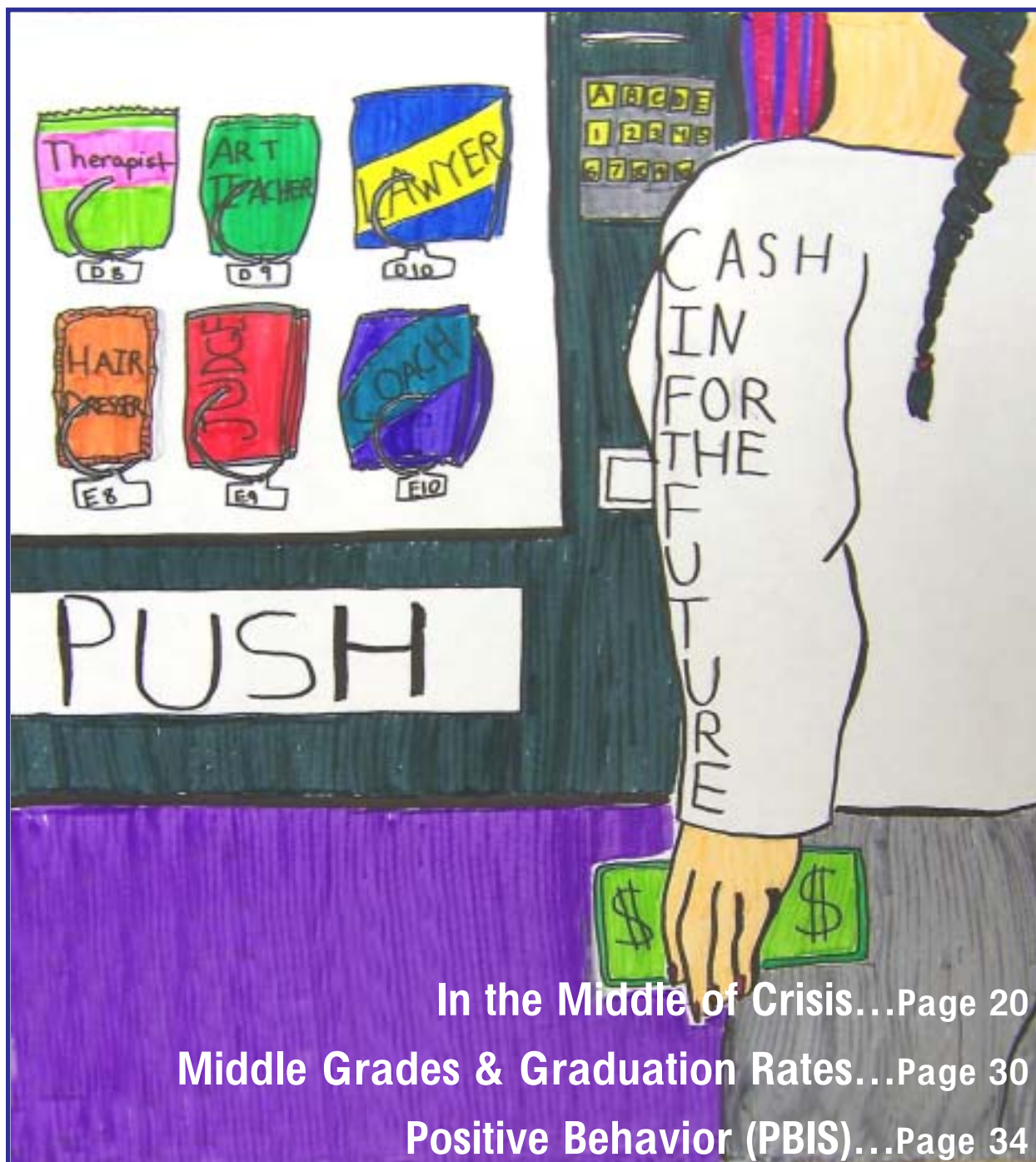


IN Transition

Journal of the New York State Middle School Association



In the Middle of Crisis...Page 20

Middle Grades & Graduation Rates...Page 30

Positive Behavior (PBIS)...Page 34

NYSMSA Mission/Vision/Goals/Beliefs

Revised and Adopted July 2009

NYSMSA Mission: The New York State Middle School Association (NYSMSA) represents those who serve the educational needs of all young adolescents in New York State. We are committed to creating, promoting, and supporting effective middle-level programs that are academically rigorous and developmentally appropriate.

NYSMSA Vision: NYSMSA acts on our belief that all young adolescents are entitled to academically rich and developmentally responsive programs. Toward this end, we work collaboratively within the educational community to make high-performing middle-level programs the norm in New York State through full implementation of the *Regents Policy Statement on Middle-Level Education*, the Education Department's *Essential Elements of Standards-Focused Middle-Level Schools and Programs*, and research-based best practices.

NYSMSA Goals: Advocacy • Service • Collaboration

NYSMSA Beliefs: NYSMSA's beliefs are listed below. Taking into consideration current research and available resources, these beliefs are viewed through the lens of the *NYS Essential Elements of Standards-Focused Middle-Level Schools and Programs* and the *Regents Policy Statement on Middle-Level Education*, and will assist the Association in supporting the improvement of instruction for middle-level students in New York State.

ADVOCACY

NYSMSA believes that we must provide leadership and coordination in advocating for the following in **all** schools that serve middle-level students:

- a philosophy and mission that reflect the intellectual and developmental needs and characteristics of young adolescents (youth 10-14 years of age);
- an educational program that is comprehensive, challenging, purposeful, integrated, relevant, and standards-based;
- an organization and structure that support both academic excellence and personal development;
- classroom instruction appropriate to the needs and characteristics of young adolescents provided by skilled and knowledgeable teachers;
- strong educational leadership and a building administration that encourage, facilitate, and sustain involvement, participation, and partnerships;
- a network of academic and personal support available for all students;
- professional learning and staff development for all staff that are ongoing, planned, purposeful, and collaboratively developed.

SERVICE

NYSMSA believes that we must provide leadership and coordination to:

- be the primary source of information, resources, and expertise on young adolescents and their schooling in New York State;
- provide a variety of resources (publications, models of best practices, professional development, etc.) in support of appropriate programs for young adolescents;
- offer support to schools, at all levels of performance,

in refining and strengthening their middle-level programs;

- provide member services to public and non-public urban, suburban, and rural schools;
- engage regional directors who provide, assist, and support regional and state activities;
- support the ongoing importance of Office of Middle-Level Education Program in SED.
- develop and disseminate position papers that provide guidance on appropriate programmatic, curricular, instructional, and assessment issues;
- recognize and honor outstanding middle-level schools, programs, and individuals and groups.

COLLABORATION

NYSMSA believes that we must provide leadership and coordination for:

- implement a collaborative relationship with the State Education Department and others who impact the lives of young adolescents;
- work with other associations in sponsoring professional development activities;
- develop and expand cooperative ventures and relationships with corporations and businesses;
- create networks of educators, parents, and others involved in the lives of young adolescents;
- serve on the boards of supportive organizations;
- engage in continuous planning through participation and shared decision-making;
- influence the quality and content of pre-service and in-service education for prospective and practicing middle-level educators;
- work with constituent groups to identify effective models for programmatic, curricular, instructional, and assessment issues.

Feature Articles

- 18** Team Teaching
by Jonathan Duval
- 20** In the Middle of Crisis: A Look at the Problem with Educating Black Boys and How We Can Begin the Process of Solving It
by Shawn L. Robertson, Ed.D.
- 23** Carving Out the Middle in a 7-12 Building
by Lindsay Marzec & Kristy Carlson
- 25** Focusing Your Leadership Values
by Dr. Edward J. Sullivan
- 30** The Impact of the Middle Grades on High School Graduation Rates
by Linda Kramer Schlosser, Ph.D.
- 33** Franklinville Central Takes a New Approach to Technology Courses
by Katie McFarland & Don Watkins
- 34** Pioneer Middle School PBIS Leads to Steady Progress District-Wide
by Nancy Sampson
- 38** Preparing for Their Future Students: How Middle Grades Preservice Teachers Make Connections about Classroom Community from a Ropes Course
by Joellen Maples, Ph.D.

In Every Issue

- 3 From the Editor's Desk
- 5 A few thoughts from the President...
- 7 The Executive Director's Message
- 11 Crossword Puzzle
- 12 Research at a Glance
- 15 Lea's Lessons
- 44 Schools to Watch Visitor's Guides
- 51 Author Index
- 52 Submission of Articles

In This Issue

- 14 Nominations for Fall 2010 Election
- 42 NYS Essential Elements: Schools-to-Watch Recognition Program (2011-2012, Seventh Cohort)
- 49 Middle-Level Education Best Practices in New York State (form)

On the Cover

Cash into Your Future by Colleen Cardone

Students in Joy Muller-McCoola's eighth grade art class were asked to create posters for the Adirondack Regional Career Fair held at Glens Falls Middle and High School. The Adirondack Regional Career Fair, a biannual event in the North Country, is organized and hosted by Glens Falls Middle School counselor Kathy Vittengl. The cover art for this issue of *In Transition* is one of the many advertising posters that were designed by some very energetic and creative students.

Artist Colleen Cardone said, "When the teacher gave us the theme, Cash into Your Future, the vending machine was the first thing that came to mind. People put money in the vending machine and get what they want. So I thought: What if the snacks were jobs that you pick out? I wanted it to feel like the girl was still making a decision, that's why the dollar bill is still in her hand. I like the way the colors came out and the way the words curved around her arm."

From the Editor's Desk

Chris Reed



Chris Reed

So do you ever take the time to ask yourself *What's next?* and *Where do we go from here?* I do, seemingly on an increasing basis lately.

I expect the district I work in is experiencing dynamics that are typical of scores of schools and districts

across the state. Typically these days, many districts are dealing with issues of decreasing student enrollment, a dwindling tax base, and the demand for more accountability in education than has ever been the case. *What's next?* and *Where do we go from here?* have never been more relevant questions to ask.

It may seem ironic that one of the things you *can* do is to simply network with other professionals in the educational field. By keeping current on the latest educational philosophies and instructional strategies, one can function in a proactive rather than reactive manner. Staying current with the latest and greatest may be facilitated by selectively attending workshops and conferences or perhaps taking a course. Maybe it's time to join a district committee (Site-Based Team, Safety & Security, Professional Development, or even the PTA). Why not accept the challenge of writing a scholarly piece for submission to *In Transition* or another professional journal?

Where do we go from here? Folks who work with me have the dubious distinction of

periodically hearing me cite one of my favorite mantras: *Things get better or worse; they don't stay the same.* I firmly believe that. Systems, schedules, programs, relationships, etc. need constant attention and deliberate adjustments because they don't just stay the same. The world around us (school, community, state, and nation) is in constant flux and must be managed in a proactive manner. Our job is to be alert and responsive to our surroundings, to become proactive, and influence the future so that we can begin to answer the questions *What's next?* and *Where do we go from here?* Change is here and we need to be ready for it, to be responsive to it, and to be prepared to influence its direction.

As promised, please find the Essential Elements: School to Watch (EE: STW) School Profiles for three New York state middle schools that were identified in the first cohort in 2006. They were redesignated in 2009 and are outstanding examples of excellence in middle-level programming. Please feel free to contact these schools for consultation on best practices or to learn more about the EE: STW application process.



Congratulations!



The following middle schools have earned the honor of being designated
2010 Essential Elements: Schools to Watch (Fifth Cohort).

Bay Trail Middle School

Penfield Central Schools • Penfield NY

Lakeland Copper Beech Middle School

Lakeland Central School District • Yorktown Heights NY

Merton Williams Middle School

Hilton Central Schools • Hilton NY

North Salem Middle School

North Salem Central School District • North Salem NY

Earning a Rising School to Watch Designation in 2010 are the following:

Carrie Palmer Weber Middle School

Port Washington Public Schools • Port Washington NY

Hugo Newman College Prep. PS/IS 180

District 3 • New York NY

Van Wyck Junior High School

Wappingers Central Schools • Wappingers Falls NY

The Essential Elements: Schools to Watch Program is a national program administered by New York State through a partnership of the New York State Middle School Association, the Statewide Network of Middle-Level Liaisons and the New York State Education Department. The program recognizes high quality Middle-Level Programs that adhere to the criteria set forth by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform and the Regents Policy Statement on Middle-Level Education. For more information on how your Middle Level Program can become an Essential Elements: School to Watch, please visit www.nysmsa.org and click on Schools to Watch.

A few thoughts from the President...

Linda Ruest



Linda Ruest

Three times a year, I am faced with the dilemma of deciding the focus of my President's Message. As an educational consultant, I have a great variety of professional experiences that tend to influence my decisions.

Such is the case for this message.

Last week I was in a meeting with the principal of a wonderful New York City high school when he commented that he hoped that in these difficult times his school would not suffer from **entropy**. I would like to tell you that I knew exactly what he meant, but I would be lying. I could infer the word's meaning from the context of its use, but his choice of the word intrigued me. The word niggled at me all day, lingering in my mind as I tried to puzzle out its true meaning. I "googled" it the minute I got back to my hotel and found that I had correctly inferred its meaning. My interest in this concept of entropy, however, presented me with a real dilemma.

You see, people who know me well will tell you that I have this quirky little aversion to learning about science. More than an aversion, actually; it is more like my life's mission to get through life learning as little as possible about the workings of science. I'm

appreciative of the role that science has played in my life. I love that a light goes on when I flip a switch, even if I don't understand why. And I am especially appreciative of scientists and the important work they do. The advanced and advancing work of cancer scientists recently saved my sister's life, and I don't understand any of it.

So you can see the dilemma I faced when I discovered the true and accurate meaning of **entropy**. It is a science word — physics, actually — and I dropped physics after the first week in high school. When I read the definition, here's what I heard: "Blah, blah, blah." Yet the concept, as it was used in relation to the quality of education that a school provides for its students, really grabbed me. I decided that, for once, I would inquire into something scientific. My inquiring mind wanted to know. I wanted to understand the concept beyond being able to define it.

