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Thoughts from the Editors

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Thoughts from the Editors

As we introduce our inaugural issue of *Language Arts*, we first would like to extend our appreciation to the outgoing editorial team (Peggy Albers, Caitlin McMunn Dooley, Amy Seely Flint, Teri Holbrook, Laura May, and Rebecca Rohloff Barria). We thank them for their experience, acumen, and generosity in supporting our transition as the incoming editors. Their assistance in the form of responses to numerous emails and phone calls, a face-to-face meeting in Atlanta, and the sharing of documents has played a pivotal role in our ability to function successfully. During their editorship, they have crafted issues filled with creative insights into language arts education and incisive commentaries on how understandings of literacies have evolved and expanded in recent years.

By offering articles that are conceptually innovative and methodologically rigorous, even as they are accessible and enlightening to a wide variety of audiences, *Language Arts* occupies an important place within the field. As the incoming editors, we intend to maintain the longstanding tradition of publishing high-quality scholarship focused on language arts teaching and learning related to children of preschool through middle school age, while also placing our own unique imprint on the journal.

Our collective vision entails three main goals. First, we intend to emphasize children's literature in a number of ways, such as routinely featuring art from picturebooks and novels on the cover of the journal, publishing interviews with notable children's book authors and illustrators, and having one themed issue annually devoted to some aspect of literature for youth.

Second, we intend to make even more central the words, experiences, and insights of children as

they use language and literacy to navigate, make sense of, and leave their marks on the world. For example, in classrooms and homes today, young learners are harnessing the tools of digital media to navigate the realm of popular culture while creating their own multimedia productions. As editors, we plan to embrace these deeply creative and increasingly complex practices of literacy by highlighting the literary, artistic, and analytic work taking place across multiple modalities and contexts. We will prioritize children's voices (such as talk occurring in literature circles in Monica A. Belfatti's feature article) and the written and multimodal artifacts young people create, from a brightly painted piece of artwork (like the pink flamingo on our cover) to digital compositions (like the tweets about math riddles in Holly Marich's Perspectives on Practice column).

Third, we intend to embed issues related to diversity and social justice throughout the journal. During these times marked by profound political unrest and widening inequalities, we contend that the language arts have a central role to play by helping us reach toward a more accepting and equitable society. We also seek to feature in the journal perspectives and research that explore the challenges and possibilities of envisioning and enacting "education as the practice of freedom" (hooks, 1994) and the vital role that the language arts may play in this endeavor. From schools to community sites, from homes to homeless shelters, from street demonstrations to prisons, literacies can profoundly mediate and transform experiences and our understandings of them.

In this inaugural issue and in future ones, we will continue to have refereed feature articles with portraits of the language arts that provide clear

implications for teaching and learning and make a significant contribution to advancing knowledge in the field. We will maintain the Research & Policy column now led by department editor Gerald Campano. This column will offer insightful pieces related to the field of language arts. Articles may include innovative studies, research syntheses, emerging or cutting-edge theoretical frameworks, past/present perspectives on influential research, or reviews of critical areas of policy. The Children's Literature Reviews column under the direction of department editor Grace Enriquez will feature reviews of recently published high-quality children's literature aligned with issue themes. This column will highlight the Notable Children's Books in the Language Arts list, the Orbis Pictus and Charlotte Huck Award winners, and an annual Notable Poetry Books list. In many of our issues, we plan to also include interviews with a wide range of authors, scholars, and researchers conducted by department editor Jennifer D. Turner. These interviews will supplement and enrich the topics addressed in themed issues. For instance, our upcoming Diverse Books issue will feature interviews with both Violet J. Harris, a well-known scholar of children's literature, and Duncan Tonatiuh, an award-winning children's book author and illustrator. In addition, we will continue to feature articles related to the work of the Elementary Section Steering Committee, such as the interview with the winner of the annual NCTE Outstanding Educator in the English Language Arts Award.

Reflecting our commitment to welcoming a diverse set of voices and experiences into the journal as well as to practitioners in the field, we are also pleased to announce that we will be seeking submissions for a new column called Perspectives on Practice. These shorter, more conversational pieces are written by and speak directly to the diverse practitioners of the language arts—teachers, librarians, literacy specialists, children's book authors and illustrators, professional development providers, and others. We are also introducing another new column titled Language Arts Lessons. In this column, we will not only introduce a range

of pedagogical practices and literary theories, we will also explain how to implement them in accessible and meaningful ways. Under the direction of department editor Haeny Yoon, authors will offer a short, lively description of a pedagogical practice or theoretical perspective and then provide questions and activities that teachers can use immediately in their classrooms. In each Language Arts Lessons column, we will also highlight professional texts (recently published ones as well as older titles and classics) to extend and enrich the inquiries.

It is our hope that as you engage with the pages of *Language Arts*, the ideas contained within will inspire you, open up new avenues of thought, and perhaps even provoke a change in a classroom practice or plant the seeds for a fresh way of thinking about literacy, assessment, young children, and the possible role of the language arts in helping us realize the democratic promise of education. As we embark on this journey, we invite you to correspond with us on the direction and vision of the journal and to support us in our efforts to make more central the voices and perspectives of students and their teachers as they engage in this important work of the language arts.

In closing, we want to acknowledge the support of others beyond the outgoing editorial team who have made our editorship possible. These include the *Language Arts* Editorship search committee and administrators at our universities, who provided support in the form of course releases and graduate student assistance. We thank Dean Robert Bangert-Drowns and Virginia Goatley of the University at Albany, Dean George J. Petersen and Debi Switzer of Clemson University, and Dean Gregory M. Anderson and Michael Smith of Temple University. We also thank our three editorial assistants, Amal Aldaej, Katie Haldeman, and Bernadette Maher, who have been enormously helpful throughout this start-up process.

Reference

hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. New York, NY: Routledge.

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