



MIDDLE LEVEL EDUCATION RESEARCH
SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

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January 2006

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Message from The President

January 2006

*Kathleen Roney
University of North
Carolina Wilmington*

Greetings and best wishes for a happy 2006. May prosperity in all its varied and surprising forms be your constant companion in this New Year.

You may recall that in his January 2004 message, then MLER SIG President, Vince Anfara, challenged us to keep the SIG growing and moving in positive directions saying, "Let's strengthen our role as an advocate for middle-level education research and young adolescents. Let's never be satisfied with our accomplishments—there is more to do now than ever before." Well, it seems to me that the MLER SIG has certainly continued its efforts on behalf of young adolescents—I'm thinking especially of the

recent publications made possible through SIG members—*Encyclopedia of Middle Grades Education* edited by Vincent Anfara, Gayle Andrews & Steven Mertens and *Making A Difference: Action Research in Middle Level Education* edited by Micki Caskey. Indeed, many dedicated advocates from our SIG prepared manuscripts and/or entries that expanded our understanding of middle level education today.

Still, there is more to do. Currently the MLER SIG has endorsed two policy briefs—*High Stakes Testing* and *Middle Level Principal Preparation and Licensure*. We want to continue the development of policy briefs that assist us in advocating for young adolescents and middle-level education. Please consider volunteering to author a policy brief on a topic of important to middle level education. Sue Thompson has a message in this edition of the newsletter that explains the process.

We have a full agenda for AERA/San Francisco. I do hope you are planning to attend. We will have our usual Officer's Meeting, Business Meeting, Paper Sessions, Paper Discussions, and Symposia. 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. Thanks to Micki Caskey, this year's Program Chair, we will be sponsoring a joint reception with members of the Adolescent SIG. So please join us. Meantime, you can read Micki's column in this edition of the newsletter.

Please join me in thanking Paul Deering, Adrienne Dixon, Dick Lipka, and Sandra Stacki for their service of leadership as MLER-SIG Association Council members. Now we need to elect four members to the council before we head to San Francisco. Nominations are open to all MLER SIG members, so please consider helping us take up Vince's challenge by nominating yourself or nominating someone else (with their permission) to serve in one of these positions. We will hold an electronic vote in early March, and winners will be notified prior to the AERA/San Francisco

meeting where the official announcement will be made. This is a good opportunity to get involved in the SIG. Please send nominations to Joan Lindgren (jlindgre@fau.edu) no later than February 6th.

The winner of the 2006 MLER-SIG Graduate Student Award will be announced in San Francisco as well. This is a great opportunity to meet one of our newest colleagues. The winner will be given a short time, certainly not time for a full presentation, but enough to introduce us to her/his research.

In our attempt to keep the work of the SIG in forward motion, the officers meet monthly by teleconference as a means of better communicating. In this way, 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 roneyk@uncw.edu and I will present your ideas at our teleconferences.

See you in San Francisco.
Safe travels,
Kathy

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P. Gayle Andrews (2005-2007)

Steven Mertens (2005-2007)

Paul Deering (2004-2006)

Adrienne Dixon (2004-2006)

Richard Lipka (2004-2006)

Sandra L. Stacki (2004-2006)

Report from the Program Chair

*By Micki M. Caskey
Portland State University*

Happy New Year! Our MLER-SIG will continue to have a strong presence at the AERA's Annual Meeting. This year we will have three paper sessions, two paper discussion sessions (formerly roundtables), a symposium, a business meeting, and a joint reception with the Adolescence SIG. The full listing of accepted proposals will appear at the end of this report.

As you may recall, the MLER SIG received 49 proposals for the AERA, which required a robust pool of reviewers. We were fortunate to have 40 reviewers ready and willing to systematically review and rate all of the proposals. They also successfully navigated AERA's electronic submission system. Speaking for myself and on behalf of the entire membership, I send sincere THANKS to all of the submitters and reviewers. We appreciate the submitters' and reviewers' thoughtful contribution, middle level expertise, and sizeable time commitment

to complete this invaluable work. In addition, we had many MLER SIG members volunteer to serve as session chairs and discussants.