So, I searched the internet...and the library; there are still books, encyclopedias, and dictionaries in a library, so I consulted with them, as well as my electronic sources. And I talked with middle and high school science teachers. (Thank you, Kristen, for your patient explanation.) Here are some of the things that I learned about entropy:

- Entropy is based on the second law of thermodynamics, which states that the direction of spontaneous change in an isolated system is toward maximum disorder. Because there are many more random ways of arranging things than there are organized ways, disorder is

much more probable (World Book Encyclopedia, 2010). (*Hmmm.*)

- Entropy is the measure of a system's energy that is unavailable to do work or of the degree of a system's disorder (Encyclopedia Britannica Online, 2010). (*Are you seeing the connection?*)
- Entropy is the tendency of the energy of a closed system to become less available to do work with the passage of time (Readers' Digest Illustrated Encyclopedia Dictionary, 1992). (*Are you worried?*)
- Entropy is the tendency for all matter and energy in the universe to evolve toward a state of inert uniformity; it is the inevitable and steady deterioration of a system or society (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 2010). (*Are you scared?*)
- Changes/attention/interventions may decrease entropy in a system. (*Do you feel empowered?*)

With my new understanding of the concept of entropy, I no longer hear, "Blah, blah, blah." I now hear something much worse. I hear this:

- In these troubling fiscal times, our middle-level programs (our systems) are likely to become neglected (isolated). With reduced resources, both human and otherwise, it becomes more difficult to do our work; as we resign ourselves to doing with less, it is natural to also do less.
- As our middle-level systems become "isolated", there will be a natural tendency away from the purposeful organization of our system and toward the more uniform, generic organization of schools in general (junior high schools).
- As time passes, this is likely to worsen, not improve, unless we intervene; unless we empower ourselves, our staffs, and our communities to intervene — to find ways

to prevent the otherwise inevitable disorder and/or decline of our middle-level programs.

Our middle-level organization is not random. It is based on research and designed specifically and intentionally to meet the developmental needs of our unique middle-level students. It is also required by NYSED policy and regulation. We must fight to preserve our middle-level programs, with or without the reduction of resources. We are obligated to resist entropy in our middle-level system. It is the only option for ourselves and for our students.

Plus, in this instance, we can't let science win.

CALL FOR PRESENTERS

**NYSMSA's
30TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

**VIEWING MIDDLE LEVEL
THROUGH A NEW LENS**

**ROCHESTER, NY
OCTOBER 21-23, 2010**

As part of the **2010 NYSMSA Annual Conference**, one-hour workshops will be scheduled throughout the day on **Friday, October 22, 2010**. Individuals or groups of individuals are invited to submit a Call for Presenters application on any topic related to middle-level education.

For an application:
Go to www.nysmsa.org and click on Annual Conference.

The Executive Director's Message

Dennis M. Tosetto



Dennis Tosetto

After hearing for more than forty years that each year was going to be the worst budget year ever for New York State school districts, it now seems possible that that prediction could actually come true within the next year or two. In

fact, by the time this issue of *In Transition* hits mailboxes, many of our middle-level colleagues from across the state may find themselves seriously impacted by budget cuts, and the 2010-11 school year may well be an even worse year. So, how can we best keep things together over the next few years during these perilous financial times?

There isn't much we can do to save our proverbial bacon this late in this school year, so let's concentrate on how we can better position ourselves for the 2010-11 school year and beyond. Trying to put jobs back into a budget once they have been chopped is an uphill fight. Therefore, we need to begin a proactive process early in the next school year that initiates actions aimed at avoiding getting into a reactive position in the first place. It is much better to be proactive early on than to be scrambling to react after the fact.

Now is the time to start planning how you and your district middle-level colleagues can

best deal with potential future district budget reductions that may surface as your local Board of Education begins preliminary work in late fall and continues to refine its budget proposition over the following months. This process will end when budget modifications and solutions are finalized by your School Board in the spring and incorporated into a 2011 budget proposition to be placed on the ballot for the public's consideration just one year from now.

What I am suggesting in this article is simple and straight forward. It is based on common sense and sound educational principles that best serve our children. It is also based on a belief that, in most cases, quality in the pursuit of excellence is both encouraged and supported by those who will benefit. While what I am proposing does not come with a guarantee, it should be clear how implementing the following suggestions will put you and your local middle-level colleagues in a strong position with your community and Board of Education as budget discussions progress through the coming year. With some work and a little planning, your middle-level program and its staff can be well positioned if the budget axe comes out of the shed again next year.

The first step is for everyone working in your school to understand and accept that they are all in this together and, therefore, must be mutually supportive if they hope to keep their middle-level program staff in tact next June. Staff and program issues should be resolved quietly in house, and everyone working in the school needs to be a public cheerleader for the

middle-level program. They need to be given the opportunity to learn about and understand the rationale for the program, so they can support it with both facts and a sense of caring.

If possible, a well structured staff discussion on this topic should take place before the end of this school year, led by a well-prepared group of school teacher leaders and the principal. In this case, voluntary attendance should be encouraged by all concerned because the topic should be of vital concern to everyone.

Research clearly supports the need for a comprehensive middle-level program that ties student learning to real-world interdisciplinary experiences. This requires articulation and collaboration that involves all of the diverse subject areas, including the imbedded affective strands of the curriculum. This necessitates the active participation of all of the school's teachers, guidance counselors, and administrators. Everyone needs to be on the same page and mutually supportive, understanding that all elements of a quality middle-level program are necessarily woven together into whole cloth and disrupting any part of that fabric disrupts the overall quality of the educational process. This needs to be an underlying theme that is regularly imbedded in community and board presentations using examples from your school's program.

Second, everyone in the school needs to understand and be able to clearly articulate what constitutes a quality middle-level education program. Educators need to have expert knowledge of related research, the *Board of Regents Policy on Middle Level Education* (updated 2003), and Commissioner Regulations as found in CR 100.4. They need to be encouraged and even challenged to keep up with professional literature and what is happening in their chosen field locally, around the state, and nationally.

Educators who are up-to-date should be able to respond to the following types of questions: According to the research, how does the middle-level impact the dropout rate? Is your school making plans to apply for NYSMSA/SED middle-level **Essential Elements: Schools to Watch** recognition? How do curriculum mapping and interdisciplinary instruction fit together?

Routine building information should be going out to staff in newsletters to ensure that professional discussions can take place regularly during faculty meetings. Additionally, both the principal and teachers should share articles and encourage professional discussions in the faculty room and during planning time that support teaching and learning. After all, it only takes a few minutes to make a copy of an article and distribute it to staff by school email. So, why not do this throughout the school year to help keep your colleagues informed on education-related matters and to encourage a wider and more professional range of discourse within your school and perhaps a paradigm shift within the school's professional culture?

CR 100.4 (NYS Education Law) does require that SED's *Middle Level Essential Elements* (updated 2003) be fully implemented in all middle-level schools and programs. Consequently, in order to be a quality middle-level educator in New York State, one must not only have a comprehensive working knowledge of SED's *Middle Level Essential Elements*, but must also implement them on a daily basis with fidelity. The principal should be able to confirm to the community not only that each classroom program is up-to-speed, but that the organization and structure of the school also meets the standards set in SED's required *Middle Level Essential Elements*.

Our children deserve quality instruction in every classroom and parents need to know

that each of their children's teachers meet this established professional best practices standard with excellence. (Considerable information on the *Board of Regents Middle Level Policy* statement and SED's *Middle Level Essential Elements*, including PowerPoint presentations that can be used during faculty meetings, are available for free at www.nysmsa.org.)

Third, every New York State school with middle-level grades, regardless of its grade level configuration, should have in place an up-to-date action plan that includes a formal assessment by its staff that clearly presents how the school's current program aligns with SED's required *Essential Elements* and identifies next steps to school improvement that are tied to a timeline and lead to full implementation of the *Essential Elements*. It should also have a formal team approach aimed at bringing about full implementation of identified best practices. Such a team approach should include direct participation by parents in developing and implementing the plan; a formal means of keeping the community and the Board of Education informed about how the school community is working to meet these requirements; and regular updates on how well the school is progressing toward full implementation of SED's requirements and best practices.

In order to better garner support and understanding for the best practices that are being utilized in today's quality middle-level schools (which are likely very different from those that the parents of our students experienced when they were in school just a decade or two ago), be sure that the school's parent handbook speaks to the NYSED's middle-level requirements in the context of your school's child-centered philosophy and how your school's structure and processes encourage young adolescents to learn more and learn better. Also, be sure to explain in clear, concise terms how current research, elements of

the Board of Regents Policy Statement, and SED's *Middle Level Essential Elements* are incorporated into your school's program and how they impact instruction in positive ways. Distribute the handbook to members of your Board of Education with a special cover letter and, if possible, have a group of staff members and students discuss the implications of the handbook with them during a workshop or meeting.

In addition to presenting the school's handbook to the school board, have staff and students make brief presentations on a regular basis to the Board of Education and community groups to demonstrate how the school is meeting the unique needs of young adolescents in ways that are supported by current research, meet specific SED requirements, and incorporate student interest. Tie these presentations to requirements found in SED's *Middle Level Essential Elements* and submit this information to the local news media.

Demonstrate that you and your colleagues actually walk the talk. Have students present both what and how they are learning when they are in school through demonstrations that include interaction with team teachers and other students. Students like to participate in these types of events, so all that is needed is to ensure that presentations and activities clearly show how: 1. Instruction works through real-world experiences that are of interest to students, 2. How subject area instruction brings together the various subject areas in interesting ways through interdisciplinary approaches, and, 3. How students remain better focused and on-task when they are actively engaged in the learning process.

In addition to your orientation for students in September, consider holding an open house program for parents and others just prior to winter recess. (This time of year provides a good positive setting due to the festive nature of the holiday season.) Be sure

to first prepare selected students to present the school's program to visitors using a team approach that involves their teachers.

Open classrooms to parents and allow the students to show off projects and explain in small groups what and how they have been learning. Ensure that parents are aware that their children are on-task and focused on learning when they are in school, that they are enjoying their school experience, and that they are comfortable with their teachers. While you may lose a couple of hours of formal instructional time that day, this positive event will support building other important affective skills within the student body and, if well organized, it will result in building strong community understanding, cooperation, and support from all who participate.

Garnering "support" is referred to several times in different contexts in this article. It is apparent that wide-ranging support for our schools is important and it is best when it comes from a variety of different directions beyond school staff. Invite community leaders and their spouses to participate as members of school-based committees and invite them to participate in school-based meetings and presentations. Active support from those who are recognized for their contributions to the community are respected when they speak out and others tend to listen to what they have to say.

Superintendents and Boards of Education are much more inclined to support and maintain the elements of a comprehensive, harmonious program that is demonstrably interconnected and well planned. This is especially true when all of the school's staff is visibly on board and the overall program is actively supported by the school community. Local Boards of Education and superintendents tend to support and protect school-based programs that are recognized by others for fully implementing New York State policy and regulation

with excellence and they are much less likely to support a program that appears to lack forward momentum, clear focus, and doesn't seem to be strongly poised for measureable success.

While most of New York State's middle-level programs are not yet in full compliance with SED's required *Middle Level Essential Elements*, having a comprehensive and comprehensible implementation plan in process well before budget deliberations begin provides considerable additional support for the school. Have as many supportive people, programs, positive acknowledgements, etc. in place by the time the Board of Education begins working through what will and won't be included in its next budget proposition that will be voted on by the community next spring. Trying to garner support for staff and programs after potential program cuts are placed on the table usually doesn't bode well for those involved, including students, so it is best to ensure support as early in the school year as is possible.

Aesop had it right in his fable about the ant and the cricket: Plan ahead or be prepared to suffer the consequences. There is no reason to believe that the school budgeting process will ease up next year or anytime soon after that; so, expect that during future financial hard times, survival will most likely go to those who ensure their own continued success by being able to demonstrate that they are among the fittest and most productive.

Hey, it can be a jungle out there — especially around budget time!

Crossword Puzzle: Essential Element 4

Jim McIntyre



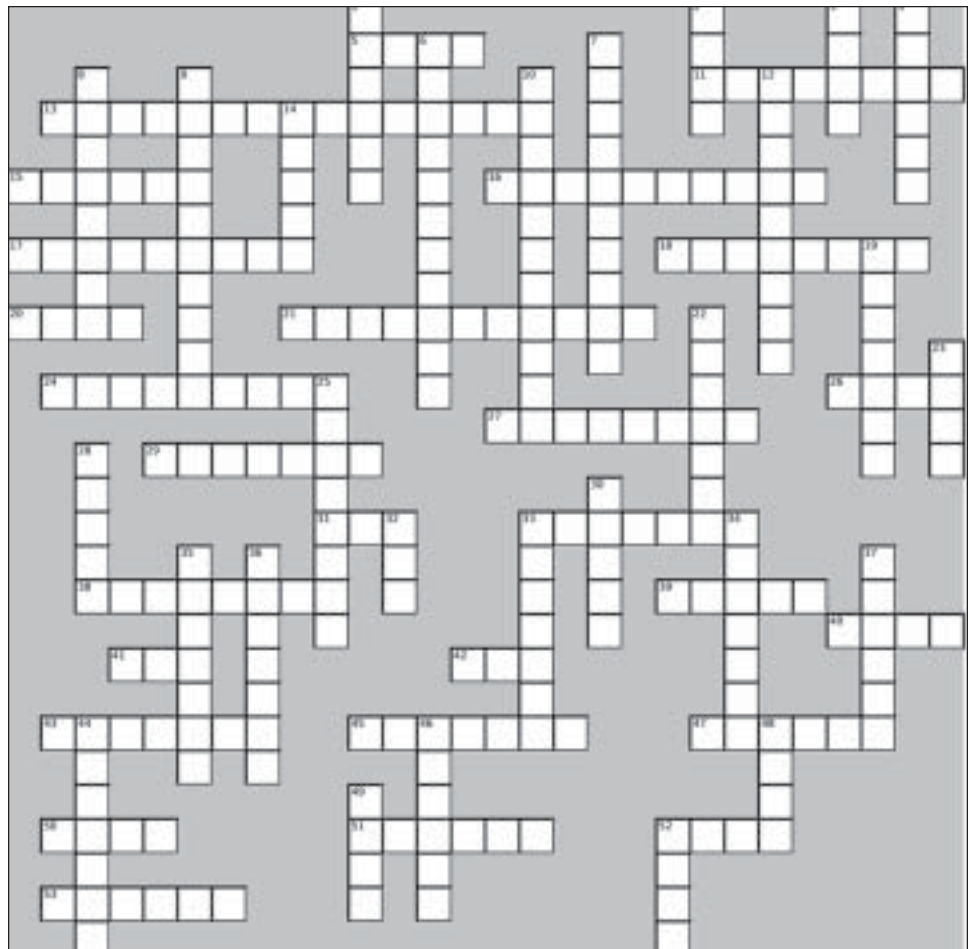
Knowing the theme of Essential Element 4 will give you a hint about most of the answers to the clues in this puzzle!

