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President's Message

The Voices of Adolescents

In my "spare time", I teach for Drake and UNI. This role forces me to reflect on my own practice, and to keep an eye out for pertinent research that can help my students

and my staff here at Excelsior in their professional practice.

As all of us do, I surf the net for ideas and sources. Last week, I found a particularly interesting study right in our own "professional back yard." The NMSA website (www.nmsa.org) features a study entitled, "Young Adolescent Voices: Students' Perceptions of Interdisciplinary Teaming", by Susan Boyer and Penny Bishop. Our school has historically been committed to teaming. We've researched, discussed, presented, and advocated for teaming since we adopted the middle school concept. What we haven't done – and this is why the title of the study caught my eye – is done a good job of asking our students what they think of teaming.

I don't want to waste your time with a "book report" when you can read the entire study at your.... "leisure".... but let me highlight a few things that struck home for me as a middle level educator.

Boyer and Bishop looked at the democratic nature of interdisciplinary teaming. Here's a part of what they wrote:

"Young people have not only a right to have a say in what happens in school, but an obligation" (Beane, 1997, p. 69). Unlike the historic and dominant model of education, students in this study reported having a voice and choice in their own learning; collaborating in setting goals, designing curricula, and making decisions in team governance. Rather than teacher centered, the power on these teams shifted and

became student centered. The teachers in this study shared power with their students as facilitators, collaborators, negotiators, guides, and co-learners. Individually and collectively students were invited to share the decision making in the classroom. An eighth grade boy described learning on his team in this way, "... things are run in a democracy format. . . all of the students get to participate and have a say in what they do." In team observations, and

student self-reports, it was evident that students were confident and interested in learning for its own sake. Students developed leadership skills and responsible citizenship by participating in the governance of their team.

"Young people have not only a right to have a say in what happens in school, but an obligation"

Boyer and Bishop continue with the statement, "Preoccupied with meeting state standards, and feeling constrained by time, middle level teachers are often reluctant to allow student input." We're all in that same boat. NCLB, CSIP, ITBS, and all those other collections of "important" letters sometimes cloud the real foundations on which middle level practice is based - good teachers, doing the right things for kids in the right settings get results – not just numbers, but real learning, both on an academic and an affective level. The authors quote a seventh grade boy with special needs who described his team in this way: "You know everyone on the team and everybody is your friend even if you don't have a good past with them, you warm up."

Stop by the NMSA website when you get a chance and look at the study. It reinforces the idea that as middle level educators, sometimes we just need to step back, take a deep breath, and recall what's really important for middle level kids!

Marc McCoy
mmccoy@linnmar.k12.ia.us

Highlights of this issue:

Summer Camp at Simpson	page 2
Election Ballots	page 3
Sectional Information	page 5

Topics for the next issue:

- Election Results
- Reports from Sectionals

Bush Tackles Middle Schools

So goes the headline in the January 11th edition of the Miami Herald newspaper. The lead paragraph in the story is the most alarming.

Middle schools across Florida could look and feel more like high schools, adding graduation requirements and a standardized grading system, under Gov. Jeb Bush's proposal announced on Monday.

Highlights under Bush's plan include:

- A) students in grades 6-8 need to pass core classes and accumulate 12 credits to graduate.
- B) an intensive-care reading class for low achieving students in addition to a standard English course.
- C) forcing all middle schools (in Florida) to use a common grade scale.

The article itself is an interesting read and is filled with the style of rhetoric we've come to expect in this time of increased awareness to public education and student achievement. What's more disturbing to me is the headline itself.

"Bush Tackles Middle Schools"

I always get a little nervous when headlines like this appear in newspapers. Most of us are aware of the fact that we have many effective middle and junior high schools in our own state and across the nation. Conversely there are also a good number of ineffective schools which exist as well. While I might appear to be overly sensitive about this, in a time when the landscape of public education is changing so rapidly, those already critical to the middle school philosophy clip such articles and use them to bolster their argument that, "Middle schools ARE failing our kids!"

