

## Message from The President

Kathleen Roney  
 University of North  
 Carolina Wilmington

Greetings, colleagues. As many of you know from the announcement made at our Business Meeting during AERA '05, Kim Hartman informed us that she needed to resign from her position as President of our SIG. Allow me on your behalf to thank Kim for her service to the SIG—five-plus years! Kim's enthusiasm for, and commitment to middle level education is obvious and we are grateful for the generous and pleasant manner with which she shared it with us. Of course Kim remains in leadership as Past President, along with Vince Anfara, for another two years.

Allow me also to thank those of you who presented at and/or attended the many sessions we sponsored during AERA in Montreal. Please notice that the abstracts are included in this edition of the newsletter. It was a great showing of your dedication to conducting research and our support of one another's effort in advancing the middle level research agenda. Now we look forward to connecting in Philadelphia in November during the NMSA annual conference and meeting. Please notice that Dave Brown wrote up an invitation, which is included in this issue of the newsletter.

We had a great Business Meeting at AERA. Changes to the SIG's

Constitution were introduced, and subsequently voted in during our recent election. The Council members agreed to "chair" some working committees, thus keeping the momentum of the SIG in forward motion. Adrienne Dixon agreed to chair an "Orientation" committee, whose focus will be to help new members get to know the many aspects of the SIG. Sandra Stacki agreed to chair the "Graduate Student Award" committee. Please give yourself a moment to read her article in this edition of The Chronicle. As Past President, Vince Anfara chairs the "Membership" committee. This committee is critical since the number of sessions our SIG is given at AERA is directly dependent upon the number of members we have on our current list. Dick Lipka volunteered to chair the "Display Board" committee. This includes not only taking our display board to local and national meetings, but also actually "manning" it during such conferences so that those who may stop by and want some information about the MLER SIG can get it.

Good news about our recent elections. Sue Thompson is now our Vice President. Sue brings a wealth of experience in middle level education research, and we are happy to have her on our leadership team. One of the new responsibilities the Vice President's position includes is the development of policy briefs/position statements. Remember, the MLER SIG is the largest body of middle level researchers in the nation. Currently the MLER SIG has produced two policy briefs, which are accessed through our website. Under Sue's leadership we hope to produce additional statements. So,

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stay tuned for her invitations to author them!  
Thanks again for all your support. I look forward to a fun-filled time in Philly!

Kathy

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## NAPOMLE News

By Barbara R. Blackburn  
NAPOMLE President

The National Association of Professors of Middle Level Education (NAPOMLE) is sponsoring a Best Practices Session at NMSA in Philadelphia. This is an opportunity for professors to share teaching practices, course activities, unique aspects of a program, or other ideas relevant to those teaching middle level courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels. The online proposal is available at [www.napomle.org](http://www.napomle.org). Deadline for submissions is June 15. Thank you.

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## Making Middle Grades a National Priority

### The National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform

The National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform is having its first annual conference in Washington, D.C. on June 9-11. Participants have been asked to make a visit to one of their Congressional Representatives. To receive a copy of the excellent policy brief members are giving to the Representatives contact Sue Thompson.

[sctompson@sprintmail.com](mailto:sctompson@sprintmail.com)

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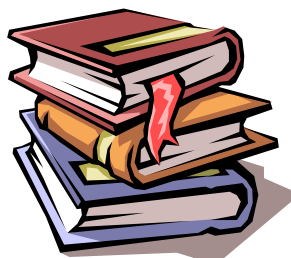
### Information Needed

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](mailto:mmusser@willamette.edu) by October 1, 2006

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

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## Making a Difference

The 5<sup>th</sup> volume in *The Handbook of Research in Middle Level Education* is in press! Micki M. Caskey edited Volume 5, *Making a Difference: Action Research in Middle Level Education*.

This volume examines the dynamic ways that preservice and inservice teachers, school administrators, university faculty, and educational consortia use action research to “make a difference” in middle level education.

