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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](mailto:jclark@vbschools.net)



from the **cover**

**New Albany Utilizes the Design Thinking Process in Reinventing Learning Spaces**

*Learn more on page 5*

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in their **words**

As educators, we try to deliver the perfect lesson the first time. When we reflect on the lesson later, we may identify many things we could have done differently if given the chance. We can't get that lesson back, but we can adjust it for the next class. Every imperfect lesson presents an opportunity for improvement.

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# President's Message

## The Past, Present, and Future

**"I learned so much. I learned about things I did not know anything about before attending. I feel like I left with some great tools and more information about things to learn more about on my own."**

**"This was such an uplifting and informative conference. This came at a perfect time. It gave me a chance to step back and look at the big picture."**

**"The breakout sessions are given by real teachers who face the same roadblocks, struggles and time constraints."**

During a time where many find it hard to generate a smile while walking the halls of education, 850+ attendees did just that for two full days in February. The smiles, laughter, and energy that filled the conference center at Kalahari is a testament to the commitment of middle level educators who work to overcome obstacles in order to keep what is most important at the center... their students!

Powerful messages from Ron and Jack gave the focus for each day. Both reminded us that caring, trusting relationships with our students is at the heart of effective teaching and learning. It is not something many people in education are talking about today,

but educators in the middle know it is a key determinant of student performance and continue to take the time to build these foundations for learning.

Then it was off to the breakout sessions facilitated by teachers in the trenches. The willingness of these teacher presenters to share their relevant, effective strategies is the engine of the entire conference. They take participants on a journey through their educator's mind, sparking new, innovative practices to implement in their own classrooms. Attendees walked away from these sessions filled and inspired.

Spending 2 days with 850+ like-minded educators is the best professional development gift any educator can receive.



Lorrie Kubaszewski

President

### Give yourself a gift!

**October 15 – 17 of 2015, AMLE will be hosting their conference in Columbus.** No need for airline tickets, it is right here in our own backyard! Attendees will hear from more than 5 keynote speakers, including Rick Wormeli and choose from more than 300 breakout sessions. And OMLA will host the Thursday night social in true OMLA fashion – Disco Inferno and the Spazmatics will battle it out to fill the dance floor with their tunes from the 70s & 80s! For complete conference details go to [www.amle.org/annual](http://www.amle.org/annual).

Since we are privileged to have the AMLE conference in Ohio during our next school year, **OMLA will not host its next conference until OCTOBER 27-28, 2016 in Cincinnati, Ohio.** We are excited by our transition to the month of October for our future conferences. No more weather worries and new ideas learned at the conference can be implemented towards the beginning of the school year!

I hope your past experiences at an OMLA conference have you presently planning to give yourself the priceless, professional development gift of attending the AMLE Conference in October and then future OMLA October conferences years after!

Lorrie Kubaszewski

OMLA President



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Annual Conference  
for Middle Level Education

October 15–17 | Columbus, Ohio  
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# How Might We?

## Utilizing the Design Thinking Process to Transform Learning Spaces for Middle Level Learners

Emily Jablonka



We all know that students need to feel comfortable in a space in order for them to truly be in a mindset that is conducive to the learning process. What would it do for a middle school student's mindset in a classroom space to put a couple coats of colorful paint on the walls, furniture on wheels, large comfortable pillows on chairs, and permission to write on just about every surface?

Look around your school. Are there spaces that are under-utilized? Are there spaces that are used for only one purpose because they lack a certain 'something' that would welcome students? I found this to be the case for a large space in my building that has historically been used for what we would all consider to be a computer lab. Students would come to this space with their classes to conduct online research and to type papers or projects. The space was used in isolation, was often empty, and was not used as a learning space alternative to the traditional classroom. This led me to ask 'why?' Why was the space unused most of the day? Why didn't students use the

space during their study center time? Why was it only used as a computer lab? So I asked around ... the staff and students had pretty common responses. It was always used as a "copy center" and "computer lab". It had really never been used as anything else, though all staff said they would love to use the space as an alternative to their classroom but the setup of the space didn't lend itself to that being a possibility. Design challenge accepted.

