

In the middle





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In the Middle is the official newsletter of the Ohio Middle Level Association and is published three times per year. Submissions on topics relevant to middle level education are encouraged and should be submitted to jclark@vbschools.net



from the **cover**

Bunsold Middle School's PlusTime meets all students' needs

Learn more on page 12

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in their **words**

It is easy to get lost in the excitement of a new strategy, just as it is easy to get overwhelmed by the amount of work involved in making changes. Teachers owe it to their students to adapt instruction to meet unique learner needs. Learning in the 21st century is not about a teacher being "right" and students having to adjust accordingly.

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President's Message

Knowledge, Inspiration, and Laughter! Don't Miss It!

I always say that February is the longest, shortest month of the year. It is a time when educators need a shot in the arm to refocus their middle level teacher convictions that tend to get blurred by the heavy fog of mandates and such. The best way to keep your middle level convictions strong is networking with other exemplary middle level educators. An easy way to do this is to attend the **Ohio Middle Level Conference at Kalahari in Sandusky, February 12 & 13**. **Ron Clark**, a Disney American Teacher of the Year is our **Thursday keynote speaker** who promises to provide inspiration and strategies to elevate your practice as a middle level educator.

Ron Clark pioneered innovative projects in rural North Carolina working with minority students in a high-poverty area. While teaching middle level students in Harlem, Ron involved his students in projects in the city and state, and in both settings his "low achievers" soon began to excel. By the end of the year, these struggling student test scores were higher than the students in the gifted classes. His highly effective programs garnered national attention and led to a White House invitation to be honored by the President of the United States. Today, Ron opens his academy in

Atlanta, Georgia to educators from around the world. Over 10,000 educators have visited to learn from Ron and his staff.

After hearing Ron speak, attendees stated the following:

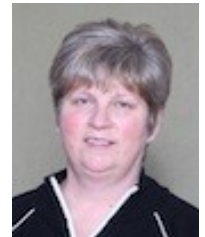
"Ron Clark is able to captivate an audience unlike anyone I've ever heard before. His stories bring both tears and laughter. I watched an audience of 650 sit spellbound as he shared his struggles and triumphs as an educator. Anyone who hears him will feel rejuvenated and inspired."

"People were coming out of the room so charged up with energy and inspiration and commitment that they all felt like supermen and women – like they could teach forever! He helped them remember why they do this work and why it matters."

Ron Clark's books – *The Essential 55*, *The Excellent 11* and *The End of Molasses Classes* are all worth the read for middle level educators. Ron will conduct a book signing following his keynote.

If that isn't enough, our **Friday Keynote** is an Ohio favorite, **Mr. Jack Berckemeyer**. If you have never had the opportunity to hear Jack speak, it is a must. There is no one who knows the mind of a middle level student better. Here is what one educator had to say after hearing from Jack:

"Jack is the total package. He is book smart, street-wise and knowledgeable in all areas of the middle school arena. His sense of humor is as quick as Robin Williams and as on target as a bullseye. Great, Great, Great!!!"



Lorrie Kubaszewski

President



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*President's Message—continued from
page 3...*

Jack has co-authored a new book with Debbie Silver and Judith Baenen titled ***Deliberate Optimism – Reclaiming the Joy in Education***. I don't know of a more relevant topic for all of us as we travel through today's education landscape.

Due to its overwhelming popularity, OMLA will again offer a **strand for pre-service/new teachers** featuring Jack Berckemeyer. This is a priceless opportunity for new teachers. In addition, Jack will conduct a couple of breakout sessions for all conference attendees.

So, make your plans now to attend the conference to receive your much needed and deserved shot of inspiration, laughter and mind-opening strategies from Ron and Jack. Plus experience over 80 breakout sessions conducted by practicing educators, sharing timely and relevant middle level practices that can be implemented on Monday.

Of course, the social will not disappoint and will be a great way to unwind after a day of processing all that was learned. It will include dancing the night away to the music of Disco Inferno, corn hole, picture booths and technology giveaways. To receive free raffle tickets for the technology giveaways (several iPad minis), dress in your best disco outfits to accumulate free raffle tickets from our roaming board members!

Visit the conference section of our new and improved website for details.

