

MLER Middle Level Education Research Special Interest Group

The Chronicle of Middle Level Education Research

MLER

MIDDLE LEVEL EDUCATION RESEARCH
SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

Message from the President

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Leadership transitions in our SIG are easy. This is due, undoubtedly, to our Past-Presidents, Kathleen Roney, Kimberly Hartman, and Vincent Anfa who willingly support the incoming President. I am truly indebted to each one. Speaking of leadership and on behalf of the SIG, I want to thank Kathleen for her excellent service as President of the SIG from 2005-2007. I sincerely appreciate her warm and collaborative disposition as well as her unwavering leadership style. We will continue to tap her expertise as Past-President in the next biennium.

In March 2007, the SIG conducted an election for SIG

officers and a constitutional amendment. The SIG membership elected Penny Bishop as Vice-President, Steve Mertens as Secretary, and Kathleen Malu as Secretary. The membership also elected new association council members Dave Brown, Kezia McNeal, and Susan Trimble, plus Cary Gillenwater as the Graduate Student Member of Council. Additionally, the membership passed the constitutional amendment, which established an Executive Director position with associated duties for the SIG. (See Article XII of the MLER SIG Constitution and Bylaws [www.rmle.pdx] for details regarding the appointment and duties.) The vote of the membership confirmed the

Micki M. Caskey
Portland State University

importance and value of an Executive Director position.

Leadership continued to be on our minds in April 2007 when the SIG's Executive Council met in Chicago at AERA. At this meeting, the Executive Council appointed Vincent Anfa as the Executive Director of the MLER SIG. As most of you know, Vince served as President-Elect (2000-02),

(cont'd on Page 6)

RMLE Online Call for Manuscripts

Research in Middle Level Education Online (RMLE Online), an international peer-reviewed research journal of National Middle School Association (NMSA), publishes 10 high-quality articles each year. The journal prints quantitative and qualitative studies, case studies, action research studies, research syntheses, and reviews of research literature. NMSA's

Research Advisory Board serves in an advisory capacity to *RMLE Online*; the Middle Level Education Research SIG supports the publication.

Current and past issues of *RMLE Online* are available on the NMSA Website (www.nmsa.org) as well as indices such as Academic Search Premier, ERIC, and Professional Development

Collection. Guidelines for contributors, members of the editorial review board, and contact information for the editor are also available on the NMSA Website www.nmsa.org

For additional information, please contact Micki Caskey, Editor, *RMLE Online* by email (caskeym@pdx.edu) or telephone (503.725.4749).

RMLE Online
Research in Middle Level Education

Report from the Program Chair

Highlights from AERA's 2007 Meeting

The MLER SIG program at the 2007 Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association in Chicago was remarkable. Our MLER SIG program included five paper sessions (with four papers per session), two paper discussion sessions (with five papers per session), two symposia (with papers), and one interactive symposium regarding the National Middle Grades Research Project. Across the week, middle grades researchers presented more 30 high-quality papers, which resulted in an outstanding program. To further the SIG's collaborative work, the SIG officers conducted an executive council meeting and a business meeting. Our

program also benefited from a set of welcoming and knowledgeable session chairs and discussants. Paper session chairs included Peggy Burke, Annie Daniel, Francine Falk-Ross, Michele Sims, and Robert Vanderburg; paper discussion chairs included Jennifer Friend and Kimberly Hartman. Our discussants were Dick Lipka, Kathleen Malu, David Pugalee, Mary Roe, and Kusum Singh. In sum, the 2007 MLER SIG program was superb.

Looking Ahead: AERA's 2008 Annual Meeting

Starting a week earlier than usual, the 2008 Annual Meeting will be held Monday March 24th through Friday March 28th in New York City.



AERA 2008 in New York March 24-28, 2008

The proposal submission system is open and will remain open until August 2nd 2007. Please prepare and upload your proposals early to avoid any last minute complications. Remember—to maintain a strong program will require many proposals.

Please direct any questions regarding the AERA proposal submission system to Sue Thompson, our new Program Chair.

scthompson@SPRINTMAIL.COM

caskeym@pdx.edu

MLER SIG Officers

Micki M. Caskey,
President

Portland State University
caskeym@pdx.edu

Sue Thompson, President-Elect & Program Chair

University of Missouri-Kansas City
scthompson@sprintmail.com

Penny Bishop, Vice President & Newsletter Editor

The University of Vermont
penny.bishop@uvm.edu

Steve Mertens, Treasurer
CPRD, University of Illinois
mertens@uiuc.edu

Kathleen Malu, Secretary
William Paterson University
MaluK@wpunj.edu

Kathleen Roney, Past President
University of North Carolina Wilmington
roneyk@uncw.edu

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

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

Jennifer Friend, Newsletter Editor
University of Missouri-Kansas City
friendji@umkc.edu

SIG Association Council Members

P. Gayle Andrews (2007-09)
Dave F. Brown (2007-09)
Larry Daniel (2006-08)
Cary Gillenwater (2007-09)
Richard Lipka (2006-08)
Kezia McNeal (2007-09)
John Niska (2006-08)
Susan Trimble (2007-09)

NMSA RESEARCH ADVISORY BOARD POSTER SESSION: CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Penny Bishop, University of Vermont

The NMSA Research Advisory Board will sponsor the NMSA Research Poster Session at the 34th Annual NMSA Conference in Houston, TX, November 8-10, 2007. This poster session highlights research that addresses issues in middle grades education conducted by beginning and emergent researchers and scholars. We invite assistant professors and doctoral, specialist, and master's level researchers to submit proposals about their research in middle level

education. The Research Advisory Board selects the top ten proposals for presentation at the conference.