Across

- 5 One of the America's five
- 11 Something teachers should do to students and themselves
- 13 Necessary but difficult lesson design element
- 15 One with remarkable skill
- 16 MS tactics
- 17 Determining this is a smart lesson start
- 18 Five seconds is best (2 words)
- 20 Texting sign off
- 21 A favorite school day (3 words)
- 24 Instruction site
- 26 Advertising award
- 27 Student — elusive, but necessary, MS capture
- 29 A middle schooler's priority
- 31 Tolstoy or Durocher
- 33 Focus of importance of EE 4
- 38 A MS lesson design element
- 39 Characteristic
- 40 NYSMSA Summer Institute
- 41 State Education Department
- 42 Apolo
- 43 NY's Commissioner
- 45 A MS lesson design element
- 47 Designed and used to meet student needs and interests
- 50 _____ time: Collaboration time
- 51 Assessed as part of every lesson
- 52 Texting for "funny"
- 58 Star Wars Text

Down

- 1 School day unit
- 2 Gas, kerosene, wood
- 3 Loyal
- 4 Lively



- 6 A MS lesson design element
- 7 A favorite school day (3 words)
- 8 Modern reading
- 9 Suggested length of a lesson module (2 words)
- 10 Key word for EE 4
- 12 Being effective often means considering the _____
- 14 The students' _____, the core of all lesson design
- 19 A MS lesson design element
- 22 Contagious teacher classroom display
- 23 Wisecrack
- 25 Style of learning
- 28 Texting for "bored"
- 30 NYSMSA President
- 32 Texting exclamation
- 33 Buttress
- 34 Lesson designer
- 35 Everyone in the middle grades is a _____ teacher.
- 36 Best kept to a minimum in MS
- 37 Boundaries
- 44 Personal gifts all students have
- 46 Necessary MS lesson start
- 48 Seldom used exam format
- 49 Largest of the world's seven
- 52 Texting show of concern

(Answers can be found on page 48.)



Research at a Glance

Jeff Craig, NYSMSA Director of Research and Technology

This edition's column reminds middle-level educators of the important regulations that guide middle-level practices in New York State.

Middle-Level Practices in Tough Financial Times

Hardly a day goes by now without another newspaper article describing the cuts that are being proposed or have been implemented in a local school district. From what we hear, 2011-2012 is likely to be even worse, financially. Districts, understandably, are facing dramatic reductions in state aid, sales tax revenue, and a climate in which increasing property taxes is unlikely.

Districts are applying a variety of approaches to close their budget shortfalls. Class sizes are increasing. Low-enrolled high school electives are being eliminated. Inter-scholastic athletics are being trimmed. In some cases schools are being closed or reorganized. Of course, middle-level programs are not immune from these difficult decisions. While there is no evidence to indicate that middle-level programs are being targeted at any rate greater than other reductions, the early adolescents to whom we have dedicated our professional careers are going to be impacted.

In order to assist you in your role as a middle-level educator who is likely being impacted by the fiscal situation, it seems timely and prudent to remind us all of some of the “rules” governing middle-level practices and programs in New York State. As you enter into conversations in your district about your

programs, knowledge of this regulatory information will put you in a more informed decision-making and input-giving capacity.

It's always good advice to begin with the end in mind. For the middle-level in New York State that means the *Regents Policy Statement on Middle-Level Education* (NYSED, 2003b). Revised in 2003, this is the codified goal and defining vision for middle-level education in New York State. This policy is not advisory – it is regulation, or in other words, a requirement of all schools in the state. To quote from the Board of Regents documentation, “The Regents approved proposed changes in Commissioner’s Regulations. Schools must implement the changes no later than September 2005 (NYSED, 2003a).” So, as a way to preface all of your budgetary discussions, the fundamental tenants expressed in this document must be honored.

The next document you should make sure you are very familiar with is the document that takes the policy skeleton described in the Regents Policy Statement and adds the flesh to it: *The Essential Elements of Standards-Focused Middle-Level Schools and Programs* (NYSED, 2003). *Essential Elements* is organized into seven different categories, each providing the standards for middle-level practices in New York State. The expectations in this document are not advisory, they are part of the Commissioner’s Regulations and no matter how a middle-level program is modeled they must be adhered to (read below in the paragraph about the Three Models).

Commissioner’s Regulations CR100.4,
100.4 Program Requirements for Grades

Five through Eight, is the collection of requirements that specifically govern grades five through eight. This is the list of courses, assessments and programmatic requirements that have been assembled and collected from years of Regents action. Last updated in 2008, districts must make sure that they have all the “pieces” described in this list. Schools that have grades other than five through eight in their school must also consider other parts of the Commissioner’s Regulations. The regulations are located at <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/part100/pages/1004.html>.

The final piece of regulation you ought to consider in your budgetary and programmatic decisions concerns the **Three Models Strategy** for middle-level programs in New York State. It may not be universally known that there are actually three (or four) different models for middle-level education: Model A, B, C1, and C2 that were codified in 2005 (NYSED, 2005). The three paths, or models, can be found in CR100.4 and are described in this way:

Model A (Follow Existing Regulations): Schools would continue to operate under the regulations as they exist in implementing an effective middle-level program, ensuring that all students achieve the intermediate-level state learning standards. Most schools will continue to work within the present regulatory requirements, taking full advantage of the flexibility that is provided within the Commissioner’s Regulations.

Model B (Strengthen the Academic Core): Schools where students are struggling to reach proficiency in English and mathematics may need flexibility to emphasize literacy and numeracy. These schools will be able to propose a program that strengthens core academic subjects and effective Academic Intervention Services, while providing all students with instruction that

addresses the NYS Learning Standards of all non-tested areas, are of high interest to students, and further reinforce core academic learning. Schools may be granted regulatory relief to implement their proposals.

Model C (Develop Next Generation Schools/Programs): In schools where student success has been demonstrated, there will be opportunity to propose new ideas for middle-level programs. Schools could propose to restructure the full educational program (Model C1) or parts of the educational program (Model C2). In either case, schools must ensure that all students receive opportunities to achieve all of the NYS Learning Standards. Schools may be granted regulatory relief to implement their proposals.

It is important to note that all middle-level programs, no matter which operating model is implemented, must be designed so that all students meet all twenty-eight of the NYS Learning Standards. It is important to note that the Commissioner’s Regulations also clearly state that alignment with the Regents policy statement on middle-level education and the State Education Department’s essential elements of standards-focused middle-level schools and programs must be maintained no matter which of the three models are employed.

Times are hard and they are likely to get worse before they get better. We might well be in the midst of the greatest period of financial challenge our schools have ever seen. Therefore we must redouble our efforts to program for our early adolescents. While impassioned arguments and heartfelt pleas might be one approach to take when defending good middle-level practice, perhaps a more reasoned, regulation-based approach would be more fruitful and convincing in the midst of all the heated conversations occurring in board rooms across the state. If you are not

already intimately familiar with these documents you should become so as soon as possible. These are the strongest and straightest arrows in the quiver of middle level weapons.

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Nominations for Fall 2010 Election

NYSMSA is governed by a Board of Directors elected by its membership. Nominations are needed for the following positions:

- **Secretary**
- **Director of Region I**
- **Director of Region III**
- **Co-Directors of Region VII**
- **Director of Region IX**

Officers serve for a period of two (2) years. Regional Directors serve for a period of three (3) years and must work in the regions they represent.

The Board, along with other association personnel, meets approximately six times a year to direct the course of our professional organization.

You may nominate an individual or self-nominate for any of the open positions. All candidates for office must be members of NYSMSA.

Please provide the following information about the nominee:

- Name & Current Work Position
- Place & Address of Employment
- Work & Home Telephone Numbers
- E-Mail Address
- Position being sought

Also needed is a statement of qualification and discussion of why the candidate is seeking the position. A high-resolution digital photo (head shot) is recommended, but not required. All nominations must be postmarked no later than **July 23, 2010**.

Nominations can be e-mailed to sampson@nysmsa.org or mailed to NYSMSA, P.O. Box 2065, Niagara Falls NY 14301.

Ballots will be mailed to the membership in late August. Election results will be announced at the October 2010 conference.

Lea's Lessons

Lea Macdonald



RAFTing in the Middle: Motivating Students to Write

Writing across the content areas is a key focus at our middle school this year and in many schools across the state. Motivating our students to write is a daunting task in all the subjects. The instructional strategy, RAFT is certainly not new; however, I decided to give it a try in my seventh grade social studies class as a way to hook my students into writing. It worked! I'd like to share the basics of this strategy with you.

Background

RAFT is a writing strategy that helps students understand their role as a writer, the audience they will address, the varied formats for writing, and the topic they'll be writing about. By using this strategy, teachers encourage students to write creatively, to consider a topic from a different perspective, and to gain practice writing for different audiences. Students learn to respond to writing prompts that require them to think about various perspectives:

- **Role of the Writer:** Who are you as the writer? A pilgrim? A soldier? The President?
- **Audience:** To whom are you writing? A political rally? A potential employer?
- **Format:** In what format are you writing? A letter? An advertisement? A speech?
- **Topic:** What are you writing about?

What Is Its Purpose?

The purpose of RAFT is to give students a fresh way to think about approaching their

writing. It occupies a nice middle ground between standard, dry essays and free-for-all creative writing. RAFT combines the best of both. It also can be the way to bring together students' understanding of main ideas, organization, elaboration, and coherence...in other words, the criteria by which compositions are most commonly judged.

Benefits

Students must think creatively and critically in order to respond to prompts, making RAFT a unique way for students to apply critical thinking skills about new information they are learning. RAFT writing is applicable in every content area, thereby providing a universal writing approach for content area teachers. Almost all RAFT writing assignments are written from a viewpoint different from the student's, to another audience rather than the teacher, and in a form different from the ordinary theme. Therefore, students are encouraged to use creative thinking and response as they connect their imagination to newly learned information.

How Can I Do It?

Step one: Explain to the students how all writers have to consider various aspects before every writing assignment including role, audience, format, and topic. Tell them that they are going to structure their writing around these elements. (It may be helpful to display the elements on chart paper or a bulletin board for future reference.)

Step two: Share a completed RAFT example, and discuss the key elements as a class.

Step three: Demonstrate, model, and “think aloud” another sample RAFT exercise with the aid of the class. Brainstorm additional topic ideas, and write down the suggestions listing roles, audiences, formats, and strong verbs associated with each topic.

Step four: Assign students to small heterogeneous groups of four or five (or pairs) and have them “put their heads together” to write about a chosen topic with one RAFT assignment among them.

Step five: Circulate among the groups to provide assistance as needed. Then have the groups share their completed assignments with the class.

Step six: After students become more proficient in developing this style of writing,

have them generate RAFT assignments of their own based on current topics studied in class.

How Can I Adapt It?

- This strategy is great for differentiation; teachers (and students) can develop any number of possible RAFT matrices based on the same text that can be adjusted for skill level and rigor.
- The RAFT strategy can be used as a pre-writing strategy and/or as a strategy for helping students prepare for a small or large group discussion.

Motivating our students to become writers is one of the most difficult challenges we face as middle-level educators. RAFT helps children to pick up their pens and start writing!

This is an example of a RAFT writing matrix offering choices to students in social studies class during the unit on World War II:

RAFT Choices

Role	Audience	Format	Topic
President Franklin D. Roosevelt	His wife, Eleanor Roosevelt	Conversation	Why I issued Executive Order 9066
Neighbor of a Japanese-American family	An uncle in New York City	Friendly Letter	What I think about the situation with the Japanese-Americans
Young Japanese-American girl or boy	Future generations of Americans	Poem of at least 8 lines	Why people should be judged on their merit, not their race, religion, or the way they look
Guard at an internment camp	Writing in a personal diary	Diary entry of at least 8 sentences	Describing daily life in the internment camps

Here is an example of an assessment tool for RAFT writing assignments.