How many of you provide gifts for your staff or colleagues around the holiday season? I have always provided staff gifts that were pretty commonplace and usually comprised of consumable materials teachers could use in their classrooms. This year I decided to spend that money on something that all teachers and students could use and would last year after year after year. I decided to conduct a Design Challenge for this computer lab space.

First things first. What would the students want in the computer lab space? If they had the choice to go to any space to study and learn, what would that space look like? Sound like? Feel like? To garner student feedback, we constructed a Visual Listening Wall. This "wall" had pictures of innovative learning spaces, office spaces, and even casual 'hang out' spaces. We asked students to write their feedback about what they liked most, place colored dots on pictures of their favorite type of space for where they would choose to go to learn and study. For students who wanted to provide feedback virtually, we also had a QR code they could scan and provide feedback at their leisure. We provided a week for gathering student feedback.

Once we compiled student feedback, we took it to the staff. Looking at what the students would want most in a learning space, what would the staff also want? What type of a learning space would they want to take their classes to?

Requirements for the redesign of the space became clear: Have multiple functions for students to be doing a variety of things within the same class, provoke imagination, individual /privacy "nooks" as well as cooperative spaces, opportunities for quiet

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# Review: Deliberate Optimism

Lee Stockhaus

OMLA member Lee Stockhaus reviews *Deliberate Optimism: Reclaiming the Joy in Education* by Debbie Silver, Jack C. Berckemeyer, and Judith Baenen

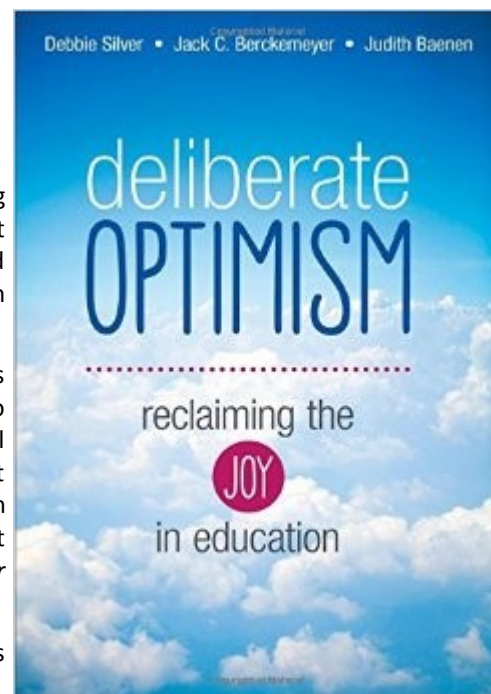
The authors of *Deliberate Optimism* wrote, “...teachers are notorious for being nonreaders, especially in their field—education. If you are reading this book, you do not fit into that category, but you know full well than many of your colleagues seldom read about their profession.” This new book by Debbie Silver, Jack Berckemeyer and Judith Baenen should be required reading for all educators.

I have heard each of these authors share their wit and especially wisdom at various presentations at professional meetings and was glad to hear they were collaborating to put some of their thoughts to a written work. This book can be read by individual educators, small groups of educators or even as a staff book study. There are only eight chapters and each one has a reflective list entitled “Action Steps for Teachers” and “Action Steps for School Leaders” and also includes an appendix of related information to that chapter’s theme. The first chapter outlines their *Five Principles of Deliberate Optimism for Educators* which are:

- Before acting or reacting, gather as much information from as many varied sources as possible.
- Determine what is beyond your control and strategize how to minimize its impact on your life.
- Establish what you can control and seek tools and strategies to help you maximize your power.
- Actively do something positive toward your goal.
- Take ownership of your plan and acknowledge responsibility for your choices.

Each of the remaining chapters weave these five principles into the themes some of which include “Creating the Optimistic Classroom”, “Reclaiming the Joy in our classrooms and curriculums”, or “Balancing your Life to promote optimism”. Each chapter offers examples to promote self-reflection on how to make your classroom or school a better place for adults and students and is liberally interspersed with quotes or stories that make you at least smile if not LOL. (Look out for the quotes from Rhodeena Culsmucker if you are reading in a quiet place, because you will definitely Laugh out Loud!) Some of the chapters and appendices also include internet links to further resources that support their text.

I would recommend this book to any educator whether you are a *Traditionalist*, *Boomer*, *Xer* or *Millennial*, (you will have to get the book to find out what they mean), a pre-service teacher, or school administrator you will find many things to help you improve your daily work with our students or your colleagues.



