

President's Message

The Iowa Association for Middle Level Education is your organization for professional conferences and workshops, grant funding, networking, on site staff development and summer training.. We are as close to you as your spring sectional conference, and as convenient as picking up a telephone or sending an email. Be open for the possibility that the best is yet to come and that IAMLE will be there with you as you advocate for and drive change.

Welcome back to those from Iowa who attended the recently concluded 2002 Midwest Regional Conference in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. The facilities and sessions were awesome. Congratulations to Carol den Otter, South Dakota MWR chairperson and her committee for organizing a very successful conference.

With an overwhelming Iowa presence in Sioux Falls, I felt like I was surrounded by 170 of my closest friends. Indeed, the power of networking!

And now it's time to plan ahead.

The IAMLE Board will be approving sectional conferences for spring of 2003. Look for the next edition of this Update for specific dates and locations of a sectional conference in your area. Better yet, don't wait for a mailing. Log on to www.iamle.org and select the calendar link. Scroll down to the spring sectionals. Click on the sectional closest to you for information about content and registration.

Now is the time to make plans for our Summer Camp series at Simpson College in Indianola. Leaf



through this edition of the Update for preliminary information on this third annual training event. I remain convinced that there is no better time for in-depth, high quality training and planning time as you look forward to the 2003-2004 school year. With more than 10 school districts and 45 educators from across Iowa, this is another opportunity for valuable networking.

Plan your budgets now for Summer Camp at Simpson College.

IAMLE is a member run organization. The Board consists of teachers, administrators, and others committed to education of Iowa adolescents. We have all, at one time, participated in this organization with varying levels of time commitment. From dues paying participants, to conference attendees, to building representatives, to active Board members, there is a full spectrum of opportunities waiting for you. Apply for open positions on the board (see Board openings as they appear on www.iamle.org). Volunteer to help with a sectional or regional conference. We all stand on the shoulders of those who have come before us. We all can contribute to move our organization forward in an effort to offer more for our members. You are the next person up. Step up.

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IAMLE homepage www.iamle.org



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Next Issue of UPDATE...

Idea Corner: Teacher Recognition
Ames Regional Conference Information
Registration information for Sectional Conferences

Mark your Calendars, NOW!

The 19th Annual Midwest Regional Middle Level Conference will be held in Ames on Oct. 1-3, 2003. Planning is well underway for this conference, which will be held at the Iowa State Center and The Gateway Hotel. You can look forward to 3 great keynote speakers (our own Rick Herrig; Neila Connors, and Mary Bigler), many awesome sessions presented by your colleagues, enthusiastic exhibitors, social activities including an Iowa State football option and exploring the wonderful city of Ames.

Having just returned from the Midwest Regional Middle Level Conference in Sioux Falls I took some time to reflect on its purpose. Attending this conference for me is rejuvenating. The chance to be around people who truly care about middle level kids for two days is invigorating. We tell similar stories. We like the same stupid jokes. We share many ideas. We help devise solutions for problems. It's like we all talk the same strange and wonderful middle school language. The stories, the comradery, and the laughter make the trip worthwhile. Add to those the host of practical strategies for working with middle level kids that I get, and the hours spent preparing for a substitute are forgotten. I not only come back with many ideas, but I come back feeling better about what I do. I come back knowing that I'm not the only one experiencing the highs and lows of being a middle level educator.

With school districts in the midst of budget crunches I fear that opportunities for teachers to attend such a conference are becoming limited. Teachers and administrators need time to grow as professionals. They also need time to just 'be' with other professionals. Start thinking now about how you and your colleagues can attend the Midwest Regional next fall. Look for conference information to be mailed in the spring or check the IAMLE website. You can't afford to miss it!

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Tidbits from the Southeast Region

“School teachers are not fully appreciated by parents until it rains all day Saturday”

Tim Wernentin
Southeast Sectional Director

Greetings from southeast Iowa! I want to remind the contingency in this region that I am happy to assist with your IAMLE needs! Should you have questions, concerns, or need information regarding IAMLE, NMSA, or the middle level initiative, do not hesitate to contact me at 563-391-6350 or email wernentint@mail.davenport.k12.ia.us. My role is to serve as the IAMLE liaison for this region in the state and am ready and willing to help your pursuit of middle level education!

