From the Editor

The State of Michigan is a very interesting place. We have large cities like Detroit, famous (or infamous) for the American auto industry; small cities with crazy names like my hometown, Kalamazoo; and a place known as the UP, the Upper Peninsula where beauty abounds at Tahquamenon Falls, a state park near Paradise, MI. We also have some very interesting issues here in Michigan. For example, the state legislature has mandated that every public school teacher in the state take a graduate class in reading process and assessment before they can acquire a professional teaching certificate. This semester I am teaching the Professional Symposium in Reading, this state mandated graduate class and, as usual, I have no doubt that it will be an interesting experience as the enrollment includes teachers of all grades and content areas. As I was reading and rereading the manuscript submissions included in this issue of *Reading Horizons*, I found myself making multiple connections to the content and the students I will have the pleasure of teaching in this and my undergraduate class, Secondary Content Literacy.

Kristine Gritter presents a study of pre-service secondary content area teachers and their beliefs about how to integrate literacy into their content area(s) instruction. Like Dr. Gritter, my undergraduate students come to class with a solid foundation in their chosen field – math, English, social studies, history, foreign language, science, etc. – and often question why they need to take a class in reading. Her research provides a glimpse into the minds of ten pre-service teachers and how they think about teaching and adolescent learners. Personally, I found her findings to be fascinating and affirming what I've seen in my own classroom.

Marie Stadler and Gay Ward did a fascinating study with kindergarten and grade one students and how the use of miniature props affected their retells of stories read in school. When giving a retell of a story, these young children handled props intended to aid them in remembering details of the various stories. While these props had no effect on the complexity of the retells, the children did use many more descriptive terms. Many of my graduate students are early elementary teachers who work with emergent readers who struggle with reading; sharing this study with them will no doubt give them yet another tool with which to support their students reading skills.

Working with third grade English Language Learners (ELLs), Ann Ebe found that while her readers generally did well on standardized reading assessments, they would struggle and frequently fail when presented with stories that had no cultural

relevance to their lives. Pulling on this experience, Dr. Ebe created the Cultural Relevance Rubric which asks readers to rate how closely a story relates to their individual lives. She then conducted a study asking her participants to first rate the cultural relevance of the stories used in a standardized assessment and then they took the test. Dr. Ebe found that the reading comprehension was greater for the stories that were rated more culturally relevant by her young students. The issue of English Language Learners is important for all of us and I intend to use Dr. Ebe's Cultural Relevance Rubric with my graduate students as they learn about assessments and how to use this knowledge to better their teaching, no matter the grade or content area.

Terry Young and Barbara Ward, as usual, present us with fabulous literature for grades K-12. In this issue of *Reading Horizons*, they discuss many books of poetry, from the oft-used anthology to the novel in verse; these books will become part of my (and my students) literate lives. Poetry, in its many forms, brings forth images of beauty and horror, laughter and tears, and Drs. Young and Ward have highlighted some of the newest voices (Julie Andrews) as well as more well-known poets (Langston Hughes) that are sure to elicit responses from everyone.

Editing *Reading Horizons* brings out what I think is the best in me as I find myself making connections with the many researchers around the world who send us manuscripts. With this issue, I found myself thinking about the students I am teaching this semester and the many joys and challenges faced on a daily basis as a university professor. Once again I am grateful for the opportunity to be a part of such a vibrant learning community as we have in *Reading Horizons*.

Allison L. Baer, Ph.D.
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There is no more crucial or basic skill in all of education than reading.