

# A Year for HOPE AND JOY

Dear Readers,

WHAT AN HONOR it has been to curate a collection of thoughtful practitioners, innovative thinkers, and diligent colleagues for this back-to-school edition of *Literacy Today* all around the critically important theme of Protecting Children’s Rights to Read. It felt especially important during this dangerous time of book banning. I paid special attention to bring together a wide-ranging group of educators whose work spans decades, various backgrounds, and a massive geographic region.

When I think about teaching now, all I can think about is how critical it is for us to teach to our whole humanity.

To teach collective care.

To cultivate belonging.

And to love each other.

At this critical juncture of education, where people are fighting to keep true stories about all kinds of beings and the ways they live *out* of children’s hands, *we* must be adamant that all children have the right to read—widely and thoroughly, and without censorship. The banning of stories about historically marginalized people—Black, Brown, Indigenous, and LGBTQIA+—amounts to erasure of humanity, and it cannot be part of our way forward.

The articles in this issue anchor to how we can reimagine not only the start of the school year but also the whole of the education experience, with plenty of practical ideas for how to embrace the whole child—their identities, voices, families, and choices. And yes, most certainly, their right to read—in its most expansive definition of multiliteracy.

Multiliteracies, as defined by ILA’s *Literacy Glossary*, is an instructional framework that supports an awareness of how new communications media are shaping the way we use language in a highly diverse and globally connected world. Its four components are (1) learning that takes place in the same context in which it is to be applied; (2) interactive teaching and learning that involves both instructors and students; (3) questioning what counts as “truth” for whom under what conditions, and with what consequences; and (4) transformed practice, which equates to applying what was learned in the three previous components.

This 40th anniversary issue is exciting for all of us. The articles exalt the teaching of multiliteracies. There are ideas for designing poetry units, supporting powerful teaching language, and using picture books at all grade levels. There are vignettes about weaving shared family experiences into the fabric of your teaching. There are invitations to connections with nature and making change through social justice librarianship. There are springboards to math literacy. There are ideas to elevate the importance of name stories and the teaching of our multilingual students from places of strength and understanding.

I find hope and joy in each of these pieces because the educators who wrote them are hopeful and joyful. Their energy and collaborative care seeps through their words in ways that breathe life into their work with young people.

It is my sincerest wish that they generate the same hope and joy in you, too.

Onward, with love,  
Nawal



**Nawal Qarooni** (nawal@nqcliteracy.com), the guest editor of this issue of *Literacy Today*, is an educator, writer, and adjunct professor who supports a holistic approach to literacy instruction and family experiences in schools across the country. Drawing on her work as an inquiry-based leader, mother, and proud daughter of immigrants, Qarooni’s pedagogy is centered in the rich and authentic learning *all* families gift their children every day. Her first book, *Nourishing Caregiver Collaborations: Exalting Home Experiences and Classroom Practices for Collective Care*, is forthcoming with Stenhouse in early 2024.