

Editorial

Welcome to the first issue of the second volume of *Reading and Writing: Journal of the Reading Association of South Africa*. This journal aims to bring together research, field reports, discussion pieces and critical commentary that will contribute to our knowledge and understandings of reading and writing and that may help us to better grasp the complex, dynamic and changing nature of literacy practices in education and in contemporary social life. We are delighted to bring out this issue but regret that we did not get a second issue published in 2010, as planned. We are hopeful that the quantity of submitted articles for review and publication will increase rapidly now that the journal has a presence. We expect that our administration and publishing systems will settle down and enable us to bring out the journal as regularly as planned, in future. We are also planning to bring out an online version of the journal soon, including back copies, which will be free and easily available to existing subscribers to the journal.

In this issue of *Reading and Writing: Journal of the Reading Association of South Africa* we start with an article by Shelly O'Carroll that argues for the importance of letter-sound knowledge in the earliest stages of children learning to read - in particular for children who come from poor socio-economic family backgrounds in southern Africa. She examines an intervention that focuses on the teaching of letter-sound knowledge to pre-school children in the context of building language skills, emergent literacy and concepts about print. She suggests that there is an urgent need for quality teacher programmes for teachers of pre-school children, with a focus in these programmes on children's emergent literacy.

Hilary Janks's article resumes the debate that was started in the first issue of *Reading and Writing* about the role of literacy tests of early primary schooling children. She examines the South African results in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) and shows that there is a disjunction between what students are learning in South African classroom and what the tests are testing. She shows that the test's emphasis on comprehending written material is at odds with the emphasis on coding activities that is common in early primary school. She argues that children need to learn to be certain kinds of text participants, users and analysts, as well as decoders, if they are to read and write successfully in school settings (and pass such benchmark tests).

In their article, Belinda Mendelowitz and Harriet Davis offer an account of narrative multilingualism as an approach to language teaching in multilingual settings, where language histories are shared by way of personal narratives.

They examine the impact of this approach on in-service primary school teachers who attended a course where it was taught and conclude that the practice can open up the classroom for teachers and students alike.

Daniel Kasule's article examines an intervention where primary school student teachers were taught to use on-line software and a cloze test to determine the readability of text in textbooks. Drawing on an interactive view of reading, he argues that such activity is beneficial for increasing teachers' awareness of readability issues, particularly as regards their students who might be learning in a second or third language.

Paula Gains and Barbara Graham report on a collaborative intervention around creative writing in primary schools in two African settings. The project was developed in tandem by researchers working in literacy organizations in Kenya and South Africa and aimed to encourage teachers to write creatively and expressively, on the basis that they would be better at developing the quality and quantity of their students' writing, if their own experiences with expressive writing were enhanced.

Finally, Lone Ketsitlile presents a brief snapshot, taken from her PhD study on San students in a Remote Dweller junior secondary school in Botswana. While struggling with standardised literacy practices at school, these students reveal their range of interests and their out-of-school knowledge to the researcher. Ketsitlile shows a series of photographs which these students took and then described to her.

We again strongly urge RASA members and anyone else who is interested to submit papers for review and possible publication. As we described it in our opening issue, we welcome the participation, both as readers and writers, of a broad range of practitioners and academics who are interested in exploring how literacy is defined, enacted and promoted in a range of institutional, socio-cultural and disciplinary contexts: from early childhood literacy; early school literacy; middle school literacy; high school literacy; academic literacy in tertiary institutions; workplace literacies; family and community literacies; digital literacies associated with the new communication media, technologies and practices; transnational and translocal literacies associated with migrants and mobile people in African settings and with children of migrants and refugees in schools; reading and writing across various kinds of multilingual settings including schools and workplaces; to the reading and writing practices associated with government, local government and formal as well as informal civil society associations. We welcome papers that present research and provoke debate about literacy interventions of various sorts, whether directed at children, adults or both; in schools, homes, workplaces and elsewhere. We encourage contributions from a range of different disciplines and across disciplinary boundaries.