

Message from The President

By Kimberley Hartman

Welcome to 2005! As we begin the New Year and new semester with a sense of renewal and hope, many new possibilities and opportunities emerge for the MLER-SIG. I am looking forward to enjoying 2005, and I am celebrating returning from my medical leave and being able to resume my role as SIG President. Kathy Roney, Program Chair and President-Elect served as Interim President in my absence. Kathy performed her own SIG responsibilities as well as the President's jobs extraordinarily well. Thank you, Kathy! Vince Anfara, Past-President and Micki Caskey, Vice-President offered much assistance in my absence as well. Thank you, Kathy, Micki, and Vince! Due to Kathy's efforts, the four of us hold teleconferences as a means of better communicating, thus we have been able to deal productively with SIG issues. If you have suggestions for topics the SIG needs to address, please email them to me at khartman@email.uncc.edu and I will present your ideas at our teleconferences.

This New Year also brings us closer to another AERA meeting. This year AERA meets in Montreal, Canada April 11-15. We will have our usual Officer's Meeting,

Business Meeting, and the main events- Paper Sessions, Paper Discussions, and Symposia. AERA has not completed its program, so we were not able to give session times and locations in this edition of the newsletter. However, we will post all the SIG events on the MLER website as soon as AERA releases the schedule. We will also have hard copies at the Business Meeting. Remember the Business Meeting is important to our SIG as we continue to grow and become more viable at the national level. The meeting is open to all members, so please join us.

We have new items that we will address at the Business Meeting. We will elect three members to the MLER-SIG Association Council in early March and will announce the names of those elected to these positions at the SIG Business meeting. Please consider nominating yourself or nominating someone else (with their permission) to run for one of these position. This is a good opportunity to get involved in the SIG. If you are interested in running for one of these positions, please email me no later than February 10th (khartman@email.uncc.edu). We will hold an electronic vote and winners will be notified prior to the meeting where the official announcement will be made.

The winner of the 2005 MLER-SIG Graduate Award will be

January 2005 Volume 5, Issue 1

Inside this Issue

Message from the President	p. 1
Roles of the Council Association Members	p. 2
AERA Applauds MLER SIG Website	p. 2
STOP, LOOK, and LOCATE	p. 2
MLER SIG Officers	p. 3
Program Chair Notes	p. 4
MLER SIG AERA 2005 Proposed Program	p. 4
The Handbook of Research in Middle Level Education	p. 5
The Encyclopedia of Middle Grades Education	p. 6
Call for Newsletter Submissions	p. 6
NMSA Research Summaries	p. 6
MLER Graduate Student Award	p. 7
MLER SIG Meeting Minutes	p. 7
Our Very Own Survey	p. 8
Treasurer's Report	p. 8
AERA-Montreal Passport Information	p. 9
FEATURED ARTICLE	p. 9
Language to Literacy Lessons For Struggling Middle Level Students: Technology Programs That Facilitate Students' Reading Development	

announced. We will have an opportunity to meet one of our newest colleagues and to learn about the recipient's research.

I look forward to seeing each of you in Montréal, and to learning more about your research many MLER sessions.

I'll see you in Montréal. Have a safe trip.

Kim

+++++

The Roles of the Council Association Members

By Kimberly Hartman

We have been privileged to have many dedicated and hard-working SIG members serve on the SIG Council. We are also fortunate that the MLER SIG's membership has grown consistently over the past few years, particularly under the leadership of Vance Anfara, Jr., Past-President. In our recent teleconferences, the officers have been reviewing the roles of the Council and are discussing the possibility of revising the Council's duties to better meet the current needs of the SIG. We believe it would be beneficial to have increased involvement from the Council. For example we may need help in organizing and maintaining the election process, working on special projects such as the recent survey and its analysis,

selecting the recipient of the Graduate Award and performing other duties as needed. We will discuss the changes at the Business meeting, and we welcome your input and feedback. If you have suggestions or concerns, please email me

khartman@email.uncc.edu

+++++

AERA Applauds MLER SIG Website

By Kathleen Roney

Our webmaster, Micki Caskey, received the following message from Helaine Patterson, Director of Communications and Outreach at AERA.