Chapter authors include Joanne M. Arhar, Heidi Bulmahn Barker, Carole Basile, Penny A. Bishop, Nick Boke, Loyce Caruthers, Micki M. Caskey, Dorie Combs, Linda Crawford, Pritha Gopalan, Larry Gregg, Steve Hoelscher, Ned Kirsch, Kathleen F. Malu, Patrick Montesano, Susanna W. Pflaum, Cynthia Resor, Laila Y. Sanguras, Dan R. Saurino, Penelope L. Saurino, Theresa A. Shrum, Sandra L. Stacki, Diane Stanton, Sue C. Thompson, Holly J. Thorton, Teri West, and Melinda Wilder.

**Order your copy of *Making a Difference: Action Research in Middle Level Education* from:**

Information Age Publishing Inc.  
PO Box 4967  
Greenwich, CT 06831  
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Fax: 203-661-7952  
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Sandra L. Stacki (2004-2006)

Paul Deering (2004-2006)

P. Gayle Andrews (2005-2007)

Steven Mertens (2005-2007)

Elizabeth Pate (2005-2007)

## **Navigating the Net**

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

The Internet continues to expand exponentially, so navigation of this resource poses some challenges. The good news is that the MLER Web Site can help you access information about middle level issues and research.

As you know, since you are reading this column, the Middle Level Education Research SIG publishes its newsletter, *The Chronicle of Middle Level Education*, on the MLER Web Site. Contents range from a message from the SIG President to featured research articles. You will note that the SIG releases three issues of *The Chronicle* and website archives past issues.

To keep up with the latest middle level publications, please check out the books page. Not only will you find books endorsed by the MLER SIG, but also you will discover other titles by SIG members. Have you authored a book that you would like to see listed? Please contact me with the pertinent information, so we can share your publication. One goal of this website is to disseminate our work.

To satisfy your curiosity about the evolution of the MLER SIG, go to one of the newest sections, History. Here you can access *The History of the Middle Level Education Research Special Interest Group* as written by Ron Williamson, SIG Historian, and others. This interesting document captures how the SIG began and changed over the past fifteen years.

One of the most useful sections of the MLER website is Conferences and Meetings. Visit this section often to find information about the

2005-06 MLER events. For example, you can verify the AERA submission deadline for special interest groups in August 2, 2005 and that the dates of this annual meeting shift to a Saturday – Wednesday format. In addition, check out the links to the future AERA meetings and NMSA conferences. You can easily add these dates to your planner or calendar. Plus, you can review previous MLER events in the newly re-organized past meetings and conferences page that extends back to the 2001-2002 academic year.

REMEMBER, this is OUR website. Please use it often! Send your position announcements, publication news, and other information to me for inclusion on the website. Suggestions for improving the website are always welcome. I hope that our site helps to make navigation of the net a little easier.

[www.middlelevel.pdx.edu](http://www.middlelevel.pdx.edu)

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## **See you in Philadelphia**

National Middle  
School Association's  
32<sup>nd</sup> Annual  
Conference &  
Exhibit

By Dave F. Brown  
West Chester University of  
Pennsylvania

As a member of the planning committee for the National Middle School Association annual conference, I would like to invite all of the MLER members to attend this year's conference in Philadelphia on November 3rd, 4th, and 5th. Philadelphia has some amazing historical sites, including the new National

Constitution Center as well as the old favorites, Independence Hall and the ever silent Liberty Bell. Add to that a chance to see the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the newly renovated state of the art Aquarium just a 5 minute boat ride across the Delaware River, and a golden opportunity to eat a Philly Cheesesteak! If that isn't enough to get you here, then a chance to see some valuable sessions at the conference and the opportunity to meet with fellow middle level education researchers at our several sessions should convince you to attend! See you in November in the city of brotherly love—Philadelphia.

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### **MLER Meets in Philadelphia**

Be sure to attend the MLER meeting at the NMSA Annual Conference in Philadelphia.