Remember to put March 12, 2003 on your calendar as Wood Intermediate in Davenport is hosting the sectional conference.

Portland Conference Challenges Us All

“When you walk with a purpose, you collide with destiny,” Bertice Berry proclaimed as she addressed participants at the NMSA's 29th Annual Conference held in



Portland, Oregon. Ms. Berry, author of the book, *I'm On My Way, But Your Foot Is On My Head*, taught sociology and statistics at Kent State University, before becoming a comedienne and talk show host, spoke of her experiences growing up and the impact education played in her life.

Challenging educators to walk with a purpose, Ms. Berry provided an inspirational opening to this year's conference.

No less profound was the closing address by author Jonathon Kozol, a staunch defender of public schools and teachers, and an outspoken critic of the voucher movement. Kozol has devoted more than three decades to issues of education, reform, and social justice. His passion, tempered by the loss of his close

“When you walk with a purpose, you collide with destiny.”

friend Minnesota Senator Paul Welstone, captured the attention of all in attendance. The enormity of the challenge before us in an era of misplaced educational reform and accountability was articulated with a sense of urgency and plea for staying the course.

Now, more than ever, is a time for those of us dedicated to doing what is right for the young adolescent child, to walk with a purpose. Each one of us has the ability to look past the façade students erect, to recognize potential in the defiant words or lackadaisical demeanor; to inspire those others choose not to teach. While Iowa may not have the squalor present in America's largest inner city schools, we can all acknowledge the unequal foundation children of migrant workers and some of our poorer neighborhoods and those from depressed rural areas bring to our classrooms. Iowa, like America, is becoming increasingly diverse, culturally and economically. You have the power to determine how that diversity will be addressed in your classroom.

Statewide, at a time when educational funding is held hostage by a fickle economy, when the testing demands of *No Child Left Behind* outweigh instructional practices, and when misinformation is driving media and public opinion regarding what works with this age group, we need to walk with a purpose. At this crucial time when the best practices of middle level education need to be implemented, educators are considering slowing, and in some cases, discontinuing the implementation of these strategies. Become an advocate for

middle level best practice among your fellow teachers, administrators, school board members, and

parents. Contact your legislators and encourage parents to do so as well. Begin to expand your advocacy beyond the walls of your classroom. Choose to walk with a purpose; your destiny is waiting.

“You Can’t Learn from Books You Can’t Much Read.”

Steve Kwikkel

At-Large Director /W-SR Jr. High

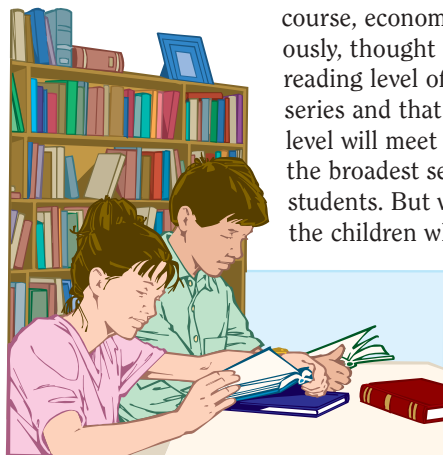
It seems so obvious—students need textbooks that they can actually read. But the young man who offered the observation in the title was a young man in trouble.

This is the lead-in statement from an article I read a few days ago. As I began to reflect on the title and content of the article, it triggered memories of the 1995 TIMSS-R research which pointed to a decline in student test scores in science and mathematics

between grades four and eight. According to this piece of research, U.S. fourth-graders performed *well in both mathematics and science in comparison to students in other nations while U.S. eighth-grade students performed near the international average in both mathematics and science*. This certainly begs the question, “Why the decline?”

This particular article really has nothing to do with TIMSS but what it did was to offer several possible answers as to why our students might be falling behind in math and science by the time they reach the eighth grade. One suggestion, and one I’m sure we can all relate to, is the decline in funding and support for additional reading assistance as students move through the upper grades. Unless a child is receiving special services, marginal and low-skill readers continue their journey through our curriculum with an increasing level of frustration in having to read textbooks, that by no fault of their own, are above their personal reading fluency and comprehension levels. The author, Richard Allington, addresses the need for teachers and administrators to select textbooks and supplemental reading materials that are at multiple reading levels to meet the needs of these students. It is suggested that a major barrier to what a child is able to learn in the classroom might, in part, be affected by the proper matching of a child’s reading level with content material that they can actually read with fluency and with the highest level of comprehension.

