

# AERA SIG RMLE

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Volume 2, Issue 2

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# The Chronicle of Research in Middle Level Education

## Message from the President

By Vincent A. Anfara, Jr.  
University of Tennessee

It was great seeing so many of you in New Orleans at AERA. As they say down there, "laissez le bon temps roulez" (let the good times roll). I want to thank the presenters, chairs, and discussants who contributed to the success of our two paper sessions and seven paper discussions. Thanks also to Richard Lipka for organizing a "Meet the Publishers" session at our business meeting. Our sessions were well attended and received. As a group, we can be proud of our mission "to improve, promote, and disseminate educational research reflecting early adolescence and middle level education."

We have grown substantially as an organization in the past two years. Our membership is at an all-time high of 146. In order to keep that membership informed we updated our website and three issues of the newsletter are published annually. Special thanks are owed to Micki Caskey, Kathleen Brown, and Kathleen Malu for all of their efforts in this regard. Additionally, we have expanded our publishing opportunities with our endorsement of *The Handbook of Research in Middle Level Education*. I ask SIG members to do whatever possible to help recruit new members and, more importantly, to make suggestions for continued growth and development of our organization.

New officers were officially installed at AERA's Annual Meeting. Kim J. Hartman will assume the responsibilities as Program Chair and President-Elect for 2002-2004.

Additionally, we welcome Steve Lucas and Micki Caskey to the Association Council and welcome back for another two-year term Richard Lipka. A complete listing of officers can be found on page 2 of this newsletter.

As I look forward to the next two years as President of the SIG, I am quickly reminded of the challenges that are currently facing middle level education. We have much work to do as a group. I want to emphasize the collaborative nature of this work as we continue on our journey. We have begun this collaboration with NMSA and NaPOMLE through the work of MLRON. But collaborative ventures must also include the design and execution of large-scale research projects aimed at answering some of the hard questions we have avoided.

I would be remiss if I did not publicly thank Barbara Whinery for her work as President of this SIG (2000-2002). We have much for her to do as Past-President of this organization.

I welcome all correspondence with SIG members and look forward to seeing many of you in Portland for NMSA.

## NMSA 2002 Update

By David Hough

The NMSA Research Committee is sponsoring a Poster Session entitled "Addressing the Agenda" to be held at the 2002 NMSA Annual Conference, October 31-November 2, 2002, in Portland, Oregon. The purpose of this session is to showcase beginning researchers' work and provide data addressing the current status of middle

level education relative to *The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Research Agenda* (1998).

Please see the Call for Presentations (deadline July 31, 2002) in the upcoming issue of the *Middle School Journal*. The Research Committee will review each poster proposal and choose the top ten for inclusion in the session. While we especially encourage beginning researchers such as graduate students and assistant professors to submit proposals, all proposals will be considered. The poster session will be held in a meeting room, and then placed in a centralized "high traffic" location where they will remain on display (with several copies of each paper available for distribution) until the closing session of the conference.

Again, the Research Committee would appreciate your assistance and encouragement to graduate students and colleagues who might be interested in submitting a proposal to present a poster. If you would like further information or input, please contact:

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## NMSA 2002 Call for Forthcoming Research

By Nancy Mizelle

On behalf of the Research Committee of the National Middle School Association (NMSA), I want to offer you the opportunity to involve your outstanding graduate students in presenting their research at the 2002 NMSA conference in Portland. Once again the Research Committee would like to show its support for new researchers by including as one of its sessions the Forthcoming Research Session for

### Research in Middle Level Education SIG Officers

Vincent A. Anfara, Jr.,  
President (2002-2004)  
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To be Elected: Vice President (2002-2004)

Nancy Mizelle, Treasurer (2001-2003)  
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### Website Manager

Micki Caskey, Portland State University  
[caskeym@pdx.edu](mailto:caskeym@pdx.edu)

### SIG Association Council Members

Joanne Arhar (2002-2004, fall)  
Gayle A. Davis (2002-2004, fall)  
Steven Mertens (2002-2004, fall)  
Micki Caskey (2002-2004, spring)  
Mickey Fenzel (2002-2004, spring)  
Steve Lucas (2002-2004, spring)  
Richard Likpa (2002-2004, spring)