This spring, the annual meeting takes place in San Francisco and stretches from Friday, April 7 through Tuesday, April 11, 2006. Both the registration and housing reservation systems are open (www.aera.net). Please make your plans to attend the annual meeting and be sure to check the AERA program for all of our MLER SIG sessions. AERA is in the process of scheduling the 2006 AERA Annual Meeting and expects to notify meeting participants later this month when the schedule is complete.

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AERA 2006 Annual Meeting

**Friday, April 7 to
Tuesday, April 11
San Francisco**



MLER SIG Sessions at AERA 2006

*By Micki M. Caskey
Portland State University*

PAPER SESSIONS

Orienting to the Common Good: Developing a Moral Self in the Middle Year
Kathleen Roney & F. Power

School Engagement And Drift Among Middle-level Students in Ireland
Emer Smyth, Allison Dunne, Selina McCoy, Merike Darmody

Students' responses to an experiential learning program: Exploring academic momentum with eighth graders who have not done well in school
David Strahan, Victoria Faircloth, Sally Hundley, Micky Cope

Educating At-Risk Urban African American Children: A Comparison of the Effectiveness of Two Types of Middle Schools
L. Mickey Fenzel

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Accountability and the Changing Practice of Middle School Teachers: Unintended Consequences
Linda Samek, Micki Caskey, Maureen Musser, William Greene, Marilyn Olson

*No Child Left Behind Act
In/Out of Two Middle
School Classrooms*
Enora Brown

*Dilemmas of a Middle
School social studies
teacher: Being culturally
responsive in a standards-
based, high stakes testing
environment.*
Mary Thomas, Tim
Holman

*School Improvement
Planning in Middle Grades
Schools*
Vincent A Anfara, Jr.

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*Middle School Team
Simulations in Higher
Education*
Penelope Saurino, Dan
Saurino

*Writing in Middle Grades
Mathematics Methods:
Developing Mathematical
and Pedagogical
Understanding*
David Pugalee, Patricia
Douville

*Middle Grades Teaching
Practices: A Validation
Study*
Steve Mertens, Nancy
Flowers, Matthew Hesson-
McInnis, Cari Bishop

*Renorming Teams:
Enhancing Leadership to
Strengthen Team
Functioning*
Ron Williamson

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**PAPER DISCUSSIONS
(ROUND TABLES)**

*Same-Gender Grouping in
Eighth-Grade Science
Classrooms*
Jennifer Friend

*Understanding the Needs
of English Language
Learners and its Impact on
their Identities*
Bogum Yoon

*Arkansas Middle Level
Best Practices Study*
Calli Holaway-Johnson,
Charles Stegman, Kristina
Fritts Scott, Sean
Mulvenon, James
Truelove, Crystal Beshears

*Teacher dispositions in the
middle grades: How do
they affect the learning of
future citizens of a
democracy?*
Holly Thornton

*Meeting Young
Adolescents' Self-Concept
and Classroom
Environment Needs Across
the Transition to Middle
School*
Audra Parker

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*Natural Progressions:
Building Language
Knowledge To Reduce
Reading Confusions For
Struggling Middle School
Readers*
Francine Falk-Ross

*Learning through
Democracy in Action:
Service Learning at the
Middle Level*
Virginia Jagla

*Maintaining Self-Worth in
the Middle School Years: A
Developmental Perspective*
Kathleen Roney, F Power

*Adolescents Speak Out:
Consequences of Early
Grade Retention for
Middle School Students*
Angela Fiske, Stacey
Neuharth-Pritchett

*Meeting the Needs of
Adolescents: Assessing the
Condition of the Middle
School in Northern
Kentucky*
Shawn Faulkner, Chris
Cook

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SYMPOSIUM

*Relevant Methodologies
for Relevant Middle Level
Questions*
Micki Caskey, Dick Lipka,
Steve Mertens, Vince
Anfara, Penny Bishop

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**Middle Level Education
Research SIG Business
Meeting**

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Joint Reception:
Adolescence SIG and the
Middle Level Education
Research SIG

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MINUTES

Fall Business Meeting

NMSA Philadelphia, PA
Friday, November 4, 2005



Kathleen Roney, President and Program Chair, opened the SIG Business Meeting at 5:00 pm and introduced the members of the Executive Council of the SIG and the officers to the membership. Nancy Mizelle, Treasurer, reported that the SIG had \$1723.66. Dues for the SIG are now \$10 and are being sent to AERA.