RAFT Rubric

Accuracy	The information provided in RAFT is very incomplete and/or has major anachronisms.	The information provided in RAFT has some small inaccuracies, omissions or anachronisms.	The information provided in RAFT is accurate but could use more support or specific details related to subject or time period.	Information & details in RAFT are always accurate and properly reflect information, ideas and themes related to the subject and time period.
Perspective	Viewpoint or ideas are sketchy and not drawn from time period. RAFT does not show insight into how characters feel or act during the event(s).	Viewpoint or ideas reflect current concerns rather than time period. RAFT does not show insight into how characters feel during the event(s).	RAFT maintains a reasonably consistent point of view and includes ideas relevant to role and time period played. Character's feelings about the event(s) are evident.	RAFT maintains clear, consistent point of view, tone and ideas relevant to role and time period played. Ideas and information always tied to role and audience of time. Characters are insightfully shown.
Focus	RAFT wanders from topic; focus cannot be seen or has many side comments.	Central topic and purpose of RAFT can be seen, but focus is inconsistent.	RAFT stays largely on topic; its ideas are mostly supported.	RAFT stays on topic, consistently maintains form or type; details and information are included and directly support the purpose.
Use of Class Time	Class time used to disrupt others. Class resources are not or inappropriately used.	Class time and resources used to do work for other classes and/or chat with friends.	Class time used mostly effectively to research the era and create coherent stories.	Class time used efficiently and appropriately to research the era and create interesting, well written, stories; extra effort or involvement beyond class.
Presentation	Writing is unclear and has gaps or confusions. Essay is marred by numerous errors, which disrupt reader's understanding.	Writing wanders or is somewhat repetitious. Essay contains several sentence errors and mechanical mistakes that may interfere with clarity of ideas. Audience is irritated by errors.	Writing is clear and direct. Essay contains some fragments, run-ons or other errors; occasional mechanical mistakes. Audience is informed.	Writing is fluent and interesting. Essay contains few or no fragments or run-on sentences; rare errors or mechanical mistakes result from risk-taking. It engages and informs audience.



Team Teaching

Jonathan Duval

My first year teaching at a middle school was an adjustment. I came from being a Special Education Teaching Assistant in an urban high school to a full-time, general education classroom teacher at a rural middle school. Growing up in a suburban area, I had little exposure to either dynamic. Besides the cultural differences, my commute changed dramatically as well; an 11 mile drive suddenly became a 43 mile drive each way. During the drive, I not only had ample time to notice the changing scenery, I was also able to reflect upon my classroom dynamics, which were about to change radically.

Fortunately for me, I was assigned a mentor with whom I immediately connected. Tim was a blessing and an excellent coach. He was from the area and had actually graduated from the school district in which I was about to begin teaching. His insight into the culture of the district was invaluable as I started to develop my unit and lesson plans for the upcoming school year. Little did either of us realize that we would soon be developing our lessons together and instituting a trial program of team-teaching seventh grade Social Studies.

For those who may be unfamiliar with team teaching, it basically means that either Tim or I will bring our students into the other's classroom and teach a combined class of students. Two teachers, 40 or so students per class may sound unruly, but it is truly an exciting way to teach. The cultural differences between Tim and me have become an asset rather than a hindrance. Our individual strengths as teachers were amplified and our

weaknesses minimized as we began to develop our repartee during our lessons together.

After initial success teaching a few lessons here and there together, Tim and I decided to try teaching all units and lessons together for an entire school year. Our goal was to evaluate the data on student achievement for the two years, comparing and contrasting student scores on units that were team taught as opposed to those that were taught separately in the traditional model. Our results spoke for themselves.¹ On average, we saw an increase of over 10 points across the curriculum when we were team teaching. In addition, we also observed a raised level of mastery and a decrease in the amount of failures on unit exams. Furthermore, student surveys on classes illustrated that most students preferred this method of instruction and eagerly anticipated our class.

After recording and reviewing all of the data, we concluded that we would team teach seventh grade Social Studies for as long as the district allowed. Fortunately for us, as of today we are still doing just that. The advantages we have seen include the following:

- Continuity and consistency across the curriculum through the development of a cohesive Curriculum Map
- Differentiation of units and lessons to meet the needs of all students including those with special needs
- Enhanced mentoring relationship for both teacher through coaching and reflection

¹ See Appendix A

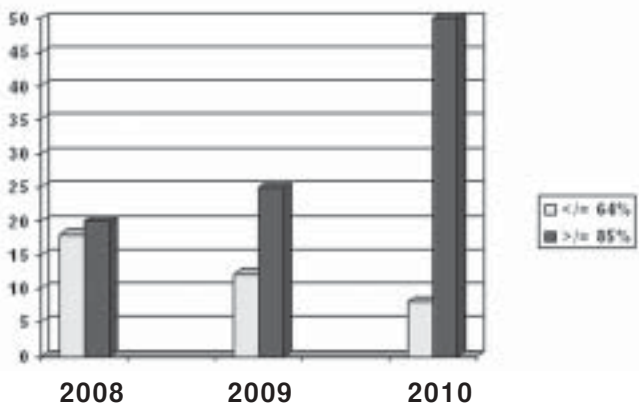
Furthermore, the team-teaching approach allowed Tim and me ample time for reflection, which has allowed us to:

- Increase student achievement and mastery on Social Studies Performance indicators
- Compare data on tests, quizzes, DBQ's and homework assignments
- Develop, analyze and reflect on unit review game outcomes
- Analyze the effect of the different delivery styles of the same content to learn where we can improve our presentation skills

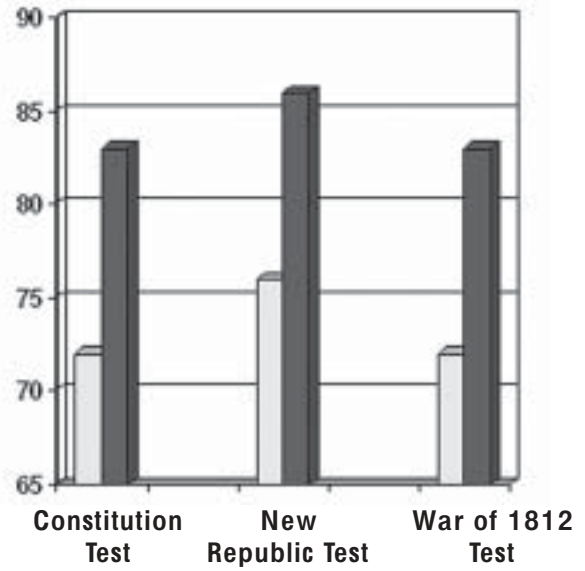
For those teachers who have heard about team-teaching but are unsure if it would work for their particular situation, do not be afraid. It has been the best thing to happen in my teaching career, and I cannot imagine teaching any other way. Team teaching does require work on the part of the teacher not only to develop in-depth and meaningful lessons, but also to forge a bond with the co-teacher that allows them to both utilize their different strengths in the classroom. However, this investment is worth it in the long run, and the students will benefit greatly from this approach. You will see increased results in student achievement and an increase in positive attitudes within your class. Take the plunge!

Appendix A

**Failure vs Mastery
US Constitution Test — 92 Students**



Grade Level Test Average — 92 Students



Membership and Publication Information

In Transition is a benefit of both individual and building membership in the New York State Middle School Association. Annual membership dues are \$50 for individual membership and \$150 for building membership. Memberships are on an “anniversary date” basis.

For any changes in membership information, please contact the NYSMSA office by e-mail (office@nysmsa.org) or phone/fax (716-282-6511). Individual and Building Membership applications can be downloaded from our website: www.nysmsa.org. Additionally, new membership applications paid via credit card can be completed online.

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In the Middle of Crisis: A Look at the Problem with Educating Black Boys and How We Can Begin the Process of Solving It

Shawn L. Robertson, Ed.D.

When many educators think of Black males, it evokes a response that covers a wide range of emotions and perspectives. Fear and blame are the two things that seem to impact the plight of the Black male in society, especially within our school systems. What is clear when this issue is raised is that many educators don't realize that the fate of Black males as students in our society rests largely in their hands.

While it is clear that there are many other factors that contribute to the issue of producing Black males who are well educated and who can contribute positively to society in ways other than in the athletic arena and the music industry, the educators' role in shaping the Black males of today and tomorrow is of the highest importance. While the future for Black males is unclear, it seems that the past is, at least for now, a clear indicator of what most assuredly lies ahead for most of them and us.

For those who don't know, the Black male is the lowest performing sub-group in America; that's right — America. Many studies have indicated that they are more likely to be disciplined in school, and with stiffer penalties than other students. They are also more likely to be recommended for and classified as special education students. The labels that are more often than not ascribed to them are: Mentally Retarded, Learning Disabled and Emotionally Disturbed. They have the lowest graduation rate of all ethnic groups. Surprisingly, this is especially true in

New York. According to the Schott Foundation's *Given Half a Chance* report (2008), New York ranks 45 out of 50 in terms of having the lowest percentage of Black males graduating high school. What may be more alarming is that that percentage graduating high school is an abysmal 39. Obviously, this is not solely a high school issue. It is a

For those who don't know, the Black male is the lowest performing sub-group in America.

systemic problem that clearly is an outgrowth of what Black males do not learn in earlier grades. For example, the Schott report indicates that 54% of Black males in New York read below the basic level according to 2007 data collected by NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress). These students are New York State middle level's current seventh graders. Additionally, half (50%) of eighth grade Black males are reading below basic level. Would we accept a doctor's performance if she stitched a wound half successfully on her

patients while the other half of her patients were smitten with persistent infection and disease? Certainly not, and nor should we, but we must seek to increase the standard of what is acceptable in educating our Black male students. Silently, a generation of Black males is being bred for no productive role in our society.

While there are many theories as to why Black males fail, a deeper question we must ask ourselves as educators is: **Why do we, as educators, let them fail?**

At the middle level, all students are going through the developmental stages that are ushering them into young adulthood. Many Black male students are going through an even more challenging growth process — Identity Crisis. It is no secret that the Black male is an endangered species when it comes to producing healthy adults, for a myriad of complex reasons. So where then is the Black male to look for someone to identify with if by chance he is one of the many who have no positive adult male in his life? This can be true for the majority of Black males. Without a positive male to identify with at a time when forming one's self-identity is so crucial, the Black male student finds himself in a world with few alternatives. In an effort to develop a strong sense of self, often times he will identify with individuals in his neighborhood who are less than positive role models in attitude and deed. Or perhaps he might turn to an older sibling who himself has lacked a positive adult male to identify with and is simply learning how to be a man on his own (although there are many Black women who work hard to raise their sons in a positive manner). In most cases he is turning outside of the school structure to look for assistance in helping him decide on what sort of individual he should fashion himself after — whether it is an unsavory person in the neighborhood or a gang member — and ultimately, what sort of individual he will develop into. Schools need to seize the opportunity to assist Black males within their buildings to become successful individuals.

One major aspect of the problem within the school is identity development. If schools would engage Black males effectively, it could significantly affect them in a positive way. One key to developing Black males' identity positively is to create mentoring experiences for them at the onset of middle school or earlier. Contrary to some beliefs, the mentor does not have to be Black or male to

have a good influence on the student. Research and experience has shown us that students of any color simply need a caring adult in their lives to make a difference. Trying to reach the Black male is where schools need to begin. What can schools do? For starters, schools can educate teachers on the problem and engage in a real study for themselves about how they engage their Black male population. Having the conversation is a key starting point for producing the kind of thinking that will translate into positive action toward solving the situation. Schools should begin by analyzing their data regarding the students in their building no matter how large or small the Black male population is. To do nothing is to contribute to the perpetuation of the problem.

The essential question for schools looking to make a difference is: How do we engage our Black males within the context of school? Below are four areas of school engagement that will help faculty and staff begin to understand and remedy the issues that plague the Black male.

1. Socially: How do we support Black males with positive social supports? (e.g. mentoring, positive peer support groups, programs)
2. Academically: How do we support Black males' academic achievement unique to the crisis affecting them? (e.g. curriculum, academic support classes)
3. Instructionally: How do we support Black males cultural learning style(s)? (e.g. cooperative learning, collaborative projects, opportunities to lead)
4. Culturally: How do we demonstrate a sustained support for cultural sensitivity in and out of the classroom? (e.g. parent meetings, professional development)

Social supports are an integral aspect of helping to develop Black males who are healthy in every regard. When a school ne-

glects to develop appropriate social supports it quietly perpetuates the status quo system, which provides little to no school-focused social interventions.

Academic supports are also key to assisting Black males in growing intellectually in relation to the knowledge they are required to attain while in the school system. Schools have a moral obligation to provide a curriculum that is inclusive and reflective of all cultures, especially those that have had a large integral part of the development of America as we know it today. When Black males do not see themselves or their positive heritage in the curriculum, it creates a disconnect between their culture and experience and the curriculum they are being taught. That disconnect is a primary cause of academic disengagement. The curriculum must relate to the student's experience and culture in some positive way in order to achieve positive results. Additionally, those Black males who are gifted academically must be presented with the expecta-

tion that they perform at the academic achievement level of their gifting. All must know that positive academic growth is the only result they will be allowed to have. After all, teacher expectation is the number one determining factor for student performance (not socio-economic status, race/ethnicity or gender).

Instructional and cultural supports are more challenging to build proficiency in because, even though the two are interwoven, they have traditionally been treated separately. Thoughtful attention to these areas will increase our Black males' growth and development.

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Do you have a colleague who has promoted good middle-level practice in your school, area, or region?

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Carving Out the Middle in a 7-12 Building

Lindsay Marzec & Kristy Carlson



Last year, Frewsburg Jr. Sr. High School in Frewsburg, New York, created a Middle Level Improvement Team whose mission is to create a Middle Level environment in the 7-12 building through the use of the Essential Elements. In order to carve out this middle level, the team decided to focus on school pride and teamwork as a way to encourage students to feel a sense of connection with their fellow seventh and eighth graders. As stated in our middle-level mission statement, our faculty and staff are dedicated to providing a safe, caring, inclusive, and challenging environment for all learners, producing citizens who are motivated, self-confident, creative, and collaborative.

For months, middle-level faculty met and planned for a Middle Level Field Day. After careful planning and organizing, Frewsburg Middle Level students were able to have their day at the town park. Faculty and staff were not the only ones working hard for this day. For two months preceding the Field Day, students were busy working in teams to develop and exhibit positive character traits. The goal for each student was to obtain links for his or her team's chain. Students were rewarded links for good behavior, completion of assignments, and other qualities that contribute to Bear Pride. If each of the team chains linked together around the whole of the cafeteria, then all students were rewarded with the Field Day. Each team was also responsible for constructing a banner including the team color, motto, and name. These banners were displayed in the cafeteria as a way to remind students of their dedication to teamwork. These banners were also used

during the Field Day. For the Field Day, students completed a series of team-building activities at various stations around the park. The Middle Level Improvement Team, including teachers, guidance counselors, and the principal, Kathleen Anderson, along with cafeteria staff, all participated in order to make this event a huge success. The students were enthusiastic and actively engaged in positive character-building activities.