Lee Stockhaus is a data coach and data coordinator for Lima City Schools in the northwest region.



# Succeeding with Middle Level Practices in Rural Schools

Sarah M. Luthy

In Ohio, thirty-two percent of schools are classified as rural, which is extremely close to the national average of thirty-three percent (Johnson, Showalter, Klein, & Lester, 2014). Making up a third of all schools it is essential that educators, administrators, and policy directors analyze the unique characteristics of rural schools and how the middle school concept can be effectively implemented. This need is strongly magnified when considering that the “[g]rowth in rural school enrollment continues to outpace non-rural enrollment growth in the United States, and rural schools continue to grow more complex with increasing rates of poverty, diversity, and students with special needs” (p. 28). Two unique characteristics of rural schools are the reliance on shared resources and having budgets dictated by higher fixed costs.

The smaller size of rural districts often makes it necessary for them to share resources between their schools to work within their budgets. When the sharing of resources, like personnel and facilities, occurs it often becomes difficult for the middle school concept to be implemented with fidelity (Thomas, 2005, p. 11). Instead of having three gym teachers, one for the elementary, middle and high schools, there may only be two. One librarian may be employed for the district that travels between the schools. Shared facilities may include gyms, cafeterias, libraries, and in some cases regular classrooms.

In light of shared resources, take a moment to reflect on two key components of the middle school concept: teaming and advisory. When schools must share their personnel teaming is affected. Limits are placed on schedules as teachers, especially elective teachers, are spread across schools. Instead of being able to develop set schedules to meet the needs of elementary students, middle school students, and high school students, administrators are forced to create a schedule that coordinates the use of all staff members and facilities. Although needs of students are weighed and considered, concessions have to be made in order to make feasible and usable schedules for all the schools in the district. This limits who is able to participate in team meetings and also limits schools’ abilities to arrange for common planning for their teachers. With limited common planning, interdisciplinary units and common expectations may not occur. Even advisory becomes affected by the sharing of personnel. Instead of being able to have a small adult-to-student ratio often times advisory groups are large making advisory time less effective.

Another unique challenge of rural schools is their higher fixed costs. Fixed costs are the expenses a school must pay regardless of their enrollment. Rural schools have “diseconomies of scale...resulting from higher rural district fixed costs based on lower student enrollment” (Sundeen & Sundeen, 2013, p. 8). Rural schools’ counterparts, suburban and urban schools, have higher enrollment spreading the fixed costs out allowing them to often have higher per pupil spending on instruction. Additionally many rural districts rely on state and federal funds to operate, and there are often stipulations and regulations on how those funds may be spent. Often times those funds are earmarked for items like professional development. Although professional development is important, sometimes other items are needed as well like personnel, classroom supplies, and technology.



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space, comfortable, movable/flexible furniture, performance/presentation space, writing surfaces on desks/walls/windows, built in "cubbies" for belongings, bright and warm colors, additional work spaces (less crowded)/divided spaces, and needs to be relaxing.

The design constraints for this design challenge were pretty daunting, given what the students and staff would want in a new, redesigned space. Constraints were mostly financial because a limited budget would not permit purchase of new furniture so our redesign had to mostly use existing furniture and materials found around the building and district.

So we compiled our resources by scouring the building and district warehouses. We found furniture, paint, and a mixture of "nuts and bolts" that we would use in construction and then took our meager budget to the store to purchase the rest. Our design team comprised of teachers, administrators, students, and parents who met for two full days over our winter break to tackle the redesign.

Keeping in mind what students and teachers wanted in the space, we began the first iteration for the redesign. We made the furniture mobile by adding casters. We tore down countertops, reclaimed unused space, put larger furniture on sliders so it can be easily moved and rearranged, adhered whiteboard contact paper to flat surfaces, cut "shower board" into smaller whiteboard sizes and put magnets on them to adhere to metal window frames, turned one whole wall into new whiteboard space, created comfortable flexible seating options with large pillows and foam squares, developed creative storage solutions, and painted the four walls in "Google" colors.