To submit a proposal, send the following by **June 30, 2007**.

Cover Page that includes:
Name
Institution
Title of research paper
Research topic and/or questions addressed by the study
Contact information (Address, Phone number, and Email address)
Abstract (maximum of 250 words)

Note: Research papers of accepted proposals are due September 1, 2007. Papers need to follow APA 5th edition style guidelines and range from 15 to 25 pages.

Please direct questions and submit completed proposal to:

Dr. Penny Bishop
University of Vermont
penny.bishop@uvm.edu

Notification of proposal acceptance: **August 1, 2007**

One Approach to the “Publish or Perish” Paradigm

Kathleen F. Malu, William Paterson University

We know that life in academe revolves, in part, around the phrase “Publish or Perish.” Depending on the institution, we need to be mindful not only of the number of publications we have, but also the prestige associated with the publication in which our manuscripts appear. The requirement to publish in the most prestigious of venues, fortunately, is usually found only in the most elite of institutions. However, the mantra of “publish or perish” generally follows us at all levels of higher education.

We are familiar with the most prestigious of publication venues because we read these in our dissertation and research work. We may be less familiar with equally reputable and more easily accessible venues at state and regional levels.

Here are a few strategies that I successfully use to locate

less well-known publishing venues. Go to the national association website that you are interested in and locate the affiliates and special interest group (SIG) links. Systematically browse through these lists and look for their publications. For example, at the National Middle School Association website under the member link we find the “dual membership” link. Browsing through the state links offering dual membership we can see that Indiana and Ohio have peer-reviewed journals, as does the European affiliate.

Further peer reviewed publications can be found using a similar strategy if we focus on content. In the area of literacy, for example, the International Reading Association has numerous state and regional affiliates and SIGs. An exploration of these websites reveals numerous state, regional and

SIG publications. Similarly, the mathematics, social studies, and English professional organizations have a variety of possibilities as well.

When I first developed this strategy there was little internet access so I wrote letters to the state level organization presidents inquiring whether they had publications and if they did I requested a sample copy. I usually received a back issue and was always encouraged to submit a manuscript. Often the state publications did not publish formally written research reports so I had to modify the voice of my writing to more closely match the publication style. This activity helped me develop multiple writing voices and gave me the psychological boost I needed to escape from the numerous depressing rejection letters I received from the more

competitive) publication venues.

In the end, finding our way through the “publish or perish” experience of academe is a personal, unique experience. We each must carve out our own path ... if you find parts of my approach useful, I encourage you to take them, shape them, modify them, and make them your own ... and then, please, won't you share them here so we can all learn a bit more about this sometimes exhilarating, sometimes frustrating, and always challenging, aspect of academe!

MaluK@wpunj.edu

Call for Submissions: Middle Grades Research Journal

Middle School Mathematics: Current Issues in Student Learning and Teacher Preparation

Mary Margaret Capraro
Texas A & M University

Various factors, among them federal legislation, the NCTM's release of the Curriculum Focus Points, and the National Research Council's book *Evaluating*

Curricular Effectiveness, have influenced the study of middle school mathematics, both from the perspective of research and teacher preparation.

Middle Grades Research Journal is interested in manuscript submissions that address: **Middle School Mathematics: Current Issues in Student Learning and Teacher Preparation.**

Topics of the manuscripts that address middle school

issues can include but are not limited to:

- Mathematical knowledge for teaching mathematics
- Using video of classroom practice as a tool to improve teaching
- Effective models of professional development
- Balance between content and pedagogy preparation for preservice teachers
- Assessing student performance mathematics
- Quality and depth of mathematics learning
- High expectations and high-stakes testing

—Nature and role of algebra at the middle grades

—Mathematics curriculum materials for supporting learning

—Technology as a tool for effectively working with middle grades students

Deadline for manuscripts to be considered for publication in this special issue is December 15, 2007. Send one hard copy and one electronic copy. Manuscripts should be submitted to:

Mary Margaret Capraro
Texas A & M University
4232 TAMU Harrington
College Station, TX 77843-4232
Address inquiries to
mmcapraro@tamu.edu

Recommended Books: Literacy Development

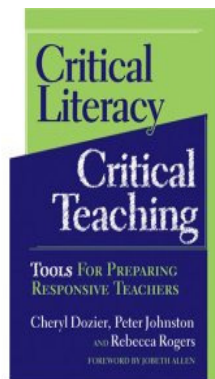
Francine Falk-Ross, Northern Illinois University

In my experiences working with teachers in middle grade content area classrooms, I have found that one of the challenges to learning and achievement has been the reading confusions that occur in class-based work and homework assignments. Students have difficulty comprehending text and connecting to the importance of the material, and teachers have difficulty knowing how to move the students through these obstacles. Two texts that I have used to help teachers learn to help students with literacy development include these readings:

Dozier, C., Johnston, P. & Rogers, R. (2006). *Critical literacy, critical teaching: Tools for preparing responsive teachers*. NY: Teachers College Press.

This text is geared to literacy teachers but is clearly appropriate for all content area middle level instructors and teacher educators. The text focuses on describing the centrality of language in teaching and learning, and the authors stress the importance of transforming interactional discourse in the classroom.

The tools they describe are approaches to developing a self-extending system for teaching and learning to provide flexible and sustained use of strategies for literacy development and applications. Using the case method to provide examples and models of transforming teaching through critical thinking and language, the authors provide information related to choices in reading, reading levels, and family and community involvement in learning activities. The emphases on connectiveness, interaction, and reflection is highly informative for middle grade teachers working with a diverse population of young adolescents in schools today. The strong research base upon which the authors develop their approach and the clear classroom-based examples that contextualize the new knowledge makes for powerful reading by middle level educators and teacher educators.