If you happen to live in a community where the middle school philosophy is being challenged, articles like this one will likely surface. Without knowing anything about South Miami Middle School (SMMS), I'm sure some parents, teachers, board of education members and yes, politicians have read this and are making the faulty assumption that "middle schools [their underlining philosophy] aren't working."

Let's examine what the casual reader doesn't know about South Miami Middle School. What amount of financial resources is available to support the overall educational program? At what level of implementation IS the middle school philosophy in this school? How many highly qualified teachers are on staff? How many experienced teachers are in

the classroom? How many first year teachers are "sent" to SMMS to start their teaching career? What expertise or knowledge does the lead administration possess in terms of grooming an effective middle level culture? Is the administration able to help teachers identify strategies to further assist low achieving students? Are the curriculum coordinators able to help teachers and administrators in identifying problem areas in instruction or critical gaps in the existing curriculum? How transient is the student population? What are the student demographics of SMMS? How many ESL or LEP students do they have? The list of questions can go on and on.

Without knowing the answers to these questions, this story's headline can send the wrong message that all middle schools, by nature of their philosophy, are hurting kids academically while the junior high approach [Which the article suggests.] is more suited to high academic standards. Therefore, even when isolated articles such as this one reach the public, those who would choose to dismantle middle schools in their community in search of answers to improved student test scores, can and will brandish such articles to support their own agenda.

Regardless if your school is a middle school in practice or just in name, each of us must stand ready with factual information and data to support the good work being done in your individual school and or classroom. The middle school philosophy requires a balanced approach to teaching the whole child. Student achievement is not mutually exclusive of a caring, understanding, and compassionate school climate. Teachers, whose philosophy it is to show their personal commitment to the success of their students, stand a much greater chance at doing so than someone unwilling or unable to make that connection. As long as our middle schools, or junior highs for that matter, are staffed with highly qualified yet caring adults, students' achievement will by and large take care of itself.

Steve Kwikkel
Executive Director

Source: The Miami Herald.com, January 11, 2005



Call For Nominations

IAMLE invites all members in good standing to consider serving Iowa in one of the following Board of Director positions:

Appointed Positions:

■ Newsletter Editor

(Term of office: one year. Duties include: soliciting, formatting, and printing of articles submitted for publication in Update newsletter; selection of printer; timely publication of quarterly newsletter; purposeful expenditures within allocated budget; and perform all duties incident to the office of Newsletter Editor)

■ Membership chair

(Term of office: one year. Duties include: recording membership information as received; maintaining an accurate database of new and renewal memberships; provide Board of Directors with regular membership updates; send notice of pending expiration to Association members; respond to member inquiries with regard to membership status; and perform all duties incident to the office of Membership Chair.

■ Building Rep Coordinator

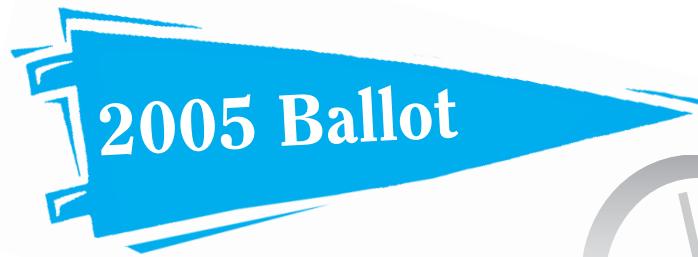
(Term of office: two years. Duties include: maintain a communication link via e-mail, print, or voice contact with established building reps in Iowa's middle grades schools, communicate the business of the Association to building reps; serve as an ex-officio member of the board; and attend board meetings as requested.)

Nomination forms may be found on the IAMLE website at: iamle.org or by contacting Steve Kwikkel at 319-352-3632 or by email: ksikkels@waverly-shellrock.k12.ia.us.

IAMLE Board Appointment

Timelines:

- Nomination Applications
Due March 30, 2005
- Appointments Certified
April 18, 2005
- Candidates Notified
April 19, 2005
- Results Released for Posting
April 20, 2005



Must be postmarked by **March 30th!**



Iowa Association for Middle Level Education 2005 State Election Ballot

Place an X in the appropriate box indicating your selection. Space is provided for a write-in candidate.

