

MLER Middle Level Education Research Special Interest Group

The Chronicle of Middle Level Education Research



Micki M. Caskey
Portland State University

Message from the President

Micki M. Caskey

As autumn bestows its rich colors and cool temperatures across many of our campuses, I send you warm wishes for a positive and meaningful academic year. It is my sincere hope that your days are filled with thoughtful interactions with students, intellectual exchanges with colleagues, and engaging conversations with community members. Though our calendars and email inboxes may be overflowing, our work offers opportunities and rewards.

One of the most engaging opportunities for educators is

the prospect of gathering at conferences.

In just a few short weeks, many educators will come together at the National Middle School Association's (NMSA) 35th Annual Conference and Exhibit in Denver, Colorado. For three days, Thursday October 30th through Saturday November 1st, thousands of educators will meet in the Denver Convention Center to reap the benefits the conference offers—general sessions, a dozen featured and best practice sessions,

and hundreds of concurrent sessions. Not only does the NMSA conference provide a comprehensive professional development opportunity for practitioners, but it also brings together middle grades researchers. This year you will find the MLER SIG's invitation for researchers to join to the National Middle Grades Research Project on the [NMSA conference website](#). This SIG sponsored event is a training workshop for researchers who plan to participate directly in the National Middle Grades Research Project on Common Planning Time. In addition

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2008 NMSA Research Advisory Board Sessions

If you will be in Denver, Colorado for the upcoming annual conference of the National Middle School Association, October 31st – November 1st, consider attending sessions sponsored by the NMSA Research Advisory Board.

Thursday, October 30th, 2008

12:15 PM–1:30 PM

Spotlight on Research:
NMSA Research Advisory Board
Room: 709 Convention Center

2:00 PM–3:15 PM

Research and Resources
in Support of This We Believe:
Assessment that Promotes Learning
Room: 705 Convention Center

3:45 PM–5:00 PM

Pathways to Publication:
NMSA Research Advisory Board
Room: 709 Convention Center

Friday, October 31th, 2008

12:15 PM–1:30 PM

What Research says about Teaching
Reading in the Middle Grades: Lessons
from an Evaluation of The Reading Edge
(Robert Slavin and Cecelia Daniels)
Room: TBA

2:00 PM–3:15 PM

What Research Says About Engaging
Middle Level Learners in Meaningful Experiences
(Paul Vermette)
Room: 705 Convention Center

3:45 PM–:00 PM

What Research Says About Bullying:
Collaborating with Students to Promote
Positive Peer Relationships
(Christopher Faull and Randy Ng)
Room: 705 Convention Center

Report from the Executive Director

Vincent A. Anfara, Jr.

I hope this issue of the Chronicle of Middle Level Education Research finds each of you well and that your fall semester is off to a great start. It is hard to believe that the annual conference of the National Middle School Association is right around the corner. It will be good to see many of you in Denver.

As the MLER Executive Director, I have been corresponding with a number of other educational and policy-focused organizations in support of our effort to get the MLER recognized as

the largest organization of middle-grades researchers. An initial email was sent to organizations like NASSP, ASCD, NMSA, The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), and the Alliance for Excellent Education (AEE) providing a basic introduction to our organization, inviting them to visit our website, and highlighting the work of our National Middle Grades Research Project on Common Planning Time.

As I continue to raise awareness about our organization, I welcome your assistance and

suggestions about possible strategies to employ. As many of you attend conferences related to your professional areas, it would be great if you would consider bringing materials/brochures about the MLER SIG and making these available to attendees.

As a member of the AERA SIG Executive Committee, I am meeting in DC from October 23-26 to continue the work related to SIG governance. The SIG Executive Committee has been asked by AERA's President and Council to consider raising the minimum

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2009 AERA Preview

Sue C. Thompson

Greetings. The AERA Annual Meeting session allocations for 2009 have been determined for Divisions and SIGs. Unfortunately, we will not be able to share which proposals have been accepted until November 3, which is after the National Middle School Conference in Denver October 30 through November 2. At its June meeting, the AERA Council approved a total allocation of 1,440 sessions for the 2009 Annual Meeting in San Diego. Our SIG had over 50 proposals submitted this year. For the membership's information, our allocation for the 2009 meeting is as follows:

Substantive Sessions:	6
Business Meeting:	1
Paper Discussion Sessions:	2
Total:	9

It has been determined that 4-5 individual paper proposals

can be grouped together and each paper session (formerly known as a roundtable) will be counted as one session. We will also have two symposia.