Freedman, L., & Johnson, H. (2004). *Inquiry, literacy, and learning in the middle grades*. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers.

This text highlights inquiry, literacy, and learning connections for teachers, and it aligns the instructional approaches suggested by the authors with research and standards-based support. By making the use of an inquiry cycle of learning central to all content area activities with literacy development integrated into all aspects of assessment and instruction, the text provides a strong set of models for teachers to replicate in their own classrooms. The importance of language and self-reflection are highlighted as threads woven into each lesson, consistent with strong approaches to learning for young adolescents. Projects, writing frames, and research resources are offered in the last chapters for teachers and are informative to teacher educators, as well.

Francine Falk-Ross, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Northern Illinois University
Department of Literacy
Education
(Voice mail) 815-753-8485
(Email) ffalkross@niu.edu



Save the Date!

**34th Annual
National Middle
School Association
Conference**

**November 8-10, 2007
Houston, Texas**

[http://www.nmsa.org/
annual/
AbouttheConference/
tabid/1331/Default.aspx](http://www.nmsa.org/annual/AbouttheConference/tabid/1331/Default.aspx)

<http://www.nmsa.org/>



**NMSA 2007
On-line Registration
Recommended by
September 30, 2007**

Advance Fees:
\$195 NMSA Member
\$260 Non-Member
\$70 College Student

Middle School Journal—Call for Manuscripts

Middle School Journal is interested in manuscript submissions that address how the precepts of *This We Believe* are being addressed in your middle school. In addition to topics related to the 14 characteristics noted in *This We Believe* (2003), we encourage manuscripts dealing with the following issues:

- Parental involvement
- Literacy across the curriculum

- Assessing student performance
- Putting young adolescents ahead of tests
- Highly qualified middle grades teachers
- Advocating for young adolescents
- Health and wellness
- Integrating technology
- Developmentally responsibly addressing standards

- Socially equitable schools

Manuscripts should be submitted to:

Cheri Howman,
Assistant Editor
 National Middle School Association
 4151 Executive Parkway,
 Suite 300
 Westerville, OH 43081
 Address inquiries to Cheri Howman at howmanc@nmsa.org.



Deadline for Submissions:
September 1, 2007

<http://www.nmsa.org/>

Book Now Available

Middle Level Education Research Annual
 Edited by Micki Caskey

The 2007 Middle Level Research Annual is a selection of articles and summaries published in 2006 and 2007 by NMSA. It includes research articles from NMSA's refereed journals—*Research in Middle Level Education Online* and *Middle School Journal*—as well as peer-reviewed research summaries. The overarching purpose of the research annual is to disseminate a set of high-quality educational research reports for those interested in young adolescents.

The theme of this year's research annual is young adolescent learners. Topics include what research reveals about young adolescents' developmental characteristics, health, well-being, and self-esteem; the transitions they experience; and ways to engage them as learners.

The book is available through the NMSA online store:

<http://www.nmsa.org/store/ProductDetails/tabid/1084/CategoryID/7/List/0/Level/a/ProductID/267/Default.aspx?SortField=ProductName%2cProductname>

The ISBN number is:
 978-1-56090-208-9.



Source: NMSA Store

Call for Submissions

Middle Grades Research Journal
 Guest Editor: Jennifer Friend

English Language Learners: Policies and Practices in the Middle Grades

A special theme issue of the *Middle Grades Research Journal* will include manuscripts that examine educational issues related to young adolescents in English language learner (ELL) programs.

According to the 2000 Census, nearly 18% of the United States population spoke a language other than English in the home. Projections include an increase to 40% by 2030. This *MGRJ* issue is intended to share empirical research findings and to present theoretical frameworks relative to the policies and practices associated with ELL students in middle-level schools.

Manuscripts must be submitted by **November 30, 2007**, to be considered for this issue. Authors should include the following:
 —Abstract of no more than 250 words
 —Manuscript formatted according to APA, 5th Ed.; 20-30 pages in length
 —Cover page with authors' affiliation and contact information; no identifying author information on other pages of the manuscript (for blind review)

Please send one hard copy and one electronic copy in Microsoft Word format as an e-mail attachment to:
 Jennifer Friend, Ph.D.
 University of Missouri—
 Kansas City
 328 Education Bldg.
 5100 Rockhill Rd.
 Kansas City, MO 64110
friendji@umkc.edu

Message from the President (cont'd)

President (2002-04), and Past-President (2004-07). His long-standing tenure in the SIG and dedication to the SIG made him our obvious choice for Executive Director. In this position, Vince will serve as the SIG's representative to the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform and serve as a liaison to the Department of Education.

We had a great set of sessions at the 2007 Annual Meeting of AERA in Chicago. (See the Program Chair Report in this newsletter). Thanks to all of you who submitted proposals, presented research, coordinated sessions as chairs or discussants, and attended the sessions. Your efforts

resulted in a most successful program to date.

Also at the 2007 Annual Meeting of AERA, the steering committee of the National Middle Grades Research Project presented an interactive symposium regarding the development of a national research project. To learn more about this exciting new research endeavor, please go to the National Middle Grades Research Project section of the MLER SIG Website (www.rmlc.pdx.edu). The steering committee plans to meet again this summer to sustain momentum on this project. Stay tuned.

Speaking of staying tuned...

please remember to visit the website regularly and communicate via the SIG listserv. Using the website, you can gather information about SIG events at the November 2007 NMSA Conference in Houston, TX and the 2008 AERA Annual Meeting in New York City. You can also find calls for papers and presentations, which may meet your research outlet needs. Together, website and listserv are most helpful during the summer.