When the 2009-2010 school year began, the Middle Level Improvement Team was excited to continue the momentum created by last year's success. The first project on the agenda was the creation of a Homework Den, where students who were struggling academically could go as a way to get help with their homework. Two days a week are now dedicated to both a seventh grade and an eighth grade Homework Den. What began as a mandatory way for the few students who were failing multiple classes to get on the right track, has now turned into a great success where teachers give their time to help students in all academic levels with assignments, projects, and study skills. The success was obvious when second-marking-period grades were released. All students in the Homework Den improved greatly, most making it off the multiple failure list, and many with passing marks in all their classes. At progress report time, every three weeks, members of the Middle Level Improvement Team check up on the students' grades to determine who needs to be in Homework Den. However, attendance has not been an issue, with thirty to fifty students in attendance every Tuesday and Thursday.

Throughout the year, students have been participating in activities that showcase their Bear Pride and good character. As spring approached, the Team worked to create an even better Field Day than last year's. All seventh and eighth grade students began the spring with *Be Aware Week*. This week was created as a way to increase student awareness of Bear Pride and pride in the community of Frewsburg. The week began with *Dress with the Best*, allowing students to show their pride by looking their best. A *Search Out the Best* scavenger hunt followed, giving students the opportunity to work together. *Save the Best* allowed students to bring in recyclables to help keep our community clean, showing that each individual can make a difference if all work together towards a common goal. *Be Aware Week* concluded with *Listen to the Best*. On this day, students visited stations around the school where they heard successful professionals from the community discuss how they show pride in Frewsburg and how education helped them reach their goals.

Our mission to enable students to strive and succeed in an evolving world is being recognized as the middle-level faculty and staff continue to show strong educational leadership by volunteering their time to provide programs that support our seventh and eighth grade students. Strong administrative support and staff dedication, combined with a shared vision, have played a pivotal role in the success of our Middle Level Improvement Team and, most importantly, have increased academic excellence and character development for our middle-level student body.

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Focusing Your Leadership Values

Dr. Edward J. Sullivan



Middle-level educators are used to being challenged. Sometimes, it is the challenge of working with the emerging adolescent. Other times, challenges come from central office where concern might be raised about teacher absenteeism, test scores, or a discipline incident. Many middle-level administrators say those issues come with the position.

There is also the major challenge of NCLB and RTTP that places pressure on the values of administrators who want their schools to represent more than what is implied by a regime of testing. How can administrators remain strong in the face of the challenge where test scores are what count? In New York, we are fortunate to have SED's *Essential Elements* as a core of beliefs on which to structure middle schools. The five tenets of the *Whole Child Initiative* developed by ASCD and endorsed by NYSASCD also serve as a foundation upon which to construct a meaningful middle school program. Taken together, the elements and the tenets provide a promising framework for action to guide the daily actions of middle level administrators. A skilled administrator and committed staff can achieve the inherent benefit of both the *essentials* and the *tenets*.

Administrators negotiate a complex landscape of monitoring instruction to deliver the proficiency levels geared to meet AYP and leading the faculty to a broad-based curriculum that will help students achieve the knowledge and skills for their effective functioning in the 21st century. It is reasonable to assume that the

demands of meeting AYP and not being a School in Need of Improvement are worthy goals. However, is the leader doing the right thing for pupils by leading a school with such a narrow focus?

Most middle school administrators candidate for their position with a strong commitment to that age level and a desire to lead youth through a normally difficult time of development. How, then, can these advocates for middle schools rise to the challenges presented by NCLB/RTTP, continue to exercise their commitment, and re-frame the conversation to direct more attention toward the *Essential Elements* and *Whole Child*?

Positive relationships define an effective middle school. Meaningful relationships are built upon trust, respect, and integrity. These core values define the administrator and are critical toward the cultivation of open, honest, and sincere interactions of the school's stakeholders. Imagine the power of these combined values and a vision focused on achievement for all learners! An administrator should model these values and lead faculty beyond the narrow NCLB/RTTP curriculum. When that occurs, there is a strong potential for the realization of the *Essentials* and the *Whole Child tenets*.

New York's middle school administrators have an awareness and understanding of the *Essentials*. The *whole child tenets* may be not as well known or articulated. They are: healthy, safe, supported, engaged, and challenged. ASCD (2007) posits that

academic achievement is “but one element of student learning and development and only a part of any complete system of educational accountability” (p. 2). The five tenets address the qualities of a program that should be present in order for students to be successful. The emphasis of NCLB/RTTP on student achievement is important, but out of touch with the mission of schools to prepare youth for today’s multiple literacies, effective citizenship, and perpetuation of culture. Our middle schoolers are at a time of their lives when they should be cognizant of the components of a healthy lifestyle. Pupils have the right to be in a physically and socially safe environment. These pupils deserve to be supported by caring, nurturing, and helpful adults. They should feel engaged in their learning and connected to a dynamic learning program based in the school but related to the community. Each child should feel challenged to reach his/her potential and to be prepared not only for high school but for effective functioning in the 21st century.

So, how does the middle school administrator relate to all of this? Simply, you are the leader. You are encouraged to fulfill the dream set by James Burns (1978) when he stated, “And the genius of leadership lies in the manner in which leaders see and act on their own and their followers’ values and motivation” (p.13). More contemporary claims for the importance of values are buttressed by research of Marzano, et.al.(2005) and the team of Wilcox and Angelis (2009).

Marzano’s (2005) meta-analysis of previous studies identified 21 responsibilities that relate to academic achievement. Marzano’s job responsibilities relating to values are: *optimizer, relationships, visibility, culture, focus, and ideals/beliefs*. Wilcox and Angelis (2009) studied ten diverse middle schools in New York and

identified six key elements of best practice in middle schools. Similar to Marzano, all of their identified elements have a foundation in one’s values; however, the two critical elements more easily interpreted as values-based are *shared vision* and *relationships*. These aforementioned researchers underscore the impact of a leader on the development of human capital (faculty, students, parents, etc.). The measure of success will be the degree to which the leader develops the talent and competence of constituents.

Basic to a leader’s work is his/her values. What does one hold sacred or consider being true north? What is the bottom line? Is the administrator viewed as the instructional leader, an advocate for all students, and a proponent of a well-rounded educational program? Answers to these questions are not automatically easy when faced with the reality of NCLB/RTTP. The fulfillment of the *Essentials* and *Whole Child tenets for our students* (and stakeholders) are dependent upon the leader basing his/her work on what is right. This is the ultimate judge of a person’s values — doing what is right. In one of his latest books on change, Michael Fullan (2009) claims *love your employees* and *connect peers with purpose* as two significant concepts that will help the administrator achieve change for the greater good.

Values of trust, respect, and integrity are foundational to an effective leader. Moving schools to the next level will also require that the principal epitomize values such as persistency, authenticity, caring, empathy, and commitment. Diane Ravitch (2010) reports that leadership values demonstrated by Anthony Alvarado in New York City’s successful District 2 stressed the “importance of collegiality, caring, and respect among staff members” (p.39). There was a culture of high expectations founded upon

mutual commitment, care, and concern. Others exalt the prime leadership skill of establishing “a sense of compassion and responsibility for others” as identified with the noted explorer, Ernest Shackleton (Morrell and Capparell, 2001). The relationship between SED’s *Essentials* and the ASCD *Whole Child tenets* to a leader’s core values are presented as the accompanying chart (on page 28).

Manifesting one’s values through positive action that support the *Essentials* and *Whole Child tenets* will cement the perceptions of the administrator as an effective leader. Taken together, they will help the middle-level administrator reach beyond the constraints of NCLB/RTTP to serve stakeholders with competent leadership skills. Basing one’s leadership upon a sound foundation of core values will help the administrator *do the right thing* and guide adolescents toward a deserving education.

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www.nysed.gov

www.wholechilddeducation.org

RELATIONSHIP OF ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS, WHOLE CHILD TENETS AND VALUES

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF STANDARDS-FOCUSED MIDDLE-LEVEL SCHOOLS (New York State Education Department)	DESCRIPTORS OF THE ELEMENT (New York State Education Department)	WHOLE CHILD TENETS (ASCD)	LEADER'S CORE VALUES
1. Philosophy and mission that reflect the intellectual and developmental needs and characteristics of young adolescents	collaboration, supported environment, connections, responsibility for all learners	Healthy, Safe, Supported, Engaged, Challenged	visionary, integrity, authenticity, concerned
2. Educational program that is comprehensive, challenging, purposeful, integrated, relevant and standards-based	encompasses State standards, cross-program connections, up-to-date curricula, assessment-based, scope and sequence	Engaged, Challenged	committed, persistent
3. Organization and structure that support both academic excellence and personal development	teacher teams, flexible scheduling, ties to parents and community, co-curricular and extra-curricular opportunities	Healthy, Safe, Supported	respectful, open, collegial, collaborative
4. Classroom instruction appropriate to the needs and characteristics of young adolescents provided by skilled and knowledgeable teachers	understanding of developmental tasks and characteristics, use of researched-based practices, activity-oriented instruction, knows subject matter	Healthy, Safe, Supported, Engaged, Challenged	caring, respectful, honest, genuine
5. Strong educational leadership and a building administration that encourage, facilitate, and sustain involvement, participation, and partnerships	knows and understands adolescent developmental milestones, promotes school culture, collaborates with stakeholders, communicates, advocates	Healthy, Safe, Supported	integrity, collegial, collaborative, empathetic
6. Network of academic and personal support available for all students	guidance/counseling programs, parent-involvement, mentors, exploratory-programs, character education	Healthy, Safe, Supported, Engaged	caring, collegial, integrity, compassion, authentic
7. Professional learning and staff development for all staff that are ongoing, planned, purposeful, and collaboratively developed	builds high expectations for all students, use of data to improve instruction, individualized, collaborative	Supported, Engaged, Challenged	trustworthy, caring, concern, empathy, committed

You are invited to join your middle-level colleagues from across New York State at the

Eighth Annual Middle-Level Institute at The Corning Museum of Glass

**Monday & Tuesday,
June 28 & 29, 2010**

NYSMSA and The Corning Museum of Glass are proud to host our Eighth Annual NYSMSA/CMoG Middle-Level Institute in Corning, New York. The Institute will be held at CMOG's ultra-modern facility. In addition to ten hours of intensive hands-on middle-level instruction, participants will spend time perusing the glass exhibits that extend back to antiquity and exercising their own creativity with a hands-on glass project.

Participants will select and participate in one of several instructional strands being offered by practitioner experts. Each session will provide participants with the tools needed to apply back in your middle-level school what is taught in practical ways. Instruction will include hands-on components with twenty-five or fewer individuals in each session.

Special activities have also been scheduled to encourage socialization and networking. We are hopeful that in addition to gaining cutting-edge middle-level education skills and learning of current research in the field, both instructors and participants will form lasting collegial networks that will support new and creative middle-level instructional endeavors long into the future.

Registrations are on a “first come- first served” basis to prevent over-subscription to sessions.

Listed below are the hands-on workshops that will be offered during the 2010 Institute:

- **Solving the Problem with Mathematical Problem Solving: Ideas, Resources, and Activities to Engage Students** (Mary Behr Altieri)
- **Reaching the Brain through the Heart: 12 Keys for Linking the Essential Elements and Social Emotional Learning (SEL) to Increase Academics** (Dr. Paul Vermette and Cindy Kline)
- **Teaching Strategies with the Teenage Brain in Mind Highlighting the Differences of How Boys and Girls Learn Differently** (Vivian Demers-Jagoda)
- **Practical Methods for Implementing SED's Seven Essential Elements in Your School and Its Classrooms** (Olivia Sutton, Carl Christensen, Mark Fish, and Terry Quinn)
- **Best Practices with Technology Tools in the Classroom: Leading and Learning with Web 2.0** (Jeff Craig)
- **Classroom Management and Student Motivation Strategies That Work** (Jack Berckemeyer)

Go to www.NYSMSA.org for detailed information.



The Impact of the Middle Grades on High School Graduation Rates

Linda Kramer Schlosser, Ph.D.

On March 11, 2010, Scott Waldman of the *Times Union* reported that New York State's graduation rates for students who started ninth grade in 2005 was only 72% state-wide. Embedded in this figure are large gaps for minority groups, English language learners, and students with special needs, where in the latter two groups, only 44% graduated within a six year time span. The data are even worse for urban areas like Albany and Rochester.

So what does this mean for middle grade educators? What impact does a student's middle grades experience have on high school graduation? The answer is: Substantial! This fundamental truth is the primary finding of Robert Balfanz's (2009) brief describing a decade of research and development work at the Center for the Social Organization of Schools (CSOS) at Johns Hopkins University, and his work with 30-plus middle schools involved in reform efforts. According to Balfanz, the stakes are even higher if the students in question attend school in high poverty areas. He reports that as early as sixth grade, indicators are evident that predict graduation rates. His data show that a combination of poor attendance, sustained misbehavior, and failing grades in math or English during the middle grades result in only a 10-20% chance to graduate on-time. Even more telling, only 25% of students with at least one of these risk factors graduate within five years.

The pivotal role of the middle grades, described by Balfanz, is reinforced in other recent studies conducted by Williams, Kirst and Haertel (2010), the National Association

of Secondary Schools (NASSP), Phi Delta Kappa (PDK), and Lumina (2007), and Rodderick (2006). Middle schools whose students do better in high school are ones situated in districts characterized by a shared culture focused on improving the academic preparation of all students, including those students with special needs and with the high risk factors identified in the Balfanz study. Perhaps the most important outcome of a district-wide shared culture is the intentional design of academic programs that *prepare middle grade students to enter high school*, and thus, give them a better chance to graduate.