The idea of having mismatched textbooks in classrooms has never been our intention. Instead, the purchase of a new series is really a matter of proper content rigor, being a good match to the district curriculum, “age appropriateness” and, of



course, economics. Obviously, thought is given to the reading level of the selected series and that the reading level will meet the needs of the broadest segment of our students. But what about the children who might be a grade level or two below the chosen textbook’s reading level? What

impact might that book have on their ability to accurately read and comprehend the material being assigned? For students receiving reading services, any number of accommodations and modifications can be made. But what about the children who don’t qualify and are struggling readers? Are they to simply tough it out and muddle through their assigned reading? The author points to our own adult tendencies when it comes to learning a new skill or concept, and that is to find the easiest and most understandable material from which to learn. How many computer manuals are sitting on shelves right now that have never been opened because the size of the book, the vocabulary, and the technical writing being too intimidating or overwhelming? As the author suggests, this one-size-fits-all approach will fail miserably if our goal is truly high academic achievement for all students.

Earlier this year, our reading strategist Kari Staack* tested 26 eighth grade students on a reading fluency test. The results from this snapshot assessment revealed that 61% (16) of those tested scored at or below 150 wpm (11 were at or below 130 wpm). This left approximately 39% of those tested in a group at or above 175 wpm. A random subgroup of 15 students was then pulled from these 26 students with even more interesting results. Using an 80% comprehension cutoff for understanding of a non-fiction passage, 53% (or eight students) failed to meet this set standard. In both pieces we could see that approximately half of the students she worked with fell below both the accepted (150 wpm or lower) fluency rate and the 80% comprehension level. This certainly makes me wonder just how efficiently and effectively these students are reading their textbooks.

It’s understood that our sample was very small; however it has piqued our interest. Where it will take us is still being discussed. Inevitably, our discussion comes back to ways we can help students improve their reading skills. Success in any classroom, but especially in math and science depends on how effectively and efficiently a child can read and comprehend new material, skills, and concepts. If our textbooks are creating a barrier to learning, we must be able and willing to supplement, change and adapt our content so it is *accessible to every child*. If we can consistently accomplish this task, perhaps the next TIMSS report will reflect a different trend for our nations’ eighth graders.

Allington, Richard L., *You Can’t Learn Much from Books You Can’t Read*, Educational Leadership, November 2002

*Kari Staack is a reading strategist for the W-SR Jr. High and our five elementary schools. Kari teaches balanced literacy and character education classes for Viterbo University. If you have questions further questions, you can contact her at 319-352-3632.



IAMLE Members...

Have you seen the member services area on our Web site? Check it out soon. The log in information is case sensitive.

The User ID is: teach
The password is: MLevel

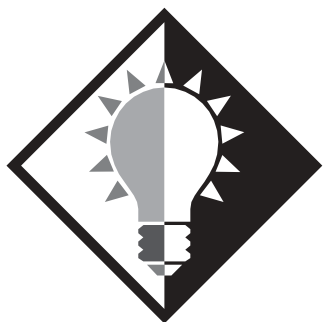
**Surf the web at
www.iamle.org**

Check out our services: outstanding teacher links by content area, detailed information about our Regional 2000 conference in

Des Moines, access to our publications. All of this AND MORE are just a mouse click away. Place us on your “list of favorites”. Coming soon, you will be able to access the Journal, in real time, on the web.