Fall=election takes place prior to NMSA's Annual Conference

Spring=election takes place prior to AERA's Annual Meeting

"about-to-graduate" or "very-recently-graduated" Master's or Doctoral level students who have conducted high quality research in Middle Level Education. I just need your help--I need you to ask those students who have done this outstanding research and are close to finishing their programs to submit a brief proposal for consideration to me by May 1, 2002. Please contact me at:

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**Chat Session for NMSA 2002!**  
Volunteers needed for chat session for new and emerging middle level researchers. Please contact Vincent Anfara at [vanfara@utk.edu](mailto:vanfara@utk.edu)

## RMLE-SIG Web Site Update

By Micki Caskey

When you need information about research in middle level education, try the RMLE website. The website contains sections on conferences and meetings, the SIG's constitution and bylaws, SIG membership, RMLE officers, and links to other relevant middle level websites. Another new section entitled "research interests" will be activated soon as a result of the recent business meeting. Specifically, twenty-four members have already provided their research interests and email addresses for inclusion on the RMLE website. Many thanks to all of you who agreed to share your research or scholarly interests in this forum. If you would like your name and research interests to appear on this list, please contact Micki Caskey at [caskeym@pdx.edu](mailto:caskeym@pdx.edu).

The RMLE website will continue to be updated to reflect the results of officer elections and upcoming conferences.

Plus, work on the research interests section as well as a section on publications will begin this spring. Remember that the RMLE website is open twenty-four hours a day/seven days a week. So check it out! Your suggestions and ideas for developing the RMLE website are always welcome. Information can be emailed, mailed or faxed.

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**Research in Middle Level Education SIG Business Meeting Minutes, AERA 2002, New Orleans**

1. The SIG met at AERA in New Orleans on April 4, 2002 where members received a commemorative calculator and CD case with the SIG logo. Mardi Gras beads, cups, and coins added to the "New Orleans" feel of the meeting.
2. After a welcome and introduction of officers, President, Barbara Whinery, thanked everyone for their work this past year and discussed the proposed changes to the SIG by-laws. We will vote on the changes to the by-laws and will need 55% or more of the members of the organization to agree to the changes in order to enact them.
3. Officers made brief reports:
  - We have 146 members. This is the largest our SIG has been.
  - A form for the Graduate Student Award in the amount of \$250.00 will be sent in the fall newsletter. The award is for travel to AERA and is open to doctoral, specialist, and masters degree students whose work has been submitted during the previous academic year.
  - We have a balance of approximately \$1900.00 in our SIG account.

- Any items for the newsletter need to be sent to Kathleen M. Brown and/or Kathleen F. Malu.
- Our website is up and running. (rmle.pdx.edu). We will be linking to other middle level organizations.

4. The SIG business meeting at NMSA will be listed in the NMSA program book. Thank you David Hough.
5. Three publishers attended the business meeting to discuss publishing opportunities for SIG members. Each representative discussed their expectations for authors, what authors should expect from them, and where publishing is heading in the next 10 years. SIG members were able to ask questions and make contacts regarding the publication of their work. The publishers were:
  - Sue Canavan, Christopher Gordon
  - Jeff Johnson, Merrill
  - Priscilla Ross, SUNY Press

Respectfully submitted,  
Kimberly J. Hartman, Secretary

**AERA 2002 Paper Sessions & Abstracts**

TITLE: Focus on Middle Level Teachers  
DATE: April 1, 2002  
TIME: 4:05 PM  
PLACE: Marriott, Second Floor, Studio 6

Chair: Vincent A. Anfara, Jr., The University of Tennessee, Knoxville  
Discussant: Gayle A. Davis, The University of Georgia

*Making Meaning in the Middle: A Model for Developing Middle Grade Teachers.* Sarah B. Burkhalter, Angelo L. Alcalá, Karen Ostland, Jeff Morton, The University of Texas, Arlington.

In the spring of 2001, three faculty members in Texas set out to discover how to build an exemplary model for preparing teachers of students in middle grades based on inquiry,

reflection, and interdisciplinary teaming. To support field-basing this program, we proposed that the theoretical framework of the public school-based internship program closely parallels theories of learning a second language, particularly Stephen Krashen's model.