At AERA in 2008, we had 5 substantive session, 1 business meeting, and 2 paper discussion sessions. In 2007 we had 11 sessions (5 paper sessions, 2 paper discussions, 1 symposium, and 1 business session.)

If your proposal has been accepted you should receive an email acknowledging your acceptance November 3. The following information can be found on the AERA Annual Meeting website:

1. Responsibilities of Participants
2. Explanation of Session Formats
3. General Information for Participants

Unfortunately, last year we had several presenters who had to cancel and because of the late notice, we were unable to replace these paper sessions with other participants. Please us know immediately if you will be unable to attend because of some unforeseen reason.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank all of you who volunteered time out of your very busy schedule to review proposals. We could not do this work without you. I look forward to seeing you in San Diego for the 2009 AERA Annual Meeting and possibly sooner at NMSA in Denver.

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Dave F. Brown	(2007-09)
Christopher Cook	(2008-10)
Cary Gillenwaater	(2007-09)
Richard Lipka	(2008-10)
Kezia McNeal	(2007-09)
Nancy Mizelle	(2008-10)
Susan Trimble	(2007-09)

Message from the President

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to this opportunity to join a national research project, you can search [NMSA's online conference program](#) to find sessions presented by SIG members. Please consider attending these sessions to support your SIG colleagues. Naturally, I also hope to see *you* at our SIG Business Meeting on Friday October 31st at 5:15 PM in Room 610 of the Convention Center.

Additionally, NMSA's Research Advisory Board, a group of middle grades researchers will be sponsoring important sessions emphasizing recent research. This year the Research Advisory Board's sessions include *Spotlight on Research, Pathways to*

Publication, Research and Resources in Support of This We Believe: Assessment that Promotes Learning, and three *What Research Says* sessions by featured researchers. You will find a complete listing of the Research Advisory Board sessions in this issue of the Chronicle.

Another opportunity (and possible reward) that warrants attention during the fall is SIG's Middle Level Education Research Graduate Student Award. This prestigious award is intended to promote and recognize outstanding research in middle level education by a graduate student or recent graduate of a masters, specialist, or doctoral

program. The award includes a one-year paid membership in the SIG, a commemorative plaque, and a \$250 cash award. To obtain more information about the award and an application, please visit the [MLER website](#).

You will also find a plethora of opportunities posted on the [MLER SIG website](#). Visit the site for information about the conference and meetings (including calls for presentations), a listing of officers and council members, a directory of members, position announcements, publications, and numerous calls for papers. The site includes a description of The Young Adolescent and the Middle School, the sixth

volume in The Handbook of Middle Level Education Research series, as well as an announcement regarding the upcoming seventh volume, *An International Look at Educating Young Adolescents*. If you are looking for opportunities to identify presentation and publication outlets or connect with middle grades researchers, I think that you will agree that our website is a good place to begin.

I look forward to our continued connections. Feel free to [email me](#) or call me at 503.725.4749 to share your suggestions, questions, or comments. And—if you can—join me in Denver!

Report from the Executive Director

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members required to establish and maintain a SIG. This number was recently raised to 45, but AERA Council is looking for a significantly larger number (nearer to 100). There is no doubt that this will impact a number of SIGs (now approximately 160) and makes membership recruitment and retention a much more serious topic of discussion for the MLER SIG. The entire relationship between SIGs

and Divisions of AERA needs to be examined more carefully. There is actually a SIG that is larger than one of the divisions.

The MLER SIG will need to reformat its bylaws into the template designated by AERA. All SIGs will be required to reformat their current bylaws and, in some cases, to initially write a set of bylaws (not all SIGs have bylaws and some

have been lost over time and changes in SIG leadership). MLER members will be updated on the progress that we are making in this regard.

The seventh volume of the Handbook, *An International Look at Educating Young Adolescents*, will be available at AERA—San Diego. Thanks to all of the SIG members who served as reviewers and who

authored chapters for this important volume.

I always welcome your thoughts and invite you to email or call me with any concerns you may have. As the MLER SIG continues to develop as one of the best special interest groups in AERA, it is absolutely necessary to receive input and assistance from all of our members.

Graduate Student Award

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.

Specific information about eligibility and proposal submission are listed on the [Graduate Student Award Application](#). Direct questions to Dr. Kezia McNeal at mstkrm@langate.gsu.edu

Deadline January 15, 2009

2008 Graduate Student Award Recipient

Preservice Teachers' Negotiation of Middle Grades Science Teaching Identity



Molly Lawrence
University of Georgia

How do beginning teachers learn to teach middle grades science? This question lies at the heart of this study in which three middle grades science teachers' learning during their student teaching placement was examined.