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### **The Encyclopedia of Middle Grades Education**

By Vincent A. Anfara, Jr.  
University of Tennessee

The Encyclopedia of Middle Grades Education, edited by Vincent A. Anfara, Jr., Gayle Andrews, and Steven B. Mertens, is in the final stages of preparation. The final manuscript will be sent to Information Age Publishing by July 1, 2005. NMSA is the co-publisher.

The editors would like to thank the many MLER SIG members who have authored entries for this much-anticipated resource. It is anticipated that the Encyclopedia will be released at NMSA's Annual Conference in Philadelphia.

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### **NMSA Research Summaries**

By Vincent A. Anfara, Jr.  
University of Tennessee

Interested in authoring a Research Summary for the National Middle School Association? Please contact Vince Anfara, Chair of the NMSA Research Advisory Board, at [vanfara@utk.edu](mailto:vanfara@utk.edu) or call 865/974.4985 to discuss possible topics.

NMSA Research Summaries are brief (4 pages) treatments of key issues in middle grades education. Each summary contains: (1) the title, (2) definitions of important terms or concepts, (3) the critical question(s) to be answered in the summary, (4) the answer, (5) research that supports the answer, (6) references cited, (7) 2 to 3 annotated references, and (8) a listing of potential resources useful for practitioners.

Each submission will be peer-reviewed by the members of NMSA's Research Advisory Board prior to publication.

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### **MLER Graduate Student Award**

Graduate Student Award  
By Sandra L. Stacki, Awards  
Committee Chair

The Middle Level Education Research SIG's Graduate Student Award is intended to promote and recognize outstanding research in middle-level education and is presented annually to a graduate student or recent graduate of a masters, specialist, or doctoral program.

The winner of the 2005 MLER SIG Graduate Student Award is Lauren A. Liang. Her dissertation is titled "Using Scaffolding to Foster Middle School Students' Comprehension of and Response to Short Stories". The award includes a check for \$250.00 when a presentation on the topic is made at either the National Middle School Association conference or the American Educational Research Conference. Congratulations Lauren!

Nominations for next year's award must be received by January 15, 2006. Don't wait! Graduate students are encouraged to apply. Faculty members are also urged to suggest nominees.

Specific information about eligibility and proposal submission is listed on the Graduate Student

Award Application which can be found on the MLER web site [www.middlelevel.pdx.edu](http://www.middlelevel.pdx.edu)

If you have questions, please don't hesitate to contact the SIG Awards Chair, Sandra L. Stacki at [Sandra.L.Stacki@hofstra.edu](mailto:Sandra.L.Stacki@hofstra.edu)

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## NASSP Middle Level Dissertation Award

NASSP is now accepting applications for its 2005-06 Middle Level Dissertation Competition. The competition builds on NASSP's 16-year tradition of recognizing and supporting middle level research, and the winner will be recognized at the 2006 NASSP Annual Convention. Applications must be postmarked by August 26, 2005. For more information visit <http://www.principals.org>

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## Membership Committee

By Vincent A. Anfara, Jr.,  
Membership Committee  
Chair

The MLER Membership Committee is comprised of Doris Williams-Smith, Dan R. Saurino, Annie J. Daniel, Francine C. Falk-Ross, and Vincent A. Anfara, Jr. This group will be meeting via a phone conference in the near future to discuss ways to increase membership in the MLER SIG. The number of sessions we are assigned at the annual meeting of AERA is dependent on our membership

numbers. Members of the SIG are encouraged to contact Vincent A. Anfara, Jr. at [vanfara@utk.edu](mailto:vanfara@utk.edu) or any member of the Membership Committee with any ideas.

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## MLER SIG AERA 2005 Abstracts

Prepared by  
Kathleen Roney,  
Program Chair

### Block Scheduling Effects on Middle School Students' Mathematics Achievement

Kim Mattox, Stephen Hancock, J. Allen Queen

Because the middle school years are often marked by a decline in student achievement, particularly during the transitional year when students move from elementary school to sixth grade, the current study was conducted. Results revealed significant increases in the mathematics achievement scores of sixth grade students enrolled in five middle schools that transitioned from traditional to block schedules. Characteristics of block scheduling that may have accounted for these outcomes and recommendations for future research are discussed.