Eighty interns participated, with half enrolled in the pilot and half in the traditional Internship program. At orientation, all students completed affective, Likert scaled surveys based on the standards of the NMSA; a scenario-based pretest of content related to 4-8 teachers' proficiencies; and a sketch of a typical middle level student. Post-tests were given at the semester's end.

Throughout the semester we continually collected and analyzed data, and determined that our control group and experimental groups were significantly different; that the experimental group changed their understandings of students; and that both groups had pre-conceptions about middle school students, some of which were reinforced by their teaching experiences.

All students in both groups are in their residency semester and will submit a videotaped lesson. We plan to continue to follow both groups into their first year of teaching.

**Secondary Education Majors' Perceptions of Middle Level Students, Schools, and Teaching.**  
Angela J. Lexmond, Indiana University, Bloomington.

This dissertation study was designed to identify, track, and challenge secondary education majors' perceptions of middle level students, schools, and teaching. During a single semester general methods course, secondary education majors of various disciplines participated in curricular activities designed to elicit their perceptions of and attitudes toward early adolescents and middle school teaching. Some of the activities also challenged the preservice teachers to look for contradictions to common cultural assumptions about early adolescents, which are primarily negative and biologically based (Finders, 1999; Lesko, 1996, 2001).

Most participants in the study desired high school teaching assignments over

middle school. Negative perceptions of early adolescents were very prevalent. Many preservice teachers in the key section were more open to middle level teaching as a career possibility after participating in curricular activities designed to interrogate negative conceptions of early adolescents and after having had positive experiences in middle school field placements.

Negative cultural constructions of early adolescents impact the career choices of preservice secondary teachers. Without intervention, few aim for middle schools. Results from this study indicate that schools of education need to develop programs to specifically recruit and specially prepare teachers for the middle level. Every school of education should have middle level advocates and experts who recognize their unique challenges regarding the issue of recruitment.

***Field-Based Teacher Education of Preservice and Novice Teachers at the Middle Level.*** Micki M. Caskey, Portland State University.

A persistent problem in middle level education is reconciling the urgent need for specialized preparation of middle level teachers with the limited resources of many teacher education institutions. The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of a field-based approach on middle level teacher candidates prepared in an existent graduate level teacher education program. Participants were twenty-seven middle level teachers who were prepared in three consecutive K-12 cohorts. The attitudes and perceptions of these preservice, first year, and second year middle level teachers toward their field-based preparation were explored using surveys, individual interviews, and focus group discussions. Participants reported the benefit of expansive fieldwork, cohort configuration, program continuity, and immersion in middle school culture. Analyses of data revealed positive effects of the field-based approach across all three groups of middle level

teachers. Though limited in size, this study produced preliminary evidence that the field-based approach supports the transition from preservice program to practicing middle level teacher.

***Interdisciplinary Teams at the Middle Level: Results of a National Survey.*** Laurie E. Hart, University of Georgia, Suzanne S. McCotter, Millersville University, K. Denise Muth, Jae Hoon Lim, University of Georgia.

This study surveyed recent graduates of NCATE/NMSA-approved programs that are specifically designed to prepare middle school teachers. The focus of this particular paper was to explore the reality of middle school teams on which novice teachers are working. The Middle Grades Teacher Preparation Survey, designed by the researchers, was used in this study. Of the respondents who indicated that they teach or have taught in grades 5-8, 85% taught in schools where interdisciplinary teams shared the same students and 92% indicated their team worked together extremely well, very well, or well. However, there was no relationship between how teachers were assigned to teams and their perceptions of how well the teachers on the team work together. Similarly, there was no relationship between the method of assigning the team's leader and how well the teachers worked together. In addition, 82% of these same respondents indicated that they had common planning time for team members. Teachers who were involved in policy decision making had more time available and also spent more time meeting than teachers who were not involved in making school policy decisions. In addition, those teachers who had a flexible schedule, had more time available to meet with other teachers on their team and they spent more actual time meeting than teachers who did not have flexible schedules. Results also showed that teachers who worked on teams with many characteristics typical of the best practice for middle schools were more likely to believe that their school's

practices matched the practices of an ideal middle school.

