

## Editor's Introduction: Questioning Our Practices for a More Hopeful Future

Michelle M. Falter

Albert Einstein reminds us that we must “Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow. The important thing is not to stop questioning.” Each author in this Fall issue of *JoLLE* follows Einstein’s lead in questioning the practices of students, teachers, teacher-educators, writers, and scholars, learning from what has occurred and is occurring in today’s classrooms, and highlighting encouraging and hopeful practices to solve some of language and literacy educator’s enduring questions.

Our issue features a wealth of topics and themes, addresses various audiences, and tackles many pervasive questions around language and literacy throughout the **Research and Voices from the Field** articles. The first article, “I Hope it Still Counts as Reading: The Cultural Production of Reading(s), Social Relations and Values in a Research Interview,” by Lyndsay Moffatt helps to frame the rest of this issue in thinking through narrow understandings of reading and literacy. Moffatt’s research highlights the challenges of transforming unequal social relations and values by moving to a more egalitarian understanding of multiliteracies that recognizes and values historically marginalized literacies.

The next two pieces, Ava Becker’s “Funds of (Difficult) Knowledge and the Affordances of Multimodality: The Case of Victor” and Rong Liu, John Unger, and Vicki Scullion’s “Social Justice Through Literacy: Integrating Video Cameras in Reading Summaries and Responses,” both tackle issues of social justice with refugee or immigrant populations. In Becker’s article, she discusses the affordances of multimodality and how it can open up spaces to engage with and understand difficult knowledge, particularly those not often recognized or acknowledged. Liu et al.’s article argues that the use of digital video cameras in reading summaries and responses helped ESL/EAP students who typically struggle with their reading engage in complex meaning, understanding, and sense-making processes around social justice topics.

The fourth article, “Labeled Reading Disabled and ‘Doing Reading’: One College Student’s Reading History” by Maryl Randel helps us to reconsider the ways in which being labeled as reading disabled has long lasting effects on reader identity, no matter how successful the student might be. Randel’s work challenges us to remember the social and emotional aspects of lifelong reading challenges.

The next three articles focus on the impact of hands-on experience in shaping preservice teacher perspectives related to challenging and understanding cultural identity/ies and White privilege, the teaching of reading in the early grades, and designing and implementing differentiated instruction through blogging opportunities.

The importance of providing authentic opportunities for pre-service teachers to interrogate and apply course concepts informs in each article. Laura Jiménez's piece, "So, Like, What Now?: Making Identity Visible for Pre-Service Teachers," introduces *The Human Bean Activity* that she used in a preservice teacher course as a tool to help students visualize their own identity/ies and communities they belong, along with helping them develop ways of talking and listening to each other as they struggle with issues of race, ethnicity, sexual identity and their choice of communities. Ramona Pittman and Theresa Dorel's piece, "Experiential Learning and Literacy: Preservice Teachers' Perspectives," examines a community-based reading tutoring program that her preservice teachers engaged in and how hands-on experiences with real readers helped preservice teachers apply difficult and abstract course concepts in real ways, thereby building confidence in their own abilities to teach reading and to work with diverse readers.

The final article related to experiential learning with preservice teachers is by Katie Stover, Lindsay Sheronick Yearta, and Rachel Sease, titled "Experience is the Best Tool for Teachers': Blogging to Provide Pre-Service Educators with Authentic Teaching Opportunities." In this piece, Stover et al. talk about an authentic teaching opportunity where preservice teachers and 5<sup>th</sup> graders engaged in a blogging pen pal project where they discussed a commonly read text. This experience allowed preservice teachers opportunities to develop as active metacognitive readers and writers and to provide more effective reading instruction for varying ability levels. It also provided real opportunities to implement what they learned in their literacy methods courses. In addition, preservice teachers saw the value of using technology as a tool to facilitate learning.