### Team Collaboration in a High-Stakes Environment

Karen Weller

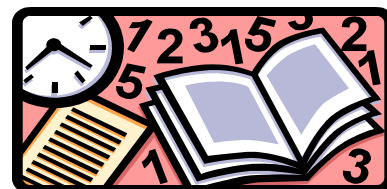
A seventh and an eighth grade team were chosen for this study based on their level and degree of collaboration during the 1999-2000 school year. This study addressed the question of what changes in collaborative practice were made at the middle school level in response to district goals regarding student performance on

standardized tests. It further asked how teacher interpreted those goals, whether accountability

### Middle Level Interdisciplinary Teaming as an Induction Practice

Dana Bickmore, Steven Bickmore, Laurie Hart

This study examined participants'—new teachers, mentors, and principals—perceptions of interdisciplinary teaming, a common practice in middle schools, as an element of induction. The questions that guided the study were: (1) In what ways did the participants characterize their experience with interdisciplinary teaming in the induction process; (2) How did interdisciplinary teaming function in relation to other elements of induction in the support of new teachers? Our results indicated interdisciplinary teams were perceived as an integral part of the induction process of new teachers.



### Sustaining Teams: The Relationship Between Leader Behavior and Team Performance

Ronald Williamson, Barbara Blackburn

This three-year study investigated teachers' and administrators' beliefs about the characteristics of effective teams and leadership behaviors that sustained high-performing teams. Data were gathered from team members and school leaders in middle level schools identified as high performing. Data analysis revealed critical leadership behaviors that contributed to sustaining long-term teaming effectiveness.

### **IMPACTing Middle School Students' Technology Skills: Results from Year One of a Technology Integration Initiative**

Amy Overbay, Jason Osborne, Lisa Grable, Jane Steelman

This study explores the effects of a fully-funded technology integration model on middle school students' technology skills over the course of the first year of a three-year statewide initiative. In this paper we report on how IMPACT students' skills changed relative to a comparison group, as well as how middle school teachers' skills (which were significant and substantial) were related to middle school student outcomes and characteristics, such as their technology skills, home computer access, frequency of home computer use, computer use in core curricular areas, and perception of technology skills.

### **New Literacies Infusion into a Middle Childhood Methods Course: A Case Study**

William Kist

This session describes an effort to help pre-service teachers "unpack levels of texts" and critically examine discourses. Pre-service teachers will need to examine their own literacy practices in this wild, new media territory, mapping students' practices and their crossings (transversals) across time, media, and space (Lemke, 2004). The session will describe the transformation of a traditional literacy methods course for pre-service teachers to reflect more of a "multiliteracies" perspective. Examples of student assignments and rubrics will be included.

### **Successful Middle Schools for Urban Minority Children: A National Study of Nativity Schools**

Leo Mickey Fenzel

The present study provides an examination of 12 alternative middle schools in 7 US cities by employing classroom observations, interviews, and written attitude questionnaires involving teachers and students. The paper will show that the success of the Nativity model rests primarily with: (a) strong and respectful leadership from an experienced principal, (b) a long school day that includes extra tutorial assistance, and (c) the extended, individual attention that students receive from dedicated teachers to support both their academic and social-emotional growth.

### **The Middle School Movement and Improved Student Achievement: Fact or Fiction?**

Kathleen Roney, Vincent Anfara

We take the opportunity to react to the National Middle School's position statement on the middle school movement and student achievement. We conclude with the bold position that the reform structures as delineated by *Turning Points* (1989) and *This We Believe* (1982, 1992, 1995, 2003) are a means to an end and are not sufficient to create the results promised. Readers will be provided with answers to questions framed by the three levels of organizational health, such as: (a) How do middle level educators assess students' overall ability to succeed? (b) How do teachers describe their feelings about the middle school? (c) How are decisions made at the middle school level? (d) What are the major stressors faced by middle schools? (e) How do middle level schools involve parents and

community in the education of young adolescents?