TITLE: Middle Level Learning Environments  
DATE: April 2, 2002  
TIME: 8:15AM  
PLACE: Sheraton, Third Floor, Pontchartrain E

**Chair: Mickey Fenzel, Loyola College, Maryland**  
**Discussant: Richard P. Lipka, Pittsburg State University**

***Unraveling the Black Box: The Middle School Movement and High Student Achievement.*** Kathleen Roney, Rosemont College, Vincent A. Anfara, Jr., The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Kathleen M. Brown, The University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

The recommendations contained in *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (1989)—balancing academic, personal development, and citizenship goals—represent a way to create an appropriate middle school environment that meets the complex needs of young adolescents. The recommendations, to be treated as interdependent parts of a reform package, are aimed at the success of every student. Have middle schools embraced the reform initiatives and implemented these recommendations with a high degree of fidelity? We respond, in this study, with the design and execution of research that focuses on the relationship between student academic achievement and the middle school concept.

Utilizing a qualitative, multi-site case study design, our purpose was to get inside the "black box" of middle level reform. Designed in two phases, our initial purpose was to explore the implementation of middle level reform components in both high and low performing middle schools. Phase One of our study addressed our first research question, "To what degree are high performing schools and low performing schools implementing the middle level

reform components?" Despite the great disparity in SES, PSSA scores, and funding between the two types of schools, Phase One findings verify the claim that middle school reform components, as articulated by national organizations and research studies, are not sufficient for high student achievement. Utilizing the framework of Hoy and Hannum (1997), Phase Two findings showed stark contrasts between the high and low performing schools with regard to the technical, managerial and institutional levels of the schools' organizational health, e.g., teacher efficacy, curriculum articulation, student expectations, collegiality, instructional leadership, institutional integrity, etc.

Our study's findings reinforce the importance of returning to the deeper meaning and purpose under girding middle schools today. Continuing to ask questions about the number of *Turning Points*' structures implemented, the degree of implementation, grade configuration of middle schools, and new programs versus old programs, does not get at the crux of student achievement at the middle level. We must ask "Why?" Why do we do it? What is the purpose and what do we hope to achieve? How you increase learning is only important in that you actually do it.

***Selectivity and Collective Student Influence in the Classroom: A Comparative Case Study.* Dan Weinles, Temple University.**

This comparative case study was conducted to examine the differential influence of students, in collectivity, at the school and classroom levels within two demographically similar urban, low-income middle schools. One school was a city-wide selective admissions magnet school and the other was a non-selective, residentially-assigned neighborhood school. Interviews were conducted with a total of ten teachers and two administrative leaders across the two schools. Multiple observations were conducted in the

classrooms of interviewed teachers and in school hallways. Finally, school-level data on student performance and discipline were analyzed. Findings suggested that student selectivity at the magnet school contributed to a more positive teaching climate, as defined by teachers' perceptions of student academic performance, motivation, and behavior in the classroom. Selectivity additionally appeared to foster higher professional expectations among teachers, more rigorous instructional practices, and a focus on curricular progress. Alternatively, "out-selection" of students prior to entrance in the non-selective, neighborhood middle school resulted in the concentration special needs students and appeared to contribute to an environment that was less conducive to teaching and learning. The study concludes by positing a more reciprocal and dynamic relationship between student collective influence and teacher practice in schools. The potential impact of student selectivity on this complex relationship is considered.

***Helping Middle School Teachers Plan for High Quality Instruction: The Case for Mathematics and Science Subject Matter Integration.* Suzanne L. Weinberg, Temple University.**

As part of a professional development program, 65 middle school teachers examined the benefits, potential difficulties, and implications of integrating math and science curriculum. In groups of four, they designed standards-based math and science integrated units of instruction. The patterns emerged. (1) More units involved a multi-disciplinary design than an interdisciplinary design. (2) Interdisciplinary units focused on measurement or data collection and analysis, process skills common to both disciplines. By contrast, multi-disciplinary units tended to focus on content skills, only some of which naturally connected. (3) The majority of units focused on science content, with math used in a supporting role. (4) In over half of the units, either the science

or the mathematics content was not on grade level—appropriate content was sacrificed to accommodate the integration. Two implications for further study include: First, many groups did not specifically describe the connection between topics, nor the reason for selecting different topics for integration. It may be that teachers see this as either obvious or unimportant. Second, the overwhelming number of units reflecting the science with math support model cannot be discounted. It may be easier for teachers to plan units that emphasize science, or that teachers cannot readily identify real-world applications for mathematics.