The Idea Corner



Classroom Management Ideas

- Involve students in creating classroom rules
- Recognize positive behavior more than negative behavior
- Administer consequences you control
- Discipline should be timely and have a connection to the behavior
- Create a seating arrangement that allows you to see all students at all times
- Utilize a variety of engaging instructional strategies
- Avoid power-plays with students
- Treat students with respect at all times
- Understand the developmental needs of middle level learners
- Use behavior contracts for individual students
- Be consistent

Iowa Association for Middle Level Education

Northwest Section contains AEA's 3, 4, and 12
 Northeast Section contains AEA's 1, 2, and 7
 Central Section contains AEA's 5, 6, and 11
 Southwest Section contains AEA's 13, 14, and part of 15
 Southeast Section contains AEA's 9, 10, part of 15, and 16

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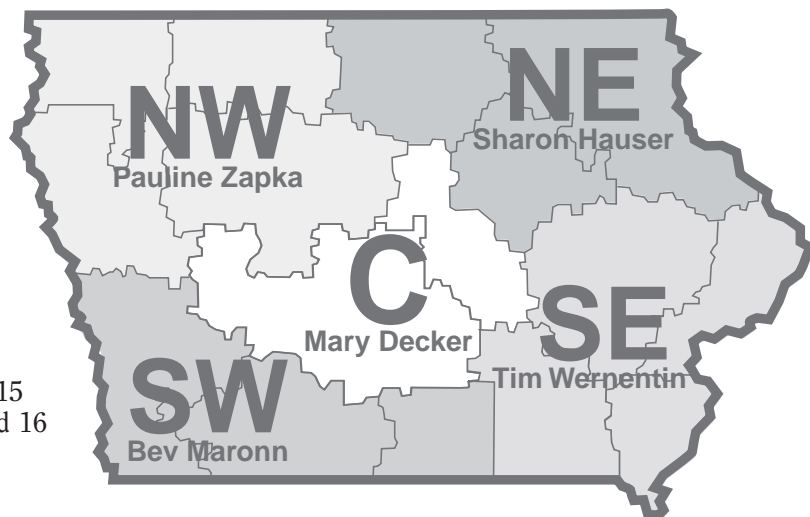
Destin, FL
June 8-1-, 2003

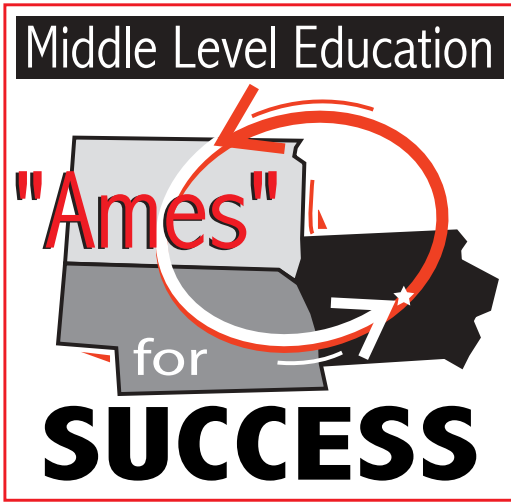
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Call for Presenters
 19th Annual Midwest Regional Middle Level Conference
Middle Level Education
“Ames” for Success

October 1-3 , 2003

Iowa State Center and The Hotel at Gateway Center • Ames, Iowa

PRIMARY PRESENTER INFORMATION (PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE):

Name _____ Position _____

Address _____
 Street City State Zip

School/Organization _____

Phone: Work _____ Home _____

e-mail address _____ fax number: _____

CO-PRESENTER INFORMATION

I am presenting alone This is a co-presentation
 Co-presenter name(s) _____

PRESENTATION

Title _____

Abstract: Please attach a description as you wish it to appear in the program. Limit it to 100 words or less.

STRAND

Please indicate the strand which best represents you presentation:

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brain Research Theory/Application | <input type="checkbox"/> Student/Parent/Community | <input type="checkbox"/> Technology/Media |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Interdisciplinary Teaming | <input type="checkbox"/> Guidance/Counseling | <input type="checkbox"/> Exploratory Program |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adviser/Advisee Programs | <input type="checkbox"/> Administration/Supervision | <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching Strategies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Middle School Implementation | <input type="checkbox"/> Subject Specific _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

AUDIENCE

My/Our presentation is geared towards . . .

- New teachers Experienced teachers Administrators All

I/We are willing to present more than once. Yes No

If YES, please indicate the day(s) 2nd 3rd

An overhead projector and screen will be provided. Presenters are responsible for any additional equipment and for conference registration.

