations of each approach. We expect to hear from you after reading this article!

In a second feature article, "Oral Language Activities in the Early Childhood Classroom," kindergarten teacher Kathleen Boike-Foster shares her experience, research, and thoughts about the importance of oral communication in primary classrooms. Tune into Kathleen's article for reassurance and insight about the value of a talkative classroom.

Past IRA President Jerry Johns chose his very first article to appear in a professional journal for this issue's "Vintage Visions." Originally published in 1968, "Informal Techniques Aiding Diagnosis in Reading" addressed the place of informal reading assessment in teachers' decisions. Thirty-eight years later, Johns revisits the role of the Informal Reading Inventory (IRI) in guiding a teacher's decision-making about the individual student. He reflects on today's classrooms, stating, "there is far too much assessment that fails to inform instruction." Do you agree?

Our out-going president, Cynthia Clingman, makes a call for action in her final letter to MRJ readers. In MRA's 50th year as a professional organization, Cynthia urges readers to consider taking a stand



PAT



MARY JO

on two issues currently ablaze in the state that are relevant to all teachers and teacher educators. And your thoughts?

Speaking of MRA's 50th anniversary, the annual conference was a phenomenal event. You will be delighted to read Jennifer Pisha-Rude's interview with Ralph Fletcher. One of many renowned authors appearing at the conference, Fletcher shared his wisdom during two packed sessions. Jennifer captures what she learned, along with the special insight she gained from speaking one-on-one with this remarkably inspiring teacher of writing.

If you have not yet attended a Michigan Reading Association annual conference, get your feet wet by reading about the conference from two first-time attendees. A first-year teacher and a pre-service teacher share their first impressions of what it's like to attend this professional conference. Their enthusiasm will surely have you marking your calendar today for next year's conference!

Barbara Geiger reveals how Ralph Fletcher's ideas inspired her teaching. Lest you question the value of writing with your students, listen in on Geiger's revelation of the power of keeping a writer's notebook. With her article "Cultivating a Classroom of Writers," she leads our "Teachers as Writers" section, followed by two thought-provoking pieces from our readers.

The MRJ would not be complete without book reviews to help you keep abreast of the many excellent children's books to enrich your curriculum. In this issue, our book review editors focus on some prizewinners. Sit alongside Linda Pavonetti in her "Window Seat" as she revels in the award-winning

books of the season. If you are only familiar with the Newberry, Caldecott, and Coretta Scott King awards, hold onto your hat! Linda introduces us to the Batchelder, Sibert, and Pura Belpré honors for authors and illustrators, as well. Linda and her co-reviewers also share the Great Lakes Great Books award winners from pre-K through 12th grade. Do you ever find yourself disagreeing with the judges who pass by your favorite and select another book as the award-winner? Then you will appreciate Ed Spicer's reviews of this year's Printz winner and honor books, along with his pick for next year.

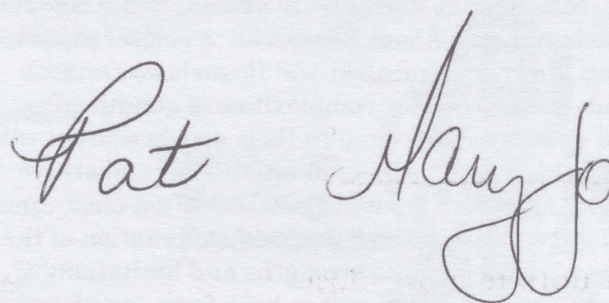
How do you sort through the many books available for adult summer reading to make your selections? Do you ask for recommendations from friends and colleagues? Our guest editor Virginia Daniels and two colleagues have some advice in "Professional Books of Interest." They recommend three books that reflect on strategies for conferring with young writers, boost your know-how about writer's notebooks, and dig into poetry you have never before encountered. Surely, you won't be disappointed.

Finally, there's a new edition to the MRJ with the

initiation of the cartoon section. Kati Gardner casts her comment through both picture and print in a political cartoon. We hope you find her interplay between picture and print – in cartoon form – as evocative as print alone! Why not let those random doodles you find yourself making turn into a thought-provoking, humorous, or just plain entertaining snapshot of your unique view of the world?

Summer is a natural time to let your thoughts wander on the page. Hopefully, you will find yourself delightfully lost in your own memories and moments you might capture, in print, for others to read or see. Whether it's a story for "Teachers as Writers," a letter to the editors, a cartoon, or a feature article, we hope to hear from you. A pen fits quite nicely into a beach bag.

Happy summer!

The image shows two handwritten signatures in cursive. The first signature, on the left, is 'Pat' and the second, on the right, is 'Kati Gardner'. Both are written in dark ink.

Letter to the Editors

Dear Editors,

First of all, I would like to thank you for creating the "Teachers as Writers" section in the *MRJ*. As I wrote in "More than a Clean, Well Lighted Place" (*MRJ*, Spring 2004), writing alongside our students is crucial for anyone who teaches composition. Having a place to submit and publish our work in a magazine as nicely put together as the *Michigan Reading Journal* is a huge service to all of us who work with writers in the classroom. This section is now the first place I turn to when I get my copy of the *MRJ*. Thanks again.

Scott Peterson
Mattawan, MI

MICHIGAN READING JOURNAL

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If you are currently a member of the *MRJ* Editorial Review Board, or if you would like to volunteer your expertise as a new member of the board, please take a moment to complete the following form. We would like to thank you for the valuable service you perform for the literacy community. It is important that each manuscript submitted to *MRJ* receives a fair reading by three of the author's peers. We send potential articles to professionals at all levels—early childhood, elementary, intermediate, middle and high school, university, and adult literacy specialists. Your commitment is important to the continued excellence of our state journal.

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Please return to: Mary Jo Finney or Pat Gallant, University of Michigan–Flint, 303 East Kearsley, Flint, MI 48502-1950

E-mail: mjfinney@umflint.edu or pgallant@umflint.edu

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