The final two articles help raise questions about how to best meet the needs of readers in middle and elementary level classrooms. Pamela Pittman and Barbara Honchell's article, "Literature Discussion: Encouraging Reading Interest and Comprehension in Struggling Middle School Readers," inquires about the role of literature discussion groups (LDGs) as a pedagogical construct for helping struggling readers. This research indicates that LDGs increase student enjoyment and understanding of texts when reading strategies, prior-knowledge, and connections are also incorporated. Heather Wall's **Voices from the Field** article, titled "When Guided Reading isn't Working: Strategies for Effective Instruction," investigates and reflects on teachers' guided reading practices in a school through the use of a coaching lab model where teachers interrogated and reflected on their practices in order to better assist struggling readers. Wall's piece attests to the power of engaged reflective communities within schools to make small positive changes to instruction that had immense influence on student success.

In addition, *JoLLE's Academic Book Reviews*, edited by Xiaoli Hong, offer considerations of six titles that extend the discussions in this issue's other sections. Both Joanna Anglin's review of *Text Complexity: Raising Rigor in Reading* and Chelsey Bahlmann's review of *Best Ever Literacy Survival Tips: 72 Lessons You Can't Teach Without* offer suggestions and discussion around how to best meet the Common Core State Standards for literacy instruction. Additionally, Gabriela del Vilar's review of *Educating Latino Boys: An Asset-Based Approach* and Deavours Hall's review of *The Arts and Emergent Bilingual Youth: Building Culturally Responsive, Critical and Creative Education in School and Community Contexts* complement the articles dealing with marginalized voices and literacies, and offer discussion about counteracting deficit-view discourses around Latino boys and children who are learning English. Elizabeth Howell's review of *Talking, Sketching, Moving: Multiple Literacies in the Teaching of Writing* considers the value of multiliteracies in writing pedagogy that foregrounds diverse ways of knowing such as: oral, visual, kinesthetic, spatial, and social. And finally, Nicole Siffrinn and Ruth Harman's review of *Research Methods in Linguistics* describes a practical, comprehensive, and interdisciplinary approach to linguistic research and methods suitable for graduate students and linguistic scholars alike.

Our fall issue also continues last year's new feature, the **Poetry and Arts** section, edited by Margaret Robbins. The three pieces of art and eight poems depict the power of language in our everyday lives. Many of our poets and artists are also educators who convey the importance of learning both inside and outside the school

walls. Sharon Verner Chappell's poem and artwork titled "I Can Climb That" offers a hopeful picture of empowering students to see the potential they have to succeed. Janine Certo's poem "/The clouds were pretending to be clouds/ and /Goat gone feral comes in where the fence is open.../ or How to Get Your Poem Published in The New Yorker" and Terese Gagnon's two poems "Thick" and "Rock Gold" articulate how writing embodies the word and the world at the same time.

The next three poetry and arts pieces all call into question what it means to be literate. Dante Di Stefano's poems "What I Didn't Learn about Reading in High School, I Try to Teach My Students Now" and "My Cannon" and Jerome Harste's painting titled "Out of the Box" offer personal counter-narratives that disrupt and expand traditional notions of school literacy practices.

The final two poems and one art piece offer commentary on the way language and culture affect our words and worlds. In Melanie Swetz's poem "Reading Neruda," she explores the intersections of language, culture, poetry, and humanity. Tammy Cline's poem "Communication in a Foreign Land" offers a window into the world of struggling language learners. Finally, the art piece titled "The Border," by Blanca Licona Miranda, highlights the struggle of undocumented students achieving their dreams within an unjust society.

In addition to these wonderful thought-provoking articles, poetry, art, and academic reviews in our fall issue of *JoLLE*, we are excited to introduce several new features of our journal that we hope will help to expand notions of what language and literacy entails. First of all, to better make use of the affordances of our online open access journal, we have added podcast interviews with our authors of **Research** and **Voices from the Field** pieces. As a journal, we believe in the value of learning from one another, and hearing how researchers and practitioners endeavor to undertake research and writing. We hope you find these podcasts helpful, illuminating, and educative.