In *What Makes Middle Schools Work* (2007), researchers in New York report five key factors: trusting relationships among all stake-holders; a focus on the socio-emotional well-being of students, as well as their academic well-being; fully-functioning, effective teams; a decision-making process based on research; and a shared vision. While there is no question that these components are essential, it is time to look beyond the middle school walls and ask how our students fare once they leave us if we are to make a difference in graduation rates. If we believe middle schools can and do impact students' success in high school, we need to add *planning toward transition* to the list. Planning toward transition differs substantially from planning for transition. The former implies long-term collaboration across the seven years of middle and high school, not just a set of orientation activities.

Aspirations

Ask any middle school student what he wants to do with his life, and the overwhelming majority will reply, “go to college and get a high paying job.” Young adolescents, whether they are successful students or students at risk of failure, set very high goals for themselves, but have limited or unrealistic ideas about how to achieve these goals. They want to be surgeons, lawyers, professional ball players, models, crime scene investigators, etc., and above all, they want to be wealthy. They are so optimistic about their futures, about going to college and obtaining high paying jobs that their lack of detail about what will be needed to prepare for the future is both mystifying and troubling.

The national poll of over 1,800 seventh and eighth graders conducted in 2007 by NASSP and PDK, with assistance from the Lumina Foundation, found that 90% of middle school students believe they are very/somewhat prepared to succeed in high school. The vast majority, 92%, felt they would definitely/probably attend college, and 93% indicated they would never drop out of school. Unfortunately, such optimistic beliefs do not predict what actually happens when students leave the middle grades. Why? Eighty-three percent of those same seventh and eighth graders surveyed knew little/ nothing about the classes they needed to take to graduate from high school, and 68% of those who said they will attend college indicated they had little/ no information about how to choose classes that would prepare them.

Middle School-High School Collaboration through Vertical Teams

In many districts across the country, vertical teams have emerged as a powerful ally in the education of young adolescents at all levels of ability, an ally that could potentially impact a district’s graduation rates. Vertical teams are made up of teachers who

represent multiple grade levels, including a high school and its feeder middle schools, and are subject-specific as opposed to interdisciplinary. These district-wide teams are charged with developing and implementing vertically aligned programs that focus on embedding the skills and dispositions the district’s teachers identify as leading to graduation.

Vertical teams ask the hard questions about course enrollment patterns, standardized testing results, district-based/school-based testing results, and student motivation and disposition. Using their district-based findings, middle and high school teachers plan and implement subject-specific strategies for improvement, setting grade-level goals and establishing short- and long-term plans of action. Their primary objective is to improve the quality of instruction for all students in the subject area and grades represented by the team.

The beauty of vertical teams is that middle and high school teachers, working together, can more easily see where each level contributes to the total educational vision. They breathe life into the district’s curriculum map by visualizing and verbalizing the district’s graduating students as a collaborative end product. Successful graduates are not just successful because of their accomplishments in high school — but their accomplishments in high school are clearly connected to their preparation in middle school. So, too, the struggling student’s experience in middle school is more clearly recognized for its potential long-term outcome, and steps are taken more quickly to address those outcomes before it is too late. Successful completion of high school really is a vertical team effort.

The number of operating vertical teams, to date, is increasing slowly. In truth, they take time, teacher buy-in, and district-wide commitment to establish, but the future is bright. Organizations like NASSP (2006) strongly

endorse vertical teams, proposing that districts must:

- Establish the content that a student is required to master in order to successfully make the transition to high school and align the curriculum and teaching strategies to realize that goal.
- Provide structured planning time for teachers to align curriculum across grades and schools and to map efforts that address the academic, developmental, social, and personal needs of students, especially at critical transition periods.

Vertical teams are a means by which districts can align curriculum and instruction with the habits of mind necessary for success; change the relationships between middle and high schools, and therefore between high schools and colleges; and treat all students like the best students. Their importance lies in the recognition of the critical role the middle grades play in a district's successful or not-so-successful graduation rates because they emphasize that preparing young adolescents to enter high school and *planning toward that transition* is a responsibility that must be shared.

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Franklinville Central Takes a New Approach to Technology Courses

Katie McFarland & Don Watkins



Today's students face a myriad of opportunities, challenges and pitfalls with all of the technology tools available to them. Inquisitive young people use cell phones, social networks and since all of them grew up on the internet it is second nature for them to use it. Most of today's teens spend more time on the internet than they do watching television. We want these experiences to be positive and productive, while also being safe. So at the end of last school year, Franklinville Junior/Senior High Principal, Mr. Thomas Kopp, approached Don Watkins, his Technology Integrator, about designing and teaching a class that dealt with digital safety for students in seventh and eighth grades.

At the direction of Mr. Kopp, Mr. Watkins designed a course that is the first of its kind at Franklinville Central School. The course, entitled Digital Citizenship for Middle School Students, covers nine basic areas of digital citizenship as they are defined by the International Society of Technology in Education (ISTE). This year the class will look at digital access and how access is so important to today's learners and examine digital communication in its various forms including social networks, cell phones, and electronic mail. They cover topics like digital etiquette and what is appropriate and not appropriate when using technology. Throughout the year they will also look at

digital literacy and what it means to be digitally literate in this first part of the twenty-first century. Students will examine digital law and copyright and how to be sure that they are complying with the law. Another topic is security and why it's important in an online environment. Students also have an opportunity to consider what their digital rights and responsibilities are. They will talk about safety and how to protect themselves in such a wide open environment. Much of the discussion will center around cyber-bullying and how to deal with this particular problem.

The course uses Moodle, a free open source e-learning platform, and in it each student has his/her own

profile and blog. Mr. Watkins has made every effort to insure that it's a "walled community" only for Franklinville students. The key to this curriculum is a focus on student self-esteem and each student is encouraged to write about the positives that are occurring in their young lives each day. Mr. Watkins spent the summer reading, researching and attended this year's National Education Computing Consortium Conference in Washington, DC in order to develop and teach this course. Mr. Watkins says, "The last two periods of each day are the high point for me as I spend it with this year's seventh and eighth graders preparing them for digital citizenship."



Don Watkins and students

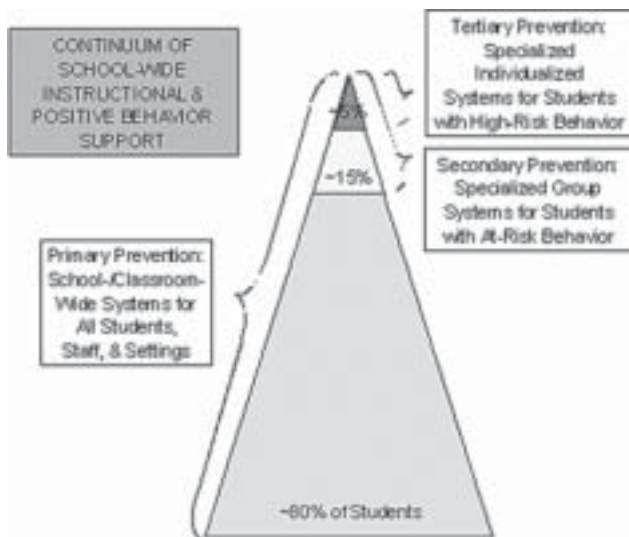


Pioneer Middle School PBIS Leads to Steady Progress District-Wide

Nancy Sampson

PBIS: Pioneer Middle School's Journey

Pioneer Middle School has fully implemented *Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports* (PBIS) over the past 4 years. PBIS has helped to significantly increase positive behaviors within classrooms and the building as a whole, while decreasing the intensity and magnitude of offenses leading to discipline referrals. We began to think of our behavioral system of interventions and supports in the same way we had thought of academic interventions and supports. The impact of PBIS made what was a very good school in many ways into a great place to learn for all students.



(From www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/positivebehavior/resources/cometogether/sugaihandout.doc)

Universal PBIS

Throughout the first year of PBIS, focus was on building our Universal (Primary Prevention) level of interventions and supports, meant to address the needs of all stu-

dents. Training through Erie 1 BOCES allowed a team of teachers and an administrator to learn PBIS together and develop an action plan for successful implementation. Pioneer Middle School chose “Be Respectful, Be Responsible and Be Ready” as their three behavior expectations for all locations and situations. Clearly defined expectations for behavior were built into a behavior matrix that was placed in all student agendas, parent and teacher handbooks, on our webpage and posted throughout the building. The behavior matrix became the framework for developing lesson plans, called “Cool Tools”, to teach all students what positive behavior looks like for all locations and situations within Pioneer Middle School. Methods of teaching Cool Tools included skits, videos, role plays and small group activities. Teachers used Homebase time to review and reinforce Cool Tools. Students receive feedback for positive behavior through individual and class recognition through tickets, signatures on the CBG (Caught Being Good) card, Student of the Month recognition, positive postcards, occasional prize drawings, and PAWS certificates.

A PBIS trainer performed a baseline School-wide Evaluation Tool (SET) during the first year to identify where the building strengths and weaknesses were and to provide the team with valuable results to focus.

September 2007 began with a school-wide PBIS kick-off on the first day of student attendance. Using summer work days allowed a large group of teachers, not all Universal team members, to deepen their knowledge about PBIS, plan the kick-off, develop Cool

Tools and work together on classroom expectations. Teachers were taking ownership of PBIS in the middle school. There was more cohesiveness amongst staff because PBIS was in place the previous year and there was a consistent record of follow-through with student issues. The Universal team worked during the school year, to make improvements to how the system worked and to better understand how PBIS is a data-driven, research-based, systems-approach to behavioral issues rather than a canned program. Data reported showed the progress that was made over two years:

- 35% decrease in incidents that result in office discipline referral
- 48% decrease in incidents that result in In School Suspension
- 51% decrease in incidents that result in Out of School Suspension

The culture in the building was changing in significant ways.

- Increase in attendance rate
- Increase in classroom instructional time
- Increase in time administration devoted to instructional leadership
- Increase of students on Merit and Honor roll
- Decrease in students on the failing list

Universal PBIS has been maintained on a consistent basis in all locations within the building. The goal of the Universal team is to systematically review data to monitor and adjust to the needs of the building. This team is the core of PBIS and works to keep focused on student behavior and the climate of the building. Communication with students, staff, parents and the community is essential.

The universal team plans recognition and celebrations for students. A drawing for prizes (water bottle, free food certificate, iPod shuffle) occurs on regular basis. A student reward night was held in February to celebrate

students who had no discipline referrals and were passing all subjects. Parents were invited to attend with their child. The night included swimming, movie, karaoke, Wii competitions, inflatable obstacle course, bounce house, ping pong, agility ball, computer games and guitar hero.

A spring carnival is planned for June celebrating the end of the year, drawing families to the middle school and helps to raise funds to support PBIS. Wyoming County Partners for Prevention and Army National Guard are partners in the program.

Secondary/Targeted Team

The next step has been the largest hurdle. Once a building has 85% compliance at the Universal level, efforts were directed to learn Targeted PBIS and to develop a continuum of interventions and supports. Interventions and supports at this level are more individualized, small group and short term, addressing needs of students who have 3 office discipline referrals, 5 unexcused absences or failing 2 or more core subjects.

Check-in/Check-out provides students with a daily behavior report card where the teachers record points (1-3) based on students' respectful, responsible and ready behavior in class. Teachers encourage student to exhibit appropriate behavior by completing the sentence starter "I like it when..." Every morning students pickup their behavior card from the CICO coordinator, who reminds students to be respectful, responsible and ready. She also asks if they have a pen, pencil, paper and their agenda and provides supplies when needed. This happens in the first 10 minutes of school. The students return at the end of the day where it is determined if students met their point goals. Students work towards an incentive, which could be a gift card, poster, hair care product, sports cards or an incentive of the student's choice. A copy of the form goes home to the parent or guardian everyday,

asking them to sign and return it. This allows for daily communication with a child's parent or guardian regarding their student's behavior. Many students graduate out of CICO within 6 weeks of implementation. Students who move out of CICO self-monitor their behavior for a period of time. If they are consistent with their progress, they are monitored without using a point card.

Targeted learning lab happens during the last period of the day and is run by 2 teachers with a manageable number of students. Students are assigned to this learning lab if they are failing 2 or more core subjects. They must have their agenda filled out and all materials with them when they arrive. In addition, the teachers are provided with a complete list of assignments from all teams. Students complete work, which is then checked over by a teacher and collected. The work is put directly into the mailboxes of the teacher who assigned the work. If a student does not have their work for the day completed by the 2:20 PM bell, they stay until the work is complete and ride a late bus home. A student who was previously on the failing list for many quarters made the Merit Roll this past semester. His unacceptable behaviors in the classroom and around the building have stopped. He is proud of himself and his work. Many students find they actually like school when their work is done on a daily basis and they do not have conflicts with teachers over homework.

Small group interventions also include anger management, social skills and organization groups.

Students are assigned a one-on-one mentor if small group interventions are unsuccessful. These mentors are teachers who have formed a positive relationship with a student, who recognizes the student's strengths and are willing to work to improve students' behavior and academic goals. If a student does not respond to some of the individualized or small

group interventions, a Functional Behavior Assessment followed by a Behavior Intervention Plan are completed on the student.

Teachers and parents are pleased with the impact that students have made when they are placed on an intervention that shows measurable results. Student overt behaviors decrease, academic learning increases and their attitude towards school and teachers improves. Teachers gain critical instructional time allowing for a greater variety of instructional strategies within each class period. Administrators gain time to be in classrooms to attend student presentations, participate in virtual field trips, observe teachers and get to know all students while they are learning.

Tertiary PBIS

Pioneer Central School has a family support center, Center for Positive Solutions, where a Licensed Master Social Work, School Psychologist and Family Advocate work with students and families to address issues. In addition, a Cattaraugus County social worker is housed in the district. These services bring the student, family, school and outside resources together to address the needs of the student. In the wrap-around stage of interventions and supports, the focus is not only on the student in school, but also addresses the students in their environment.