Although many scholars have conducted high quality studies on learning to teach middle grades science (Proweller & Mitchener, 2004) and learning to teach science (Crawford, 2007; Friedrichsen, Munford, & Orgill, 2006; McGinnis, Parker, & Graeber, 2004), my own experiences as a middle grades science teacher encouraged me to identify a lens for examining learning to teach that more accurately represented the complexity of my own experiences while learning and becoming in the classroom. I believed this lens could prove useful in helping middle grades teacher educators support beginning teachers' efforts to navigate the complexities encountered during student teaching in the middle grades. Building on the work of situated learning and practice theorists (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), learning, in this study, is conceptualized as a process of

becoming, or identity negotiation (Gee, 2005; Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998). Identity negotiation, as a lens for examining teacher learning, prioritizes action (enacting self in world) as socially-situated and personally bound (Wenger). As such, learning to teach is assumed to be a dynamic and complex process rather than something more linear, static, or developmental in nature. One primary research question framed this study: How do beginning teachers negotiate their middle grades science teaching identity during student teaching?

My inquiry into this question was driven by a constructionist (Crotty, 1998) epistemology, which assumes that meaning does not exist in the world or in objects waiting for us to discover it. Instead, there is something to work with in constructing meaning, but meaning is not present waiting or able to be discovered. As such, there is not one true or valid interpretation. An inductive (Charmaz, 2006) case study approach (Hays, 2004) infused with narrative inquiry traditions (Polkinghorne, 1995) was employed in collecting and analyzing data. Three middle grades science student teachers participated: a graduate student and an undergraduate student in a science education program and an undergraduate student in a middle grades education program. Data collection methods included interviews,

observations, various written work, and informal participant-initiated conversations throughout their semester of student teaching in middle grades science classrooms. Analysis of data included initial and line-by-line coding (Charmaz), a focus on the social goods (Gee, 1999) that were made relevant or irrelevant by my participants, and, ultimately, a re-coding of the data into large chunks of text that reflected the nuanced negotiations of middle grades science teaching identity. These chunks of text were used to craft narratives, which, in conjunction with Gee's notion of D-identity (2001) and Holland et al.'s tools of agency (1998), were used to construct a model depicting each participant's negotiation of middle grades science teaching identity.

Synthesis of findings into a concise paragraph is impossible in light of the nature of this study. Participants' negotiation of middle grades science teaching identity is best represented by using the narrative as grist for understanding the middle grades science aspects of identity negotiation that are not explicitly part of the model. However, the narrative cannot be reduced to a few sentences if meaning is to be retained. Thus, a synopsis of each model will be included and a few implications of the nuanced negotiations of middle grades science teaching identity will be explored below. The graduate science education student teacher's

(Lilly) model of identity negotiation can be characterized as one of dialogic tension. She focused on how students and others responded to her as a certain type of teacher, which she always referenced back to her personal vision of teaching. She placed considerable emphasis on getting kids to see her as a teacher, not a student teacher, and was able to accomplish this goal. She consistently used others' responses to her to refine her conceptions about the type of teacher she wanted to be. When she lacked confidence, she was less able to stay in touch with her personal vision of teaching. However, as her confidence increased, the dialogic tension she maintained between the social response and her personal vision allowed her to refine and reshape this vision of teaching in ways that influenced her teaching identity and resulted in more desirable responses from the social context (students & cooperating teacher).

The undergraduate science education student teacher's (Stacey) model of identity negotiation can be described as one in which trial and error allowed her to learn about the nature of the social context in response to activities. Whereas Lilly was constantly trying to learn about the nature of the social context prior to teaching and modified her teaching identity based on how the individuals within the social context were responding to her, Stacey's actions as a teacher were intended to help

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her learn how the students responded to the instructional approaches she employed (these were more like tools than an extension of her preferred way of doing things as a learner or a person). She did not use students' responses to help her determine whether or not they were seeing her as the type of teacher she desired (in fact she did not desire that students recognize her as a teacher unless class got out of hand - she prioritized her relationship with students as one person trying to relate to another), but instead used these responses to determine if activities worked or did not work. She used this knowledge of how the social context had responded to an instructional strategy to guide her enactment of teaching in the future.