Another new feature is our **Children's and Young Adult Literature (CYAL) Book Reviews**, edited by Helene Halstead. We feel this is complementary to our academic book reviews, and provides educators with opportunities to preview books that they might wish to include within their classrooms. We have included two viewpoints on each book reviewed—one from an educator's perspective, and one from a student's perspective—so that we are always keeping in mind our students when choosing literature, and not only privileging adult perspectives. For this issue educators and students reviewed 9 children's and young adult books. For elementary level books, *The Smallest Girl in the Smallest Grade* written by Justin Roberts and illustrated by Christian Robinson, *Soccer Star* written by Mina Javaherbin and illustrated by Renalto Alarçao, *Golemito* written by Ilan Stavans and Illustrated by Teresa Villegas, and *Playing Pro Football* written by Paul Bowker were reviewed. Middle grades books reviewed include *I Remember Beirut* by Zeinia Abriached, *Serafina's Promise* by Ann Burgm, and *brown girl dreaming* by Jacqueline Woodson. *I am Malala: How One Girl Stood Up for Education and Changed the World* by Malala Yousafzai and Patricial McCormick and *If You Could Be Mine* by Sara Farizan round out our reviews of literature aimed at high school students.

Our vision for *JoLLE* is one in which *JoLLE* readers not only consume content, but also produce new ideas through conversations. One way to do this is by joining us in conversation through **Facebook** (please "like" us and join in the conversation at <https://www.facebook.com/JoLLE.UGA>) and through **Twitter** (@jolle\_uga). Over the past few months, we have posted resources and queries on these pages. We hope you will participate in this community, sharing your ideas about content read in *JoLLE* or other interesting literacy-related topics. Furthermore, we are always interested in hearing our readers' voices through our **Scholars Speak Out** feature, edited by Meghan Barnes (<http://jolle.coe.uga.edu/scholars-speak-out/>). Each month an op-ed is selected that highlights different, and typically current, concerns and/or interests in the field of language and literacy education. The topics are varied and writers often use Scholars Speak Out as a platform to talk more accessibly about their work, their concerns in education, and/or to make a call to action. We are always looking for more writers for this feature. If you are interested in writing, please email the Managing

Editor, Meghan Barnes at [meghan824@gmail.com](mailto:meghan824@gmail.com). Finally, we invite all of you to continue the conversations started through this issue by joining us for the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual JoLLE@UGA Winter Conference, hosted in Athens, GA on February 7-8, 2015. This year's theme is Embodied and/or Participatory Literacies: Inspire, Engage, Create, Transform. For more information on the conference and registration please head to our website: <http://jolle.coe.uga.edu/conference-2015/>. In addition, our Spring *JoLLE* issue will be a themed issue based on the conference theme. For more information on our call for manuscripts and how to submit, please see: <http://jolle.coe.uga.edu/about/submission-guidelines/>. We encourage our readers to submit work that falls within any of the publication categories available in this issue: research articles, voices from the field, academic book reviews, CYAL book reviews, poetry and art, and Scholars Speak Out essays.

As we head into our holiday celebrations, whatever they may be, I hope that this Fall issue of *JoLLE* has left you with much excitement and optimism about the future of language and literacy education. Albert Camus poetically wrote: "In the midst of winter, I found there was, within me, an invincible summer." Particularly in a time in education when teachers are burdened with the brunt of educational reform policies, teacher-education programs are under increased pressure to graduate teachers through newly imposed standardized measures, and students are being tested at rates that seem out of control, each of the authors, poets, and artists in this issue offers positive suggestions and considerations for the future. *JoLLE* readers, I encourage each of you to find your own "invincible summer," and continue to use that strength within to question language and literacy practices for a more hopeful future.

Sincerely,



Michelle M. Falter  
Principal Editor 2014-2015  
[jolle@uga.edu](mailto:jolle@uga.edu)