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The Literary Consortium of Michigan

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**Literacy Statements
for the
State of Michigan**

**Developed by
The Literacy Consortium
of Michigan**

**and Approved by
The Executive Council
of the Michigan Association of Speech Communication,
The Executive Board and Committee
of the Michigan Council of
Teachers of English,
and the
Board of Directors
of the Michigan Reading Association**

1985

Preface

In the fall of 1983, representatives from the Michigan Association of Speech Communication (MASC), the Michigan Council of Teachers of English (MCTE), and the Michigan Reading Association (MRA) joined together to form the Literacy Consortium. The consortium began to address current issues of mutual concern in advancing literacy in Michigan. The statements in this document are the result of deliberations started at the Gull Lake Conference in 1984, a two day meeting supported by a grant from the Michigan Council for the Humanities.

The following representatives of the three organizations contributed to the original formulation of this document

for MASC:	Richard Bowen Mary Freydl Steve Rhodes Roger Mattens Jerry Nickles
for MCTE:	John Beard Sheila Fitzgerald Ronald Kar Rhoda Maxwell Stephen Tchudi Mary Ellen Van Camp
for MRA:	Lillian Boyd Helen Johncock Harriet O'Brien Betty Anne Rowlands Nancy Seminoff Karen Urbschat

Succeeding drafts of the statements were developed with the help of other members of the three associations.

A basic premise adopted by the Literacy Consortium of Michigan is that education draws its strength from local control. The ability of communities to make decisions which serve educational needs has been proven by student accomplishments. These student accomplishments reflect the support of the following:

Parents who have shared their visions and wishes for their children's education and who continue to work with teachers and community leaders to assure quality educational programs in their schools

Legislators who have made education a high priority in the State of Michigan

Educators who have transferred the best of current instructional theory into effective classroom instruction

The continued advancement of Michigan education requires increasing cooperation of students, parents, legislators and educators, each assuming appropriate roles in literacy education.

STATEMENT OF LITERACY

Traditionally, literacy has been viewed as only reading and writing, but that view fragments the wholeness of language learning. A contemporary view of literacy recognizes the inter-dependence of listening, speaking, reading and writing. The Michigan Association of Speech Communication (MASC), the Michigan Council of Teachers of English (MCTE) and the Michigan Reading Association (MRA) ascribe to a philosophy of integrated language learning which defines literacy as competence in listening, speaking, reading and writing.

MASC, MCTE and MRA agree to promote their common interests and perspectives on literacy.

LITERACY STATEMENT I

The School Curriculum

Students must continuously develop their abilities to communicate in order to function as literate members of society. Specific course offerings in the communication skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing are essential components of a curriculum that promotes literacy.

The issue of literacy should be addressed throughout the curriculum. Therefore, to promote literacy, we recommend three curriculum proposals.

- A. Instruction and experiences in communication processes must be incorporated into all content areas.

For example:

1. Include activities to promote speaking and listening for a variety of purposes and in a variety of educational and social settings.
 2. Integrate formal and informal listening and speaking instruction into all units of study.
 3. Include oral language activities as an integral part of the writing and reading processes in all content areas.
 4. Include writing activities in all areas of study.
 5. Include activities which promote reading for a variety of purposes and which promote reading a variety of materials in all areas of study.
 6. Include activities to assist students in reading specific content material for specific purposes.
- B. Courses in print and non-print media should be offered to allow students to develop higher level thinking and communicating skills. Specialized study should be offered in listening, speaking, reading and writing.
 - C. To insure quality instruction, teachers of courses in the communication processes must be specifically certified and qualified to teach in those disciplines.

LITERACY STATEMENT II

Testing and Assessment

The measurement of learning is extremely complex. Because perceptions of this complexity vary among and within lay and professional groups, testing as a measurement of learning has definite limitations. Because of these limitations, abuses of testing have occurred:

Decision-making about students and school programs relies too heavily on formal test results.

Too much instructional time is used for test-taking and for the preparation, administration, scoring and interpretation of tests.

Goals for instruction are limited because of the narrow range of language competencies measured by the tests.

Simple testing formats are used for measuring complex language competencies. These tests usually measure what students will or can do in a testing situation, not what they will or can do in real-life situations.