District PBIS

Pioneer Central School committed to take PBIS district-wide following the gains made in the middle school. Every building now has a Universal team that has attended training and is beginning to implement Universal PBIS. PBIS looks different in every building due largely to the age of students and the culture of the building. There are several components that are consistent such as existence of a behavior matrix that clearly defines behaviors in all locations. "Be respectful, be responsible and be ready" is a consistent

language with consistent expectations used in all buildings. Elementary schools added “be safe” to address the needs of their students. The community is using “be respectful, be responsible and be ready” in churches and businesses. Genesee Community College is teaming up with Pioneer Middle School initially to have pre-education, psychology and human services students volunteer in the homework help to assist students who may need extra help or attention.

The District PBIS team, composed of team coaches in all 3 buildings, district administration, parents, support staff representatives, our social workers and building administration, focus on the sustainability and fidelity of

PBIS in the district. A district 3 year action plan addresses political support, funding and visibility of PBIS. The district team works to have PBIS be part of the community by communicating with business and community organizations. The vision of the district team is critical to sustaining PBIS.

PBIS is a system that addresses the needs of all students. Pioneer Central School is committed to providing a safe, supportive learning environment to all students through PBIS.

For more information on PBIS, visit www.pbis.org or contact your BOCES PBIS coordinator.

Have you visited NYSMSA’s website lately?

Go to www.nysmsa.org for...

- the latest information on what’s new “in the middle”
- updates on State Education Department discussions
 - articles of particular interest
- Corning Middle-Level Institute and Annual Conference materials
- Schools to Watch information and application form
 - Middle-Level Education Best Practices form
- ways to contact your local regional director
 - the NYSMSA book store
- membership renewal and more



Preparing for Their Future Students: How Middle Grades Pre-Service Teachers Make Connections about Classroom Community from a Ropes Course

Joellen Maples, Ph.D.

In my first semester as an assistant professor in literacy education, I taught a group of preservice teachers in preparation for their secondary certifications. The course, Reading in the Content Area, focuses on middle grades literacy instruction and is designed for preservice teachers to understand the underlying conceptual ideas that promote the teaching of reading in various subject areas. Central to this course is a focus on the importance of building classroom community. I explain to my students that while passion about teaching coupled with the ability to design an effective lesson are important, creating a strong sense of community within the classroom is the ultimate factor when striving to reach their future students. Throughout the course, I introduce reading skills and strategies while integrating opportunities for classroom community building. I hope that these activities underscore the value of community development in their future classrooms. In this article, I present how classroom community is described in educational settings, a ropes course activity my teacher candidates participated in as a way to establish classroom community, and my students' connections they made from the ropes course experience to their future classrooms.

Problematizing the Concept of Classroom Community in Education

When I first discuss the concept of classroom community with my future teachers, I realize my preservice teachers perceive it as a simple concept in which everyone in a classroom gets along. However, I point out to them that within educational settings, definitions

about community are inconsistent. We discuss how classroom communities can be based on essential components or follow specific models. It's important for my future teachers to assess these differences and determine a style of classroom community development that will most benefit their future students as well as their own teaching style.

Understanding Classroom Community

In the introduction of the concept of classroom community I share with my students some ways in which community is defined and characterized. Sergiovanni (1994) suggests that in a classroom community, members think, grow, and inquire, while elevating the role of learning from an activity into an attitude. Others focus on the essential components of classroom community rather than a formal definition. For example, Rovai (2002) theorized that there are four components of classroom community: spirit, trust, interaction, and learning.

Not only is classroom community defined or examined by its components, but classroom community is also classified through models. Thayer-Bacon and Bacon (1998) describe three classroom community educational models: individualistic communities, social constructivist communities, and democratic communities. Thayer-Bacon and Bacon explain that the individualistic community is common in schools. In this type of community, teachers focus on the individual instead of the group. The second model Thayer-Bacon and Bacon (1998) describe is the social constructivist community. In this type of classroom community, the focus is on the

group rather than the individual. The final model described by Thayer-Bacon and Bacon (1998) is the democratic classroom community. This model is based on Dewey's definition of a democratic community "that recognizes the interactive, interrelational, and interdependent qualities of individuals and others" (p. 20). None of the models described are perfect; however, they provide a framework for my students to examine community.

From Theory into Practice

After discussing differences in the definitions of classroom communities, I show my students practical ways in which to think about developing this important aspect into their classrooms. Recalling my middle school teaching days, I share with them the success of a ropes course/obstacle challenge to create my classroom community. By creating an environment of mutual learning, respect, and encouragement, I was able to facilitate growth and empowerment for my students.

After finding out about a local ropes course facility, I saw this as an opportunity to model to my preservice teachers the very ideas that I had espoused. It is not enough to present future teachers with innovative ways of teaching if we also do not provide those experiences for them as well.

The Sunshine Rotary Camp

Located in Rochester, NY the Sunshine Rotary camp is primarily a campus facility for people with disabilities. The program has been providing camping programs for young people with disabilities for 85 years. Nestled in the wilderness, the ropes course experience is merely one of the various activities they offer.

On a cool sunny day, 22 of my undergraduate preservice teachers headed into the wilderness to establish a more cohesive unit. With three activities to accomplish, we began

by doing an introduction/stretching activity in which we all had to share a little known fact about ourselves. The first challenge was a man-made spider web, and the object of the task was to get everyone through the web without any of their body parts touching it and without using the same hole in the web more than twice. Once two people had gotten through the hole, that hole was closed. If anyone's body parts touched the web, the whole group had to start over again.

The second activity we encountered on our mission of community building was the trust fall. In this activity, each student had to climb up an incline to a five foot high ledge and then fall backwards into the arms of their classmates. Several of my students faced issues of anxiety that availed themselves in different ways —not wanting to be touched, being afraid, and being anxious.

The final challenge was a steel, v-shaped tightrope that was anchored to three trees and elevated about two feet off the ground. To complete our task, we were to cross the tightrope using a single rope for balance. Even though this activity was the most difficult, the entire group made it across and we were proud to know that together we had not failed any part of the course.

Students' Reflections

As part of the community building process, my students filled out a questionnaire designed to help them reflect upon the experience. I later used those questionnaires as a springboard for class discussion. I wondered how my students would respond to the ropes course experience. Was it just a fun time in the woods? Did they truly bond? Would they make connections to their future classrooms?

In our discussion and in the questionnaires three topics emerged repeatedly from the experience: leadership, the importance of trust, and the application of what they learned

at the ropes course to teaching. In this section, I will share sample representations of my students' reflections based on these topics (pseudonyms have been assigned). My students describe common attributes of communities, and they also make connections about this experience and our classroom community to their future classroom communities.

Defining Leadership

Many students acknowledge the importance of leadership in their community-building. In fact, they even discuss how leadership could be represented in different ways and the importance of having followers in a task.

We did not have a single leader the whole time, but rather everyone's voices were heard...Being the follower is probably the hardest thing to do because as future educators most of us like the spotlight. A good classroom will have students that listen to one another, learn other people's ideas and see things from a different perspective. Everyone thinks being the leader is the most important task, but being a follower is challenging yet rewarding. (Maggie)

Leadership came out on every task, but what I was most impressed with was the diversity of the leadership. On every challenge there seemed to be different leaders, not just the same people were directing. Also, I really liked how everyone got their own piece of mind into the group before any decision was made. (Billy)

The Importance of Trust

Of all the elements discussed by my students, the most important was the development of trust in their classroom community, a direct result of the ropes course activity. From the ropes course, the seeds of trust were planted with the hope that they would be developed in the classroom.

Forming trust was a great responsibility of all the members. We need to know we are there for one another to complete the challenge but also to know that we are there to protect/support each other in need. (Jack).

If we can trust each other to catch us falling down it should be easy to trust each other to finish a part of a project or homework. Also we now know that everyone's opinions will definitely be heard and not criticized. (Billy)

From the Ropes Course to the Real Classroom

I was curious to know how my students had processed the ropes course activity in terms of their future teaching, and I was pleased to learn that the connections they made between the two were vivid and tangible.

I now realize how very important it is to create a strong sense of community within a classroom because if students are comfortable and happy in a classroom, I feel like they will be more willing to participate and share their ideas in class. A good, strong group dynamic is important for a class to function effectively because it creates an atmosphere in which students aren't scared to share their opinions, and where students can be focused on tasks at hand. (Mary)

I think we can take away a lot from our ropes course experience and implement it into our own teaching styles and beliefs. Trust and communication are two of the most important aspects of being part of a group, like a classroom. In order to positively influence students, teachers need to show they trust their students and allow them to communicate their beliefs without feeling like they might be belittled. (Maggie)

If my classroom is nonjudgmental and everyone works together like we did at the ropes course I know that we can learn any-

thing, pass any test, and overcome any challenge given to us. (Billy)

My Reflection

Of course, as an observer and participant I was able to see that my students were leaders and sometimes good communicators. In the middle school world, as in life, there are followers and creators. After we had processed the implications of our experience, I had to reflect on the experience as a teacher.

I learned a lot about myself as a teacher. When I told my former doctoral advisor that I had participated in a ropes course, her first response was, “I can’t believe *you* did that!” Her statement unearthed aspects of my identity as an educator that had too long lain dormant. After all, I have never been a nature person, and I have long ago lost my athletic physique and agility. However, for my students and in the name of pedagogical development, I was willing to test my limits and conquer my fears.

My colleague also reminded me of the importance of being a leader and exemplifying that which I expected from my students—how could *they* build community without *me*? I wanted to personally set a precedent for the level of participation that I expected so they might think, “If she can do it, I can do it.” This experience was special because my students *encouraged* me to succeed and wanted me to be a part of the experience *with* them. So, in many ways it was no different from when I taught middle school and would read stories in strange accents and dress up to make stories more interesting. It is true that I would not have done the ropes course for myself, but I would for my students. They reminded me of the lesson worth passing on to future teachers that to be a good teacher, you should do whatever it takes for you students to help them along their educational journey. I took my students to a ropes course to learn about community, and I was the one

that learned. As I recount our experience, I am reminded of another lesson: sometimes students teach and teachers learn.

The author would like to acknowledge Kenneth Fasching-Varner for introducing her to the Sunshine Rotary Club and for his help co-creating the student questionnaire, and Nicholas Maples for his help editing this manuscript.

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New York State's Essential Elements: Schools-to-Watch Recognition Program (2011-12) (Seventh Cohort)

Do you believe your middle-level school is a model for others? If so, please consider completing the application for the seventh cohort of schools in New York State's Essential Elements: Schools-to-Watch Recognition Program.

New York State is seeking to identify a small number of diverse, high-performing model middle-level schools that will constitute the seventh cohort of schools selected for inclusion in New York State's Essential Elements: Schools-to-Watch Recognition Program. These schools must be academically excellent, developmentally appropriate, socially equitable, and organized to ensure continuous improvement. They — along with the already identified EE: STW schools — will serve as exemplars for the implementation of the *Regents Policy Statement on Middle-Level Education* and the State Education Department's *Essential Elements of Standards-Focused Middle-Level Schools and Programs*.

Schools eligible to participate in New York's EE: STW program must have **at least TWO of the following grades**: grade six, grade seven, grade eight. Eligible schools cannot currently be designated as a school in need of improvement (SINI), a school requiring academic progress (SRAP), or a school under registration review (SURR). Schools may satisfy the minimum student performance eligibility requirements in one of two ways:

1. Possess a 2009-10 Performance Index of 165 or higher, OR
2. With a 2009-10 Performance Index of less than 165, have met all Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) growth targets for both the 2008-09 and 2009-10 school years.

Eligible schools and districts interested in being considered for the seventh cohort of New York's Essential Elements: Schools-to-Watch Recognition Program should view and download the application announcement and related information at the New York State Middle School Association's website (www.nysmsa.org) and follow the directions to complete the school self-assessment and the formal application for the seventh cohort of the EE: STW Recognition Program. **Note that completed applications must be postmarked no later than Friday, July 15, 2011.**

Anyone with questions should feel free to contact either:

Marybeth Casey
NYS Education Department
(518) 474-8892
Mcasey2@mail.nysed.gov

OR

David Payton
EE: STW State Director
(518) 356-3299
dpayton@nycap.rr.com

OR

Contact the New York State Middle School Association directly at NYSMSA@aol.com

New York State's Thirteen Recognized Essential Elements: Schools-to-Watch Schools

First Cohort (2006; Re-designated 2009) — Seven Schools:

Barker Road Middle School
Pittsford Central School

Moravia Middle School
Moravia Central School District

Sayville Middle School
Sayville Union Free School District

Victor Junior High School
Victor Central School District

Calkins Road Middle School
Pittsford Central School District

Oliver W. Winch Middle School
South Glens Falls Central School District

Twelve Corners Middle School
Brighton Central School District

Second Cohort (2007; Re-designated 2010) — One School:

North Salem Middle School
North Salem Central School District

Third Cohort (2008) — Two Schools:

Islip Middle School
Islip Union Free School District

Pioneer Middle School
Pioneer Central School District

Fourth Cohort (2009) — Three Schools:

A.A. Kingston Middle School
Potsdam Central School District

Glens Falls Middle School
Glens Falls City School District

Jericho Middle School
Jericho Union Free School District

Fifth Cohort (2010) — Three Schools:

Bay Trail Middle School
Penfield Central School District

Lakeland Cooper Beech Middle School
Lakeland Central School District

Merton Williams Middle School
Hilton Central School District

NOTE: The EE: STW schools comprising the sixth cohort will be identified in Spring 2011.



