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From the Editors...

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From the Editors...

by **Kathryn L. Roberts, Ph.D.** and **Poonam Arya, Ph.D.**

Welcome to a new year, and a fresh start! Although many of us consider September the true beginning of the year, there is something to be said about coming back to the classroom refreshed, renewed, and recharged after the winter break. This is our final calendar year as Journal editors, and we're so happy to be beginning a new year with our Michigan Reading Association colleagues across the state.

To say we are excited about this issue would be an understatement. This academic year, and those leading up to it, have felt like a pressure cooker for many of us. The Read by Grade Three law is contentious, but a current reality in our state. We open this issue of

the journal with an article by Gabriel P. DellaVecchia (University of Michigan), who shares with us an overview of the legislation, as well as positive steps we can take to support our children and teachers who are affected by it and remind us that our students are so much more than scores on a spreadsheet. Times are tense, but this is no time to give up on the humanity involved in teaching and learning. As everyone's favorite educator, Albus Dumbledore once said, "Happiness can be found in the darkest of times, if only one remembers to turn on the light," and what better way to turn on the light than to open a book.

In this issue, our authors also help us to think about the other ways in which reading matters for our students. Ashley Schultz (Central Unit School District 301, Elgin, IL) and Alicia Baczek (Central Unit School District 301, Elgin, IL) help us think about how read alouds provide opportunities for socio-emotional learning. Dr. Rebecca Norman (Mount Saint Mary College, Newburg, NY) showcases the ways in which we can use careful selection of books and learning activities to foster enthusiastic engagement in our students, especially young boys. Drs. Sara Churchill and Kathy Everts Danielson (University of Nebraska at Omaha) discuss why it is important to explicitly teach vocabulary and review best practices in vocabulary instruction. In a Voices from the Region piece, Dr. Chad H. Waldron (University of Michigan-Flint) and Michelle McQueen (Regional Multi-Tiered System of Support Consultant) emphasize the importance of improving early literacy outcomes by implementing the *PreK Literacy Essentials* in early childhood classrooms.

In the Critical Issues section, Dr. Sandra M. Gonzales, Jonelle Lopez, Laura Torres, and Ana Calandrino (Wayne State University, Detroit) help us to think about the different ways in which our students engage and embody literacies, and what it means to be responsive to them. quan neloms (In Demand, Detroit) offers a not-to-be missed poetic focus on the importance of diversifying our teaching community, particularly to include a more proportional inclusion of Black male teachers.

We could not be more excited to share our "Must Read Texts" with you. We open this section with three book reviews: *A Teacher's Guide to Getting Started with Beginning Writers: Grades K-2*, written by Katie



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Wood Ray and Lisa Cleaveland and reviewed by Dr. Meghan K. Block (Central Michigan University); *Beyond Literary Analysis: Teaching Students to Write with Passion and Authority about Any Text*, written by Allison Marchetti and Rebekah O'Dell and reviewed by Dr. Gina DeBlase (Wayne State University); and *No More Reading Instruction without Differentiation*, written by Lynn Bigelman and Debra Peterson and reviewed by Kathleen Plond (Wayne State University). Next, we have a guest book reviewer, Elena, from the *Elena Reads* book review blog. Elena is a sixth-grade student, who reviews books with a particular eye toward diverse representation. The column includes both an interview with Elena and several fantastic book reviews. We close this issue with *Great Lakes, Great Books* recommendations from our unofficial *MRJ* librarian, Lynette Suckow (Peter White Public Library, Marquette, MI).

We encourage our readers to read updates and information about the journal by liking the Michigan Reading Association page on Facebook, following @michiganreading on Twitter, and searching and following Michigan Reading Association on Pinterest. Our journal email address is mrj@wayne.edu. We invite you to join the conversation by contributing to *MRJ*. Please email article submissions that are appropriate for any of the sections in our journal to our email address. We look forward to hearing from you.

Many thanks to our Wayne State University editorial team of Angela Harris and Sarah Schrag, who have done a fantastic job of supporting the work for this issue. We would also like to thank LaShan Mabry and Charissa Elmer from the Michigan Reading Association office; our MRA president, Theresa Hasenauer; and the MRA board for all of their hard work.

We hope that you enjoy this issue of *MRJ*, and that you will continue to tell your friends and colleagues about us.

Happy Reading!



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