I hope you have a wonderful summer and discover some of Gershwin's sentiment... "Summertime, an' the livin' is easy..."

Micki M. Caskey



***AERA 2008—New York
March 24—28***

Program Theme:

***Research on Schools,
Neighborhoods, and
Communities:
Toward Civic
Responsibility***

Call for Proposals:

Deadline August 2, 2007

<http://www.aera.net/Default.aspx?id=2966>

Business Meeting Minutes

Notes submitted by Kathleen Malu, Secretary

Business Meeting Held at

**AERA ANNUAL
CONFERENCE
Chicago, IL**

**Wednesday 11 April 2007
6:15-7:45 PM
Marriott, Wisconsin,
Sixth Floor**

1. Welcome / Introduction of Officers (Kathleen Roney)

Micki Caskey, President Elect and Program Chair
Sue C. Thompson, Vice President
Nancy Mizelle, Secretary (not present)
Joan Lindgren, Treasurer (not present)
Vince Anfara, Past President
Kim Hartman, Past President

Introduction of Council Members:
P. Gayle Andrews, Larry Daniel, Richard Lipka, John Niska, Elizabeth Pate, Kathleen Brinegar (graduate student member)

2. Reports

- **AERA 2007 Program (Micki Caskey)**
53 proposals were submitted. There were 11 sessions.
- **Financial (Steve Mertens)**
Current balance is \$3,192 and includes 100 membership renewals. Reimbursements outstanding include expenses for SIG consumables.

- **Web (Micki Caskey)**
Portland State University continues to host the website and updates are made regularly. Any announcements should be sent to Micki Caskey.
- **Newsletter (Jennifer Friend)**
This newsletter continues to be published three times per year. The Co-editors solicit book reviews, calls for papers and manuscripts. Deadline for the June issue is May 15.
- **History (Kathy Roney for Ron Williamson)**

- Kathy will ask Ron to update the history of the SIG.
- **Policy Briefs (Kim Hartman)**
The SIG has been unsuccessful in sponsoring/writing policy briefs. Kim Hartman, John Niska and Dick Lipka will investigate the idea and report back to the Officers at the November meeting. Meantime, Officers and Councilors agreed to take this issue off the agenda.
- **Membership (Vince Anfara)**

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AERA 2007 Paper Sessions: Abstracts

Examinations of the World of Young Adolescents

A Longitudinal Study of Young Adolescents' Perceptions of Middle Grades Instruction

Audra Parker; Stacey Neuharth-Pritchett

Of the many dramatic changes that young adolescents experience during their middle school years, their cognitive development is perhaps the most under-served. The middle school literature consistently reports that structural reforms supporting the affective needs of young adolescents are implemented far more readily than instructional reforms needed to address young adolescents' increasingly complex cognitive abilities. The current research literature lacks investigations of young adolescents' perceptions of instruction during the middle grades—especially in the context of high-stakes testing reforms such as No Child Left Behind. The purpose of this study is to investigate students' perceptions of classroom instruction prior to and during their middle school experiences. By examining young adolescents' perceptions of instruction at various data points, middle school educators gain valuable insight into the current state of instructional reforms and into how students' perceptions of classroom instruction may change across the middle grades years.

Identity in the Middle: A Longitudinal Investigation of Young Adolescents' Self-Concept across the Middle Grades

Audra Parker; Stacey Neuharth-Pritchett

The middle grades years represent a particularly challenging time for young adolescents: the transition to middle school, the onset of adolescence, and rapid physical and emotional development are among a host of changes middle grades students face. It is not surprising that young adolescents' self-concept can vary greatly throughout this tumultuous time period. The purpose of this study is to investigate young adolescents'

self-concept prior to and during their middle school experience. By examining psychological outcomes such as self-concept, this study will enhance the current understanding of how middle school structural reforms, transition programs, and teacher practices impact young adolescents' middle school experiences.

Having Our Say: Middle Grade Students' Perspectives on School, Technologies, and Academic Engagement

Hiller Spires; Kimberly Turner; Janet Johnson

There is growing consensus among policy groups that if current generations of students are to be competitive in the twenty-first century, our education system must be transformed to address the needs of a connected global economy. Acknowledging that today's students learn in different ways than those of previous generations, and much of the change is due to advancements in information technology, the purpose of this study was to assess 4000 middle school student's perspectives about what they need to be engaged and achieve in school settings. The findings are viewed within the context of defining middle schools within the changing global economy and the new demands this is placing on our educational system.

Social Functioning and Depression of Young Adolescents Who Have Been Retained

Angela Fiske; Stacey Neuharth-Pritchett

The study examines grade retention, depression, and social functioning of young adolescents. The 80 adolescents were divided into three groups: those who had been retained in grade, those who had not been retained but were low-performing, and an on-grade level control. Retained students differed from the other two groups, reporting higher levels of depression in middle school. No differences were found on social

functioning. Retained students reported greater social functioning concerns during 7th grade and were more depressed than their typically developing peers. Social functioning plays a crucial role in young adolescents' schooling and their perceptions of themselves. Considering the use of retention to address academic failure, research exploring the psychological outcomes of the practice is needed.

Excellence in Middle Grades Teacher Education

Negotiating Differences: Early Preservice Field Experiences in a Diverse Middle School

Jane Arrington; Penny Howell

A major goal of the multicultural focus of many teacher education programs is to better prepare a mostly White and female teaching force to work effectively with students from racial/cultural backgrounds different than their own. Little research has been conducted that looks at general educational pedagogical coursework being taught in a diverse middle level setting and how that can shape preservice teachers' beliefs and attitudes about teaching diverse populations. The purpose of this study was to explore perceived changes in preservice teachers' attitudes and beliefs about issues of race, class, and ethnicity after completing two general professional courses that were taught in a diverse middle school in small mid-western city.

