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Viewpoint

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VIEWPOINT

During the months which immediately precede the publication of a journal issue, an editor assumes a unique perspective. It is during these days that he or she, working with a Board of Advisors, a Board of Directors, authors, and members of an organization, reviews manuscripts, explores format, shapes content, corresponds, telephones, edits, and proofs the proposed publication. It is a time when many details need to be accomplished and, in spite of the early view of the task which makes it appear unattainable, small, steady steps toward the goal do make it achievable.

Early planning comprised some of these steps. We continue to bring you our regular features, including the "Teacher of the Issue" column which salutes an outstanding educator among us; news from the MDE concerning various reading programs, a valued perspective on current ideas in our continuing efforts to bring juvenile readers and quality children's literature together; and pertinent reviews of both professional resources and classroom materials.

One treasured element of this journey is the view of the content as it takes shape. Concomitantly, the scattered moments intervene, allowing time to reflect upon the ideas of the authors and how these ideas relate to each other. This must be similar to the experience of an artist as color, line, and texture are *en train* during the production of an art form.

The interesting mixture of content in several of this issue's articles forced me to pause to reflect on characteristics of people, of teachers, and the children we are teaching. Exposing young readers to biographies, as Cianciolo suggests, reveals to them the uniqueness of individuals. As she states, "... biographies will help young readers to realize the diversities, ambiguities and paradoxes one is bound to find existing among people anywhere at anytime."

Are we as teachers really tuned into the uniquenesses of our students, even if they are different racially, culturally, religiously, linguistically? Silverstein underscores the vitally significant point that in teaching children with these differences — in culture, in dialect, and/or language — we must understand their differences *and* similarities to help them achieve a generous measure of success in school and to reinforce a positive self image. I think Fech conveys a congruent point (among others) — that we should be student-centered in teaching middle school age youngsters.

You will also be able to review the proposed Reading Objectives which form the basis for the revised MEAP Test. I can't help but caution all of us as we read about "measurable behavior" in reading. So much takes place in the interaction between reader and print that is not measurable. In fact, what is *not* measurable may be even more important! And, I'm recalling the words of Kenneth Goodman, humanist/researcher, who once admonished teachers to consider children as "half full" rather than "half empty." So often this is the pitfall of the drill-skill, skills management systems, behaviorist approaches to teaching reading. In our diagnosis of reading and in our teaching of reading, let's build first on the child's strengths! What we are and what we know are really more important than our shortcomings, aren't they?

I leave you to look for the positive in others.

BSS



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The Michigan Reading Journal is published by The Michigan Reading Association, an intermediate council of The International Reading Association. Our journal, dedicated to the dissemination of information to improve the teaching of reading, presents articles on a wide spectrum of topics and issues in reading, language arts, and literature, preschool through adult levels. Published tri-annually, Fall, Winter, and Spring, the journal incorporates articles which address both theory and practice. Single Copy \$1.75

MANUSCRIPTS

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