

NATIONAL MIDDLE GRADES RESEARCH PROJECT

Sponsored by the
Middle Level Education Research Special Interest Group

Project Information Sheet

The following information is intended to provide an overview of the major aspects of this research project and to offer a timeline of activities.

PHENOMENON TO BE STUDIED: Common Planning Time (CPT)

RATIONALE FOR CHOOSING THIS TOPIC: Utilizing quantitative approaches, middle grades educational researchers have addressed the positive effects of providing interdisciplinary team teachers with common planning time (CPT). Research has documented positive impacts on student outcomes including student achievement, better social adjustment, and more positive school climate. Positive benefits to teachers include more positive work/school climate, higher levels of efficacy, and higher levels of engagement in interdisciplinary team and classroom instructional activities (See attachment for specific findings). While the results of this research are promising and support the need for common planning time, there still remains an unknown—what teachers do when they meet for common planning time. This, then, is the focus of this project.

METHODOLOGY: Both qualitative and quantitative data will be collected over the life of this project. We will start with the qualitative data collection which includes data obtained through: (1) interviews, (2) structured observations, and (3) demographic/contextual information.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARTICIPANT RESEARCHERS:

Participant researchers are responsible for:

- (1) Selecting the schools to participate in this data collection initiative and collecting all of the data in the specified manner using the protocols provided,
- (2) Submitting these data in a timely manner for the creation of a database that will be national in scope, and
- (3) Participating in the professional development that is provided.

Participant researchers are encouraged to:

- (1) Add to the data collection protocols in appropriate ways that will allow for the researcher to publish using these data. As an example, a researcher may want to add additional questions to the interview protocol and may want to collect student outcome data (e.g., academic performance or behavioral indices) to link CPT to student outcomes.

- (2) Submit their studies for publication consideration in an upcoming volume of *The Handbook of Research in Middle Level Education*.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PROJECT LEADERS:

- (1) Keep the project moving in a timely manner,
- (2) Develop the final protocols for data collection,
- (3) Plan the professional development that is part of this research project,
- (4) Develop a “template” IRB for participant researchers to use at their respective institutions for human subjects approval, and
- (5) Create the national data base and manage these data for future use.

PRODUCTS TO RESULT FROM THIS PROJECT:

- (1) Participant researchers will have the opportunity to submit their individual manuscripts for publication in an upcoming volume of *The Handbook of Research in Middle Level Education* that will be dedicated to CPT and the work of this project.
- (2) Sessions will be submitted for presentations at both NMSA and AERA.

ASSUMPTIONS OF THIS RESEARCH PROJECT:

- (1) We will collect data over an extended period of time (longitudinal),
- (2) A national database will be constructed from the data that are submitted by all of the research participants,
- (3) Multiple data sources will be utilized,
- (4) Professional development will be provided,
- (5) Multiple methods will be encouraged,
- (6) The data will be co-owned by the individual participant researchers and the MLER SIG,
- (7) All studies should be designed to be replicable, and
- (8) There is no current funding for this project.

TIMELINE:

April 12, 2007: Project is announced to the MLER SIG during an interactive session at AERA, Chicago. Those in attendance had the opportunity to sign-up for participation in this research project.

May 3, 2007: Participant researchers submit items (i.e., interview questions) for consideration in the construction of the interview protocol. They also suggest ways that would be most effective in conducting the structured observations.

Summer 2007: Steering Committee meets to finalize development of qualitative protocols, develop/refine project timeline, and develop professional development training to be conducted at 2007 NMSA Conference in Houston, TX.

November 8-11, 2007 (NMSA Conference): Data collection protocols are distributed at a designated time during the annual NMSA conference. Professional development is provided at this time to provide for some degree of reliability in the collection of data. Professional development will also involve data analysis strategies.

February 15, 2008: Participant researchers submit the qualitative data (interview, observation, and demographic/contextual) to the project steering committee. Details regarding the submission of data will follow in future memos and will be discussed at the November meeting during NMSA's annual conference.

March 24-28, 2008: Participant researchers attend AERA with initial analysis of data completed. Time will be provided for discussion of these initial findings. Problems encountered in the field during data collection will be discussed. Future steps will be announced.

PROJECT INFORMATION:

For details of the AERA Chicago meeting, as well as prior planning meetings, and additional project information, please visit the [MLER SIG web site](#) or the [MLER National Project web site](#)

For more information, please contact one of the members of the **MLER NATIONAL MIDDLE GRADES RESEARCH PROJECT** steering committee.

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