Middle Level Teacher Education: Conceptualizing Developmentally Responsive Teaching Practices in Early Field Experiences

Penny Howell

The purpose of this descriptive qualitative study was to analyze Child Study Research Projects completed by first-semester, middle level preservice teachers for connections between the

(continued on Page 8)

AERA 2007 Paper Sessions: Abstracts (Cont'd)

theoretical underpinnings of Middle Level Education, early adolescent development and Middle School curricula and how these connections are perceived to effect their understanding of developmentally responsive teaching in the middle school. The findings suggest that the preservice students made explicit connections to the need for developmentally responsive teaching. They reported the significance of being able to see early adolescent behavior in relation to the context of the middle school environment. Additionally, the students reported that they were able to gather "real evidence" that theory and practice are linked and vital to the success of middle level teachers.

Personal and General Teaching Efficacy among Alternatively Licensed Middle Level Teachers
Kimberly Hartman

Fifty participants enrolled in a university program that prepares alternatively licensed middle level teachers participated in this study which investigated how middle level teachers in urban, suburban, and rural schools communicated perceptions of efficacy. Data collection included using the Woolfolk and Hoy Teacher Efficacy Scale, a questionnaire, and structured interviews. Data suggest that (a) subject matter taught did not impact teachers' personal or general teaching efficacy, (b) length of time teaching impacted teachers' personal and general teaching efficacy, (c) location (urban, rural, or suburban impacted teachers' personal and general teaching efficacy, and (d) that prior job experience affected teachers' personal and general teaching efficacy.

Three Studies of Middle School Mathematics: Learnings from the Field
Deborah Jolly; Sheila Cassidy

The studies presented during this session investigated middle school mathematics teachers' preferences related to pedagogi-

cal content and mathematics content before and after participating in online professional development. The studies also examined the impact of both online and face-to-face professional development formats on middle school mathematics teachers' content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge, as well as any increases in achievement for middle school students. Independent sample t-tests were used to analyze the resulting data for any statistically significant differences. The results revealed a statistically significant difference regarding preferences to algebraic thinking ($p = .007$) and data analysis ($p = .028$) between the group using online professional development and the one using a face-to-face interaction. There was also a statistically significant difference between the two groups regarding preferences towards effective teaching strategies ($p = .005$). The results also revealed a statistically significant difference between the middle school teachers who participated in either online or face-to-face professional development in the areas of content and pedagogical knowledge for middle school mathematics teachers and achievement level for middle school students.

Exemplary Curricula and Practice in Middle Grades Education

Making Writing Visible: Using a Cognitive Model to Analyze Teacher Candidates Written Descriptions to Mathematical Tasks
David Pugalee; Patricia Douville

This study focused on the written descriptions to problem solving by middle grades teacher candidates enrolled in a methods course making writing an explicit component. This current study used a cognitive model to analyze the candidates' writing consisting of four components: domain knowledge, heuristic strategies, control strategies, and learning strategies. Qualitative methods were used to classify text chunks as

belong to one of the categories. Findings indicate that the writing showed strong content knowledge characterized by an emphasis on stating mathematics concepts and ideas, justifying processes and actions, and verification of outcomes. Heuristic strategies were both similar and varied across problems. Writing showed the presence of control strategies as evidenced through a metacognitive framework. Examples and illustrations will be used to highlight findings.

New Literacies for New Middle School Teachers: An Ongoing Case Study
William Kist

Much has been written about reconceptualizing the definition of "literacy" for middle school students as forms of communication continue to develop and change and as educators examine more of the sociocultural implications of these new literacies for adolescents. This session will, rather, focus on the literacies of some teachers, in particular some new middle school teachers as they begin to "unpack levels of texts" in their classrooms and critically examine discourses at the beginnings of their careers. The session will describe the transformation of a traditional literacy methods course for pre-service teachers to include more "new" literacies. From a pool of former students in this course, formed over a five-year period, selected former students are documenting their own evolutions as active readers and creators of nonprint texts as some create middle school classrooms that embrace new literacies. Examples of student assignments and rubrics will be included.

Literacy Motivation and School/Non-School Literacies among Students Enrolled in a Middle School ESOL Program
Elizabeth Sturtevant; Grace Kim; Constanza Loriz

This study explored literacy motivation and school/non-school literacies among
(Continued on Page 9)

AERA 2007 Paper Sessions: Abstracts (Cont'd)

45 middle school learners enrolled in an ESOL program. The research question was: What are characteristics of literacy motivation and uses of literacy in and out of school for diverse middle school learners learning English as a new language? All students completed the Motivation to Read Profile (adapted); 8 purposively selected students participated in 30-40 minute interviews. Students varied greatly in their motivational profiles, ranging from strongly interested in reading to strongly disinterested. Interviewed students described numerous ways that they used literacy with their families or in the community.

Making Middle Grades Work through Arts Integration
Howard Coleman

This paper reports the results of a \$1.5 million dollar grant project which established an interdisciplinary arts program in an urban middle school. The arts integration project supported teachers, parents, and artists in helping middle school students achieve high learning standards and improve their behaviors. The project followed the recommendations of the National Middle School Association by creating a challenging and exploratory curriculum. The project provided a variety of opportunities for parents to have meaningful roles in school governance and in student learning. The arts integration program improved student achievement, student behaviors, student attendance, and home/school relations.