***High Stakes Testing: A Comparison of Practices Used by Teachers to Aid in Test Preparation.* Valerie Wright, Kimberly S. Kalaydjian, Rita Holt, Jeffrey Kromrey, The University of South Florida.**

**Volume 2—The Handbook of Research in Middle Level Education: Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment**

*Edited by Vincent A. Anfara, Jr.  
Published by Information Age Publishing, Inc.*

**Tentative Contents:**  
Preface: Vincent A. Anfara, Jr., The University of Tennessee

Introduction: Middle Level Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment: Evolution or an Innovation at Risk? Steven J. Gross, Temple University

Chapter 1: Curriculum Integration: History and Research. Billy O'Steen, Pru Cooper, Hiller Spires, Candy Beal, and Carol Pope, North Carolina State University.

Chapter 2: Exploratory Education in a Society of Knowledge and Risk. Leonard Waks, Temple University

Chapter 3: Developmental Appropriateness vs. Academic Rigor: An Untenable Dualism in Middle Level Education. Vincent A. Anfara, Jr., The University of Tennessee, and Leonard Waks, Temple University

Chapter 4 Culturally Responsive Instructional Practices. Dave F. Brown, West Chester University

Chapter 5 Every Student and Every Teacher: Crossing the Boundaries of Middle-level, TESOL, Bilingual, and Special Education. Ellen Skilton-Sylvester, Temple University and Graciela Slesaransky-Poe, Arcadia University

Chapter 6 Authentic Curriculum: Strengthening Middle Level Education Micki Caskey, Portland State University

Chapter 7 The Relationship between Middle Grades Teacher Certification and Teaching Practices. Steven B. Mertens, Nancy Flowers, and Peter Mulhall, University of Illinois, CPRD

Chapter 8 Character Education Infused Into Middle Level Education. Thomas F. Mandeville and Rich Radcliff, Southwest Texas State University

Chapter 9 Reculturing Middle Schools to use Cross-Curricular Portfolios to Support Integrative Learning. Sue Carol Thompson, University of Missouri, Kansas City

Chapter 10 Enabling "Algebra For All" with a Facilitated Instructional Program: A Case Study of a Talent Development Middle School. Robert Balfanz and Douglas Mac Iver Johns Hopkins University, and Debbie Ryan, The School District of Philadelphia.

Chapter 11 Cohorts in Middle Level Teacher Preparation: Transformational Possibilities and Complexities. Joanne Arhar and Alicia R. Crowe, Kent State University.

Conclusion: Sandra L. Stacki, Hofstra University

## Watch For These Publications!

### *Becoming a Successful Urban Teacher*

By David F. Brown Co-Published by Heinemann and NMSA

Dave conducted interviews with 13 urban teachers from first grade through twelfth grade from 7 urban centers throughout the United States: Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Philadelphia, Wichita, and Minneapolis. Teachers speak about issues such as classroom management, identifying learning needs, effective instructional strategies, getting along with colleagues, principals, and caregivers, and that challenging first year in an urban school. Dave provides recent research on culturally responsive teaching from researchers Gloria Ladson-Billings, Geneva Gay, Lisa Delpit, Eugene Garcia, and Gary Howard, as well as others and connects this knowledge base to the stories told by these 13 teachers to provide genuine strategies for teachers to use daily. The book is intended for preservice as well as novice inservice and student teachers who struggle with the transition of entering the profession as an urban teacher.