Sectional Director

(Vote for this position only if you are in the Central Region)

Central Director:

Mary Decker – Physical Education teacher at May Goodrell Traditional Plus Middle School in Des Moines, Iowa. She is the current Central Director and has a commitment to IAMLE, middle level learners, and the professional development of those who accept the challenge of working with young adolescents.

Write-in candidate: _____
(Name, School, Location)

At-Large Director:

(All members vote for this position.)

Write-in candidate: _____
(Name, School, Location)

Complete ballot and return to:

Steve Kwikkel, Waverly-Shell Rock JRHS, 215 3rd Street NW, Waverly, IA 50677

Deadline: Ballots must be postmarked by March 30, 2005

Fifth Annual Summer Camp

Held at Simpson College, Indianola, Iowa
SIMPSON COLLEGE



Presented by



Iowa Association for Middle Level Education

“Increasing Student Achievement Through Teaming”

June 13 - June 16, 2005

This year's camp features both workshop and breakout sessions featuring Turning Points 2000, CEYA, and NMSA consultants. More information coming soon.

For more information regarding this year's camp, contact:

Rick Herrig
herrigr@davenportschools.org
Wood Intermediate School
5701 N. Division Street
Davenport, IA 52806
563-391-6350

What's Summer Camp About?

Remember those days at camp when you were young? The things you learned, the friends you made, and the FUN you had can be more than memories of the past. Join us as we re-create some of those by-gone days during three days of camp devoted to best practice in middle level education.

Set in the serene atmosphere of Simpson College, located in Indianola, Iowa, you get the best of both worlds – small-town friendliness and a good mix of city life. Located 12 miles south of Des Moines, Indianola is a town of 13,000 friendly people. Simpson College offers air-conditioned dorms, excellent meeting facilities, and use of computer facilities during camp.

Returning campers will note changes to this year's camp design includes both workshop topics and breakout sessions and Monday's keynote will be a dinner keynote followed by a social.

Visit www.iamle.org to check out the tentative daily schedule. This year's keynote and workshop topics will include:

- The Iowa Professional Development Model: Incorporating No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the Teacher Quality Act, and Comprehensive School Improvement in Middle Level Implementation
- Classroom Management Strategies Using the Discipline With Love and Logic Approach
- Advisory and Transition Planning: Creating Your Own District Plan
- Curriculum, Assessment, and Instructional Practices: Understanding the Backward Design Curriculum Model
- Interpreting Data and Examining Sub Group Strategies That Work
- Instructional Leadership: More Than An Administrator's Job

When is Registration Due?

- Registration materials are due by **May 13, 2005**
- Camp is limited to first **75** individual attendees. A waiting list will be compiled on a first-come basis.

Who Can Attend?

Individuals and teams are welcome to attend. Whether you attend camp as a team or individual, you will leave camp with an understanding of NCLB and the tools to implement current best practice in your classroom, team, or building. Consultants will be available to work with individuals or teams as they develop actions plans. Round table discussion opportunities will exist for individual attendees during team time.

What do Registration Fees Include?

- Lodging (double) at Simpson College's air-conditioned Picken Hall
- Meals (nine included)
- Linen service including pillow, bed and pillow linen, blanket, towel, washcloth, soap, and glass
- Camp T-shirt
- One book: *High-Performing Teams*
- Materials and Handouts

Is College Credit Available?

Yes, Simpson College is offering one- and two-hour graduate credit options. CEU's are also available through AEA 11.

