

NORTH CAROLINA MIDDLE SCHOOL ASSOCIATION
JOURNAL

Kathleen Roney, Ed.D., Editor
University of North Carolina Wilmington

Fall 2011

Volume 26

Number 1

A Glance Inside

The special interest of this issue of *NCMSJ* focuses on what we referred to as “future ready learning” in our call for submissions. By that we explained, “as we enter the second decade of this century, we hope to highlight some of the ways that teachers, administrators, and researchers in North Carolina are enacting ‘21st Century learning’.” We are happy to tell you that ten of the submissions were accepted. In addition to offering a variety of viewpoints on 21st Century learning, within this issue you will read research-based instructional techniques for middle level classrooms, ideas and techniques for strengthening middle level teacher education programs, and research findings related to middle level teachers in high-needs areas in North Carolina. It became clear to us that all of these authors share a common goal which is that of insuring positive student outcomes.

Self-reflection is a key element in teacher education. Through reflection on best and worst practices, teachers can grow personally and professionally. As teacher educators Ramirez, Davies and Shankar-Brown reflect on their work with teacher candidates. In “Developing Global Awareness Through Self Awareness: A Middle Grades Multicultural Research Experience,” Ramirez relays the challenges she faces in preparing teachers who are demographically different from those in today’s increasingly diverse classrooms. She offers a creative approach to helping her students tackle the complexities of diversity. In “A Programmatic Approach to Teaming and Thematic Instruction,” Davies and Shankar-Brown present their design and implementation of a course they and their colleagues created to assist in preparing middle level teachers for teaming and thematic instruction.

Dente, Hilburn and Wall address the importance of collaboration among practicing teachers. In “Teachers and Social Workers: Collaboration in a Changing Environment,” Dente introduces us to the six core values of the social work profession and advocates for strong ties between teachers and social workers. Hilburn and Wall, too, speak to the issue of collaboration in their article, “Concept-Based Interdisciplinary Teaching: Science and Social Studies Teacher Collaboration for the 21st Century.” Their

experience with difficulties in finding common ground across the science and social studies curricula led them to link their disciplines through common concepts in the respective curricula.

Clabough, Rowland and Pegram focus their attention on the developmentally responsive curriculum NMSA calls for—exploratory, integrative, challenging and relevant. Entitled “Paneling History: Using Storyboards to Engage Students in the Social Studies Classroom,” Clabough provides an idea he used to make the classroom come alive. Rowland and Pegram offer a similar idea in their article “Engaging Students In and Out of the Classroom: The R.R. Moton Museum Project.” These authors call for teachers to incorporate activities that take the learner beyond the classroom and out into the community.

The importance of literacy is presented in the articles VanSlyke-Briggs and Luther provide. VanSlyke-Briggs in “What Went Wrong: Middle School Students and Alliteracy” reports on a two year study into why students stop reading during the middle grades. Luther’s “A Most Critical Need: Why Middle Grades Educators Should Be Teachers of Reading” provides insight into why literacy skills are necessary and why teachers should consider themselves teachers of reading. These authors stress the importance of helping middle grades learners develop and sustain a love for reading.

Finally, Petty, O’Connor, Dagenhart, Lemon and Fischetti introduce us to teachers in high-needs schools in North Carolina. Lemon and Fischetti present three lateral entry teachers in high-minority, high-poverty schools who are achieving impressive growth with students in “Five Factors That Contribute to the Success of Middle Grades Math Teachers in North Carolina’s Most Challenging Schools.” The factors they offer provide direction for middle grades teachers working with students living in rural, high-poverty districts. Petty, O’Connor and Dagenhart investigate how to attract and retain teachers for high-needs middle grades schools in their article, “Staffing High-Need Middle Schools: North Carolina Teachers’ Perspectives.” Their conclusion confirms the absolute necessity of addressing distinctive needs of teachers working with disadvantaged settings.

Please feel free to engage in continued dialogue with these authors. E-mail addresses are included at the end of each article.

Kathleen Roney, Editor
Professor and Middle Level Education Graduate Program Coordinator
Watson School of Education--University of North Carolina Wilmington
roneyk@uncw.edu

Heather H. Allen, Graduate Assistant
Middle Level Education M.A.T. Candidate
Watson School of Education--University of North Carolina Wilmington
hha3092@uncw.edu