Following winter break, we had an unveiling of the new space, inviting all students and teachers. We asked for feedback on the space by leaving messages on any and all of the new writable surfaces. This feedback was used to make a couple changes, all part of the design process. We will continue to develop new iterations for how the space can best be used to meet the unique needs of our middle level learners, based on reflection and feedback from students and staff. The result of this design challenge has led to the space being occupied every period of every school day through a sign-out process for teachers. Students ask to stay after school to use the space to work on homework, projects, etc. They like to hang out in the space instead of going to Starbucks down the road, literally. What a testament to the power of designing space based on their aesthetic and learning needs!

This design challenge has opened the door for individual classroom teachers to generate design challenges within their rooms. When we promote and expect conversations that begin with, "How might we ..." and consistently incorporate "think about this differently..." we ignite inspiration, creativity and passion with and for our students and staff.

How might you take the challenge?



Emily Jablonka is the principal at New Albany Middle School in the central region.



Even with these challenges, the implementation of the middle school concept as described in *This We Believe* is not impossible. Implementation requires some creativity on the part of administrators and their teachers. Teaming is still possible in which common classroom expectations can be enforced and having interdisciplinary units. Common expectations and curriculum integration can be developed ahead of the school year. Try planning one or two days of collaboration during the summer. In the initial year, the grade level team may only focus on common behavior expectations and procedures. Then, in following years, curriculum can become the focus of planning since common expectations and procedures are already established. Common planning throughout the day may be a challenge to work out for an entire grade level. Keep in mind some common planning is better than none. Even if only two teachers can have common planning, they can work on integrating their curriculum. Communication of this integration is important, so make sure all teachers at that grade level are informed. They may not be able to meet, but they can still contribute. Resources like Google Drive can support this form of collaboration.

Advisory can still occur in rural middle schools. Even though groups may contain higher adult-to-student ratios, there are ways that advisory can be included in less than ideal schedules. One suggestion for scheduling is by having advisory during two shorter times at the beginning and the end of the day. Homeroom can become a time of preparing the students for the day not just a time to take attendance. At the end of the day, the students return to their “homerooms” to debrief the day by discussing what they have learned, what homework there is, and to work through any challenges that may have arisen during the day. If a school has a common intervention period for all students, try devoting a portion of this time each day to advisory activities. Since many schools will have larger advisory group sizes, try looping. The same group of students could have the same advisory teacher the entire time they are in middle school. Although you may not be able to accomplish as much in one year due to the size of the group and limited time, think about what may be accomplished over three or four years.

Those are just a few suggestions for implementing the middle school concept in rural areas. With a little creativity, the possibilities are endless. Begin by focusing on just one or two areas of the sixteen characteristics of effective middle schools presented in *This We Believe*. Each year continue adding to the previous work. Just because you start small does not mean the end results will not be big!

**Sarah M. Luthy** is a math teacher at Trimble Middle School in the southwest region.

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# Groundhog Day

Tom Burton

We all want a second chance when things don't go right the first time.

In school, students ask for a chance to “re-do” a test. Teachers get to the end of a lesson, recognize the holes in hindsight, and re-write it. Administrators come to the end of a meeting, realize it could have been more productive, and develop a game plan for the next meeting.

In the movie *Groundhog Day*, Bill Murray's character, weatherman Phil Connors, gets the opportunity to have a “do-over.” Unfortunately, he doesn't immediately realize the opportunity he has—the chance to have a perfect day. When he finally realizes that every day is an opportunity to improve his life, he spends time each day planning what he has to do differently the next day. If he falls short of perfect, he doesn't get too frustrated because he knows he will have another chance to be perfect the next day. Ironically, when I saw the movie the first time, I didn't really get it. When I watched the movie a second time (my do-over), I understood the message: learn from your experiences and you'll have the opportunity to make life richer.

## Quest for Perfection

As educators, we try to deliver the perfect lesson the first time. When we reflect on the lesson later, we may identify many things we could have done differently if given the chance. We can't get that lesson back, but we can adjust it for the next class. Every imperfect lesson presents an opportunity for improvement.

Data are important at all levels of education decision making—in classrooms, schools, districts, and beyond. We can use data from formative assessment in the classroom to enhance our lesson-planning decisions.

