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Welcome to the New Year!

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Welcome to the New Year!

EDITORIAL BY **MARK CONLEY AND CARMEN DYKEMA**

Literacy educators face profound changes in the final years of this millennium. The change list includes: a newly-revised revised public school code, increases in charter schools, a centralized curriculum, high school proficiency exams, re-education efforts aimed at preparing Michigan's students and teachers for these challenges and renewed interest in early intervention and remedial programs. At no other time in our state's history has it been as important for educators to have a voice and be involved in educational change. Therefore, the two guiding principles of our editorial philosophy are to: (1) ensure that the *Michigan Reading Journal* (MRJ) stays out in front in its coverage of literacy in the face of historic change, and (2) increase involvement in the journal among the broad range of Michigan educators.

The Michigan Reading Association (MRA) has an arguably unequaled set of traditions in the field of literacy. Not only was MRA one of the founding state organizations in the International Reading Association, it was one of the first to impact literacy standards through state policy and provide networks of support for literacy educators. In keeping with the strengths and traditions of the Michigan Reading Association, we will continue a strong focus on literature and literacy. We will continue to publish articles about classroom literacy practice and applications (including reading, writing, listening and speaking), action research, personal essays, poetry and cartoons. Articles that spotlight the literacy successes of

Michigan educators and their students are especially welcome. Vera Miles has agreed to continue her superb book reviews in *Book-pourri* and Tom Tobias has graciously agreed to supply us with his unique brand of humor, *Reading Trends*. Special thanks goes out to the Hackley Public Library in Muskegon for this issue's cover (and to Robert Smith for securing the graphic for us).

Here are some ideas we have for our tenure with these pages. We would like to develop a themed issue about the impact of the new state Frameworks and the proficiency exams on classroom practice and assessment. Of particular interest are articles that demonstrate how teachers and children are learning to thrive with these historic changes. Other ideas for themed issues include:

- new approaches to integrated language arts (reading, writing, speaking, listening and viewing)
- the many faces of Michigan Reading Recovery
- providing instructional support in the 90's (rethinking remediation and special education)
- innovative literacy staff development
- what school restructuring means for literacy education
- collaborations that work (teacher to teacher, parents and teachers, kid to kid, administrators and teachers, professors and teachers)

We would also like to open up the journal to healthy exchanges of alternative points of view. For instance, writers may wish to offer point-counterpoint views on various issues (for example, To

Remediate or Not to Remediate: That is the Question!). Send us your ideas and articles for themed issues and point-counterpoint discussion.

We will also continue MRJ's support for writers, and particularly writers who evoke images and experiences from the classroom. In keeping with traditions started by Robert Smith, we will hold a writers' workshop at the annual MRA conference in Grand Rapids and we will guide writers in following the advice of our able board of reviewers. A new innovation that we will start with this journal will be to invite recent MRJ authors to serve as guest reviewers for subsequent

editions. This plan will help MRJ grow through the involvement MRA members.

Finally, you will see that Mark has written his last Paradigm Shifts column. We feel strongly that this is a member publication. The Paradigm Shifts pages now are available to you. If you have some burning issues you feel literacy educators need to hear about, drop us a commentary. As the challenges loom ahead for Michigan and its literacy educators, let MRJ serve as your forum for creating new visions of literacy, celebrating our work and our passions, and raising the authentic classroom voice on behalf of improved literacy for us all.

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