The undergraduate middle grades education student teacher's (Mandy) model of identity negotiation cannot be described as a negotiation of teaching identity as Mandy was never able to get students to recognize her as the teacher rather than the student teacher. As such, she was unable to make significant progress in establishing the type of relationships

she wanted to have with her students as their teacher (not their student teacher), which was her priority during student teaching. Thus, she spent the majority of her efforts mimicking her cooperating teacher's instruction. To Mandy, copying her cooperating teacher's teaching was the best way to learn to teach. She frequently watched him teach and then tried to replicate what he had done. She did not question what relational factors made it possible for him to enact himself in this way, nor did she carefully examine the nature of his interactions with students. Upon completing student teaching Mandy concluded that she had learned little about herself as a teacher, but said she felt confident she could establish positive relationships with students and successfully implement her cooperating teacher's strategies in the future.

Various conclusions can be drawn that hold powerful implications for middle grades and science teacher educators. First and foremost, beginning teachers' attempts to relate to students are an integral part of their negotiation of middle grades science

teaching identity. Each of the participants in my study prioritized their relationship with students above their actual teaching practices. Only Lilly, however, came to see an integral connection between her ways of relating to students (as a teacher) and her instructional practices. Her ways of relating to students were linked to her desire to help them learn. For Stacey, however, her way of relating to students made it difficult for students to recognize her as a teacher. Her interactions with students were inconsistent: sometimes she was the supportive friend and others the mean teacher. Her ability to reflect deeply on her instructional practices was disconnected from her thinking about relating to students. On the other hand, Mandy prioritized relationships with students but was unable to make meaningful connections between relating to students and instruction because she was always positioned as the student teacher. As middle grades teacher educators invested in helping beginning teachers create inviting, supportive, and safe learning environments, we need to consider ways to help beginning teachers identify more

coherent connections between their relationships with students and their instructional approaches during student teaching. In addition, we must carefully consider the implications of placing student teachers in contexts where they are unable to relate to students in authentic ways. How much space is needed in order to negotiate teaching identity in ways that ease student teachers' transition into their induction year and allow them to have made progress in relating to students as teachers and linking these relationships to learning? Finally, we must further examine learning to teach in all contexts by considering practice within the sociocultural and personal dimensions from which it cannot be removed. If we are to better understand how our work with beginning teachers is becoming relevant in their future work both the context, the individual's response to the learning in which they engage, and the individual's actions and interpretations of the current context must be considered when examining learning to teach.

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Call For Manuscripts

Research in Middle Level Education Online

Research in Middle Level Education Online, the international peer-reviewed research journal of National Middle School Association (NMSA), publishes quantitative and qualitative studies, mixed methods research studies, case studies, action research studies, research syntheses, and reviews of research literature. Full-text issues of the RMLE Online are available from the [NMSA website](#). The journal is also indexed in educational databases such as Academic Search Premier, ERIC, and Professional Development Collection. RMLE Online is also available through the [Directory of Open Access Journals](#), an international repository of free, full text, quality controlled scientific and scholarly journals.

The Middle Level Education Research SIG endorses RMLE Online, while NMSA's Research Advisory Board provides guidance for the journal.

Guidelines for contributors and members of the editorial review board are available on the [NMSA website](#).

For additional information, please contact
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Call For Manuscripts

Middle Grades Research Journal

A Research Journal Published Quarterly by the Institute for School Improvement Dr. David Hough, Editor-In-Chief

Middle Grades Research Journal (MGRJ) is a refereed, peer reviewed journal published by the Missouri State University Institute for School Improvement. The journal publishes original studies providing both empirical and theoretical frameworks that focus on middle grades education. A variety of articles are published quarterly in March, June, September, and December of each volume year.

Guidelines for Contributors

All manuscripts must adhere to APA fifth or sixth edition format, include an abstract of 200-300 words, and range between 20-30 pages in length (including camera ready tables,

charts, figures, and references). If hard copies of manuscripts are submitted for review, the lead contributing author must send four "blind" copies including title and abstract along with a letter of transmittal to:

Dr. David Hough, Editor-In-Chief
 Middle Grades Research Journal
 Institute for School Improvement
 Monroe Hall
 Missouri State University
 901 South National Avenue
 Springfield, MO 65897

Electronic submissions as Word documents are strongly encouraged and should be emailed to:

DavidHough@missouristate.edu

Call For Reviewers

Handbook of Research in Middle Level Education

If you are interested in reviewing manuscripts for **Volume 8: Voices from the Middle**, please contact Kathleen F. Malu at: maluk@wpunj.edu

Call for Submissions

The Chronicle of Middle Level Education Research

Please send any items you would like to have considered for publication in the January issue of The Chronicle of Middle Level Education Research to: kathleen.brinegar@uvm.edu