Explorations of Middle School Issues

Teacher Affiliation, Academic Emphasis, and Collegial Leadership: Links to Student Achievement in Middle Schools
Kathleen Roney; Howard Coleman

The theme of this year's conference, "The World of Educational Quality," encourages those of us involved in middle level research to ask hard

questions about the relationship of student achievement and the quality of the middle school organization itself. As stated by Hoy, Sabo and Barnes, "Healthy middle schools have higher levels of student achievement in reading, mathematics, and writing" (1996, p.36). Following a mixed methods design, the purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between student achievement in reading and the organizational health of middle schools.

Parents' Relationships and Engagement: Effects on Students' School Engagement and Performance
Yun Mo; Kusum Singh

This study focused on parents' relationships and engagement in their children's lives and its effects on the students' school engagement and school performance. The study used the Wave I & II data from National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health). The data on 7th and 8th grade students' school and family experiences were analyzed using regression models. The study examined the effect of parental relationships and engagement on students' cognitive, emotional and behavioral engagement in school and subsequently on school performance. The results confirmed the importance and significance of parents' engagement in middle school students' school engagement and performance. The study has implications for practices and supports school structures that would foster parents' continued interest and engagement in their children's education.

Differences in Peer and Parent Encouragement and Mathematics Achievement
Kimberly Filer, Mido Chang

The purpose of the study was to examine the effects of peer and parent encouragement/discouragement to take algebra on mathematics achievement.

The differential effects of racial groups and peer and parent effects on achievement were also investigated. Parents' expectations and involvement have been shown to have significant effects on student achievement; however, research examining the effects of peer interactions is limited. Results showed a significant effect of peer encouragement and parent encouragement on mathematics achievement. The interaction effects of race and peer/parental encouragement were significant. This research extends the body of work on peer influences to consider its impacts on mathematics achievement and how it affects racial groups differently.

Adolescents' Perceptions of Deviance When Using Technology
Annie Daniel

This study explored middle and high school students' perceptions of deviant behavior when using the computer and the Internet. Based on the findings, students do not perceive most of their behaviors on the Internet and computers as deviant, but they did conclude that their peers are engaging in technology deviance. Moreover, the Peer Behavior Score mean is higher than the Students' Behavior Score mean. Therefore, students do not perceive their own behaviors as deviant as their peers'. There is a limited amount of research to determine the types of deviant behavior students' use on the Internet and with computers, the opportunity to perform deviant acts increases with the integration of technology in education and students' personal use of technology.

Social Equity in Middle Grades Education

CRIS-Cross: Culturally Relevant Interdisciplinary Instructional Strategies that Reach Across Content Barriers
Kezia McNeal

(Continued on Page 10)

AERA 2007 Paper Sessions: Abstracts (Cont'd)

Due to the increasing cultural diversity of the U.S. student population and increasing focus on national mandates, the importance of an interdisciplinary approach in synchronization with a multicultural stance at the middle education level is crucial because of the specific cognitive and physiological developmental needs of middle level students. This qualitative project examines the acquisition and implementation of culturally relevant interdisciplinary instructional strategies (CRIIS) of nine middle level teachers. The teachers, from various disciplines, at a metropolitan, culturally diverse school, participated in a five-week professional learning course. The teachers were formally introduced to culturally responsive pedagogical principles (Irvine & Armento, 2001) and to the five dimensions of multicultural education (Banks & Banks, 2004). Results will include specific reactions and instructional adjustments of the teachers.

Educating At-Risk Urban African American Children: The Effects of School Climate on Motivation and Academic Achievement

L. Mickey Fenzel, Lindsey O'Brennan

Despite a growing body of literature documenting the effects of school-level factors on academic achievement, few studies have examined how school climate affects minority students. The present study examines a mediator model of the school climate and motivational processes that affect academic engagement and achievement among 282 urban African American middle school students considered at risk. Results provide support for the mediator model that shows that self-perceptions of intrinsic motivation and teacher reports of student academic engagement mediate the relation of student perceptions of school as enjoyable and fair to GPA. Other factors related to peer relationships and support from teachers and administrators are related to intrinsic motivation

perceptions and academic engagement but not to GPA.

African American Males Transition to Middle School

Patricia Larke

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to examine four variables that impact African American male students' perceptions of their transition from elementary school to middle school. A 52-item questionnaire was administered to 149 African American middle school males to determine their perception of the social, emotional, physical, and academic aspects impact on their transition from elementary school to middle school. This study records the voices of African American males from the use of a questionnaire, a free-response question, and interviews of ten students (two from each school).

Supports and Barriers to Resilience: A Case Study of a Low SES Middle School Student

Heather Sheridan-Thomas

Students from low SES backgrounds may face challenges to academic success and smooth transition from elementary to middle school. This qualitative case study used resilience theory and developmental assets as a lens for analyzing the supports and barriers to the school success of a low SES white girl. In depth data was collected over 3 years (5th to 7th grade). Results suggest that parental, school and community supports can promote resilience and school success, but that school factors can also serve as barriers to resilience. Implications for the intentional building of resilience in schools and communities will be discussed.

PAPER DISCUSSIONS

Investigations of Middle Grades Teachers and Students

Professional Growth toward Adaptive Expertise: Case Studies in Middle Level Teacher Development

David Strahan; Russell Binkely

This study examined the experiences of four middle level social studies teachers as they worked with literacy coaches and university partners to enhance reading and writing across the curriculum. Analysis of observations, interviews, and archival documents showed that participants made sense of literacy initiatives through formal and informal conversations. Professional growth accelerated with discussions of instructional practices and student performance, guided by professional readings and available assessments of student achievement. Dialogue sessions grew more complex and sources of information more comprehensive. While general patterns characterized the professional development of all four participants, growth occurred in different ways based on the nature of their relationships with coaches and colleagues, suggesting possibilities for differentiating professional development more productively.

