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A Letter From the President

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A Letter From the President:



In recent months several reports have evaluated the current status of education throughout the nation and within this state. "A Nation at Risk," the recent Goodlad Study, and the "Preliminary Report of the Commission on High Schools" are but a few of the reports familiar to us. In Michigan the State Board of Education has recently reactivated the Teacher Certification Code Study Commission and the Superintendent has established a Select Study Group on Early Childhood Education (in which MRA has been invited to participate).

Given the current interest in and emphasis on education, it is crucial that our organization have a network for efficient communication to be able to respond immediately to educational issues and legislative proposals in the months to come. I have asked each Regional Representative to identify key contact persons who will call and/or write to a senator or representative in the local area. Perhaps you would be willing to be one of those key contact persons. If so, I invite you to notify your Regional Representative whose name is listed inside the front cover of this journal.

During the last six months a Task Force, chaired by Dr. Karen Wixson and Dr. Charles Peters, has written a new definition of reading (see position paper in this issue) which reflects process. This Task Force has presented the definition to several other professional groups to broaden the base of understanding. In January and February this group will be working to operationalize the definition by writing objectives to serve as a means for developing test items for the Michigan Educational Assessment Program. A prototype of the test items will be completed this Spring. This new definition of reading promises to have far-reaching implication for reading instruction in the years ahead.

Also in recent months MRA officers have met with officers of the Michigan Association of Speech Communication and the Michigan Council of Teachers of English to explore ways in which professional organizations can work collectively to promote sound approaches to develop literacy throughout Michigan. Interaction with Michigan Department of Education officials who represent various agencies is also on-going and has resulted in the continuation of a cooperative working relationship between MRA and the MDE on a number of activities.

This is a time of great public and political interest in education. As professionals we have an opportunity — indeed, an obligation — to contribute to educational policy and change in a thoughtful, informed, and deliberate manner rather than to react in a hasty, knee-jerk fashion. I invite you to join MRA's involvement in the shaping of educational policy in Michigan. You can participate through your membership in MRA and through your willingness to be a part of the communication network.

Together we can make a difference in whether some or all students will become readers.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nancy E. Seminoff".

Nancy E. Seminoff
President