When teachers discuss formative assessment, their conversation often turns to grading—an issue basically unrelated to formative assessment as it was conceived by Robert Marzano and others. Marzano defines formative assessment as assessment that is used during instruction rather than at the end. Formative assessment is not a tool for grading students. Rather, it is a tool for providing information to drive future instruction.

When we are doing an excellent job of formatively assessing students, we give ourselves the opportunity to find out how students learn the best. We also have the opportunity to determine what they have learned each day. By accumulating and analyzing these data, we can make informed and careful decisions about how and what to teach each day.

Before we had access to the technology that tells us instantaneously whether students understand the material we have covered, we relied on slower, more inefficient methods to assess students. In the pre-digital age, daily assessment of learning progress was, at best, an onerous and time-consuming task. Modern advances in classroom technology and data management make good formative assessment an achievable and practical goal for all teachers.

## Knowledge in an Instant

Linda Wilson is an outstanding teacher at Cuyahoga Heights Middle School. She teaches *students* first; math and language arts instruction come second. While observing her class last year, I was treated to one of the best lessons I have ever witnessed. It wasn't a lesson where the students were moving from station to station or one where the students were teaching the class. It was, however, one in which Mrs. Wilson and the students were in complete concert with one another.

As the students entered the room, they received a Classroom Performance System (CPS) hand-held response pad. The device looks like a remote control for a television but is used to quickly and accurately assess student comprehension. The

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students submit their responses to questions by entering a letter, number, or short answer into the device. A class average is displayed on the Polyvision board mounted at the front of the room.

This instant feedback was one of the keys to the success of the lesson. When Mrs. Wilson asked a question, she was able to get instant feedback about whether the students displayed mastery. If the students were below the target, Mrs. Wilson would re-teach the concept, toggle the questions, and re-evaluate the students.

Once or twice Mrs. Wilson re-taught part of the lesson and the students were back on track, displaying mastery of the concepts taught. Mrs. Wilson was using formative assessment throughout the lesson—assessment that was not related to grades but that offered valuable data to inform instruction.

As I reflected on the lesson, I was reminded of my middle school years, when a teacher asked students to raise their hands if they understood what she had just taught. I know instructional methodology was commonplace 30 years ago (and, in all likelihood, prominent in many modern classrooms), obtaining information that way did not reveal whether all students understood the concept or were, like the sixth grade version of myself, trying to avoid being embarrassed by not knowing the answer.

Far too often educators make instructional decisions based on opinion or limited facts. Bound by timelines prescribed by the school, district, county, and state, educators move to the next section, the next concept, without ensuring student mastery.

Teachers who use technology to gather data are better able to instruct their students in ways that work for them.

### **Working Toward Success**

In *Groundhog Day*, Bill Murray eventually decides to use his experience to learn everything he can about his colleague, Rita, with the goal of getting her to fall in love with him. He learns some valuable lessons about himself along the way and eventually wins her love.

Like Bill Murray's character, teachers learn more about their students every day, and use this knowledge to help improve learning the next day. As the year progresses, each lesson we teach helps us learn a little bit more about how to be successful the next day. After all, if we aren't happy with the end result, we need to change the way we approach the lesson.

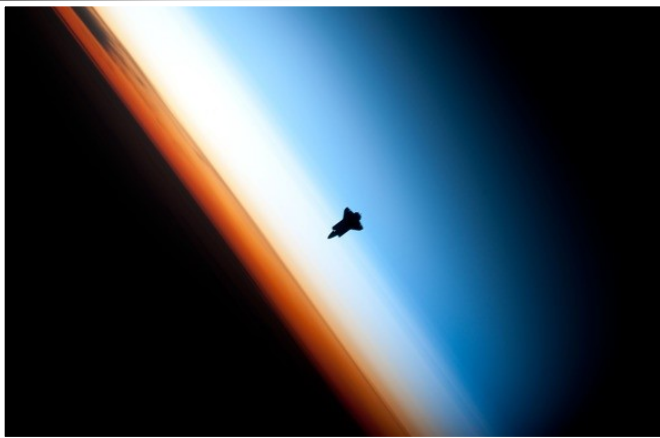
**Tom Burton**, Director of Administrative Services for Cuyahoga Heights Schools, was the Mark of Leadership columnist for the Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE) for five years. This article is republished with permission from both Tom and AMLE.