### **Re-Envisioning Instruction of Large-Group Performance Ensembles in the Middle Grades**

Patrick Freer

This session will explore the instructional characteristics and language use of middle school choral teachers during rehearsals in which students report higher levels of perceived challenge and skill (often referred to as "flow experience"). The findings suggest that choral music teachers re- envision the rehearsals they lead for young adolescents – dispelling any notion that choruses must be rehearsed in a rigidly organized, teacher-centered manner without opportunities for individual student contributions.

### **The Effects of Latchkey Status on Middle-Grade Students**

Steven Mertens, Nancy Flowers

This paper will examine the status of middle school students and the effect that latchkey status has on student well-being. The implications of the results suggest that students left home alone after school for three hours or more are engaged in more high-risk behaviors and report lower levels of student well-being. Policy implications will also be drawn from these data.

### **Hand in Hand: Engaging High-Risk Adolescents in Positive Youth Development Experience**

Boyoung Park, Stacey Neuharth-Pritchett

This research paper presents data on a youth development program for high-risk youth. Adolescents engaged in the program were high-risk youth involved in a youth empowerment program and a school-to-work program. As part of either community service or a youth apprenticeship program, the

17 male and female adolescents volunteered in an early childhood education center for infants and toddlers. Data from the adolescents indicates an increase in their knowledge of child development and comfort with young children and careers that center on young children. Qualitative interview data also indicated that adolescents were more likely to consider parenthood and the possibility of becoming parents at such an early age much differently than before the intervention. Further evidence suggested an increased quality in the environments for young children as well as increased literacy experiences for both the young children and adolescents.

### **Depression in Adolescents Who Have Experienced Academic Failure**

Angela Fiske

The current study examines 190 adolescents' self-ratings of depression, association with early success or failure in school, and self-ratings on social variables. Through hierarchical linear regression analyses, results indicated that adolescents' self-ratings of total depression were significantly predicted by retained status and adolescents' self-ratings on social characteristics such as popularity, social acceptance, intellectual and school status, and social connection to school. Examination of descriptives on the individual variable of total depression indicated that retained children were more likely to rate themselves as more depressed than either students who were low-performing or those who were on grade-level. These data suggest the need to develop interventions for adolescents who have been retained that address their emotional well-being during this critical period of development

with a particular focus on countering depressive symptoms.

### **Making it in the Middle: How African American Girls' School Experiences Shape Learning**

Constance Bauer

This study examines how African American female students experience middle school, specifically examining how white male teachers' instructional practices affect these students' agency and engagement. Data suggest that teachers whose attitudes and practices reflect and incorporate students' cultural backgrounds and interests are most effective with the African American girls. Findings indicate that teachers who learn about students' needs and interests, demonstrate patience, provide opportunities for group work, and make learning relevant foster positive classroom environments for these African American girls. Conversely revealed is how teacher behaviors stifle these girls' engagement. The study has important implications for understanding how African American females enrolled in a middle school experience their classes taught by white men, furthering research regarding the importance of fostering a culturally responsive school climate.

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

Frances Spielhagen

This study explored single-gender classes in a public middle school by using both qualitative and quantitative analysis of student attitudes and achievement, as well as teacher and parent attitudes. From this study, it can be concluded that single-gender class arrangements have merit for students who are positively disposed to being involved in

them. Moreover, the younger the student, the more likely that student will respond favorably to single-gender classes and the greater the academic gain as measured by achievement tests.

### **Middle School Girls' Perceptions of Teachers and Learning**

Mary Ariail, Colleen Fairbanks

This study, based on data from 52 interviews, traced four middle school girls' perceptions of teaching and learning over three years (grades 6-8). Data was gathered from girls' responses to the question: "What does it mean to be a good teacher?" The girls' views evolved from a perception of a good teacher as simply "nice" to a view that also included a teacher as competent. Analysis categories included (a) attending to and respecting students as persons, (b) engaging students in active learning, (c) giving explanations and help, (d) providing opportunities to learn with and from peers, (e) making curriculum relevant.