Keynote Speakers and Camp Consultants Include:

(Consultant List Incomplete)

Dale Henze: After more than 30 years in education, most at the middle school level, Dale Henze retired in 2001 as principal at Galena (Illinois) Middle School. During his tenure at GMS, he led the faculty and staff through the transition from a traditional junior high to a middle school philosophy helping them earn the distinction as a Blue Ribbon school. A frequent presenter at the Teaching the Transescent Seminar at the University of Wisconsin – Platteville, Dale now serves the university as an adjunct professor in the education department. We welcome his return visit to Simpson and look forward to his presentations on advisory programming, transitioning activities, teaming .

continued



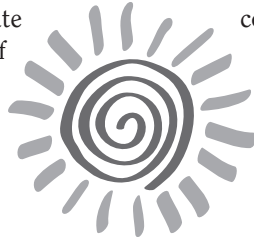
Summer Camp *continued*

Rick Herrig: A former President and Executive Director of IAMLE, Rick Herrig brings a wealth of middle level knowledge and experience to the summer camp. He serves as a North Region Trustee for the National Middle School Association (NMSA) and is currently principal of Wallace W. Wood Intermediate School, Davenport, Iowa. A former middle school teacher, Rick has presented at numerous regional and state conferences throughout the Midwest. Rick returns in his third year as director of summer camp.

Dr. Kristen Crabtree-Groff: A former school improvement consultant for Heartland AEA 11 and member of the AEA 11 Middle School Satellite Team, Dr. Crabtree-Groff brings vast experience in school reform. A middle school language arts teacher for 13 years, she also taught exploratory courses including Spanish and Communications. A 1987 graduate of Coe College, Dr. Crabtree-Groff earned her Masters of Science in Teaching, Learning, and Leadership from Drake University in 1993 and has completed her Curriculum Specialist coursework. She earned her Doctorate in Educational Leadership at Drake University in 2003.

Theresa Hinkle: Currently the South/East Teacher Trustee for the National Middle School Association, Theresa is a former president of the North Carolina Middle School Association. A former Teacher of the Year recipient for her district and state finalist, she has presented throughout the East and South and worked with many school districts in North Carolina on topics including Reading in the Content Area, Teaming, Interdisciplinary Instruction, and Organizing for Success. A 28-year veteran of middle level, she is National Board Certified in Early Adolescent English/LA and is currently teaching LA/SS on a 3-person interdisciplinary team at Kernodle Middle School, Greensboro, North Carolina.

Turning Points 2000 Consultant: Arrangements have been made this year to bring in a consultant from the Turning Points 2000 Regional Center located in Champaign-Urbana, Illinois. This consultant will assist participants in the review of their current level of implementation of the recommendations found in Turning Points 2000: Educating Adolescents in the 21st Century. Participant will then develop an action plan designed to enhance their efforts to fully implement Turning Points 2000 recommendations.



(Complete and detach registration form below)

Summer Camp at Simpson College Registration Form

Please print clearly or type: (Return to Rick Herrig, Wood Intermediate School, 5701 N Division St., Davenport, IA 52806)

Name: _____ School: _____ District: _____

Address: _____ e-mail: _____

School City/Zip: _____ Phone: _____

Home City/Zip: _____ Phone: _____

Team Members: _____ Roommate: _____

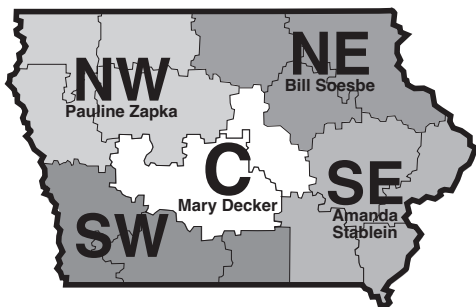
_____ Full Time Camper Single Registration	\$355 (\$380 if single room)	T-shirt Size:
_____ Day Camper Single Registration	\$315	S__ M__ L__ XL__ XXL__
_____ Special School Registration (up to 5 staff)	\$2000 (includes one-day in-service)	
_____ Check enclosed (payable to IAMLE)	P.O.# _____ (\$35 cancellation fee)	

Note: \$15 Early Bird Discount for schools/individuals who have completed their registration and paid in full by April 15, 2005.

I A  LE

Iowa Association for Middle Level Education





Hello from the Southeast Region

Announcing:

Southeast Iowa Middle School Conference

sponsored by North Scott Junior High School and the Iowa Association for Middle Level Educators.

Join with other middle level educators to get new ideas from your peers on creating a quality learning environment for young adolescents. There is something for everyone at this conference designed for middle level educators who are interested in expanding their knowledge and strategies in the classroom.