I hope to see you in February!

Lorrie Kubaszewski

OMLA President

A big **thank you** to our business partners for their support of middle level education!



Get Real

Teaching Financial Literacy Through The Reality Store

Tiffany Shaw

“When will we ever use this stuff?”

This question is constantly on the minds of kids, many who find math class instruction lacking relation to life outside of school. Students at Tuscarawas Valley Local Schools had the unique opportunity to experience the benefits of applying their skills outside of the classroom in a simulation focused on making smart financial decisions at a community event The Reality Store.

School staff, together with local community businesses including banks, career professionals, professional and community organizations harnessed 21st Century Community Learning Centers funding to create an evening event for families that focused on positive community engagement and educational opportunities for middle school families and students.



At the Reality Store, students chose a career of their interest. They also chose factors such as being married, having children, and pursuing higher education. The combination of these choices gave each student a salary that they would have to work with to live within their means. Students traveled from station to station to interact with an “expert” in an area of life where adults have to spend their earnings. For example, a local realtor gave students the option of choosing from three homes: an apartment, an average priced home for the area, or an extravagant home with all the bells and whistles. Students learned how a mortgage is factored, and then chose a home. The cost of their mortgage was deducted from the “monthly budget” that was based on the student career choice and life factors. Eighteen stations covered all of life’s expenses that students encounter in their adult lives. Other stations included Life’s Unexpected, Child Care, Banking and Taxes, Transportation, Medical, Groceries, Utilities, Insurance, and Financial Counselors for those students who spent over their means. The event also included a meal for families, the 2 hour session for students, and an opportunity for parents to learn about a program, Financial Peace University, being offered through the district at no cost thanks to 21CCLC funding.

The event was attended by over 250 middle school students and their families. Tuscarawas Valley Local Schools plans to run the event again this year and is working to integrate a daytime Reality Store for all students. The Reality Store was part of a community engagement series for students and families provided by 21st Century Community Learning Center grant funding.

Tiffany Shaw is the Student Services director at Tuscarawas Valley Local Schools in the east region.

Adapting Instruction to Meet Student Needs

Kristen Lavric

Three years ago I attended a weeklong workshop about personalized learning, and suddenly my passion for teaching was recharged. I was excited to implement new strategies and instructional methods that were geared towards promoting student ownership. When I put the strategies into practice, many of my students flourished. Unfortunately, though, a small group of students struggled to take ownership of their own learning. I needed to find a way to support the struggling students while also holding true to my new vision. Many teachers have likely faced a similar situation. Two suggestions can help teachers adapt instruction to meet student needs.

The first way to bridge the gap between innovative instruction and student learning is genuine reflection of the instructional methods.

The first way to bridge the gap between innovative instruction and student learning is genuine reflection of the instructional methods. It is important to identify what really matters and why, so that the vision remains strong. This reflection will likely highlight weaknesses that can be addressed to improve instruction. In my example, I needed to determine what was absolutely crucial to personalizing learning and what was getting in the way of student success. Ultimately, though, I remained passionate about putting students in charge of their own learning.



Once the instructional vision is refined and clarified, changes in your practice should occur. It is easy to get lost in the excitement of a new strategy, just as it is easy to get overwhelmed by the amount of work involved in making changes. Teachers owe it to their students to adapt instruction to meet unique learner needs. Learning in the 21st century is not about a teacher being “right” and students having to adjust accordingly. If students are struggling so much that they are shutting down (for whatever reason, justified or otherwise), teachers must make changes. Sometimes the change can be as simple as providing more scaffolded instruction; at other times, it will require a complete overhaul.

Change is not easy for teachers or students, so any instructional changes will have bumps in the road. Challenges and missteps are okay and likely to happen, especially as teachers refine a vision. So long as teachers are willing to make adjustments to meet student needs, the challenges will not get in the way of student success.

Kristen Lavric is a 7th grade math teacher at New Lexington Middle School in the southeast region.

A Passion for Teaching

From Teacher to Administrator

Lesley Smith

Throughout my life I have had a passion for working with children. From playing school, babysitting, tiny tot ski instructor, working at a Pre-School, helping students learn to dance, teaching eleven year-olds at Church School, and meeting administrators who really cared; along with having some dynamic teachers are just some of the ways I have developed my passion. In various organizations through high school, church and college, I got my first taste of administration and it grew as I was appointed to various committees for my school.

