Welcome to the first MACRA newsletter since I have taken over the role of President. I would like to start by thanking everyone for electing me to this position, and to let you know I hope to fill the shoes of the past presidents and continue to lead MACRA to a thriving future.

Never in my wildest dreams did I think I would leave our conference as the future president of such a valid organization. I thought I would come back to Delaware Tech and just get back into the swing of things, but instead, I have traveled to several colleges and conferences to meet other people dealing with issues in reading and Developmental Education issues. I’m glad to know the issues we discuss and try to work with are national.

This said, I am currently working with the publishers that have supported MACRA in the past to see if they can help us procure an author of national recognition to speak at our 2014 conference. Negotiations are going well!!!! So hopefully in late January or early February I will be able to announce our speaker.

My students await…. The end of the semester is near. They all fret over their grades (or lack of) and I just want the end of the semester to come so I can rest and enjoy the holiday season. I wish all of you a great holiday season and look forward to seeing everyone in 2014.

First Experience at MACRA

This was the first MACRA Conference I have attended, and it was a valuable experience indeed. The keynote presentation by Dr. Kenneth Kerr on the Flipped Classroom was a very timely topic. It was helpful to see how he developed this method for teaching reading and writing. The afternoon "hands on" session not only provided practical experience, but also camaraderie and laughs as well. The Saturday morning presentations were helpful as a variety of topics were presented. Most of all, it was encouraging to share ideas and practices with colleagues who teach the same subject matter at the same educational level. I found myself inspired and encouraged as a result of the presentations and the opportunities to engage with fellow reading instructors. I look forward to next year’s conference. .

Rhonda K. Sharman
Delaware Tech, State Rep
I was truly intrigued by the idea of a flipped classroom. While I believe that modeling in class is essentially important, I believe the idea of accessibility to materials, to learning, outside of the classroom is important for student practice.

At my school, East Stroudsburg University, we were required for the first time to use our online course management system, Desire to Learn, this semester. We each had to post our syllabus—that was all. But as I connect my resistance to online requirements to the concept of the flipped classroom, I realized I could have the best of both worlds.

I make Power Points and handouts regularly; I have written assignments. I also have games and activities that we do in class. Suddenly, I realized I could make the flip! What if I posted all assignments beforehand on D2L? What if I put review games, my Power Points, and activities on the site as well? Students could not just use D2L to access a copy of their dog-torn syllabus—they could use it to practice outside of the classroom and continue learning.

This concept is extremely simple, but I didn’t put the pieces together until our MACRA Conference. Instead of grumbling about a requirement (use D2L!), I can flip this thinking and make learning more accessible for my students. It’s easy and something completely in my control. I’m not making all new resources—they are all in my files already. How great is that? I’m sure that I’ll continue to grow in my thought process, but I think this is a good start that I really like, and making this “flip” feels natural to my teaching philosophy. I hope that my students also flip for this idea!
The MACRA annual conference is hands down my favorite conference of the year. It has consistently offered me an opportunity for both professional development and reflection in a beautiful seaside setting. I especially look forward to the individual conversations I have with my colleagues in the field. Through those discussions, I have gained a better perspective of what is happening in Developmental Education in general. The information I have gleaned from MACRA presentations and panel discussions has been invaluable to me. It seems that from every single conference I have left with ideas about how to improve my individual instruction and the Development Reading Program that I coordinate at my institution.

I already have the MACRA 2014 conference marked on my calendar. Attending the conference has become a priority for me. It’s a vacation getaway, a reunion with friends, and an opportunity for professional growth—all wrapped into one terrific weekend.

Diane Schellack, Burlington County College, NJ

2013 MACRA Conference, by Sandra Graff, Associate Professor English, SUNY Orange.

Astonished once again by what I learned at the annual MACRA conference, I returned to New York prepared to try several new approaches to teaching and learning. One ingenious method to increase student engagement is to create a video tutorial to explain a specific skill or learning strategy. Dr. Kenneth Kerr’s presentation on the flipped classroom featured the instructor-created video, in this case, a tutorial he created to explain how to revise passive voice sentences. In the flipped model, students study the tutorial outside of class. Other topics for tutorials could be such things as how to fix the run-on sentence or how to read, paraphrase, and cite a source of information. The web application Screencast-O-Matic could be easily applied to this purpose. Thus, learning in the classroom can be effectively followed up with tutorials that can be made available to the students as a whole or sent to individuals whose work shows they could use a review of particular skills. I plan to start making videos in which I model close reading strategies. Also, it would be really useful to have a library of teacher-made tutorials on specific reading and writing issues. Another exciting possibility is to reach out across disciplines to create video tutorials of guided reading of textbook material to demonstrate reading-to-learn strategies. These tutorials would enhance reading and writing instruction in our own courses as well as across disciplines.