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## Letter from the Co-Editors: Promise and Possibility

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## LETTER FROM THE CO-EDITORS

# Promise and Possibility

As new co-editors, we welcome you to the promise and the possibility of the Language Arts Journal of Michigan (LAJM) through the Fall/Winter 2022-23 issue. In coming together to create this issue, we want to acknowledge the outstanding leadership and expertise of the previous co-editors, Drs. Christina Ponzio, Shireen Al-Adeimi, and Kaitlin Glause. We are grateful for their commitment to LAJM and expertise with advancing literacy and scholarship. Likewise, through our onboarding, we are excited to cultivate a space where healing, love, and joy are centered in humanizing ways. Our shared connection as Michigan State University Spartans has allowed us to grow together, extend grace to ourselves, and hold space for one another when navigating challenges and trauma. It is our hope that this spirit of collaboration and community building will forge a path for a more just future.

Since 1985, LAJM has maintained its focus on English and language arts at all instructional levels across the education landscape. This journey—spanning nearly 40 years—has allowed LAJM to sustain its timeless mission, while evolving to address timely topics such as anti-racism and social justice, which hold current significance to language arts educators and learners across the Great Lakes state. We welcome both longstanding members of the MCTE community, as well as those navigating the journal for the first time. We acknowledge the shared passion you bring for community, literacy, and learning. Our hope is through LAJM we are creating a space to provoke both knowledge sharing and action in service to the students and diverse communities to which you are connected. Additionally, our hope is for LAJM to continue informing our collective practice, as well as building the field of scholars through a platform that is both affirming and intellectually challenging.

LAJM is a community within itself, born out of MCTE and composed of readers, authors, and reviewers. Our goal as co-editors is to engage and support MCTE members across each of these roles over the next 3 years. We plan to do this by offering information sessions for prospective authors, inviting reviewers from diverse areas of perspectives representing all of Michigan, including communities that have been historically underrepresented, including within LAJM.

We are thankful to the authors, reviewers, and other contributors who made this work possible and blends the voices of educators, practitioners, community advocates, and youth. We invite you to explore the 2022-2023 Fall/Winter issue, beginning with cover art by Detroit, Darrius “Play” Staples, a creative visionary whose colorful piece, “Love Me,” is a fusion of lines and worlds connected by and through love. Next, the soul-stirring poem, “Reveal of the Real Superheroes,” recited at the MCTE Fall Conference by Flint’s inaugural poet laureate, Semaj Brown, is a beautiful tribute to the bravery and dedication of Teachers of English. Next, in their article, “Working to Collectively Pursue Anti-Racist and Equitable Teaching: One High School English Department’s Journey,” Sharon Murchie, Anthony Andrus, Pat Brennan, Gina Farnelli, Shelby Fletcher, Dawn Reed, Emily Solomon, Benjamin K. Woodcock, a team of Okemos High School English teachers share their intentional journey in creating more equitable, antiracist learning experiences for their students.

Also offering literacy insights in their work, “Reading on the Ropes: A Pilot Study of an Accelerated Remediation Program with Alternative High School Students,” Joanne Veatch Coggins and Laura Clark Briggs describe their research studying the effects of a reading intervention program with students in alternative high school programs. Anne Dency Lippert furthers our dive into high school English in their article, “Teaching *Twelfth Night* and Queering the Canon in Michigan English Language Arts Classrooms.” We move into higher education with a piece by Nicole Guinot Varty, Adrienne Jankens, Linda Jimenez, Anna Lindner, and Mariel Krupsansky, entitled, “Building Sustainable Antiracist Coalition: Developing a Research Team for Studying Diverse Language and Literacy Practices at the University.” The authors unpack their attempts to study and implement antiracist language and literacy practices at the university level. Finally, in, “A restorative justice book club for secondary classrooms,” Mary

M. McConaha investigates teaching book clubs in the secondary classroom using restorative justice to facilitate rich conversations that build trust among students while supporting their engagement with books centering injustice. We then offer a student spotlight on Alix B. Dorsey, a native Detroiter and aspiring art teacher. As a second grade student, Alix reveals her insights on the importance of literacy and why helping children with their homework is imperative for their development and learning. With all of these authors' ideas in mind, we share a book review by Margaret Saelens and Brian Larsen that may inspire your next personal read or your next unit. In their review, they explore the theme of resilience in *Life As We Knew It: The Last Survivors* (Book 1), *The Poet X*, *Copper Sun*, and *Unwind*.

We end our issue with a community spotlight on Angela Hood who has been advancing literacy across Flint as an educator, nonprofit executive, masterful collaborator, and servant leader. We hope that Angela's spotlight will inspire you to consider and engage with individuals in your local community who are equally passionate about literacy and learning while positioned in roles that may differ from your own. Each individual and their work represented in this issue brings a unique and valued perspective to the LAJM community, which we are excited to share with the broader LAJM community.

As we build upon the journal's history, the strides taken by the past editors and others that have supported it, the promise we present with this issue is to continue providing a high-quality peer-reviewed journal including the voices of literacy and language arts educators across Michigan. We intend to accomplish this by creating space to interrogate both theory and practice, challenge the status quo, and engage in the essential conversations that allow us to collectively move forward. We invite you to journey with us to accomplish such possibilities and promises through your dedication, love, scholarship, and patience. The possibility we present with this issue is an invitation for you to reimagine the unique contribution you can make in advancing literacy and English Language arts in Michigan in ways that are just, equitable, and affirming.

Go Green, Go White,

Raven L. Jones, Tanya Upthegrove Gregory, and Alexandra Sánchez, Co-Editors  
Language Arts Journal of Michigan



A Detroit native and resident, Dr. Raven L. Jones is committed to teaching and empowering children and youth to speak truth to power. As an associate professor of teacher education at Michigan State University, her teaching and work examine culture, equity and the lived experiences of Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) in schools and communities. Dr. Jones loves Scrabble, tacos, and traveling with her daughter, Zuri Hudson Stanbrough.



Born and raised in Inkster, Tanya Upthegrove Gregory is passionate about supporting communities where residents can live, learn, and thrive. She is a learning officer at the Ruth Mott Foundation in Flint and a Ph.D. student in the College of Education at Michigan State University. Her research focuses on Historically Black Colleges & Universities and community engagement. Tanya lives in Saginaw with her husband Kevin, and enjoys collecting stamps (postage & passport) and the golden era of Hip Hop.



Originally from Seattle, Washington, Alexandra M. Sánchez has been a Michigander since she was ten years old. Raised by grandparents who instilled a passion for social justice, Alexandra entered education to make school more liberating for children. She currently teaches third grade at East Lansing Public Schools and is in the Doctor of Educational Leadership program at Michigan State University. Alexandra lives with her husband Eric Schultz and their dog Breslin, and spends her free time hiking and playing pickleball.