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

Paul Deering, Anne Ashford, Rhonda Black, Sheila Apisa

This paper examines attempts to help middle level educators become leaders for change in the Master of Education Degree in Curriculum Studies with a Middle Level Emphasis program (MLMED). Analyses of qualitative and quantitative data (anonymous surveys, school and program documents) regarding the four two-year cohorts that have completed the program (n=130) suggest that our efforts are bearing fruit for all participants, including ten board members, seven presidents, and four Educators of

the Year of the Hawai'i Association of Middle Schools. The supportive learning community, portfolio and self-direction appear to be keys. Thus, all middle level teachers, including women, Asians and/or Pacific Islanders, can become leaders for change, within and beyond their schools.

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

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

This study investigated the effect of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 on the everyday practices of middle school teachers throughout the state. Results identify trends based on the socioeconomic status of the school community served, the number of minority students enrolled in the school, or an interaction of the two variables. Based on these findings, the study concludes with policy recommendations for middle schools and middle level preparation programs that address academic excellence, developmental responsiveness, and cultural equity.

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

Scott Sowell

This research explicates how incorporating the discourse of middle level education, specifically the debates surrounding developmental responsiveness versus academic rigor (Anfara and Waks, 2000, 2001), into a poststructuralist analysis of science teaching, can provide a more holistic and robust understanding of the

gender equity issue. Findings speak to both the science education community's gender equity research as well as the middle level research community's exploration of advisory programs.

### **Different Ways of Learning: Professional Development of Principals and Comprehensive School Reform**

Ronald Williamson, Susan Galletti

Different Ways of Knowing Middle Grades Comprehensive School Reform Project provided principals of schools participating in the project with focused professional development designed to strengthen their work with teachers. This paper reports on aspects of this four-year research project funded by the United States Department of Education. In particular, the paper reports findings about the professional development of principals in Different Ways of Knowing schools and the impact of that professional development on teaching and learning as well as student learning in the schools.

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

Catherine Brighton, Kristi Doubet, Trudy Clemons, Maria Capper

This session will present the results of an innovative effort to bring quality differentiated curriculum and instructional practice into teachers' classrooms. The project served as an innovation in staff development and in helping teachers' develop units that addressed student differences ranging from student achievement and readiness, interests, and learning profiles. Results suggested that familiarity with the innovation affected student achievement. Implications

for staff development are discussed and presented

### **Mental Imagery and Mathematical Problem Solving**

Patricia Douville, David Pugalee

This paper will present the results of an exploratory investigation designed to determine the relationship between mental imagery strategies and the successful mathematical problem solving of middle school students. Although investigations of the effects of mental imagery on literacy tasks have represented a specific research interest, little inquiry has been conducted to investigate the effects of mental imagery on mathematical problem solving. The exploratory study revealed a significant correlation between the students' reported use of mental imagery and successful mathematics problem solving.

### **Parent Perceptions of a Magnet Middle School**

David Allen

Parents are usually thought of as one of the primary stakeholders in conversations focusing on education. Yet when the evaluation of an educational program occurs, the parents are often not included in the process either by inadvertent exclusion or by blatant omission. The purpose of this study is to identify what perceptions about a magnet middle school are present with the parents of the magnet middle school students. Most of the parents feel that this magnet school has provided an exceptional learning environment for student. But like all programs, there is room for improvement, mostly in areas dealing with communication.



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

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

This study explored literacy motivation and school/non-school literacies among middle school English Language Learners. Results indicate that students' motivation was high when engaged in projects they participated in selecting and when working with a teacher with whom they felt a connection. In addition, family interviews revealed a large number of literacy activities in which students participated outside of school. However, surveys and interviews indicated that students found much of their school-related reading/writing non-motivating; they also described this reading/writing as very limited in scope.