Micki,

Just a quick note to let you know how helpful the website for the Middle Level Education Research SIG has been this afternoon in assisting a freelance journalist with a magazine article. He was interested in the related resources/links/websites, which can lead him to other sources on a national level.

In looking at the website, the Research in Middle Level Education Annuals will be very helpful, and we noticed that only the 2000 and 2001 editions were posted on the SIG website. Do you know whether Annuals have been issued for 2002 and 2003? If so, would you want to add these annuals to your already fine website? We in AERA Communications find the

SIG websites invaluable, and appreciate all of your efforts.

Best,

Helaine

Let us join Helaine in giving Micki a hearty THANK YOU for the "invaluable" work she did for us in creating the website, not to mention the dedication she has shown us in maintaining it with interesting and up-to-date information.

+++++

STOP, LOOK, and LOCATE

By Micki M. Caskey, Portland State University, caskeym@pdx.edu



When you need some information about middle level education, I hope you will start with our MLER Website. The site is relatively easy to use. In fact, a recent survey revealed that about 90% of our membership found it to be "very easy" or "relatively easy" to use. So, give it try the next time you are looking for a past issue of *The Chronicle of Middle Level Education*

MLER SIG Officers

Kimberly J. Hartman, President
(2004-2006)
University of North Carolina, Charlotte
Khartman@email.uncc.edu

Kathleen Roney, President-Elect/Program
Chair (2004-2006)
University of North Carolina, Wilmington
roneyk@uncw.edu

Micki M. Caskey, Vice President
(2004-2006)
Portland State University
caskeym@pdx.edu

Nancy Mizelle, Treasurer (2004-2006)
Georgia College and State University
nancy.mizelle@gcsu.edu

Joan Lindgren, Secretary (2004-2006)
Florida Atlantic University
jlindgre@fau.edu

Vincent A. Anfara, Jr., Past President
(2004-2006)
University of Tennessee, Knoxville
vanfara@utk.edu

Newsletter Co-Editors

Vincent A. Anfara, Jr.
University of Tennessee
vanfara@utk.edu

Maureen Musser
Willamette University
mmusser@willamette.edu

Website Manager

Micki M. Caskey, Portland State University
caskeym@pdx.edu

SIG Association Council Members

Joanne Arhar (2002-2005) *

P. Gayle Andrews (2002-2005) *

Steven Mertens (2002-2005) *

Paul Deering (2004-2006)

Adrienne Dixson (2004-2006)

Richard Lipka (2004-2006)

Sandra L. Stacki (2004-2006)

[* up for election prior to AERA 2005]

Research, opportunities for publication, upcoming conferences, a new higher education position, or another member of the SIG. The MLER website, allows you to STOP, LOOK, and LOCATE.

STOP and LOOK at the newest feature of the website, the MLER Directory. You will find the Directory listed in the website's index, which borders the left hand side of the website. Once you open the Directory (a PDF file), you will be able to LOCATE almost any current member of our SIG. The Directory includes the names, professional affiliations and contact information for the vast majority of our members. There are over 180 entries. Feel free to print a hard copy of this 23-page document. Also, do not hesitate to contact me if your affiliation or contact information changes.

Have you looked at the fourth volume of *Handbook in Middle Level Education* series, *Reforming Middle Level Education* (edited by Sue C. Thompson)? STOP, and take a moment to LOOK at the authors who have contributed to this volume. You can LOCATE the book's contents and ordering information in the *Publications* section of the website. Soon, you will find announcement about the fifth volume, which focuses on action research. While you are in the *Publications* section, you can check out abstracts from past AERA annual meetings as well as issues of *The Chronicle of Middle Level Education Research*.

