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President's Message...

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Michigan Reading Association

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President's Message...

by Jill Erfourth, MRA President 2021-2022

“April showers bring May flowers.” We typically associate the month of April with rain, and we hold out hope that May will bring brighter days.

I think of this aphorism as I reflect upon where we have been as an organization in supporting our members and continuing our mission of empowering all Michigan students and educators through literacy. Along with other businesses and nonprofit organizations, MRA continues rebuilding, both financially and structurally, from the pandemic.



Jill Erfourth

One of our initial goals in the fall was to develop an updated, comprehensive 3-year strategic plan. At the same time, our office was undergoing restructuring with new personnel, and we were initiating a new cost-saving website platform. With that also came implementing new procedures and protocols, which took precedence. That work has, indeed, led us to brighter days with a more functional membership database, improved email communication, and a more efficient method of registering for events. As needs change and new ones arise, the MRA Board adjusts plans and goals along the way.

As an organization, we have continued to focus on other established goals of building community outreach and partnerships, collective action in committee work, advocacy, activism, and professional learning for educators. Offering MRA members additional opportunities for professional learning and collaboration around literacy was another goal we prioritized. This year we provided two professional learning webinars exclusively for our members. Our committees have been active in our social media communities, sharing resources and information and collaborating with participants. The Adolescent Literacy Committee, for instance, offered opportunities for collaboration and learning through a book study, which was for MRA members only. Next year, building and expanding opportunities and offerings like this will continue to be at the forefront.

We are literacy activists. Recently, we have come together with other organizations across the state to stand up to censorship and book banning. At our 66th annual conference, we gathered as a beloved community to engage educators and literacy leaders from across Michigan advocating for literacy equity and justice. Our work focuses on empowering all Michigan educators and students through literacy. Together, we continue to emerge stronger as an organization and invite you to join our collective work as an active member!

To become more involved in MRA, there are many ways to get started. First, you can reach out to me directly, or you can contact your regional representative. Their contact info is on our website, under the About Us, Local Councils tab, and we are always willing to connect with you and hear about your work. Second, you can follow and engage with MRA via Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, all with the “michiganreading” handle. Third, you can look ahead to our board elections for next year, as nominations

will open up on January, 2023. Finally, if you are doing great literacy work in your classroom, school, and community – and we know you are – you could write a short post for our blog. Again, if you are interested in that, please contact me and I can help get you started.

May is just around the corner, then the end of another challenging, yet invigorating school year. My hope is that the warm days, cool evenings, and end-of-year projects ahead all bring you – and your students – joy in these final days of the 2021-2022 year.

Sincerely,
Jill Erfourth

Jill Erfourth is the 2021-2022 President of the Michigan Reading Association. Jill has over 25 years of experience as an educator in Utica Community Schools. Previously she has served as a second-grade teacher for 18 years and a literacy coach for the past two years. Jill is currently a District K-6 Literacy Consultant in UCS. As a Macomb County Literacy Ambassador, she shares her love of reading and advocates for equity through literacy in Utica Schools and across the county. Jill is the co-author of *Interacting With informational Text for Close and Critical Reading*. She holds a master's degree in Educational Leadership from Saginaw Valley State University. Jill has been nominated for Michigan Teacher of the Year, and was a 2018-2019 MTOY semi-finalist. You can reach Jill Erfourth at <jerfourth.michiganreading@gmail.com>.

