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From the Editors...

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From the Editors...

by Meghan Block, Carlin Borsheim-Black, and Troy Hicks

As we look across the articles in this spring issue, we are struck by teachers' remarkable capacity to persevere. Educators, even in the year of pandemic teaching, continue to reflect on and improve their practice, despite the personal and professional challenges. As teachers manage the ever-changing landscape of virtual teaching, social distancing, and school openings and closings, they are continuing to collaborate, conduct classroom research, attend virtual professional development, and read and review both young adult literature and teaching resources. Several articles feature teachers and literacy coaches who have innovated in ways that not only met challenges of the pandemic but also improved on pre-pandemic practice.



Meghan Block



**Carlin
Borsheim-Black**



Troy Hicks

In *Bridging Research to Practice* section, we offer four articles that demonstrate this resilience in practice. First, in her article, “Connecting the Dots between Academic and Social-Emotional Learning with Literacy,” Allison Phillippe (Michigan State University) offers ELA teachers possibilities for weaving social-emotional learning into everyday literacy practices, including interactive read-alouds, small group instruction, and whole class instruction. Then, in “Teaching Students to Comprehend Text Structure,” Dr. Jennifer Knight (Northern Arizona University) and Dr. Angela Child (Dixie State University) share research-supported methods to effectively support children’s comprehension development by teaching text structure to elementary students. From there, Dr. Chad Waldron (University of Michigan- Flint) offers insights into the experiences and contexts that support preservice teachers’ knowledge of literacy instruction in his article, “Policies, Practices, People, and Places: How Elementary Preservice Teacher Learned Literacy Teaching.” Finally, this section closes with Dr. Amber Meyer (Salisbury University) and Dr. Vince Genareo (Salisbury University) fill a gap in the field by sharing their findings from a content analysis of representations of upper limb differences (ULDs) in children’s literature, offering recommendations teachers can use as they search for texts for their classrooms.

As we move into the *Voices from the Region* section, we begin with Kimberly Blumke’s (Cheboygan-Otsego-Presque Isle Educational Service District) article, “Virtual Coaching: Throughout and Beyond a Pandemic,” in which she describes how her ISD now uses virtual literacy coaching to overcome obstacles of face-to-face coaching and support teachers in using the *K-3 Literacy Essential Instruction Practices in Early Literacy*. We also learn more about the work that Jenelle Williams has led with the Disciplinary Literacy Task Force, considering lessons learned from the online professional learning that they have offered in 2020-21, and a look ahead to more efforts in 2021-22. And, celebrating her site of the NEA Big Read and Little Read Lakeshore in west Michigan, Hope College professor Dr. Deborah Vriend Van Duinen offers us a look at

her community's response to two texts – Julia Alvarez's (1994) historical fiction novel, *In the Time of the Butterflies* (for older readers) and Carmen Agra Deedy's (2017) children's picture book, *The Rooster Who Would Not Be Quiet* for younger readers – and the power of community-wide reading experiences. Finally, we close the voices section of this issue with some reflections on the 65th MRA Annual Conference, offered this past March in a fully online format, in "We Are All Lifelong Learners, No Matter What the Platform."

In the *Critical Issues* section, we feature an interview that Dr. Carlin Borsheim-Black conducted with Dr. Lamar Johnson (Michigan State University) exploring Critical Race English Education (CREE) as a framework for teaching English Language Arts for racial justice.

Finally, in our *Must Reads* section, we hear from our regular contributors, Lynette Suckow and Annie Spear, as they share their insights on children's and young adult literature as well as professional texts worthy of attention. Suckow offers a thematic look at stories of friendship that have been published in a year physical distance has required us to be even more mindful of social presence. Then, Spear shares her insights on Dr. Tanya S. Wright's recent Heinemann title, *A Teacher's Guide to Vocabulary Development Across the Day*, which is especially useful for K-3 teachers and learners.

With the first year of our editorship coming to a close, we are pleased to again remind readers that all articles are also available on our website, housed at Grand Valley University's Scholarworks site <scholarworks.gvsu.edu/mrj>. Our partnership with Jacklyn Rander and the entire Scholarworks team has been incredibly fruitful, and we are grateful for their efforts to post back issues of MRJ going back to Volume 31, Issue 1, from the fall of 1998. These three issues in Volume 53 have provided us with a unique glimpse into a year unlike any other, and we thank the GVSU Library team for making these articles available to a wider audience than ever before.

Sincerely,

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