Are you interested in authorship? Well, check out the *Calls for Papers* and the *Policy Briefs* sections. Currently, we are most interested in expanding this section with additional policy briefs. Please connect one of the MLER SIG officers or council members about your drafting a policy brief.

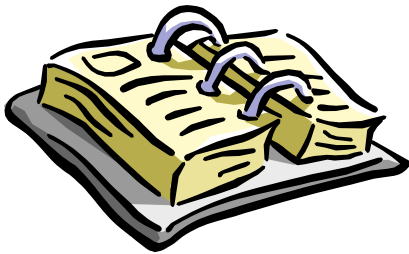
Do you ever need to find the dates of upcoming conferences? Again, STOP and LOOK at the *Conference Section* of the website. In addition to the current year's conference information, you can LOCATE future dates and locations for annual meetings of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) and the National Middle School Association (NMSA).

Where can you find stuff about middle level education? The MLER Website is also a great place to begin your searches for information. STOP and LOOK at the *Related Web Sites* section for a wide-ranging list of resources. If you LOCATE other middle level website that you would like to see in this section, just send them my way. We want this website to be your first and comprehensive STOP for middle level education research and resources. Please remember to send to me (1) information to for inclusion on the website, and/or (2) suggestions for improving it. Together, we can make the MLER Website a valuable asset for our SIG.

www.middlelevel.pdx.edu,

+++++

Program Chair Notes



By Kathleen Roney
UNCW

Please notice that I have included the AERA '05 program of sessions for our SIG in this issue of *The Chronicle*. AERA has not given us the dates and times for these sessions, but I am hopeful you will look for them once the program is published — sometime after the first of the year. We were fortunate to have an increase in submissions, and I thank the reviewers for their time in evaluating the many proposals we received. Allow me to thank, also, those who have agreed to serve as discussants during AERA in Montreal—Dave Brown, Mickey Fenzel and Kathy Malu.

MEMBERSHIP

As you may or may not know, AERA allots the SIGs a certain number of paper sessions, paper discussions (round tables), symposia, and a Business Meeting during the annual conference. The number of sessions a SIG receives is based upon the number of members in the SIG. Our membership is growing, and I want to thank Vince Anbara, Immediate Past

President, who now serves as chairperson of the Membership Committee, for his continued fidelity to the SIG.

+++++

MLER SIG AERA 2005 Proposed Program

Prepared by Kathleen Roney
Program Chair

PAPER SESSIONS

Block Scheduling Effects on Middle School Students' Mathematics Achievement
By Kim Mattox, Stephen Hancock, J. Allen Queen

Team Collaboration in a High-Stakes Environment
By Karen Weller

Middle Level Interdisciplinary Teaming as an Induction Practice
By Dana Bickmore, Steven Bickmore, Laurie Hart

Sustaining Teams: The Relationship Between Leader Behavior and Team Performance
By Ronald Williamson, Barbara Blackburn

IMPActing Middle School Students' Technology Skills: Results from Year One of a Technology Integration Initiative
By Amy Overbay, Jason Osborne, Lisa Grable, Jane Steelman

New Literacies Infusion into a Middle Childhood Methods Course: A Case Study
By William Kist

Successful Middle Schools for Urban Minority Children: A National Study of Nativity Schools
By Leo Mickey Fenzel

The Middle School Movement and Improved Student Achievement: Fact or Fiction?
By Kathleen Roney, Vincent Anbara

Re-Envisioning Instruction of Large-Group Performance Ensembles in the Middle Grades
By Patrick Freer

The Effects of Latchkey Status on Middle-Grade Students
By Steven Mertens, Nancy Flowers

Hand in Hand: Engaging High-Risk Adolescents in Positive Youth Development Experiences
By Boyoung Park, Stacey Neuharth-Pritchett

Depression in Adolescents Who Have Experienced Academic Failure
By Angela Fiske

PAPER DISCUSSIONS (ROUND TABLES)

