

# Montana English Journal

Montana Association of Teachers of English Language Arts



Spring 2023  
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## From the Editor: Introducing the Spring 2023 Edition of the *Montana English Journal*

**Stephanie F. Reid** is currently an Assistant Professor at the University of Montana. As of Fall 2023, she will be joining the University of Cincinnati as an Assistant Professor of Literacy Education. Prior to her work at UM, she was a middle school ELA teacher for 15 years in both England (3 years) and the United States (12 years). Stephanie's research focuses on multimodal approaches to teaching and learning.

Although this is an open-themed edition of the *Montana English Journal*, thematic strands link many of the articles in this edition: (1) the importance of collaboration, community, and mentorship; (2) humanizing approaches to teaching and learning that nurture students' identities, cultures, and languages; and (3) possibilities for multimodal and digital literacy opportunities in school spaces.

At the time of publication, debates about school, education, and literacy are playing out on social media, at school board meetings, and in the press. In addition to teaching students, teachers must defend their text selections, advocate for curricula that reflect and honor their students' identities, and push back against those promoting narrow, exclusive, and oppressive literacy pedagogies. The articles in this edition of the *Montana English Journal* all demonstrate in different ways the necessity of designing responsive curricula that demonstrate deep care for students, their futures, and the well-being of our social worlds and planet.

In the opening article, Abby Lynes converses with Beverly Ann Chin, Professor Emeritus of English at the University of Montana, who recently retired after contributing to English language arts education for nearly 50 years. Their conversation focuses on Dr. Chin's 2021 MATELA conference keynote speech, *Mentoring: Sharing*

*Our Journeys, Honoring our Stories, Transforming our Profession*. Abby and Beverly remind readers that teaching should not be a solo endeavor and that community and collaboration will help educators grow their pedagogy and support each other in sustaining their work over time. Mentoring other educators and accepting mentorship are ways to strengthen our professional communities. Abby and Beverly encourage their readers to pursue excellence while uplifting and celebrating fellow community members. Togetherness is powerful.

Lona Running Wolf, whose self-identity is rooted in the Blackfeet (Nitsitapi) Nation, explains why and how educators must work to match educational paradigms to learners. Lona issues a moving call to change how Indigenous students are educated and explains that educator preparation programs must shoulder the responsibility for such change. In her article, Lona shares her ideas for re-designing education with readers and advocates for re-envisioning schools, teaching, and learning. For such a reimagining to occur, curriculum design must be a collaborative endeavor that draws upon the knowledge of Indigenous Elders, community members, and educators. Educational paradigms must be rooted in Indigenous cultures and worldviews. Standardized curricula and methods, which are aligned with Western and colonial worldviews do not nourish, honor, or celebrate

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Indigenous students and their brilliance.

Also demonstrating the importance of collaboration and humanizing curricula possibilities are Ashley R. Olsen, Abby Stitt, and Jessica Van Kerkhove. Together, they worked to redesign a third-grade language arts unit on astronomy. They expanded upon the curriculum offered through the student reader and workbook, grounding their re-design in the scholarship of Dr. Ghody Muhammad (2020, 2023) and her culturally and historically responsive framework. They also incorporated multimodal texts and extended opportunities for students to show their knowledge and understanding. Although they know that curriculum designing is always a work in progress and never complete, they share their curricular work so far with readers. They acknowledge that working towards social justice and supporting students in building criticality is not “the work of a single unit or year but of one’s life” (p. 24).

Additionally, Kristina ByBee and Mandy Luszeck collaborated on curriculum design. In their article, they share how they generated more student interest in argumentative writing by incorporating multimodal elements and digital technologies into their first-year community college composition courses. They share the goals of their unit, the scholarship underpinning their thinking, and the details of their Difference-Makers project.

Reka C. Barton, in her article, asks that educators move beyond labels to ensure that students are understood and supported in more nuanced ways. Reka discusses the labels often used to describe multilingual learners and their capabilities and argues for expanded notions of literacy. Incorporating multimodality and visual literacy strategies into instruction means students can access, participate in, and respond to the curriculum in multiple ways. This article offers two

specific multimodal strategies to support multilingual learners in learning and showcasing their expertise.

Dilnoza Khasilova’s article also addresses language learning. Dilnoza describes the Access the World with World Languages and Cultures summer program that she directed at the University of Wyoming. The grant-funded program was free to any adult in Wyoming interested in learning about Arabic, Armenian, German, Korean, Spanish, Turkish, and Uzbek languages and culture. Across two weeks, participants learned from volunteer facilitators. Dilnoza’s article details how the camp unfolded and shares participant feedback.

We are also fortunate to include three book review articles. Jordan Parker reviewed *Teaching English in Rural Communities: Toward a Critical Rural English Pedagogy* by Robert Petrone and Allison Wynhoff Olsen. Jordan also includes excerpts from her interview with the authors. Monica J. Dierken, Georgina M. Kepferle, and Madeline Wenberg reviewed Brett Pierce’s (2022) *Expanding Literacies: Bringing Digital Storytelling into Your Classroom*. They, too, include excerpts from an interview with the author.

Inspired by Dean Valerie Kinloch’s 2021 NCTE Annual Conference theme, Elisa Schroeder shares some incredible children’s and young adult book recommendations. Together, these book reviews emphasize the importance of place and responsive pedagogies, highlight the opportunities to expand upon the more traditional ways of reading and writing that are often privileged in schools, and demonstrate the necessity of ensuring that readers have access to books that are windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors (Rudine Sims Bishop, 1990).

Finally, I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who made this issue possible. We appreciate the authors who were willing to share

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their work through this publication venue, the editorial board members who participated in the peer review process, and Katie Kotynski, who continues to help me navigate the *MEJ* publication process.

I hope that you enjoy reading the contributions to this edition of the *Montana English Journal* and that you find value in the ideas, texts, and teaching strategies shared. I also hope you will consider submitting your teaching ideas, book recommendations, and artistic endeavors for publication in our next edition. Please visit the *MEJ* website for further details regarding submissions (<https://scholarworks.umt.edu/mej/>). You are welcome to contact the *MEJ* editor or board members before submission to connect regarding any potential publication ideas.

Happy reading!

Stephanie F. Reid, Editor

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