After teaching Kindergarten for a year and first grade for a number of years, I set a goal for myself to try to teach most of the primary grades and then move up to the intermediate grades. A second grade opening came up and I was able to teach second grade for a couple of years. After that, my principal needed a first grade teacher willing to change grades and teach an inclusion class. I agreed to move back to first grade. It brought me joy to see the struggling reader become fluent. Only third grade yet to teach, and I would reach my primary goal.

I had been a teacher for eleven years before deciding to move into an administrative position. I was happy teaching, but I had the desire to be able to inspire and support both students and teachers. I received encouragement from my colleagues, parents of my students, and my principal.

Working toward that goal of eventually teaching intermediate grades, I worked to get my middle grades endorsement. As you can tell, I am the type of person who is flexible and likes new challenges. I made the decision to move up to the middle school last year and taught fifth grade English/Language Arts. Wow, was that an eye opener! Moving from an elementary building to a middle school building from first to fifth grade was a huge change. I just had to find new motivators and familiarize myself with fifth grade interests. From the students, to meeting new staff, becoming a part of a new team, to new curriculum and procedures presented daily challenges. However, I soon found out I loved it! Children are children no matter what age, size or shape. I was reinforced that middle school teachers need to teach reading in every subject and constantly provide intervention both remedial and enrichment. I am very happy I made the change because I have grown both personally and professionally.

When the announcement came from our Superintendent that an Administrative Intern position would be established in the middle school, I began to think about applying since I had a Masters in Administration. I would be able to get some good experience working with an administrative staff and learn what an administrator does.

Before I applied, I reflected to myself: *Is this what I really want? Do I want to leave my classroom and my students? Will I be able to handle the evening meetings and time away from my family?* I realized this was a great opportunity for me to see if administration is what I really want.

After talking to my husband, I decided to interview for the position. If it were meant to be, I would get the position.



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State Conference

Early Registration Deadline

January 9, 2015

Passion for Teaching—continued from page 7...

After making it through two rounds of interviews, I began to believe I had a chance. When my principal offered me the job, I was excited but nervous about my new position. How to handle the evening meetings, what to do when my child was ill or need to go to various lessons were a few things for which I needed to have a plan in place. I was fortunate to have my family's full support with options and back up plans.

I started my new position during the summer with interviews, meetings, scheduling, and problem-solving. I now realized what a middle school administrator does over the summer to make the school year run smoothly. Working together was a great way to organize, set up procedures, and build a strong administrative team. I also learned how calm the summer is in comparison to the daily routine of the school year.

Many thoughts crossed my mind. I missed setting up my classroom, searching for new ideas for lessons, and meeting with my teaching team to prepare for open house, implementing new curriculum and just the camaraderie of the teachers I had worked with and felt at ease with them. Doubt crept into my mind. I had to tell myself that it takes at least one month to get my first graders into their routine, so I need to give myself a month to settle into the position and after that I will ask myself the same question. Is administration for me?

It's been about four months in my new role, and I would not be truthful if I said it all has been smooth sailing. Being an organizer, one who likes to complete tasks, plan, follow through and solve problems, I find I ask myself what did I get done today? How will I ever finish my work? I now know it is just a matter of managing my time and putting my staff and students first.

Instead of spending evenings and the weekends grading papers, I spend hours going through emails, planning for meetings, researching ideas for classroom management and intervention, and looking for motivators. Being an Administrative Intern has given me an avenue to make certain we are putting children first. I've quickly learned an intern must be a model for the staff in actions, words, dress and daily dealings. I can reinforce that every teacher is a reading teacher, that all curriculum must be student-centered, that the teacher must embrace diversity and differentiation, that specific interventions are set up in the classroom, that motivators work and need to be changed frequently and that "Teaching is a Matter of Heart".