A large portion of limited funds for instruction is used for tests.

Therefore, to promote literacy, we recommend three testing and assessment proposals.

- A. School district policies on testing should be locally developed.
- B. Both teacher-developed measures and standardized assessment devices should be used to make curriculum decisions to assess student progress, and to assign students to particular classes.
- C. The use of test results should not be the sole criterion for program funding.

LITERACY STATEMENT III

Graduation Requirements

The communication skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing are learned and refined throughout life. Furthermore, teachers, working with parents and local school administrators, are in the best position to plan, assess and monitor students' educational development in communication skills. Therefore, to promote literacy, we recommend two graduation requirement proposals.

- A. Michigan high school students should pass a minimum of four years of communication skills courses.
- B. Graduation requirements should continue to be determined by local school districts.

LITERACY STATEMENT IV

Preparation and Certification of Professional Educators

Enhancing the quality of education requires improved standards of certification and recertification. Collective efforts to develop these standards should involve teacher education institutions, professional organizations, public schools and the community. Therefore, to promote literacy, we recommend four proposals for the professional preparation and certification of educators.

- A. Criteria for teacher preparation courses should include the following:
 - 1. Communication skills course work taught by specialists in the teaching of listening, speaking, reading and writing
 - 2. Frequent opportunities to read, write and speak
 - 3. Methods for teaching interrelated communication skills
 - 4. Study of child development and language development
- B. Criteria for continuing certification of teachers should include the following:
 - 1. Participation in professional conferences
 - 2. Participation in classroom research initiated by oneself or others
 - 3. Participation in locally developed workshops and seminars
 - 4. Participation in graduate level courses and study for advanced degrees
- C. Criteria for recertification of teachers should include the following:
 - 1. Methodology of instruction appropriate for the skills and teaching level
 - 2. Information about application of communication skills in content areas
 - 3. Continuous education throughout one's teaching career
- D. Criteria for certification of building administrators should include the following:
 - 1. Teacher certification and five years of teaching experience at the grade configuration they administer
 - 2. Administrative certification at a grade configuration they administer
 - 3. Academic preparation which includes a minimum of one course in the design and development of communication skills curricula
 - 4. Administrators to participate in professional organizations which promote communication skills instruction in schools
 - 5. Release time with pay for school administrators to provide inservice in other school districts
 - 6. Release time, continuing education funding, part or full time sabbaticals and mini-grants or tuition reimbursement

LITERACY STATEMENT V

Professional Growth and Development

Teachers have a continuing need for current knowledge in the theory and practice of communication skills. This is especially important for teachers who have not received extensive training in communication skills and for teachers who find themselves assigned to teach outside their primary areas of expertise. Teachers, administrators, school boards, colleges, parents, the State Department of Education, and professional organizations share the responsibility for professional growth and development programs.

However, in-depth professional growth opportunities for developing teacher competencies cannot be accomplished simply or easily. Therefore, to promote literacy, we recommend two professional growth and development proposals.

- A. In order to support teachers' professional growth in communication skills, local school districts should provide for and expect the following:
 - 1. Teachers to take an active part in their own professional growth
 - 2. A school climate which encourages and supports professional growth and development
 - 3. Current professional libraries and professional library services
 - 4. Announcements of new resources in the communication skills areas
 - 5. Work areas for the development of teaching materials
 - 6. Lists of current materials
 - 7. Release time with pay for school faculty to provide inservice in other school districts
 - 8. Release time, continuing education funding, part or full time sabbaticals and mini-grants or tuition reimbursement
 - 9. Inservice sessions in the communication skills conducted by skilled faculty members or local and state experts recommended by communication skills organizations
 - 10. Encouragement to join professional organizations which address the concerns of communication skills and financial support for teachers to attend conferences of those professional organizations
 - 11. Recognition for teachers who participate in professional growth and development programs and conferences and for teachers who implement their learnings in the classroom
- B. In order to support administrators' professional growth in communication skills, local school districts should provide for and expect the following:
 - 1. Administrators to take an active part in their own professional growth
 - 2. Administrators to attend communication skills workshops, conferences or graduate courses with their teachers
 - 3. Administrators to discuss communication skills issues with their teachers