Updates:

Micki Caskey reported that Volume 5 of the Handbook is now in the bookstore, while Vince Anfara, Steve Mertens, and Gail Andrews (Eds.) announced that the Encyclopedia of Middle Level Education published by Information Age Publishers is now out in the bookstore. There is a 50% reduction for contributors to the Handbook. Ron Williamson reported that the SIG history project is now on line at our website, but there are still some gaps in the collections and documents. A search is underway for information

to update, clarify, and fill in missing pieces. Micki Caskey, webmaster gave the website www.middlelevel.pdx.edu and her address. Information regarding the Graduate Student Award and application, by-laws, information about publications, and position announcements are listed on the website. Micki noted that the website is an access point for our SIG, and that our website has been recognized as a model for other SIGs in AERA.



The website contains a link to AERA, and also to other middle level groups of special interest. Maureen Musser announced that the next newsletter will be out in January 2006, and will contain short papers, reviews. She noted that it is a way to keep in touch with the SIG. Her email is mmusser@willamette.edu. Last of updates was by Adrienne Dixson who is organizing information for new councilors and new members.

Vince Anfara reported that our membership is large with 168

members. He noted that 109 memberships had lapsed. Attempts are being made to get them back. Our membership is still growing at present. Our sessions at AERA are based on our membership and our SIG # is 88 for the AERA listing. Vince is managing the listserv and there are 130 names on it. The directory comes from AERA and they require that members have a masters degree. The directory is being handled by Micki Caskey. It is the AERA directory that is used for elections.

Sandra Stacki announced that the graduate student award deadline is January 15, 2006. The award is based on research for an Ed Specialist, Ed.D, or PhD with a \$250 check to the students to go to the AERA conference and present their research. The study must be completed within a year, and the criteria are on the website.

Sue Thompson reported on policy making; she has been promoting public policy which would be useful to schools and boards and said one can submit a brief proposal on policy. A statement was made about having a subcommittee on policy. Kathy has been trying to get people actively involved in taking on projects. Ours is the largest body doing research on middle level education and we could have some influence.

Vince Anfara is a member of the NMSA Research Advisory Board. A CD called "Why It Works" came out in 1997, and it has now been revised. It is free to the membership and can be used for teacher preparation and will appear on the NMSA website. Research summaries need to be updated and put up on the website. Authors of the

summaries should address the 14 tenets of “*This We Believe*” do an abbreviated review of one tenet, and note resources and research useful for educators, administrators, researchers, and policy makers. There is a call for research summaries that are a useable tool for all. The length should be 3-4 pages. For an operational definition, see Elizabeth Pate’s model and Steve Merten’s model. There is a credit for citation and there will be a blind review process. One can write on a tenet or on something new. Variations are great and good quality is expected of the research summary. Contact Elizabeth Pate at elizabeth.pate@utsa.edu if you wish to contribute.

For the AERA program in April, the SIG will have 23 presenters with the 3 paper sessions, 4 full papers announced, 2 discussion sessions with 5 papers. There will be 1 symposium. Micki Caskey announced that the review of submissions is a straight objective blind review process. Those with the highest numbers are those who present.

Some discussion followed re: having a round table for new people, and also perhaps limiting the number of proposals by one author. It was concluded that this may be an important question to ask in the future, but not this

year. We need to increase the number of submissions. Vince Anfara noted that AERA feels that acceptance rates by SIGs are far too high at 50%. We should discuss this issue again at the AERA meeting in April.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan Lindgren, Secretary
jlindgre@fau.edu

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Call for Manuscripts

Research in Middle Level Education Online

The National Middle School Association (NMSA) publishes *Research in Middle Level Education Online (RMLE Online)*, an international peer-reviewed research journal. The journal prints quantitative and qualitative studies, case studies, action research studies, research syntheses, integrative reviews, and interpretations of research literature. NMSA's [Research Advisory Board](#) provides guidance for the

publication and the MLER-SIG endorses *RMLE Online*. Current and past issues of *RMLE Online*, a list of the editorial review board, guidelines for contributors and contact information are available on the NMSA Web Site (www.nmsa.org).