I love working with the teachers, classified staff, parents, community, and our amazing administrative team this year. The support I have received has been awesome and is an important part of any internship. Talking with staff and telling them things they do not want to hear isn't easy, but knowing it is best for the students makes it right. I have learned the decisions I have made that are student centered are the best. I have had teachers come to me to discuss situations and decisions I have made. I am very fortunate to have the teachers respect me enough to come talk to me and we respectfully implement change for the betterment of the students.

Overall, this experience has been one I will never forget, and I am appreciative that our school system had instituted the Administrative Internship. It provides guidance, companionship and emphasizes team building. I now view our building as my classroom. I have the opportunity to "Inspire and Empower" the students and staff each and every day.

Lesley Smith is an administrative intern/assistant principal at North Royalton Middle School in the northeast region.



Conference

2015 Ohio Middle Level Association Annual State Conference

Kalahari Resort - Sandusky, Ohio
February 12 - 13, 2015

OHIO MIDDLE LEVEL
ASSOCIATION

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FORM — Please PRINT; One person per form

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Conference Fees: For every four (4) Full Conference Fees paid from the same district or college/university, an additional person may be registered free. All five (5) registrations must be sent at the same time with full payment. Full conference (2-day) may not be split between 2 people. **NO REFUNDS** given but substitutions are encouraged.

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Fee After January 9, 2015 (Post-marked) & Onsite

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* Price includes one-year OMLA membership					
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Both days:	\$45.00	\$60.00	\$45.00	\$60.00	\$ _____
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Mail check and registration form to: OMLA c/o OASSA, 8050 N. High St., Suite 180, Columbus, OH 43235 or FAX to: 614-430-8315

For more information, visit www.ohiomla.org Registration Questions? Call Barb Benson 614-430-8311

On-site registrants will be accepted with payment or hard copy of purchase order. Meals for on-site registrants are NOT guaranteed.
Participation Certificate for CEU credit will be offered.

Hotel (Registrant is responsible for making reservation) Ask for OMLA Conference Block by 1/11/2015

Phone: 877-525-2427

Kalahari Resort, Sandusky OH

\$144/night Wednesday-Friday

\$194/night Saturday

1-4 people in room

Lessons from the Iceman

Tom Burton

Mr. Roach, “The Iceman,” was well ahead of his time. His approach to education started and ended with building relationships. Any of his former students at Monticello Junior High (now Monticello Middle School in Ohio’s Cleveland Heights-University Heights School District) would agree that he was an unforgettable educator.

Teaching a class that some would consider mundane at best—civics—he made it come alive with excitement as he talked about the formation of government, why taxes were needed, and the most practical of lessons, how to fill out the 1040 tax form. Mr. Roach could make you believe that everything he said was invaluable to your development as a student and a person.

Close to 30 years ago, he walked the halls with a stern look and a huge heart. He encouraged students to hurry to their next class with a “better get going, The Iceman is here.” His personality was much bigger than his physical stature. He was 5’3”, and the middle level students weren’t intimidated with his physical presence. However, reminiscent of the old E. F. Hutton commercials, when he spoke, you listened.

His ability to relate with students started the first day in his class. He laughed as he introduced himself as The Iceman. Even his hall pass had Iceman engraved on it. Although we weren’t quite clear about the reasoning behind the nickname, it didn’t matter. He was and will always be The Iceman.

As he talked about the facts of government he floated around the room asking questions, probing for more in-depth answers and thoughts, all the while praising students for their effort. His standards were exceptionally high, yet we, his students, always tried to reach or exceed them. Even for an average student like me, nothing but the best was acceptable for Mr. Roach. He made young people in his classes want to be better students and people. His energy never seemed to drain, which to us was remarkable, because he seemed to be about 105 years old. (In retrospect, late 40s or early 50s was more accurate.)

While talking with Andy Shive, former Monticello student, he and I recalled Mr. Roach’s playfulness as he seemed to have a personal relationship with each student. Andy remembered The Iceman joking with him on what seemed like a daily basis. We laughed about the questions thrown at some of the brightest students in the class. His challenging questions helped stretch students’ thinking.

Beyond Relationships

At a time when the focus in education seems to be on everything else, we can all learn something from The Iceman. One of the most important qualities of an educator is the ability to relate with students and build relationships. When a teacher has a trusting relationship with students, learning takes on greater meaning. I can still remember some of the lessons Mr. Roach taught and that’s probably because he clearly cared about us.