A Matter of Semantics: Supporting Teachers' Language and Vocabulary Instruction for Diverse Middle Level Students

Francine Falk-Ross

The research study addresses developing a language- and vocabulary-building approach to support reading activities for marginalized students in a school district with a population that is ~90% Hispanic and bilingual. Reading and content area teachers are supported in their development of language/literacy knowledge and strategy suggestions for both remedial and classroom-based reading programs. Marginalized middle level students include classroom members who have language differences and language difficulties.

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AERA 2007 Paper Sessions: Abstracts (Cont'd)

Using results of students' formal reading achievement testing, teachers' informal focus group meetings, and field notes, challenges and successes are documented related to instructional interventions. The results of the study provide important information about, and case studies of, trends in reading programs at the middle level.

Discourse to Promote Understanding in Middle Grades Mathematics Classes
Mary Truxaw, Thomas DeFranco

This paper reports on an investigation of discursive practices of seven middle grades mathematics teachers. Characteristics and patterns of talk and verbal assessment were found to be associated with discourse on a continuum from univocal (conveying meaning) to dialogic (dialogue to generate new meaning). For example, inert assessment (guiding instruction by keeping the flow and function relatively constant) was more frequently associated with univocal discourse. Generative assessment (mediating discourse to promote students' active monitoring and regulation of thinking) was more frequently associated with dialogic discourse. However, there was evidence to suggest that rather than either univocal or dialogic discourse being exclusively productive, that a strategic mix of both was used to promote mathematical understanding of students.

Relationships among Elementary School Students' Epistemological Beliefs, Metacognitive Skills and Constructivist Learning Environment Perceptions
Mustafa Topcu; Ozgul Yilmaz-Tuzun

This is a cross sectional study which aimed to explore relationships among the elementary school students' epistemological beliefs, metacognitive skills, and constructivist classroom environment perceptions. The surveys were administered to 315 students enrolled in fourth and fifth grades and 626 students

enrolled in sixth, seventh, and eighth grades of seven elementary schools. Explanatory factor analysis results revealed four factors, which are innate ability, quick learning, simple knowledge, and certain knowledge for the 4th and 5th grades and 6th to 8th grade students. Multiple regression analysis results explaining relationships among elementary school students' epistemological beliefs, metacognitive skills and constructivist learning environment for 4th and 5th, and 6th to 8th grade students were investigated in this study.

"America is Confusing": The Schooling Experiences Of Young Adolescent Immigrant and Refugee Students in One Small Town
Kathleen Brinegar

As the number of immigrants and refugees continues to grow in the US, the linguistic and cultural diversity that comprises the classroom will continue to increase. Given the need for resources and specific attention to linguistic and cultural strategies for these particular populations, the focus of this yearlong ethnographic study was to examine the schooling experiences of young adolescent immigrant and refugee students in a small town community located in a rural state. Utilizing ethnographic methods including participant observation, interviews, and document analysis, the schooling culture in which these students found themselves and how they each fit, or did not fit, within that culture was examined. The implications for researchers and educators center on whether the middle level practices recommended in the current research succeeded in creating a climate of care for the students in the study and what missing elements needed to be in place for them.

Perspectives and Possibilities in Middle Grades Education

The 7th Grade Immersion Program: Adventure Education to Enhance Character Education
Ben Paul Dyson; Allen Seed; Bethany Stover; Molly Pickering; Lisa Willis

During middle school years students can develop healthy or unhealthy habits that can last a lifetime. This study evaluated the piloting of an innovative seventh grade program that incorporated Adventure Education, Cooperative Learning, and Character Education (Positive Behavior Intervention System, and Sean Covey's The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens). Data collection included: interviews with students, teachers, and administrators; field observations; researcher journals; document analysis; and a Student Feedback Form. Students' and teachers' comments supported the program. Several recommendations emerged from the findings of this study. It appears that partnerships; like the one formed by an urban school district, a university, and a nonprofit organization, can design and implement programs that work to improve the lives of middle school students.

Empowerment and Understanding through Service-Learning: An Inner City Professional Development School Leaves neither Children nor Preservice Teachers Behind
Virginia Jagla

Attendees will come away from the presentation with a clear understanding of the possibilities of service-learning in middle grades in an inner city school. Attendees will further learn how this powerful pedagogy of service-learning can enhance students' comprehension in all curricular areas at the middle level. There will be a clear perception of the use of a professional development school in a large urban inner city to educate pre-service teachers for teaching in similar settings.

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AERA 2007 Paper Sessions: Abstracts (Cont'd)

The intention of service-learning is to experience democracy in action. Adolescents learn through the experiences themselves as well as reflection on the process. The powerful pedagogy of service-learning empowers those who participate.

Middle School Students and Their Teachers on the Same Page When It Comes to Effective Practices

Mark Storz

Through the use of interviews the perspectives of almost 300 urban middle school students' at five different schools in a midwestern metropolitan area were examined on their educational experiences, particularly on the type of teachers and pedagogical practices that they perceived to be most beneficial to their achievement and success in school. At two of the schools teachers that the students identified as those they perceived as most effective - those who cared for them and those in whose classrooms they learned the most - were also interviewed. Students and teachers agree that a strong curriculum, interpersonal relations, and teachers knowing their students well are all important in creating a learning environment conducive to the success of young urban adolescents.

What's the Bottom Line? Middle School Single-sex Classes and Student Achievement

Frances Spielhagen

The potential of single-sex class arrangements to increase student achievement dominates the discussion among educators striving to address declines in academic performance, especially in the middle school years which involve tremendous social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development. Recent research suggests that such arrangements work for some students, boys and girls, in some academic areas. The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of middle school single-sex classes through quantitative analysis of standardized test scores. Longitudinal follow-up of a

cohort (N=600) of students over three years suggests that single-sex classes work for some students in some classes.