Submission Deadline: December 20th

Call For Manuscripts



Voices from the Middle: Narratives For, By and About the Middle Level Community Volume 8 in The Handbook of Research in Middle Level Education

Kathleen F. Malu, Volume Editor, Vincent A. Anfara, Jr., Series Editor

The need for continued research at the middle level is clear and urgent. The previous volumes in this Handbook series testify to this urgency. While quantitative studies continue to be essential, there is a critical need to understand the complexities of the middle level community. One way to capture the rich, diverse mosaic of the voices and experiences of middle level participants and stakeholders is to use narrative inquiry methodology. The intent of this volume in The Handbook is to give voice to and broaden our understanding of the wide variety of participants and stakeholders who weave through the middle level. Such participants and stakeholders may include middle level teachers, school psychologists and counselors, students, parents, administrators, middle level researchers, research foundations, and community groups (e.g., Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA's, YMHA's, YWCA's, YWHA's, and others). In addition to hearing directly from these groups, this volume will focus on the intricate webs, connections and questions that these narratives hold and frame them within current middle level research, theory, and practice. Ultimately this volume will highlight the nuance, diversity and future directions that research may need to explore.

General Outline:

In order for manuscripts to be considered for publication, authors must use narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry uses the genre of narrative to tell a rich, complex story. The narrative perspective may be from the first person, "I," or third person, "She," "He," or "They" (see Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, for a further explanation of this research methodology). Each narrative must be followed by reflections on what issues and questions this narrative raises and a discussion of this story in relation to current research, theory and best practices at the middle level. Manuscripts that give voice to middle level participants not mentioned above will also be considered. In addition, those that draw on theory, research, and practice that may exist beyond the direct field of middle level research will also be considered.

Submission Guidelines:

Manuscripts, not to exceed 30 pages including references, should be type-written, double spaced on white 8 ½" x 11" paper and follow the formatting guidelines provided in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (5th ed.). Include the author's name, professional title, and institutional affiliation, and all contact information (phone, fax, mailing address, email) on a separate cover page. Do not insert headers or footers into the manuscript. Number pages in upper right hand corner. Include an abstract of approximately 150 words. Tables and figures should be inserted in the text where appropriate. Manuscripts should be submitted electronically to Kathleen F. Malu. Submission of a manuscript implies commitment to publish in this handbook series. Authors should not simultaneously submit this manuscript to another journal or book for publication consideration.

Narrative, Reflections and Discussion:

Specifically, each chapter must begin with an overview of the setting in which the narrative takes place. Thick, rich descriptions (Geertz, 1973) of this setting should begin the chapter. After the "stage is set," authors should tell the story of the participants, individuals or stakeholders. Examples of possible narratives might tell the stories of: The experiences of a group of teachers who are not supported in their efforts to implement best middle level practices by the administration; a parent and child's experiences during family conferences; stories of international middle level students who attend an American middle school; a foundation's story of trying to support professional development at a school under review by NCLB. Next, this narrative should be followed by reflections and end with a discussion. Reflections should include questions and dilemmas the narrative highlights and the discussion should connect with and/or question/challenge research, theory and practice at the middle level.

Deadlines:

Intent to submit a manuscript should be sent to Kathleen F. Malu by November 15, 2008. Manuscripts are due by March 15, 2009 and will undergo a rigorous review/revision process.

Inquiries:

All questions should be directed to Kathleen F. Malu at maluk@wpunj.edu with the phrase "Volume 8 Handbook Question" in the Subject Box.



Revive the Classics!

How often have you tried to track down a copy of an old book you just can't do without only to learn that it is "out of print"? Too many classic texts in education have been allowed to go "out of print", because publishers don't see the long term value in your hard work. IAP never lets any book go out of print, so you will never have to face this issue again.

That's why IAP - Information Age Publishing Inc. has launched a new effort to bring back some of the titles in education that are hard to find today or, once found, are priced more like collectors' items than books for working scholars. Six months ago, we acquired the rights and republished a famous text in measurement theory (Lord and Novick) that was previously only available on the internet at enormous cost. The response (and gratitude) of persons in the field has been as rewarding to us as have the few sales that followed.

What books in your field are out of print, or can only be bought at hugely inflated "collector" prices? Let me know the names of books that you and your colleagues have great difficulty locating because they are out of print, and we will investigate and see if they can be made available again. Send me the title, author(s), publisher and we will take it from there. IAP never lets any book go out of print, so you will never have to face this situation again.

Also Available:

The Handbook of Middle Level Education Series

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