Let’s not forget the importance of relationships as we scour through the test results to attach a number from a state mandated test to each individual student. While accountability and assessment are critical for schools to move forward, I don’t ever want us to stop talking about the necessary nature of personal relationships with students. This is particularly true today, when more students seem to be struggling with balancing relationships with their friends and family. As the old adage goes, “Students don’t care how much you know until they know

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how much you care.”

I want to be perfectly clear; being an educator is more than being a nice person who gets along with everyone. We need to provide learning experiences that are relevant. As far back as the 1700s in the United States, our colonies were focusing on classical instruction; the need for “useful knowledge” was stressed, according to scholar Meyer Reinhold. While some aspects of our education history may seem a bit archaic, useful knowledge is and always will be timely.

Challenge all students to reach their highest levels of performance. We know that each student is special and unique. However, many of our instructional practices are still geared to the middle. The focus of instruction needs to be on reaching all learners and challenging them each day. Easier said than done, I know, but something we need to do. Plug “differentiation” into any search engine for some great ideas to reach all students.

Possess great content knowledge. I thought it very prescient that I ran across the following quote from Samuel Johnson as I was completing this article: “Knowledge is of two kinds. We know a subject ourselves, or we know where we can find information on it.” Not only do we need to have great content knowledge that can capitalize on those teachable moments, we also must know where we can find additional information to be able to stretch all students.

Use instructional methodologies that are based on best practices. Each day is different, each class is unique, and all students are special. As we plan lessons, we must keep in mind what is best for our students. Using best practices that are evidence-based—modified to fit our classrooms—will lead us to greater achievement.

Be creative and innovative as we plan for and implement our lessons. Daniel Pink, author of best selling book, *A Whole New Mind* (and keynote speaker at NMSA’s 2009 Conference), writes about the right and left hemisphere of the brain and the implications that new research has made for the future. The logical left side, while critical, is not driving the future. The right side, being creative and innovative, is much more useful.

While he recognizes the importance of both hemispheres working together, the right side is driving what Pink describes as the Conceptual Age. He notes, “With facts easily accessible to us all, each one becomes less valuable. What begins to matter more is the ability to place these facts in context and deliver them with emotional impact.”

The Iceman’s Legacy

My sister, Sally Burton, is an amazing teacher. Her ability to connect with her students is remarkable. Living in the community where she teaches, I hear stories about her all the time. “Ms. B. sure is cool.” “She is amazing.” “I loved her class.” Being the little brother, I am always trying to get some scoop that I can later use for some healthy family dinner conversation. Much to my dismay, I can’t. She is simply too good. When I ask her students both present and past what makes her class so good, the answers seem to come out of a computer in identical statements. “She makes learning fun.” “It seems like she knows everything.” “Our lessons are exciting.” “She spent extra time with me to help.” I am very proud to tell people that my sister is Ms. Burton and not surprisingly, she was a student of the famed Mr. Roach.

It must have been 10 years ago, perhaps more, that I found out that the legendary Iceman passed away. I would love to talk with him and let him know that he continues to be an influence in my life. His ability to reach all students with a passion and purpose while maintaining trusting relationships was incredible.

As we move forward in education, seeking to provide a greater education experience in the global society for our students, remember that your greatest asset is the person who looks at you in the mirror. To paraphrase

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PlusTime

One Middle School's Journey to Provide Enrichment and Remediation

Lisa Nemeth

There is never enough time in a school day. These precious minutes pass as we make our best efforts to remediate with struggling learners or challenge students who are ready to move forward. This constant battle between best practice differentiation and time allowances prompted Bunsold Middle School to revamp their schedule and replace a flexible block of time with structured intervention and enrichment courses. In appreciation for the purpose and intention of these courses, building on skills and adding knowledge, Building Leadership Team members named it PlusTime.



