
July 1996

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Mark Conley

Carmen Dykema

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Recommended Citation

Conley, Mark and Dykema, Carmen (1996) "Meeting New Challenges Through The Eyes of the Whole Child," *Michigan Reading Journal*: Vol. 29 : Iss. 3 , Article 2.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/mrj/vol29/iss3/2>

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Meeting New Challenges Through The Eyes of the Whole Child

EDITORIAL BY **MARK CONLEY AND CARMEN DYKEMA**

It is sometimes easy these days to get too caught up in the rhetoric of the doomsayers about public education. Legislative challenges, quick-fixes and the shrill voices of extremists on both sides of the fence threaten to fragment and disperse the best efforts of parents, teachers and children alike. It is gratifying to know, in the midst of this historic (and some would say histrionic) atmosphere of change, that our colleagues still rise to the challenge of focusing squarely on our primary purpose, the education of the whole child. This issue provides a good illustration of this premise.

In her article about school reform, Suzanne Standerford raises some important questions about our ongoing priorities in public education. This is followed by three articles concentrating on emergent literacy. Interestingly, these emergent literacy pieces span a wide range of grade levels, despite the fact that most writing in this area focuses only on the very early ages. We think that this is testimony to the creativity of Michigan educators in applying literacy concepts in ways that most benefit kids. A process writing rap appears at the center of our tome — kind of makes you want to run out, write your own poem (sorry, couldn't resist!). Next up is an article describing how to set up a school-wide literature project. The detail and illustrations in the article are sufficient for many of you to get started on a school-wide project of your own. Our feature articles are rounded out by a description of Reading Recovery, an intervention program transplanted from New Zealand and now sweeping the state as the

answer to early reading problems.

We have our first guest columnist for *Paradigm Shifts*. JoAnn Delmar asks why we can't take the "mini" out of the mini-lesson. Remember, this column is for you, our *MRJ* readers. If, like JoAnn, you have a burning issue you want to share with the rest of the state, send your commentary to us. Again, Vera Milz and Tom Tobias join us in this issue with, respectively, book reviews and a cartoon satire.

Well, besides preparing this issue, Carmen and I are keeping up with a busy summer. Carmen is finishing a biography of Jane Austin in preparation for the next Jane Austin conference. I'm taking flying lessons but, so far, I can't get anybody to ride with me. Hope you're having the kind of summer we are, appreciating the great state we live in, running into friends and colleagues from time to time, talking about the coming year, even just a little. We have a lot of challenges that await us in 1996-97, from the first full battery of proficiency exams to who knows what will come out of Lansing and into our schools and communities. On a hopeful note, we will be publishing another Literacy Consortium Issue in the Fall dedicated to the new State Standards in literacy.

We wish you all a tremendously successful startup of the new school year and we hope these articles give you a bit of inspiration to try something new, overcome some hurdles, and share your thoughts with your colleagues or even us here at the Michigan Reading Journal. Have a great year!

Mark Conley

Carmen Dykema