Making it in the Middle: How African American Girls' School Experiences Shape Learning
By Constance Bauer

Separate by Choice: Single-Gender Academic Classes in a Public Middle School

By Frances Spielhagen

Middle School Girls' Perceptions of Teachers and Learning

By Mary Ariail, Colleen Fairbanks

Leadership? Me?: Helping Female and Multicultural Middle Level Teachers to Become Leaders for Change

By Paul Deering, Anne Ashford, Rhonda Black, Sheila Apisa, Susan Kahiapo

Caught in the Middle Again: Accountability and the Changing Practice of Middle School Teachers

By William Greene, Marilyn Olson, Micki M. Caskey, P. Maureen Musser, Linda Samek

Integrating Middle School Discourse into a Poststructural Analysis of Gender and Science Teaching

By Scott Sowell

PAPER DISCUSSIONS (ROUND TABLES)

Different Ways of Learning: Professional Development of Principals & Comprehensive School Reform

By Ronald Williamson, Susan Galletti

Differentiating Instruction in the Middle Grades: Effects on Teacher Practices and Student Achievement

By Catherine Brighton, Kristi Doubet, Trudy Clemons, Maria Capper

Mental Imagery and Mathematical Problem Solving

By Patricia Douville, David Pugalee

Parent Perceptions of a Magnet Middle School

By David Allen

Middle School English Language Learners' Uses of Literacy and Literacy Motivation in Multiple Settings

By Elizabeth Sturtevant, Diane Staehr Fenner, Carla Deniz, Toni Walters, Bonnie Loriz

Instructional Improvement through Data and Dialogue: A Case Study with an Alternative Middle School

By David Strahan

SYMPOSIA

Lessons Learned from Foundation-Based Efforts to Create Comprehensive Transformation of Middle Level Schools

By Stephen Brand, Robert Felner, Thaddeus Dumas

Teachers and Professors as Partners to Enhance Middle School Climate: A Five Year Study

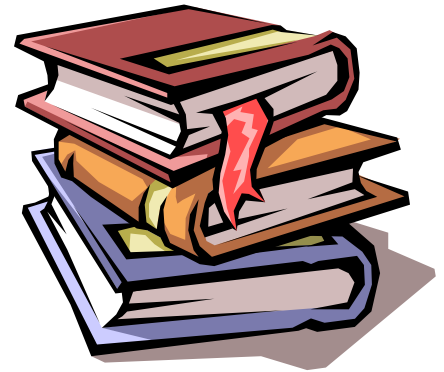
By Paul Camic, Lynda Cafasso, William Ristow, Jean Rhodes

Action in the Middle: Exemplars of Action Research in Middle Level Education

Micki M. Caskey, Joanne Arhar, Heidi Barker, Penny Bishop, Kathleen Malu, Dan Saurino, Penelope Saurino, Sandra Stacki

+++++

GET YOUR COPY TODAY!!



The Handbook of Research in Middle Level Education

The MLER SIG officially sponsors the publication of the book series, *The Handbook of Research in Middle Level Education*. We are proud to announce that 4 volumes have been published including: (1) *The Handbook of Research in Middle Level Education*; (2) *Middle School Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment*; (3) *Leaders for a Movement: Professional Preparation and Development of Middle Level Teachers and Administrators*; and (4) *Reforming Middle Level Education: Considerations for Policymakers*. Copies may be ordered from Information Age Publishing (203-661-7602) or from the National Middle School Association's bookstore (<http://www.nmsa.org>).

Currently, Micki Caskey is finishing her work as editor of the 5th volume which will feature action research related to middle grades schools. It is anticipated that this volume will be available in April/May 2005.