Developmentally Responsive

PlusTime is allowing for math and language arts teachers to meet the needs of students who are having difficulty grasping concepts in the regular classroom setting. Students who may be reluctant to ask questions during class time have the opportunity to be in a smaller environment to learn. Teachers may explore multiple teaching approaches and students can experience additional learning opportunities. Elyssa, a student in a math intervention course, says, "The math PlusTime class helps me because the teacher explains it differently. It kind of makes things more fun because I can do math in different styles or ways." Some classes have developed what Beth Hohenfeld, a seventhgrade

language arts teacher, calls a family. "Students in my intervention class gave themselves a name and developed a mascot! I think they like that they are able to slow down the pace and get the extra help."

Challenging

Students who are struggling with basic skills get small group instruction four days a week from an intervention specialist to bridge learning gaps. Students who need help with current material in math and language arts are given the opportunity for small group instruction with their own team teacher for math and/or language arts. Science and social studies teachers developed enrichment courses based on personal interest that would connect to real-world learning. Each enrichment course teacher plans lessons that are designed to extend the learning in the classroom. Most include some sort of project based learning component or learning a skill that would otherwise not be taught. "PlusTime gives me a chance to learn about and do something other than the normal core subjects," explains Mikayla, a 7th grade student in the *Introduction to Theatre* enrichment course.



Empowering

Students placed in remediation courses are being given powerful tools to solve problems and improve academically. The extra time allows for metacognitive processing for students that is otherwise difficult to provide in the regular education setting. The students are empowered in these classes to "earn their way out" and into an

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PlusTime—continued from page 12...

enrichment course for the following nine weeks. Students in the enrichment courses are taking ownership of products such as a school newspaper, school newscast, theatrical production, debate, or science experiment. “My Plus Time has been incredibly fun getting to watch kids grow and improve with the news broadcast,” said Brock Cunningham, eighth grade teacher, as students filmed their second news broadcast episode. “I love the responsibility and ownership [the students take] for each show.” In the various enrichment courses, students are empowered to delve deeper into analyzing difficult texts, learn to use more sophisticated equipment, learn American sign language, or imagine how their lives would change had they been born in a different time period. All of these activities are encouraging students to take control of their own lives and providing them with the skills to do so.



Equitable

All students at Bunsold Middle School are participating in either a remediation course or an enrichment course. The initial decisions to group students were based on OAA data, tests given in the beginning of the year, as well as team teacher input. Students in the enrichment courses were asked to designate their top 5 choices. No matter which class the student attends, there are challenging and relevant learning opportunities. Sawyer, a seventh grade student in an enrichment course entitled *Living Through the 20th Century*, explains, “I like the class because I like learning about

history.” Remediating team teachers are focused on a blend of topics being learned in class at that moment as well as other basic skills. Enrichment teachers chose a topic that they themselves are passionate about in order to help students realize the relevance. Each nine weeks, the classes are reevaluated to decide which type of class is best for each individual student.

Although not a perfect system, so far PlusTime seems to be beneficial for student learning. Carrie Romine, an 8th grade intervention specialist agrees, “Added intervention and support to develop skills in reading and math can only help students grow in these academic areas. The students have responded well to the overall intervention.” Enrichment teachers have positive feelings about working with their students as well. “I like having students from other teams and working with higher level students who are self-starters and are excited about creating the newspaper together,” reports Katie Schneider, seventh grade language arts and social studies teacher who teaches a newspaper enrichment course.

Bunsold Middle School will continue the journey to provide enrichment and remediation. Knowing that our time with students is very precious, we are constantly reevaluating PlusTeam as teams, departments, and Building Leadership Team. Through this feedback we hope to continue to find the best ways to give students what they need to grow, while keeping our practices developmentally responsive, challenging, empowering, and equitable.

Lisa Nemeth is a seventh grade science teacher at Bunsold Middle School in Marysville, central region.

A Win-Win Field Experience Partnership

Hailey Betiko

During the fall semester of 2014, 17 middle level teacher candidates in Dr. Richele O'Connor's Methods for Integrating Literature, Speech and Drama course were matched with 24 fourth graders in Roger Bullard's class at Fairborn Intermediate School with the goal of providing one-on-one instruction in the areas of reading and writing. Specifically, Dr. O'Connor instructed her students to focus on the reading of nonfiction and the writing of opinion pieces.