Please return this form by January 12, 2003 to

Mr. Steve Kwikkel, Waverly Shellrock Junior High, 215 3rd St, Waverly, IA 50677

Phone: 319-352-3632 • Fax: 319-352-5199 • e-mail: kwikkels@waverly-shellrock.k12.ia.us



IAMLE Mini-Grant Application Request for Proposals

The objectives of the IAMLE Mini-Grant Program are:

To improve the school experience of middle level children in Iowa.

To promote and enhance team teaching efforts in middle level schools.

The timeline to complete the selection of IAMLE mini-grant recipient winners is:

Applications due no later than 3:00 PM March 22.

Selection of recipients June 27.

Notification of recipients week of July 10.

Apply online at iamle.org
or

Submit this request to:

Mr. Rick Herrig,
Executive Director
Iowa Association for
Middle Level Education
C/O Bettendorf Middle School
2030 Middle Road
Bettendorf, IA 52722

Note:

Participants in the IAMLE Mini-Grant Program share the results of their projects at Sectional Middle Level Conferences and/or the Midwest Regional Middle Level Conference.

Application

Contact Name _____

School _____

School Address _____

School Phone Number(s) _____

Please respond to the following questions:

For what purpose will the mini-grant fund be used?

What amount are you requesting? (Submit a simple budget outline.)

What are the educational benefits of this project?

How many students will be affected by this project?

How will this project advance middle level education in your school?

By what measures will you assess the success of the project?



R. Paul Brimm Award

IAMLE is accepting nominations for the R. Paul Brimm Award

Each year the Iowa Association for Middle Level Education sponsors the R. Paul Brimm Award. The purpose of the R. Paul Brimm Award is to recognize an outstanding middle level educator from the state of Iowa. The criteria for the R. Paul Brimm award recipient will center around middle level educators who are committed to:

- Lifelong learning
- Middle level education
- The philosophy of middle level education

All nominations for the R. Paul Brimm Award are due May 20, 2003.

All nominees will be informed of the committee's decision by September 1, of the school year in which the nomination is being made. The award will be presented at the Midwest Regional Middle Level Educator's Conference October.

To Nominate someone for this prestigious award:

Forms are available online at iamle.org

or Fill out this form and mail to:

Jeff Schumacher, Assistant Principal
Parkview Middle School
105 NW Pleasant St
Ankeny, IA 50021
Phone: (515) 965-9640
Fax: (515) 965-9648
e-mail: jshoe@ankeny.k12.ia.us



Additional brief information will be sent to you and the candidate via U.S. mail to finish the process.
2002 R. Paul Brimm Award Winner is in the selection process

Nomination Form - Due May 20, 2003 R. Paul Brimm Award Sponsored by IAMLE

I hereby nominate:

Nominee's Name _____

Nominee's Home Address _____

Nominee's School _____

Nominee's Home Phone _____

Nominee's Work Phone _____

Nominee's Position _____

Nominator's Name _____

Nominator's Address _____

Nominator's Home Phone _____

Nominator's Work Phone _____

Nominator's Email Address _____



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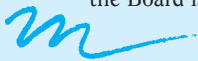


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IAMLE Board Goals

The Board of Directors of the Iowa Association for Middle Level Education has organized work around three goals for the 1998-99 school year. These goals are focused on serving the needs and expectations of the membership, designed to reinforce quality programming for middle level students. First, the Board is looking at collaborating with Regents institutions to create summer workshops on middle level educational opportunities. In addition, the Board is investigating opportunities to provide support and assistance to school districts wishing to transition to middle level education and districts taking their middle level programs to higher levels. Second, the Board is preparing to survey membership as to individual needs. Third, the Board is actively supporting and promoting sectional conferences. They have committed to bring current information, service, and resources to members through an expanded website. Finally, the Board is developing a middle level educators conference covering a current hot topic to be offered over the ICN this winter.



The Iowa Association for Middle Level Education - the only affiliate of the National Middle School Association in Iowa - is dedicated to meeting the needs of young adolescents and committed to promoting educational improvement for middle level students.

The IAMLE UPDATE is the official newsletter of the Iowa Association for Middle Level Education and is published four times each academic year. Subscription to the IAMLE UPDATE is included in IAMLE membership dues.

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