+++++

The Encyclopedia of Middle Grades Education

Edited by Vincent A. Anfara, Jr., P. Gayle Andrews, & Steven B. Mertens

Work is on the encyclopedia project is advancing rapidly. As submitted entries are being reviewed and edited, Vince, Gayle, and Steve are currently seeking authors to submit entries that are still outstanding. If you are interested in contributing to this much-anticipated publication, please contact Vince at 865.974.4985 or email him at vanfara@utk.edu

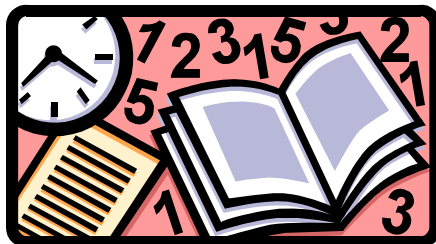
Information regarding *The Encyclopedia of Middle Grades Education* is available on the MLER SIG website at www.middlelevel.pdx.edu

According to the timeline that has been established by Information Age Publishing, the encyclopedia should be available in November 2005 at NMSA's conference in Philadelphia.

+++++

Visit our website
www.middlelevel.pdx.edu

+++++



Articles, News, Book Reviews, Op Ed Pieces, Helpful Information Needed

The editors of the newsletter are searching for articles, news, book reviews, and other information that would be of interest to MLER SIG members.

Please send any items you would like to have considered for publication to Maureen Musser at mmusser@willamette.edu

The SIG Newsletter is published three times annually in January, June, and October.

+++++

NMSA Research Summaries

The Research Advisory Board of the National Middle School Association is searching for researchers to revise/update some of the current *NMSA Research Summaries* and to author new research summaries.

The need to revise, update, and create new summaries has become exacerbated by the unprecedented demand currently being placed on NMSA for research to support

best practices and to advocate for middle grades schools.

A current listing of *NMSA's Research Summaries* may be viewed at <http://www.nmsa.org> by navigating to "research," then "research summaries." Please note that NMSA's Research Advisory Board has identified some of these as "in need of revision/rewriting." We have also identified some new topics and are open to new summaries on a wide variety of topics.

All summaries will be peer-reviewed by the Research Advisory Board before publication on NMSA's website. Authorship will be acknowledged through the inclusion of full citation information.

In an effort to standardize the format, *Research Summaries* should be a maximum of 4 pages and formatted as follows:

- (1) title
- (2) definition(s) of important term(s)
- (3) the critical question(s) to be answered
- (4) the answer(s)
- (5) research that supports the answer(s)
- (6) references cited
- (7) 2-3 annotated references for further investigation
- (8) a listing of potential resources useful to practitioners

Anyone interested in authoring a *NMSA Research Summary*

should contact Vince Anfara, Chair of the NMSA Research Advisory Board, at 865.974.4985 or vanfara@utk.edu to discuss a potential topic and expertise in that area.

**NMSA
Research Advisory Board**

- P. Gayle Andrews, The University of Georgia
- Vincent A. Anfara, Jr., The University of Tennessee, Chair
- Micki M. Caskey, Portland State University
- David Hough, Southwest Missouri State University
- Steven B. Mertens, CPRD, University of Illinois
- Mike Muir, University of Maine at Farmington

soon to think about nominations for the 2006 award.

Any person currently enrolled in a graduate program or who has graduated between August 1, 2004 and July 31, 2005 may apply. **Applications are due January 15, 2006.** Go to the MLER web site, www.middlelevel.pdx.edu for more information.



Encyclopedia of Middle Level Education was being completed with Vince Anfara, Gayle Andrews, and Steve Mertens as editors. Gayle reported that there are 7 anchor essays in the Encyclopedia. Vince noted that more entries are requested. Entries can be long, 2000 words, or shorter at 500 words in APA 5th Edition style. An announcement and request for entries were sent out to the SIG listserv, with publication of the Encyclopedia to be July 1, 2005. NMSA will be co-publishing the encyclopedia.

The SIG history project is being handled by Ron Williamson. Some pieces to the SIG history are missing.

The Graduate Student Award application should be mailed to Kim Hartman. It is open to Masters, Doctoral and Specialist students. The student who receives the award is presented a plaque and \$250. The name of the person to receive the award this year should be decided by March 1st.