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

David Strahan

During the 2003-04 school year, teachers and administrators attempted to make Elm Street Middle School more significant in the lives of their students by encouraging higher levels of reasoning and by extending their efforts to nurture self-control. This case study chronicled the ways teachers worked together to accomplish these improvements and documented students' perceptions of their experiences in school. Results illustrate the dynamics of developmental responsiveness and underscore the power of data and dialogue to promote

collaborative instructional improvement.

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

Stephen Brand, Robert Felner, Thaddeus Dumas

The symposium presented findings from a multi-year longitudinal evaluation of a set of foundation-based initiatives that sought to transform educational policy and practice to create high performing middle level schools in which all students would succeed academically. The symposium addresses critical questions concerning: 1.) the extent to which schools have been able to achieve comprehensive, intensive, and sustained implementation of these common national recommendations; and 2.) the conditions that facilitate or constrain efforts to carry out these recommended practices.

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

Paul Camic, Lynda Cafasso, William Ristow, Jean Rhodes

This symposium reported on the findings of a five-year longitudinal study involving five academically excelling suburban middle schools where university researchers partnered with middle school teachers, as co-researchers, to study school climate. Using multiple quantitative and qualitative methodologies that included a longitudinal design utilizing matched comparison groups, as well as ethnographic and participatory action research, we will report on the findings at the end of Year 5. Information regarding climate, regularities, strengths, challenges and

resistance within each school will be discussed by university researchers and one of the participating school principals, in addition to encouraging audience participation.

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

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

The purpose of this multiple paper presentation is to share current action research in middle level education. Six researchers will present highlights from their action research studies with topics that include middle level reform, professional development, adolescent literacy, university-school partnerships, collaborative action teams, and preservice teacher education. These six studies are exemplars of action

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AERA ANNUAL  
CONFERENCE  
MONTREAL, CANADA

**Annual Meeting**  
April 11-15 Montréal

MLER SIG COUNCIL  
MEETING

APRIL 14, 2004  
4:05-5:35p.m.

Members present: Steve Mertens, Vince Anfara, Sandra Stacki, Adrienne Dixon, Micki Caskey, Dick Lipka, Maureen Muesser, Kathleen Roney

Members not present: Paul Deering, Gayle Andrews, Joanne Arhar, Joan Lindgren, Nancy Mizelle, Kim Hartman

**Message from the President**

Kim Hartman resigned for health reasons. Kathleen Roney assumes office of President, Micki Caskey assumes office of Program Chair and President-elect

**Election of Vice President.**

Members will be invited to nominate and/or self-nominate. **Action Step:** Kathy will announce at Business Meeting and begin election process by Friday, April 22, 2005

**Awards**

Graduate Student, Lauren Liang advised that she was unable to attend AERA to accept her award and to share her research. The award includes a check for \$250.00 intended to offset cost of attending conference. Since application does make this clear, Lauren will be sent the check. **Action Step:** Micki will edit application to reflect the intention of the monetary award.

**Action Step:** Form ad hoc committee to explore other awards SIG could confer.

**Amendments to Constitution.**

**Action Step:** Present amendments at Business Meeting. Kathy will follow up with ballot to members through email list.

**The SIG Association Council (Articles Seven and Eight).**

**Action Steps:** (1) involve Councilors as Chairs of ad hoc working committees as follows; (2) Periodically Kathy will include Chairs in officer teleconferences; (3) Kathy will contact Councilors not present at meeting to determine which ad hoc committee they would like to chair.

- Membership (immediate Past President, Chair). Vince Anfara
- Nominating
- AERA Program. Micki Caskey
- Ad Hoc:
- Strategic Plan. Steve Mertens
- Orientation of new members. Adrienne Dixon
- Awards. Sandra Stacki

**Financial Report.** Current balance \$1,343.66

**Purchase of domain for SIG website. Action Step:** Mick will explore possibility

**Other Business. None**

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**MLER SIG  
MEETING  
MINUTES**

AERA ANNUAL  
CONFERENCE  
MONTREAL, CANADA

6:15p.m.  
APRIL 14, 2005

AGENDA

**Message from the President (Vince Anfara)**

Kim Hartman resigned for health reasons. We thank her for her leadership. Kathleen Roney assumes office of President, Micki Caskey assumes office of Program Chair and President-elect.