Keynote Speaker-

Steve Kwikkel, President of the Iowa Association of Middle Level Educators and the Principal at Waverly-Shellrock Junior High School, Waverly, IA

Topic:

"Boxers or Briefs" What your underwear might say about you and how you adapt to change and your role in change process.

Date: March 16, 2005

Times: 4:30-8:00 p.m., Dinner is provided

Location: North Scott Junior High School
502 South 5th Street, Eldridge, IA 52748
563-285-3195

Audience: Teachers, Administrators, College Students in Education

Cost: \$35.00

Registration Deadline: March 7, 2005

How to register:

Go to www.north-scott.k12.ia.us and click on Junior High
Or call Darlene Finnegan at 563-285-3195

Greetings from Central Iowa

Central Sectional Call for Presenters

You're invited!

The Central Sectional

has been scheduled for

April 7, 2005

Registration begins at 4:30.

\$35.00 gets you a dinner, keynote speaker, IAMLE membership, and two breakout sessions.

If you or your team is interested in presenting a great middle school initiative to your peers, please contact mary.decker@dmps.k12.ia.us.

Presenter registration is \$25.00, which includes the membership, dinner, keynoter and one breakout.

Some of the topics so far are:

Different Brain-Different Learner, Building Relationships, MindSets, Brain-Targeted Curriculum and Developing Resiliency.

The sectional will be at:

May Goodrell Traditional Plus Middle School,
3300 E. 29th St., Des Moines, IA, 50317.

Look for registration forms coming in February through your AEA mail delivery. Hope to see you for an evening of good food, laughs, learning and networking with your favorite kind of folks, middle level educators.

If you have any questions, please contact:

Mary Decker at (515) 242-8444 or
at mary.decker@dmps.k12.ia.us.

www.iamle.org

Welcome to new board member, Sandy DeSchinckel!

My name is Sandy DeSchinckel, and I am the new website editor for IAMLE. I have been a member of IAMLE for approximately four years, but this is my first official position. I am²in my eleventh year teaching⁶6th grade math at Wood Intermediate School in Davenport. My undergraduate work was done at Iowa State, and I have my masters degree from Western Illinois University. My ideal job right out of college was either second grade or middle school math. Through fate or luck, I transferred into Wood and felt immediately at home in the middle-level setting. I love working with the predictably unpredictable cliental.

I am very excited about working on the website. The website may be getting a facelift soon, so keep^oon the lookout^ofor that! If there is anything that you would really like to see on the website, please contact me. I am open to ideas as long as they are within my abilities. Please be patient as I assume the responsibilities of this role. Although I am a self-proclaimed techno-geek, I am a math teacher, not a professional web designer.

Sandy DeSchinckel
deschinckels@davenportschools.com



Corporate sponsors of IAMLE

MDA MIDWEST DAIRY ASSOCIATION™



Perfection Learning®
CORPORATION



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, applications for mini-grants and the Iowa Educator of the Year Award (in honor of R. Paul Brimm), board contact information, and access to our publication. All of this AND MORE are just a mouse click away. Place us on your "list of favorites".

Membership News

Please notify the IAMLE Membership Chair of any changes of address, e-mail, or position that have occurred in the last year. By doing so, your mailings will arrive as scheduled.

We are always looking to serve you better and in order to do so your updates are important.

The Membership Fee is \$20.00; if you have not renewed your membership please do so by sending your application via e-mail or regular mail to: Vicki Westerly, Interstate 35 Middle School, P.O. Box 200, Truro, IA 50257 or you can go to our website iamle.org and send your application via the internet. You will receive a confirmation telling you to send your payment to the Membership Chair immediately. Payment is required to activate your membership. The membership year extends one year from the month of application.



**2005
Ballot Enclosed**
See page 3

Must be postmarked by March 30th!

IAMLE homepage
www.iamle.org

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.

IAMLE UPDATE Volume 12, Number 6

Editor: Keri Schlueter
Ankeny, Iowa
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515/965-9640 Work



MIDDLE LEVEL EDUCATION

IAMLE UPDATE

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