Each week, Dr. O'Connor recorded instructions on Sunday night to guide the teacher candidates' planning for their time with their fourth graders. Instead of giving step-by-step directions, Dr. O'Connor shared relevant standards and "I can" statements to encourage the teacher candidates to design their own lessons based on student needs. Due to this individualization, there were always different things happening in the classroom. For example, while some pairs were working on summarization, others were working on determining author's purpose- mirroring what a differentiated classroom may look like for these pre-service teachers.

Roger Bullard reported that his students benefited from this experience in several ways, "My students benefited because each student received individually designed lessons that promoted academic growth." While circulating the room during the tutoring time each week, Mr. Bullard noted that all Wright State teacher candidates were tapping into the "teacher toolbox" that they had been developing for the past several years and it was noticed by his students, too. He explained, "Each week my students looked forward to spending time working with their Wright State teacher and showed a genuine interest in what they were learning."

Fairborn Intermediate fourth grader feedback for this instruction was also positive. One student remarked, "My teacher really helped me out with reading, I have noticed that I'm a better reader now than I was before. I also

learned a lot from her." Another fourth grader gushed, "I could tell she was helping me be better because my reading grade has gone up from third grade. Now it's easier for me to read."

In the final reflections that the teacher candidates completed to culminate the project, they were required to submit a letter to Dr. O'Connor and Mr. Bullard that included a final product from the Fairborn student, recommendations of helpful strategies to increase

student learning, and documentation of student progress. The final product that the fourth graders produced was an opinion piece on the topic that they studied throughout the project. The strategies that the teacher candidates recommended to Mr. Bullard were helpful in two ways. First, he was able to gain several weeks' worth of insight into each of his

students from reading a few short paragraphs. Secondly, the WSU teacher candidates were forced to advocate for their students by providing strategies to increase learning. Finally, the documentation of student progress came in the form of a chart that listed the 16 "I can..." statements that corresponded with the focused standards. Each teacher candidate evaluated his or her student's progress for each learning target and supported each with evidence.

Overall, this project proved to be beneficial to both sets of students, fourth grade and teacher candidates alike. The fourth graders spent individualized time with a teacher to improve upon their education. Likewise, the teacher candidates spent individualized time with a fourth grader to improve their lesson planning and instructional delivery. Partnerships like this between local universities and middle grades classrooms can be a valuable tool and offer a "win-win" for all involved.



Hailey Betiko is a middle childhood education graduate student at Wright State University in the west region.

Twitter in Your Classroom

Ashley Pease

Using social media in the classroom can be an intimidating step to your teaching practice because of all the grey areas that go along with it. A good percentage of people who use social media use it for the social aspect only, including our students. Social media was created to help people collaborate, connect, create and critically be aware of the impact of their word choices in the digital world. The fact is, our current students are growing up in a world with social media around them. There needs to be some intervention of how it is used so that they can benefit from it. It goes from “How many likes can I get with my selfie?” to “How am I going to use this information to accomplish my goal, whether it be research, networking for jobs, or learning from others?”

This article talks about the procedure of how to set up Twitter in your classroom. It isn't as simple as “go tweet.” You want to make sure that parents are aware of the use of twitter in your classroom, students continually practice their digital responsibility, and learn the ways in which you will use Twitter to benefit your learning goals and help students develop 21st century skills.



Twitter and Parents: Communication is Key

Just like teachers who need supportive parents, parents also need supportive teachers. If you are requiring your students to create a Twitter account for educational purposes, it is your responsibility as the teacher to inform the parents and get consent no matter what age level.

Create a parent Twitter letter for parents to sign at the beginning of the year. This can be sent home with all other “back-to-school” paper work. You will need to cover all bases in case a student decides to use his/her classroom twitter account for negative purposes while also informing the parent of your intentions with social media and their child.

Create a Digital Citizenship letter or even a Google Form for parents to take acknowledging that they and their child know the importance of internet safety, using cell phones and devices in school, and when NOT to use them in school. You will want to incorporate the school handbook policy in regards to device usage in school.

Hold a meeting inviting parents to come learn about Twitter, ask questions and create their own accounts. Invite the school resource officer to answer questions about forensics, cyber-bullying and reiterate digital citizenship. Make sure to talk to your school resource officer beforehand!