### *From the Desk of the Middle School Principal: Leadership Responsive to the Needs of Young Adolescents*

By Kathleen M. Brown and Vincent A. Anfara, Jr.  
Published by Scarecrow Education, Rowman & Littlefield

Beyond their own walls, middle schools are having a profound effect on the entire range of American schooling, K-12. The middle school's emphasis on the characteristics and interests of young adolescents, the importance of a

close-knit school community, the accommodation of diversity, the teaming of teachers, and integration of curriculum have found their way into many elementary and secondary schools as well.

Specifically, this book focuses on the importance of school leadership grounded firmly in the belief that schools should be responsive to the developmental needs of their students. The distinct nature of the middle school, the appropriate responses that are required from middle school principals, and a model of developmentally responsive leadership are explored. This emphasis on school leadership is not atypical since most educational research dealing with school improvement arrives at the conclusion that excellence in education cannot be attained without effective school leadership.

The importance of such a book is heightened because of recent events. These include: (1) indictments that have been levied against a less than rigorous curriculum resulting in poor student achievement at the middle level, (2) the realization and admission that most middle schools have become so in "name only," and (3) the recognition that one of the missing elements in middle school reform is the adequate preparation of both middle level teachers and administrators.

With this as background, the reader will find in Chapter One a brief history of the middle school movement, a review of the research on the middle level principalship, and a discussion of what developmentally appropriate means in relation to the middle school movement. Additionally, common terms, which can be easily misunderstood, are defined and the research design upon which this book is based are presented.

The heart of this book—Chapters 2 through 8—describes the strategies and related practices employed by middle level principals who are struggling with implementing the middle school concept in their schools. These seven chapters are divided into three sections: responsiveness to students (Chapters 2-4), responsiveness to teachers (Chapters

5-6), and responsiveness to school and community (Chapters 7-8). This organizational structure forms the framework for our model of developmentally responsive leadership that is presented in Chapter Nine.

Chapter Nine develops a model for middle school principals—a model grounded in the new paradigm of developmentally responsive leadership and school improvement. Recent studies support the conclusion that for school reform to occur, effective leadership is essential. Our model incorporates the qualities of effective leadership disclosed by our sample of middle school principals and delineated in Chapters Two through Eight. Look for *From the Desk of the Middle School Principal*, with cover comments by experts John Lounsbury, Walt Grebing and Ron Williamson, to be in print by September.

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## **Call for Manuscripts & Papers for Volume 3: *The Handbook of Research in Middle Level Education, Preparation & Professional Development of Middle Level Teachers and Administrators***

*Edited by Gayle A. Davis and Vincent A. Anfara, Jr.* Published by Information Age Publishing, Inc.

*Deadline Date for Submissions:  
January 15, 2003*

The third volume will focus on issues related to the preparation and professional development of middle level teachers and administrators. Contributors are encouraged to submit manuscripts that address preparation and professional development in relation to recruitment; characteristics of effectiveness; model programs;

sources of support and/or resistance; standards; policy; funding; licensure and certification; historical perspectives; trends; district, state, and university accountability programs; comparisons of programs across countries, states, and/or districts; characteristics of middle grades students; characteristics of pre-service or practicing middle grades educators; the changing roles of teachers and administrators; etc.

The editors of this third volume of *The Handbook of Research in Middle Level Education* invite the submission of manuscripts contributing to scholarly knowledge and improved practice of middle level education. Submission—utilizing quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods—may include but are not limited to empirical investigations, conceptual and theoretical perspectives, and reviews of research and practice. Submission of a manuscript implies commitment to publish in this series. All copies should be typed, double-spaced, on standard white paper and should follow the style in the fifth edition of the Publication Manual for the American Psychological Association. Manuscripts should be 20-30 pages in length and include a 100-word abstract. Author's information (affiliation, address, phone numbers, e-mail) should appear only on the cover page.

To submit manuscripts and for additional information, please contact:

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## **A Conference within a Conference Proposal**

*By Barbara Whinery*

The concept of a "meeting within a meeting" was first introduced to me by Dick Lipka. I was very excited about organizing a similar activity for middle level scholars, educators and leaders. Such an activity would provide an opportunity for the many constituencies of middle level education to come together to discuss the critical issues and visions each group has for the future and direction of middle level education. It would be my hope that the discussions and identification of issues would lead to further research and development of new visions for programs to support the academic achievement and development of early adolescents, 10-15 years of age.