# Interstellar Goes Interdisciplinary

I watched *Interstellar* on the big screen, and it drew me in from the start. I loved the story, and all the complexities presented with every twist and turn of the plot. Then the movie introduced the idea of different dimensions, and my math teacher mind started piecing together an interdisciplinary project for our 8th grade students.

Our school, like many, has an 8th grade end of the year trip to Washington DC. Approximately 50% of our 8th grade student population participates in this valuable 4 day experience. Each year, we teachers struggle with trying to provide quality instruction to students still at school, keeping the workload down for students on the trip, while trying to be fair and equitable to both groups. When I saw *Interstellar*, I knew that I had found a solution. When discussing the idea with other teachers, I discovered one had actually gone to an educator's viewing of the movie and had some materials to relate the movie to lessons in the classroom. We started with these ideas and over the course of a few weeks, the unit came to fruition.



The teachers of each subject area worked together to create their "Interstellar Unit." Our plan is for students to have a movie theatre experience (including popcorn and the big screen), then use the movie to explore some important and interesting topics in various classes. Students on the Washington DC trip are going to watch the movie on the bus and complete modified assignments. Here are some of the topics we are exploring:

Science: We will look at Einstein's Theory of Relativity. We will do three activities that relate to the movie using knowledge students have acquired throughout the school year: calculating velocity, the speed of light and how these could change as we travel through space.

Language Arts: We will begin by reading the short story "If I Forget Thee, O Earth" by Arthur C. Clarke, a story that shares a conflict and theme with *Interstellar*. We will discuss the similarities and differences regarding characters, setting, theme and conflict between these two stories. We will then study the poem "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" by Dylan Thomas, featured in the film. We will look at the original intent of the poem, a plea for the poet's seriously ill father to fight for his life, and then its broader implications as used in the film, a civilization fighting for survival. We will also study the structure of the poem. It is written as a command or request with imperative sentences. We will discuss how the structure of the poem is well-crafted to its purpose. The students will then end the unit by writing their own imperative poems concerning an important issue. These poems will be read aloud as a capstone to the unit.

History: "You don't believe we went to the Moon? "I believe it was a brilliant piece of propaganda, that the Soviets bankrupted themselves pouring resources into rockets and other useless machines..."(*Interstellar*). Throughout the school year, students examine the importance of historical figures and events. Students will have a choice of three projects that relate to the idea "What would happen if...?" One option is to choose a major historic event and analyze the importance of the event, and how history could have been different if the event never occurred when it did. A second option is for students to create a narrative that tells an alternate history, beginning with how it occurred in history, then creating a time distortion that modifies the course of history. The final option is for students to create an interview of historic figures and discuss how different life is now, versus their time period, showing the impact of their life and contributions to the world.

Math (Math 8, Algebra, Geometry): Students will use ideas of percents, probability and scientific notation to discover how

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*Interstellar Goes Interdisciplinary—Continued from page 12*

many planets can support life in our universe. Then students will explore the idea of a fourth dimension while deepening their understanding of one, two and three dimensions. We will investigate life as a two-dimensional figure using the movie *Flatlands*, thinking about how a two-dimensional figure would view our three-dimensional world. We will use these ideas to draw different shapes in different dimensions. This activity will culminate in drawing what a tesseract (fourth-dimensional cube) would look like on paper. We will use these ideas to discuss unit measurements and the x, y and z axes in the coordinate plane.

**STEM:** Students will explore binary code as a method of communication. Just as in the movie, students will send messages to each other by creating and decoding binary trees. They will then explore how this translates into computer programming.

Written by eighth grade teachers at **Bellbrook Middle School** (west region) and compiled by Allison Bisignani

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# Professional Learning Mirroring Our Classrooms

Jay Clark

In schools, our business is learning. In reality, schools have traditionally done a terrible job at helping our own employees learn. Oftentimes, teachers have little input as to the content of an inservice day. It is also common that professional development does not reflect fidelity, leading to a “shotgun” approach to learning.

We know that teaching our students content in isolation is not a best practice. We know that when our students have buy-in or a personal connection to the content, they are more engaged. Finally, we know that when our students are provided choice in learning, they are more motivated. All of these understandings led our school to institute individual teacher professional development this year.

We modeled our professional learning time after Google’s 20% time. Google employees are allowed to spend up to 20% of their time focused on a project that is not part of their everyday work. Many of Google’s most successful products were born during this flexible time.