Contributors need to prepare their manuscript to conform to the language and format of the fifth edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association. Typically, manuscripts are 7,000-12,000 words in length. After completing the manuscript, contributors submit five blind copies that include the title and abstract of 150-200 words as well as one title page with author contact information. Naturally, a cover letter needs to accompany the submission. If you have questions, please contact Micki Caskey by email (caskeym@pdx.edu) or telephone (503.725.4749).

Please send manuscripts and correspondence to: Dr. Micki M. Caskey, Editor *RMLE Online* Portland State University Graduate School of Education 615 SW Harrison St. Portland, OR 97201

NAPOMLE

NEWS

*By David Virtue
University of South Carolina
And
Barbara Blackburn
Winthrop University*

The South Carolina and North Carolina Associations of Professors of Middle Level Education are co-sponsoring Middle Level Teacher Education Symposium to be held in Charleston, SC, May 17-19, 2006. The symposium will include Action Labs on partnerships, accreditation, and publication/research; presentations by state and national leaders on impacting change in middle level education; and best practices presentations.

Roundtable presentations of best practices in higher education (undergraduate and graduate level) will be featured. You are invited to submit a teaching idea, project, course syllabus/outline, or other resource. Please complete the application online at <http://FreeOnlineSurveys.com/rendersurvey.asp?id=136465>. Proposals will be accepted through February 15, and applicants will be notified of the status of

their proposal by March 15, 2006. If you have any questions please contact Tracy Smith (smithtw@appstate.edu) or Alecia Jackson (jacksonay@appstate.edu) at Appalachian State University. For information about the symposium, contact David Virtue at the University of South Carolina virtue@gwm.sc.edu



POLICY SUBCOMMITTEE IS LOOKING FOR MEMBERS

The Policy Subcommittee is developing a process to guide the SIG in the development of policy briefs. The committee will meet at AERA in San Francisco and we invite you to become a member of this important group. Please contact Sue Thompson, sctompson@srintmail.com or Kathleen Roney, roneyk@uncw.edu to let them know you will join the committee.



Policy Subcommittee

AERA Middle Level
Education Research SIG
Draft

*By Sue C. Thompson
Vice –President*

In order to ensure that there is a process developed by members of the Middle Level Education Research SIG to adopt policies that are critical to the well being of middle level education, the members of the Executive Committee propose the following process for the development, selection, and adoption of policies.

A Policy Subcommittee will be appointed by the President from the general membership and chaired by the Vice-President of the MLER SIG. The Subcommittee's first responsibility would be to develop guidelines, possibly in the form of a

rubric, for the subcommittee to follow in order to determine what policy statements would be taken to the membership for acceptance or rejection. An example of a possible guideline might be the appropriateness and consistency of the policy with the mission of the AERA MLER SIG. Another guideline might be the length of the policy. The Policy Subcommittee would develop the format to be used in the development of a policy, i.e., relevancy of the problem/issue, review of the literature, significance of policy, and the use of APA 5th edition in the writing of the policy. The subcommittee would decide how the policy would be submitted, i.e., electronically or hard copy.

There would be two dates when the subcommittee must receive a policy from a member of the SIG in order to have it considered for adoption. One date would be two months before the semi-annual meeting held at the National Middle School Conference and the other date would be approximately two months before the semi-annual meeting held at AERA. This should give the subcommittee enough time to review the policy and determine whether the policy would be moved forward for the vote of the

membership and for the policy to be sent to the membership electronically in order to accept or reject the policy.

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2006 MLER Graduate Student Award

SEND IN YOUR NOMINATION FOR THE MLER GRADUATE STUDENT AWARD TODAY!!!

Nominate Masters, Specialists and Doctoral students who have recently completed theses and dissertations. Go to the MLER Web Site for specific information and application/nomination form at 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

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Send In Your News !

Please send any items you would like to have considered for publication in the Chronicle of Middle Level Education Research to Maureen Musser at mmusser@willamette.edu. The Newsletter is published three times annually – January, June, & October.

Visit our website
www.middlelevel.pdx.edu

AERA 2006 Annual Meeting
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San Francisco