Essential Elements Schools to Watch Model Schools— Visitor's Guides

Barker Road Middle School

School Characteristics and Replicable Practices

Academic Excellence

- NYS Assessments — Top performer in region, among the highest performers in NYS
- 50% of 8th grade students currently enrolled in Integrated Algebra
- Clustered class of Integrated Geometry Students taught at Middle School
- 30% of 8th grade students enrolled in Regents Earth Science
- All students have the opportunity to earn high school credit in World Languages
- Acceleration available in Math, Science, World Languages
- After School tutoring by high school students provided
- Academic Intervention Service classes/programs in Math, Science, English and World Languages
- Academic Support through summer program
- Daily scheduled Enrichment period for academic support, enrichment, extension and integration
- Project Lead the Way — pre-engineering classes for seventh and eighth grade students

Developmental Responsiveness

- Thematic Units with designated books of choice throughout ELA classes
- Team Composition of 4 teacher teams plus a learning specialist, 100 students
- 5th to 6th grade transition program for students and parents
- 8th to 9th transition program for students and parents
- Elected Student Council
- Elected peer helpers to serve as role models
- All students participate in service learning/ community service
- Counselors provide individual and group counseling

School Statistics — Barker Road MS

(Source: NYS School Report Card, BEDS)

Community: Suburban NYS
Enrollment: 740
Grade Levels: 6-8
School Schedule: 9 period day — 2 day cycle

Student Demographics

51% Male
49% Female
2% Hispanic/Latino
87% White
0% American Indian/Alaskan Native
3% African American
0% Filipino
8% Asian/Pacific Islander
6% Students with Disabilities
2% Free/Red. Lunch/Econ. Disadvantaged
1% English Learners

2006 AYP	ELA 185	Math 187
2007 AYP:	ELA 191	Math 192
2008 AYP:	ELA 192	Math 198

- Counselors have created a curriculum for in-class presentations (respect, bullying, peer pressure)
- Offer over 30 different after school clubs
- Multiple Service Learning Opportunities

Social Equity

- All students take courses in Art, Music, Home and Careers, Health and Technology Education
- Fully inclusive classes
- Co-teaching throughout grade levels
- All school social-emotional initiative – focus on character in less structured areas
- Character education embedded in all classes and Enrichment
- Activity Nights – PTSA Sponsored – one Friday night per month
- Weekly “Great Kid Of the Week” postcards mailed home – focus on character
- Computers in All classrooms

- Video-Streaming Morning Announcements
- The building is wireless and contains three mobile laptop carts
- All Math teachers and several teams have Smart boards in the classroom
- Classroom sets of interactive response systems for formative assessment
- All teachers utilize an on-line grading system
- Homework and tutoring clubs after school
- Fitness room available and supervised for students after school
- All grade levels are afforded the same opportunity for field trips

Organizational Support

- Extensive Induction Program for new teachers
- Teacher mentors for new teachers
- Instructional Coaches available to staff
- Common planning time for teams
- Common planning time for departments
- Project Challenge teachers to assist with lesson planning and differentiation
- Instructional Technology Support staff to assist with technology integration
- Embedded staff development during the school day
- All staff undergoing Standards Based Planning and Backwards Design
- Shared instructional decision-making team involving parent representation
- Capacity for Flexible Scheduling
- Daily Team meetings

Contact Information

Barker Road Middle School
Designated 2006 • Redesignated 2009
 75 Barker Road • Pittsford NY 14534
 (585) 267-1800
 Principal Michael Pero
 E-Mail Michael_Pero@pittsford.monroe.edu

Calkins Road Middle School

School Characteristics and Replicable Practices

Academic Excellence

- NYS Assessments – A top performer in region of strong schools, among the highest performers in NYS
- 50% of 8th grade students currently enrolled in Integrated Algebra
- 25% of 8th grade students enrolled in Regents Earth Science
- All students have the opportunity to earn high school credit in World Languages
- Acceleration available in Math, Science, World Languages (utilizing polycom system for distance learning)
- After School tutoring by high school students provided
- Academic Intervention Service classes/programs in Math, Science, English and World Languages
- Academic Support through summer program
- Daily scheduled Enrichment period for academic support, enrichment, extension and integration
- Project Lead the Way(award winning) – pre-engineering classes for seventh and eighth grade students
- Two teacher sixth grade team based on UBD principles

Developmental Responsiveness

- Thematic Units with designated books of choice in ELA classes
- Team Composition of 4 teacher teams plus a learning specialist, 100 students
- 5th to 6th grade transition program for students and parents
- 8th to 9th transition program for students and parents
- Elected Student Council
- Elected peer helpers supervised by counselors
- All students participate in service learning/ community service
- Counselors provide individual and group counseling
- Counselors have created a curriculum for in-class presentations (respect, bullying, peer pressure)
- Offer over thirty different after school clubs
- New building, state of the art facility, (opened in 2006) designed around needs of adolescents

- Theme Days: Dress to Impress; Day In The Tropics; Spirit Week; Pass it Forward; Cellphones for Soldiers
- Distance Learning Lab
- Large Group Instruction room (LGI) provides appropriate venue for whole team activities
- Team classrooms clustered together
- No bells passing time between classes
- Two thirds of students are involved in music program
- Green building: geothermal heating and cooling, recycles paper and plastic: Rochester Business Journal's Environmental Leadership Award
- "Do You Know Me?" Project — Measures how well we know our students. Provides both individual student and demographic data.

Social Equity

- All students take courses in Art, Music, Home and Careers, Health and Technology Education
- Fully inclusive classes
- Co-teaching throughout grade levels
- All school social-emotional initiative — focus on character in less structured areas
- Character education embedded in all classes and Enrichment
- Activity Nights — PTSA Sponsored — one Friday night per month, per grade
- Weekly "Great Kid Of the Week" postcards mailed home — focus on character
- Computers in All classrooms
- The building is wireless and contains five mobile laptop carts
- A variety of technology available for instructional use.
- Interactive room (DDR) and gym available for recreation during lunch
- Homework and tutoring(HS students) clubs after school
- Fitness room available and supervised for students after school
- Title I School

Organizational Support

- Extensive Induction Program for new teachers
- Teacher mentors for new teachers
- Instructional Coaches available to staff
- Common planning time for teams
- Instructional Challenge teachers to assist with lesson planning (differentiation, integration, UBD etc.)
- Instructional Technology Support staff to assist with technology integration

School Statistics — Calkins Road MS

(Source: NYS School Report Card, BEDS)

Community: Suburban NYS

Enrollment: 730

Grade Levels: 6-8

School Schedule: 9 period day — 2 day cycle

Student Demographics

53% Male

51% Male

49% Female

1.6% Hispanic/Latino

88% White

0% American Indian/Alaskan Native

2.3% African American

8.3% Asian/Pacific Islander

9.2% Students with Disabilities

5% Free/Red. Lunch/Econ. Disadvantaged

0% English Learners

2006 AYP: ELA 185 Math 187

2007 AYP: ELA 190 Math 189

2008 AYP: ELA 192 Math 198

- Embedded staff development during the school day
- All staff undergoing Standards Based Planning and Backwards Design
- Shared instructional decision-making team involving parent representation
- Parent volunteers utilized to support program.
- All building meetings include professional development (faculty read together: "Understanding by Design" (G.Wiggins/J. McTighe); "A Whole New Mind" (D.Pink)
- Teacher Center serves entire district by offering an extensive menu of PD

Contact Information

Calkins Road Middle School

Designated 2006 • Redesignated 2009

1899 Calkins Road • Pittsford NY 14534

(585) 267-1900

Principal Scott Reinhart

E-Mail Scott_Reinhart@pittsford.monroe.edu

Moravia Middle School

School Characteristics and Replicable Practices

Academic Excellence

- Literature based interdisciplinary units on The Revolutionary War, Slavery and the Industrial Age, World War II and The Middle Ages.
- Flexible scheduling including blocking allows differentiation and in depth study for all students.
- The House System 10th period allows school day time for extra help and academic enrichment.
- The principal and counselor teach character development and anti-bullying units in collaboration with the Home and Careers teacher.
- Non-Literature based interdisciplinary units; the Metric Olympics, the Day of the Dead, Los Posadas, involve multi grade level students with teachers.
- Daily team meetings enhance the effectiveness of delivering academic support to students in need.
- Replaced final exams with project-based community service.
- Grade level themes for the year center academic program.

Developmental Responsiveness

- The House advisor-advisee 10th period system ensures a safe supportive school learning community.
- The school counselor in concert with the house teacher meets student's developmental needs on a day-to-day basis.
- Teaming daily allows proactive support for students needs.
- 6th grade orientation, Y Pals Program, open house on the day before school starts and bi-monthly parent teacher meetings provide for a smooth transition from the elementary school to the middle school.
- The character ed program utilizing themed units and whole school forum meetings allow students to be publicly rewarded for exemplifying successful achievement in character education.
- The mainstreaming of Special Ed students and the interdisciplinary units allow for diversity of instruction for differently abled students.
- Counseling through Literature teams the counselor with the English teacher to teach character education.

School Statistics — Moravia MS

(Source: NYS School Report Card, BEDS)

Community: Rural

Enrollment: 255

Grade Levels: 6-8

School Schedule: 6-8 Middle School within 6-12 organization; flexible block or unblocked schedule within a 10 period day.

Student Demographics

53% Male

56% Male

44% Female

0% Hispanic/Latino

98% White

0% American Indian/Alaskan Native

2% African American

0% Filipino

0% Asian/Pacific Islander

21% Students with Disabilities

40% Free/Red. Lunch/Econ. Disadvantaged

0% English Learners

2008 AYP ELA: 182 Math: 181

2007 AYP ELA: 164 Math: 169

- Unit on political conventions is the process for student elections.
- Broadway Junior plays and musicals performed.

Social Equity

- We provide varied educational strategies for our economically disadvantaged students.
- Field trip for cultural literacy to museums, symphony and ballet broaden students' cultural horizons.
- Forum, a whole middle school assembly at the beginning of each day, allows for the school community to reward and recognize students for academic, character ed and sports achievement.
- Team facilitates multiple strategies to deal with the student's diversity of ability and the wide spectrum of economic diversity in our school community.
- Home and Careers, Technology, Art, Music, and Foreign Language are required for all students at the middle school.
- Academic Instructional support is provided in Math and English to students in need.



Middle-Level Education Best Practices in New York State

Name of best practice:

Which Essential Elements apply (Please check all that apply): 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Name of school:

School address:

Contact for practice:

E-mail address:

Phone number(s):

Principal:

Need/Resource
category:

Enrollment:

Grade level targeted
for this practice:

Description of practice, strategy, or program (Please enclose any supplementary material as appropriate):

(over)

Description of practice, strategy, or program (*continued*):

To contribute to *Promising Programs and Practices*, go to Best Practices at www.nysmsa.org or copy and send this form to Steve Zielinski, South Seneca Middle School, 7263 Main Street, Ovid NY 14521.

Author Index

page 12...Research at a Glance

The purpose of this feature of In Transition is to provide a succinct research reference for middle-level practitioners. Topics will reflect timely issues and best practices. To suggest a topic for a future Research at a Glance, send your suggestion to craig@nysmsa.org.

Jeff Craig, NYSMSA Director of Research & Technology, is Assistant Superintendent for Instructional Support Services at OCM BOCES, P.O. Box 4754, Syracuse NY 13221.

page 15...Lea's Lessons

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page 18...Team Teaching

Jonathan Duval

(jduval@pioneercsd.org) is a seventh grade social studies teacher at Pioneer Middle School, P.O. Box 619, Yorkshire NY 14173.

page 20...In the Middle of Crisis: A Look at the Problem with Educating Black Boys and How We Can Begin the Process of Solving It

Shawn L. Robertson, Ed.D.

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page 23...Carving Out the Middle in a 7-12 Building

Lindsay Marzec (lmarzec@frews.wnyric.org)

and **Kristy Carlson** are members of the FCS Middle Level Improvement Team, Frewsburg Junior/Senior High School, 26 Institute Street, Frewsburg NY 14738. They teach eighth grade English and Science, respectively.

page 25...Focusing Your Leadership Values

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(sullivan@newpaltz.edu), chairs the Department of Educational Administration, SUNY New Paltz, 800 Hawk Drive, FOB S-4, New Paltz NY 12561. He also serves as Co-Chair of NYSASCD's Influence Committee.

page 30...The Impact of the Middle Grades on High School Graduation Rates

Linda Kramer Schlosser, Ph.D.

(LSchlosser@sjfc.edu) is Assistant Professor at the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. School of Education, St. John Fisher College, 3690 East Avenue, Rochester NY 14618.

page 33...Franklinville Central Takes a New Approach to Technology Courses

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page 34...Pioneer Middle School PBIS Leads to Steady Progress District-Wide

Nancy Sampson (nsampson@pioneerced.org) is Assistant Middle School Principal and District PBIS Coordinator, Pioneer Central School District, P.O. Box 619, Yorkshire NY 14173. She also is Vice President of NYSMSA.

page 38...Preparing for Their Future Students: How Middle Grades Preservice Teachers Make Connections about Classroom Community from a Ropes Course

Joellen Maples, Ph.D. (jmaples@sjfc.edu) is Assistant Professor in the Literacy Department of St. John Fisher College, 3690 East Avenue, RCW 111, Rochester NY 14618.

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office@nysmsa.org

Submission of Articles

In Transition is a juried publication; all manuscripts are reviewed and approved for publication by a panel of members from the NYSMSA Board of Directors.

Manuscripts describing successful programs, stimulating projects, exemplary teaching techniques, unique team concepts, action research, and promising practices are welcome. We are particularly interested in articles on implementing the new Standards, teaming, interdisciplinary instruction, authentic assessment, flexible scheduling, integrating technology into instructional programs, and application of the *Essential Elements*.

Format guidelines:

Length: 400-2,000 words (2-8 pages)

Format: MS Word or compatible, double space, Times New Roman 12, 1-inch margins. Citations of referenced works should follow current APA standards.

Illustrations: High quality, black and white or grayscale. Photographs must be in JPEG format and include captions identifying subjects, activity, and source or photographer. All illustrations become the property of NYSMSA.

Cover Page (required): Title; Author; Position; School and/or Home Address and School and/or Home Telephone Number (please indicate which); E-Mail Address; and (optional) a brief synopsis of the content of the manuscript.

Deadlines: August 15 for the fall issue; January 15 for the winter issue; April 15 for the spring issue.

All documents must be submitted as e-mail attachments to: editor@nysmsa.org
Please note: Only e-mail submissions will be considered; do not send fax or paper copies of manuscripts.

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