Multiple Perspectives on the Teaching of Writing From Middle Level Teachers, Students and University Faculty

Kathleen Malu; Salika Lawrence

This qualitative study explored the research question: What was the nature of the teaching and learning of writing at one large urban middle school? Participants included language arts teachers, 750 seventh graders, and three faculty members from a local university who conducted professional development workshops on writing. A wide variety of data sources were used including teacher questionnaires; field notes and workshop plans; participant writing, and state writing test scores. Data analysis used the constant comparative method and results revealed that the teacher participants changed their approaches to teaching writing. Faculty learned to address teacher "resisters" and teachers and faculty engaged in a wide variety of emotions including anger and frustration regarding the state standardized writing test.

SYMPOSIA

Middle Grades and Middle Schools That Work: Research-Based Lessons from Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Trials: Stephan Brand et al.

Numerous studies of students' academic performance and adjustment suggest that, in many schools, the middle grade years constitute a potentially hazardous transition period for students. Students who previously had succeeded academically at the elementary level may show sharp declines in their academic performance, motivation, aspirations, and expectations. Similarly, during the middle school years, problems with classroom behavioral adjustment and health risk behaviors may emerge. Students may begin to experiment with, or use regularly, tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs. High-performing middle schools can play a critical role in sustaining

students' academic performance and behavioral adaptation. The symposium focuses on the lessons learned about the creation and maintenance of such high performing schools.

The Impact of Middle Grade Structures, Organizations, and Practices on Student Outcomes: Moving Toward a Multivariate/Multi-Level Model

Steven Mertens et al.

This symposium will present the results from the development and testing of a multivariate/multi-level model designed to examine and empirically test the impact of the "middle school concept" (e.g., interdisciplinary teaming, school contextual factors, team and classroom practices, positive school climate) on a variety of student outcomes including learning and achievement. Utilizing structural equation modeling and a large-scale sample, we will examine how these components are inter-related and assess their individual and combined impact on student outcomes. This symposium will consist of four papers that describe and discuss the varying aspects of our multivariate model development and testing including methodological issues in determining levels of teaming implementation, validation of key constructs in the model, and the results of our structural equation modeling including the components in the model.

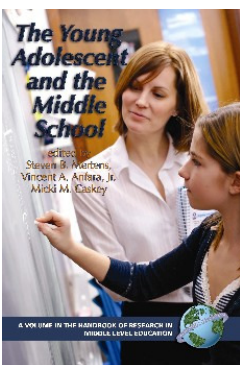
National Middle Grades Research Project: Kathleen Roney et al.

The intent of this interactive symposium is to present Phase One in the development of a national middle level research project. Panelists will discuss the need for such a project, prior efforts for similar types of projects, decisions made during Phase One, and how such a project could be implemented. Those attending will participate in discussion of next steps in the development of such a project. Small-group interaction strategies (e.g., Open-Forum Discussions; Consensus Building; Chalk Talk) will be used during this session.

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 Jennifer Friend at friendji@umkc.edu.

The Newsletter is published three times annually – January, June, & October.



We're on the Web!
<http://www.rmle.pdx.edu>



The purpose of the MLER SIG is to improve, promote, and disseminate educational research reflecting early adolescence and middle level education.

Membership in the MLER-SIG connects AERA members who are committed to research issues related to young adolescents. SIG members exchange information and ideas through Annual Meeting presentations, newsletters, and informal gatherings.

Membership cost is \$10/year. The MLER-SIG (#88) is listed on the third page of the AERA Membership Application Form.

The Young Adolescent and the Middle School

Edited by Steven B. Mertens, Vincent A. Anfara, Jr., and Micki M. Caskey
Published by Information Age.

Ordering Information:
Information Age
<http://www.infoagepub.com>

Table of Contents:
<http://www.rmle.pdx.edu/handbook6.htm>

Business Meeting Minutes (cont'd)

There are 167 current members and 128 lapsed members. Lapsed members were contacted. Typical reasons given for the lapses included retirement, lack of funds, and disinterest in middle school issues. The membership was asked to consider more avenues to recruit members to the SIG.

- **Handbook (Vince Anfara)**
The Handbook series was approved in 2000 and just released the 6th volume.
- **Graduate Student Award (Penny Bishop)**
There was a strong pool of candidates. The award was given to Emily Nelson, a master's degree candidate from New Zealand, for her work on visual/image-based research with Maori middle level students.

3. National Middle Level Research Project (Kathy Roney)

Members are encouraged to become involved in this project. Participation in the Interactive Symposium was encouraged. Further information will be available through the SIG's website.

4. Middle Grades Journal (Larry Daniel)

AERA policy does not permit SIGs or Divisions to sponsor journals. Larry Daniel and Vince Anfara will contact AERA leadership to discuss the SIG's sponsorship of the *Middle Grades Research Journal*, Dr. David Hough editor.

5. Election Results (Kathy Roney) Officers:

Micki Caskey, President
Sue C. Thompson, President Elect and Program Chair

Penny Bishop, Vice President
Kathleen F. Malu, Secretary
Steve Mertens, Treasurer
Kathleen Roney, Past President

Council Members:

P. Gayle Andrews, newly elected
Dave F. Brown, newly elected
Cary Gillenwater, newly elected
Graduate Student representative
Kezia McNeal, newly elected
Susan Trimble, newly elected

6. Presentations (Kathy Roney & Micki Caskey)

7. Other Business

It was suggested that the SIG dues be increased. A justification, outlining the reasons for this proposed increase, is to be distributed to the members shortly.