**Elections (Kathy Roney)**

**1. Council Election results:**

Gayle Andrews, Steve Mertens, and Elizabeth Pate were elected for a two-year term. Joanne Arhar was thanked for her three years as Council member.

**2. Vice President.**

Members are invited to nominate and/or self-nominate for position of Vice President. Announcement of this will be posted to the listserv. Nominations are due to Kathy Roney at [roneyk@uncw.edu](mailto:roneyk@uncw.edu) by Friday, May 6, 2005. Ballot will be prepared and sent out to members by Monday, May 9, 2005. Completed ballots must be returned to Kathy at [roneyk@uncw.edu](mailto:roneyk@uncw.edu) by Friday, May 20, 2005.

**Reports**

**AERA Program (Kathy Roney).**

Over 25 members volunteered as reviewers, chairs, and discussants. MLER SIG sponsored 2 paper discussions, 3 paper sessions, 2 symposia, 1 officers' meeting and 1 business meeting during AERA '05.

**Financial (Vince Anfara).**

Balance as of April 3, 2005 is \$1,343.66. Expenses related to AERA will be deducted at the conclusion of the conference.

**Web (Micki Caskey).** Exploration of the purchase of web domain for MLER SIG.

**Newsletter (Maureen Musser).**  
Next issue anticipated for June 2005. Submissions to be sent to Maureen Musser.

**History (Ron Williamson).**  
Copy of *History of the MLER SIG* available on website.

**Survey (Micki Caskey).**  
Results were presented and will be available on the website.

**Amendment to Constitution: Composition of Council (Kathy Roney).**  
Ballot for changes to Constitution will be sent to members along with ballot for the election of a new SIG Vice President. Completed ballots must be submitted by Friday, May 20, 2005.

**NMSA Research Summaries (Vince Anfara).**  
Contact Vince Anfara at [vanfara@utk.edu](mailto:vanfara@utk.edu) if interested in authoring a research summary.

**SIG Policy Briefs.** Contact Kathy Roney at [roneyk@uncw.edu](mailto:roneyk@uncw.edu) if interested in submitting a policy brief.

**Graduate Student Award.**  
Lauren A. Liang *Using Scaffolding to Foster Middle School Students' Comprehension of and Response to Short Stories*

**Updates (Vince Anfara; Micki Caskey)**

**Handbook.** *Making a Difference*, 5<sup>th</sup> volume, edited by Micki Caskey, will be available shortly.

**Encyclopedia.** Expected release date November 2005 at NMSA.

**NMSA sponsored Poster Session.** Submit proposals to Micki Caskey at [caskeym@pdx.edu](mailto:caskeym@pdx.edu)

**New Business**

Penny Saurino announced position open at University of West Georgia. If interested contact Penny at [psaurino@wesstga.edu](mailto:psaurino@wesstga.edu)  
Dave Brown, West Chester State University, encouraged members to participate in NMSA in Philadelphia November 2005.

**Standing and AdHoc Committee Meetings.** Members joined one of the following working committees. First meetings were held following the Business Meeting.  
-Vince Anfara, Chair, Membership Committee  
-Maureen Muesser, Chair, Communication Committee  
-Sandra Stacki, Chair, Awards Committee  
-Dick Lipka, Chair, Display (aka, "Sandwich") Board Committee  
-Adrienne Dixson, Chair, Orientation Committee

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**MLER Listserv**

Interested in being part of the MLER listserv? Want to get all of the latest news and events? Don't be left out! Send an email to Vince Anfara at [vanfara@utk.edu](mailto:vanfara@utk.edu) and ask to be added to the MLER listserv.