At the start of the year, teachers met with administrators to create a learning goal along with the steps or process to attain the goal. As we approached individual PD, we had one requirement for teachers’ PD goals: that they be related to their teaching. This broad expectation allowed teachers to go in a variety of directions - assessment, technology, and even using yoga in the classroom. We purposefully eliminated as many parameters as possible.

Part-way through the year and during post-observation conferences, we discussed the teacher’s journey thus far: Struggles and celebrations. Oftentimes, our evaluation tool (the OTES rubric) aligned directly with a teacher’s individual PD project, which created a connectedness in the conversation. In January, teachers were asked to complete a survey indicating any support they needed from me. This constant check-in mirrored what our best teachers do: They provide the students a path, but have clear checkpoints and purposeful discussions that both give the student timely and specific feedback.

During our last inservice day, staff members presented their learning to their colleagues. A few weeks prior, I provided teachers a general outline for sharing their learning. The focus

the entire year was on the journey - not on a specific product. I asked that presentations be 5-10 minutes in length, share the different steps of learning, and identify both hurdles and celebrations.



*Van Buren Middle School teachers present their individual professional learning projects in April.*

Presentations were generally longer than ten minutes as teachers were interested in one-another’s learning. They asked questions, had the presenter repeat a web address or other resource, and expanded on ideas. Some teachers worked together on their projects, such as two math teachers who began using Educannon to flip their classrooms and provide resources to students at home. The language arts teachers worked together to create grade-level specific writing checklists for content

area teachers for different types of writing assignments. Aligning with our school’s focus on writing across the content areas, a science teacher shared her journey on increasing writing in her classes and some of the resources she found. As mentioned earlier, an intervention specialist took a yoga in the classroom course and used it in her classroom for test anxiety and transitions. A young science teacher shared a variety of useful formative assessment techniques that he used and adapted in his classroom this year.

In talking with our staff members, the individual professional development was appreciated. Giving professionals autonomy while providing support led to a higher level of learning. One obstacle that is present in every school district will be the need for large-group professional learning that falls outside of our control. Much like a classroom, there is some content that we must cover together, while the majority can be individualized for students.

When we begin a new math program or the state implements a new program, large group professional development may be necessary however, we cannot abandon the ideals behind individual learning, either.

Jay Clark is the principal at Van Buren Middle School in the northwest region.



## Conference 2015: The Middle Level Journey



AMLE 2015  
**Annual Conference**  
for Middle Level Education



October 15–17 | Columbus, Ohio  
#AMLE2015 | @AMLE





OMLA wishes to thank Ripcho  
Studio for their photography  
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## OMLA WEST REGIONAL WORKSHOP



***FREE TO OMLA  
MEMBERS:***  
**TAKE ME OUT OF  
THE BALL PARCC  
SPEED LEARNING  
SESSIONS**

**MONDAY MAY 11**  
**4:00-6:15**

### **WHERE: BERRY ROOM AT THE NUTTER CENTER ON WRIGHT STATE DAYTON CAMPUS**

Begin the event by sharing refreshments with other middle level professionals.

After this social time, attendees will have the opportunity to choose from a variety of offerings, ultimately choosing to visit three different roundtable sessions of interest for 20 minutes each. These speed learning sessions will offer several practical and engaging teaching ideas in a short amount of time. Session topics and presenters are outlined on the next page. We will end with opportunities for all attendees to win door prizes.

Cost: Free to OMLA members, \$15 for nonmembers. Nonmembers may become a member with an additional \$15 and earn a chance to win an extra prize. College students will become members by attending the workshop for the \$15.00 fee. Complete attached Registration Form.