Micki Caskey, Vice President and Web Manager reported that the website has at least 8 positions listed on it. The website contains a link to AERA, and also to other middle level groups of special interest. The current annuals of *RMLE Online* are up on the website, with more expected in the future, and the MLER Membership Directory set up by Steve Mertens is now available on the website. Micki suggested that all check to see if

+++++

**MLER Graduate
Student Award**

Graduate Student Award
The Graduate Student Award is intended to promote and recognize outstanding research in the field of middle-level education and is presented annually to a graduate student or recent graduate of a masters, specialist, or doctoral program.

A \$250.00 award, one-year membership in the MLER SIG, and a certificate will be presented to the graduate student selected by the Graduate Student Award Review Committee.

The winner of the 2005 Graduate Student Award will be announced at the SIG Business Meeting at AERA. It is not to

**MLER SIG
MEETING
MINUTES**

Fall Business Meeting
Friday, November 5, 2004

By
Joan Lindgren, Secretary

Kathleen Roney, President Elect and Program Chair, opened the Business Meeting at 5:30 pm and introduced the members of the Executive Council. Kathleen announced that Kim Hartman, President, was on the mend and would be participating in SIG business in the spring.

Vince Anfara announced that four Volumes of the Handbook were completed. Micki Caskey noted that the fifth Volume would include work of both practitioners and researchers. Vince announced that the

their listed information is correct. Current information regarding the graduate student award as well as the application for the award are available on the site. The recent Graduate Student Award recipients are shown and the application for graduate students to apply for the award can be obtained on the site.

Maureen Musser mmusser@williamette.edu is editing the January SIG Newsletter, *The Chronicle of Middle Level Education*. Short pieces can be featured in the newsletter and book reviews can be in the Newsletter as well.

AERA is now charging the SIG \$225 instead of \$150 as of this year, and our personal SIG membership dues went up from \$5 to \$10. General AERA membership dues have increased as well. Dues for the SIG can be paid with AERA dues or be paid alone.

The vote supporting the High Stakes Testing Policy Brief written by Jerry Valentine passed. Another topic for a potential Policy Brief might be Middle Level Principals. Policy briefs need to be concise statements of one to two pages.

The NMSA Research Advisory Board reported that research summaries need to be updated and the group is looking for 5-6 people to aid with this. Contact Vince if interested in doing a research summary.

Kathleen Roney announced that the SIG has 3 substantive research sessions, 2 paper discussions, 1 business discussion, and 3 symposia.

Everyone should receive an official letter of acceptance from Kathleen. Reviewer comments will be available after November 15. The three discussants will need your papers 3 weeks earlier than AERA conference that is April 11-15.

Barbara Blackburn and Janet McDaniel of NaPOMLE announced that on Feb. 4 & 5 in Columbus, OH there will be a symposium at the Hilton. Respectfully submitted,

Joan Lindgren, Secretary

+++++

Our Very Own Survey



By Micki M. Caskey

In November 2004, the SIG invited its members to complete an online survey, *Middle Level Education Research SIG Survey*. The purposes for the survey were to: (1) gain a better understanding of how the SIG is viewed by its members, (2) get SIG members' opinions about various SIG activities, and (3) determine options for enhancing involvement in the SIG. We posted the ten-item survey to

the MLER listserv on November 16th and closed access to the survey on November 29th. In those two weeks, 56 members of the SIG completed the survey. Thanks to all of you who responded!

Our preliminary review of the data revealed how members interact with the SIG, the strengths of the SIG, and suggestions for enhancing the SIG. More detailed information is forthcoming. In April 2005, we plan to share the results of the survey at our SIG Business Meeting at AERA in Montreal. Subsequently, we will summarize the findings in the June issue of *The Chronicle of Middle Level Education Research*.