Parent Twitter meeting agenda example

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1CT_Zd93hrM1sx95EQK5Aco_h7FHg7JKmnBlmqQzHAIs/edit?usp=sharing

Twitter and Students

We work hard to make sure our own children and students grow up to be decent citizens. We now live in a time where we need to make sure they are good citizens online as well. Here's how to get students started using Twitter in your

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The Parent Letter Should Include...

What is Twitter?

- Some parents are skeptical of social media because they are not familiar with it.
- This section also helps parents be on the same page when discussing the purpose and how you will use it in your classroom.

What does Twitter have to do with their child?

- Explain what having a Twitter account for your class will entail for the parent and the student. List a few of your Twitter assignments for examples.
- DO NOT make Twitter mandatory. Explain other options for parents who do not want their child to use Twitter.

Why is Twitter being used in the classroom?

- Teaches the student 21st century skills that upcoming professions are looking for:
 - ◆ Communication
 - ◆ Collaboration
 - ◆ Critical Thinking
 - ◆ Creativity

The Teacher and Twitter

- Provide your @username to parents so that they too can follow you.
- Also let parents know that if something controversial is tweeted to YOU from a student, that you are legally responsible to report it.

What the Parent needs to do:

- Signature line that acknowledges that the parent knows the importance of digital citizenship for their child, the intentions, purposes and liability of using Twitter in the classroom.
- Signature line that allows the student to create and use a classroom Twitter account. Again, this is not mandatory but it will help you as the teacher sort out who has a Twitter account and who doesn't.

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classroom. Steps taken to prepare students for using Twitter as an educational tool include the following:

Set up an account

Some students may already have Twitter accounts. Have them create a new SCHOOL one. That way you can follow them and see their tweets. It is recommended that all accounts are in a similar format. For example, @LASTNAME2020 (year they will graduate).

When setting up an account, it is important to show them the steps to make an account private. There are YouTube videos and websites to help you teach this to your students. Remind them that by creating a social media account they are accessible and vulnerable to the outside world.

It is recommended they use their school email to create the school twitter account. They will need to go into their school email and confirm their account or else the Twitter account will be deactivated and it is a message

Students who are not permitted to have a Twitter account

Use this time to let them practice how they will tweet. Create a Google Form for them or create a prompt for them to “tweet” on a sticky note. Even though they don’t have an account, it won’t hurt to have them practice and understand the proper use of hashtags and condensing ideas into 140 characters.

Create a place where they can go and get the information for Twitter Assignments

Your class website is recommended with a separate page for Twitter assignments with a due date, the appropriate hashtag to use to link peers, and the process before the tweet. Here is a link to my Twitter page to get you started! <http://peasepod.weebly.com/twitter-assignments.html>

Twitter and Learning

Peers can benefit from each other if they habitually know how to use Twitter the right way. We need to expose them to the right methods and safe use of social media before they are on their own in the digital world. Here are some examples of how you can use Twitter in the classroom to benefit learning while also creating good online habits.

- Different assignments will vary based on your curriculum. If you work at a school with teams and share the same students with twitter accounts, tweets can be shared between teachers and graded for content as well as proper language.

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Happy Holidays from the Ohio Middle Level Association!

the great Ralph Waldo Emerson, trust your students and they will be true to you; treat them great and they will show themselves great.

Tom Burton, Director of Administrative Services for Cuyahoga Heights Schools, was the Mark of leadership columnist for the Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE) for five years. This article is republished with permission from both Tom and AMLE.



Have a story to share?

Contribute to



E-mail editor Jay Clark

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- Use for upcoming holidays or observances such as Veteran's Day, Memorial Day, to show appreciation or gain a deeper understanding of the observance
- Create Haiku tweets
- Take pictures of agenda boards and assignments
- Replies, Retweets and hashtags can be used to connect ideas and continue a stream of conversation between peers. *This idea benefits the introverted students who feel more comfortable communicating digitally. This opens up a window for participation.*
- Take pictures of live field trips using a common hashtag!

Happy Tweeting!

Ashley Pease is an eighth grade language arts teacher at Learwood Middle School in Avon, north central region

50+ ways to use Twitter in your classroom

<http://www.teachhub.com/50-ways-use-twitter-classroom>