The design of the conference includes several components. The conference would be held at the AERA Annual Meeting on a biennial basis, using a symposium format. Following the presentation of invited papers there would be breakout sessions for discussions. A large group discussion would follow these breakout sessions. Finally, a call for papers and/or research proposals would be made to follow-up on critical issues and ideas identified during the conference. Another follow-up activity may be to have conference proceedings published and/or have conference participants publish articles.

Presenters would be invited to share a review of the literature and/or their research on an identified topic or theme for the conference. Topics or themes would be interdisciplinary and designed to bring researchers and leaders in specialized fields of study together to share their knowledge and insights related to early adolescents and middle level education. Conference topics may include: Contemporary Research on Mathematics, Social Studies, Science, English/ Language Arts and Literacy Methods for Middle Level Learners, Professional Development and the Preparation of Teachers and Leaders for the Middle

School Education. Medical and Health Issues Related to Early Adolescent Learning, Research on Parent Involvement and Education for the Early Adolescents, and the Impact of High Stakes Testing on Early Adolescents and Middle Level Education. The conference committee would be responsible for the identification and selection of the conference topic or theme.

One approach to initiating a "conference within a conference" immediately would be to develop an AERA conference pre-session. In this way we would attract scholars and educators interested in specific issues related to middle level education. By utilizing the pre-session approach, we would not be competing with other conference activities, provide visibility to middle level educational issues, defray some of the costs and logistics associated with setting up a "conference within a conference." As a result of experimenting with such an activity, we would be able to determine what interest and commitment there would be associated with doing this on a long-term basis. Eventually, if we were successful, a "community of scholars" would evolve who would be dedicated to middle level education.

I would like to extend an invitation to SIG members, in addition to those of you who already expressed an interest, to join a planning committee. This committee would identify next steps and develop the "conference within a conference" proposal for the 2004 AERA Annual Conference. Our SIG President, Vince Anfara, will assist with the coordination of conference details. I am committed to organizing the conference planning committee and to developing the pre-session proposal and activities.

Please contact me by June 15, 2002 to join the "conference within a conference" planning committee. Thank you for your interest!  
Barbara Whinery  
University of Northern Colorado  
(970) 351-1605  
Barbara.Whinery@unco.edu

## Become A Member Today!

### *Why join the Research in Middle Level Education SIG?*

Membership in this organization will let you stay current on the most cutting edge research regarding middle level education. You will converse with leading researchers and professionals in the field of middle level education.

By joining you will ensure that the voices of middle level researchers and practitioners are heard within the AERA. As our membership increases we will receive additional convention timeslots and opportunities for presentations.

### How Do I Join?

To join the SIG, simply contact Nancy Mizelle, SIG Treasurer, or the American Educational Research Association:

Write to: Nancy Mizelle  
School of Education  
Georgia College and State University  
Milledgeville, GA 31061  
Nmizelle@MAIL.GCSU.EDU

Or: AERA Subscription Department  
1230 17th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20036-3078  
Fax: (202) 775-1824. Be sure to note that you wish to join the SIG Research in Middle Level Education. Annual SIG dues are \$5.

Further information is also available at:

<http://aera.net>

## Mark Your Calendar ...

July 31, 2002

**National Middle School Association Call for Papers Due**

Further information available at  
1-800-528-NMSA or  
[www.nmsa.org](http://www.nmsa.org)

**NMSA CONFERENCE**

Portland, Oregon

October 31-November 2, 2002

August 1, 2002

**American Educational Research Association Call for Papers**

For further information contact  
<http://aera.net>

**AERA ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

Chicago

April 21-25

## Other Notes ...

How about joining the RMLE SIG Listserv?

Simply send an email message expressing your desire to join the listserv to Vince Anfara at [vanfara@utk.edu](mailto:vanfara@utk.edu) and he will place you on the listserv.

### SEND US YOUR NEWS!

Please send news items to Editors

Kathleen M. Brown at [brownk@email.unc.edu](mailto:brownk@email.unc.edu) OR

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