+++++

Treasurer's Report

By Nancy Mizelle
MLER Treasurer

We began the 2003-2004 year at \$1,346.87 and ended it at \$546.66. During the year we had expenses and deposits as outlined below:

Totals for 2003-2004:
Deposits = \$ 805.00 (all of which came from Membership dues)
Withdrawals = \$1,605.21

Breakdown of Expenses for 2003-2004:
Graduate Student Award \$276.62
SIG Dues to AERA \$150.00

Newsletter Expenses \$546.82
Traveling Exhibit \$131.77
Brochure \$500.00
Total Expenses = \$1,605.21

+++++

AERA
Annual Meeting
April 11–15 Montréal
SEE YOU THERE!!

Please be aware that you will need a passport in order to travel into Canada.



United States-Canadian border crossings now require a passport or original birth certificate.

General Information on U.S. Passports can be found at <http://travel.state.gov/passport/index.html>

It takes about 6 weeks to get a passport using regular service. Using expedited service it takes 2 weeks. Cost, in addition to regular application fees, is \$60 per application plus overnight delivery costs for expedited service.

Language to Literacy Lessons For Struggling Middle Level Students: Technology Programs That Facilitate Students' Reading Development

Francine Falk-Ross,
Northern Illinois University

Young adolescents, as all students, build upon their knowledge and use of oral language competencies as they construct and develop early literacy strategies (Adams, Foorman, Lundberg, & Beeler, 1998; Torgeson & Mathes, 2000). The relationship between language and literacy is one of an extension. For struggling readers, there is often an overlap of services available for children experiencing difficulty with the language competencies necessary to develop reading competencies successfully in school districts (Blosser & Kratowski, 1997; Catts & Kamhi, 1999; Risko, & Bromley, 2001).

New standards for reading professionals mandate integration of technology tools and media materials into literacy instruction (IRA, 2003; NCTE/IRA, 1996). Use of

language technology tools can serve as an emerging and effective method for accomplishing literacy goals for students with language difficulties. Software programs that enrich and enhance language awareness in classroom reading lessons are important and necessary additions (Miller, DeVivo, LaRossa, Pycha, Perterson, Tallal, Merzenich, & Jenkins, 1998).

Specifically, middle level reading programs have been shown to be most effective when they offer the following characteristics:

1. Offer variety in content material and presentation style (NMSA, 2003);
2. Stay current with popular culture (Hagood, 2000) and higher motivation for literacy products using media (Lee, 2000);
3. Use media which is frequently an outlet outside of the classroom, although not as much in the classroom (Buckingham, 1998);
4. Use collaborative approaches to learning
5. Emphasize academic frameworks with discovery and explorative activities (NMSA, 2003). The use of organized, academic software programs targeting improved language to literacy skills and strategies will align with these needs and those of increased use of visual literacies.

Five software programs are described that may be used by classroom teachers, reading specialists, and/or

speech/language specialists to strengthen the language competencies that support literacy achievement for middle level students. Some of these are being used (although very infrequently) by school districts, but if the teachers knew more about these programs they could increase the use of technology in schools and in their own classroom lessons. Introduction to these programs to preservice and practicing teachers who do not usually use technology programs for literacy instruction and who are not familiar with these academic software programs will enhance tutoring services for struggling readers.

Software Program Product Information

General characteristics of each program are as follows:

1. Includes multimedia tools and books to complement the software;
2. Costs per program are from ~\$300.00 to ~\$800.00 per program;
3. Individual 'stations' for students are an addition cost (possibly \$4,000. per classroom, \$2,000. per small group);
4. Programs are responsive to touch screens or use of mouse for response choices.

Specific characteristics include:

1. Lexia – S.O.S. (Strategies for Older Students) at www.lexialearning.com. Activities are set up to develop and reinforce automatic word recognition skills. There are 6 activities provided and 8-10 levels within the activity.

2. FastForWord for Middle School and High School at www.scientificlearning.com. The program targets working memory, phonological fluency, listening accuracy, and sequencing abilities to upgrade the skills critical for fluent reading and communication.