**OMLA West Regional Workshop Speed Learning Sessions**  
**May 11 4:00-6:15 PM, Berry Room at Nutter Center at Wright State University**

**Session Topics and Presenters:** Attendees will choose any three of the speed session tables to attend.

- **Table A:** *Strategies to Build Community in the LA Classroom*, Lindsay Smith and Cierra Jordan, North College Hill City Schools  
Attendees will learn engaging content strategies that also foster strong community.
- **Table B:** *Productive Discussions in the Math Classroom*, Peggy Kelly, Wright State University  
The discussion at the end of each math lesson is vital to ensure that your students get all they can out of each lesson. Attendees will look at five steps for creating productive discussions.
- **Table C:** *From Lightening Bug to Lightening Bolt: Strategies to Energize your Classroom*, Katie Weisenbarger, Beavercreek City Schools  
This session will demonstrate tweaks to everyday strategies that will energize your classroom. Topics include partnering, rewards and incentives, word walls, applause, name sticks, and more. You can take these ideas back to your classroom and use them right away!
- **Table D:** *Incorporating Science Day and the NEW Believe in Ohio Programs Into Your Classroom Instruction: The What, Why and How*, Angela McMurry, Darke County ESC  
Attendees will receive a "start-up" kit with clear suggestions to incorporate one of these hot programs seamlessly into their classroom instruction. Don't miss out on hearing about these amazing opportunities for students that will prepare them for high school, college, career and life.
- **Table E:** *Motivating Middle School Students*, Courtney Pennington, Trotwood Madison City Schools  
Attendees will learn various strategies shown to motivate students academically, behaviorally, and improve the overall classroom environment.
- **Table F:** *Building Critique in the Classroom*, Pat Murakami, Dayton Regional Stem School  
Attendees will learn how to help students engage in thoughtful and specific conversation about their work using a critique method adapted from Edward de Bono's Six Thinking Hats.
- **Table G:** *FASTs (Formative Assessment Strategies and Techniques)*, Joyce Koopman, Troy City Schools  
Learn specific strategies that will spice up your lesson plans. These are fast, fun, engaging activities to assess student learning that you can take and immediately try in your own classroom.
- **Table H:** *Moving from Rote Learning to Meaningful Learning*, Lisa Kenyon, Wright State University  
Attendees will learn about shifting classroom cultural norms to support students' engagement in scientific practices such as argumentation, explanation, and modeling.
- **Table I:** *A New Take of Formative Assessments: Motivating Your Students With Something Other Than A Quiz*, Ellen Herick and Nate Doolos, Sugarcreek Local Schools  
Come learn new takes on that old Friday quiz!
- **Table J:** *Five Ways to Replace Your Old Bell Ringers!* Dave Herick and Eddie Lohn, Sugarcreek Local Schools  
Learn how to start your classes with something other than a traditional bell ringer!
- **Table K:** *Storybooks: A Look at PBL through an Integrated Project*, Nicole Miller, Dayton Regional Stem School  
In this project, students write, illustrate, and distribute storybooks to local businesses in the Dayton area. Take a brief look at tools and strategies that we use to keep this 10-week project on track and meaningful for our students.



**OMLA West Regional Workshop**  
**Take me out of the Ball PARCC Speed Learning Sessions**  
**May 11 4:00-6:15 PM, Berry Room at Nutter Center at Wright State University**  
**Registration Form**

**Schedule**

- 4:00-4:40 Registration and Refreshments  
(iced tea, lemonade, water, and light appetizers will be available free of charge)
- 4:40-5:00 Speed Session 1
- 5:10-5:30 Speed Session 2
- 5:40-6:00 Speed Session 3
- 6:00-6:15 Announcements and Door Prizes

**Cost**

- Free to all OMLA members with Individual Memberships
- Schools with building memberships may send six participants at no cost. Please list all names on the same form if using this option.
- \$15.00 for nonmembers; nonmembers may join for an additional \$15.00
- A college student membership is \$15.00; any college students who attend as nonmembers will automatically become members without any additional cost.
- Anyone who becomes a member at the workshop will have a chance to win an extra prize.
- All fees will be collected that day in the form of cash or a check made payable to the Ohio Middle Level Association. We will be unable to process credit cards.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Title (select one)

☐ Administrator ☐ Teacher ☐ College Student (Pre-Service Teacher) ☐ University Professor ☐ Other

School: \_\_\_\_\_ School District: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_

OMLA Region: \_\_\_\_\_

To attend, please return the attached registration form via mail or email by May 1, 2015.  
 Return to: Tracey Kramer, 343 Allyn Hall, 3640 Colonel Glenn Hwy., Dayton, OH 45435 or  
[tracey.kramer@wright.edu](mailto:tracey.kramer@wright.edu), Questions call 937-775-2995