3. Earobics for Adolescents and Adults at www.cognitiveconcepts.com. Individual game format for strengthening word recognition skills. The software provides adaptive training technology that automatically adjusts to each student's performance to encourage learning and minimize frustration.

4. Openbook at www.openbooklearning.com. This was field tested partly a private middle school for dyslexic students. Students work independently, with some supervision required initially. There are 6 activities provided and 8-10 levels within the activity.

5. Read Naturally at www.readnaturally.com. The Read Naturally program combines three powerful strategies for improving fluency: teacher modeling, repeated reading, and progress monitoring.

Suggestions for Product Application

These products can be used in a variety of ways in middle level reading programs for students with language differences, language difficulties, and language disorders. These software programs may be used within more traditional reading

instructional organizational formats as part of independent work activities, within an inclusive setting with assistants to aid in literacy support, or in programs that use variations of reading/writing workshops with individual work and conferencing opportunities. Some suggestions for use include:

1. Use of product(s) for whole class instruction to introduce and practice language awareness activities (most recently, use of 'clickers' for feedback or quiz responses);
2. Station or centers work for individual development and practice for all students;
3. Program enhancement involving struggling readers (individually or in small groups) during guided reading lessons or in remedial activities);
4. Home use following parent workshops and product permissions.

Discussion

These above software programs can be both important and motivational as additions to reading programs for middle level students. They may be used to provide increased motivation and for mimicking the interactive feeling of games. Since technology is a very visible part of life these days, there is good reason for integrating software CD's and internet use into reading programs. Using the software also provides a larger variety of ways to present information and to connect information. Most often, these software programs are set up for individual work, which even with minimal

supervision allows students to self-direct and self-monitor their own progress. In some cases, the use of these programs may aid in the introduction for students to technology use and manipulation of material, since some students do not have access to computers outside of home. In all cases, teachers and specialists are urged to investigate these programs and other academic language-to-literacy software models for reading support in middle level literacy programs.

References

- Adams, M.J., Foorman, B.R., Lundberg, I., & Beeler, T. (1998, Spring/Summer). The elusive phoneme: Why phonemic awareness is so important and how to help children develop it. *American Education*, 18-29.
- Blosser, J.L., & Kratcowski, A. (1997). PAC's: A framework for determining appropriate service delivery options. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools*, 28, 99-107.
- Buckingham, D. (Ed.) (1998). *Teaching popular culture*. London: University College London Press.
- Catts, H., & Kamhi, A., (1999). *Language and Reading Disabilities*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Hagood, M.C. (2000). New times, new millennium, new literacies. *Reading Research* and *Instruction*, 39 (4), 311-328.
- International Reading Association. (2003). *Standards for Reading Professionals*. Newark, DE: Author.
- Lee, G. (2000). Getting in line to publish online, *Voices from the Middle*, 8 (1), 23-34.
- Miller, S., DeVivo, K., LaRossa, K., Pycha, A., Perterson, B.E., Tallal, P., Merzenich, M.M., & Jenkins, W.M. (1998). Acoustically modified speech and language training reduces risk for academic difficulties, *Society for Neuroscience*, 24.
- National Council of Teachers of English/International Reading Association. (1996). *Standards for the English Language Arts*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- National Middle School Association. (2003). *This we believe: Developmentally responsive middle level schools*. Westerville, OH: Author.
- Risko, V.J., & Bromley, K. (2001). *Collaboration for diverse learners: Viewpoints and practices*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Torgensen, J., & Mathers, P., (1998). *What every teacher should know about phonological awareness*. Florida Department of Education Division of Public Schools and Community Education
- Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services.
- Wilkinson, E.R., & Silliman, L.C. (2000). Classroom language and literacy learning. In M. Kamil, P.D. Pearson, & R. Barr (Eds.), *Handbook of Reading Research: Volume III* (pp. 337-360). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.