

## FROM THE EDITOR

### THIS EDITION OF THE NORTH CAROLINA MIDDLE SCHOOL JOURNAL: CONTINUING EFFORTS TO CLOSE THE "KNOWING- DOING GAP"

Welcome to the third issue of the *North Carolina Middle School Journal* online. The response to our first two online issues has been enthusiastic and we hope to continue to illustrate successes in closing the “knowing-doing gap.” As noted in our “Call for submissions,” the *North Carolina Middle School Journal* “publishes manuscripts on all topics related to the education of young adolescent learners.” Within that general mission, we are especially interested in narrowing the gap between what we know about successful practices and what we do to implement these practices. As in issues past, this issue shows how some of our colleagues put what they know about good teaching and good leadership into action.

The 2007 edition of the North Carolina Middle School Journal Online featured a special theme section on Schools to Watch. In his introduction to that section, Ron Williamson noted “*Schools to Watch* are just that, places where other middle grades practitioners can see The National Forum’s criteria at work. Each school is unique and reflects its own unique identity. The emphasis is on outcomes for students, not a uniform program design” (p. 5). He concluded that one of the most valuable contributions of the program was ready access to information about these uniquely successful schools through the *Schools to Watch* website. Ron’s introduction was followed by three featured articles related to Schools to Watch:

- Recognizing and Celebrating Success: "Puttin 'on the Ritz" at Ashe County Middle School--Bobby Ashley
- Schools to Watch as a Template for Growth at Durant Road Middle School--Bob Smith
- The Challenge to Remain Unique at South Charlotte Middle School--Christine Waggoner and Lisa Cline

All four of these articles can be accessed at <http://www.ncmsa.net/journal/archives.html>

In this issue of the journal, we extend our goal of learning from our North Carolina *Schools to Watch* by examining the reports of the most recent recipients to highlight some of their most successful practices. Kristin Menickelli studied the applications from Kernersville, Rogers-Herr, and West Pine Middle School and crafted a report that describes the central accomplishments of each school. Following this spotlight feature, Vance Vaughn, Peggy Gill, and Ross Sherman report a study in which they surveyed teachers and administrators in Texas about the extent to which they perceived “effective school research variables” at their schools and found that these variables corresponded strongly with other indicators of student achievement. Next, Judith McDonald shares suggestions for making the most of “warm ups” at the beginning of lessons. In the article that follows, MaryAnn Davies and

Brenda Wheat present a “universals of culture” framework for guiding students in understanding big ideas in the curriculum through integration. Understanding culture is also the focus of Russell Binkley’s article on “crossing borders.” In this piece, he describes how he has drawn from his own personal learning experiences to craft an approach that encourages preservice teachers to “confront differences.” Rita Dunn and Karen Burke summarize years of experience with learning style data to suggest ways to “improve students grades and decorum” in the middle school classroom. “Teaching students to think for themselves” is the focus of Holly Thornton’s analysis of strategies for guiding students in making thoughtful decisions.

We conclude this issue with our two feature columns. Johnna Faulconer offers concrete ideas for “Keeping current with adolescent literature.” Jeanneine Jones shares strategies for helping preservice teachers understand “just who are these kids I’m teaching?”

Thanks for visiting our North Carolina Middle School Journal online. Please feel free to share your ideas for improving our journal or consider writing an article for us. You may reach me at [strahan@email.wcu.edu](mailto:strahan@email.wcu.edu) I would really like to hear from you.

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#### Reference

Williamson, R. (2007). Schools to watch as a tool to improve school and classroom practice. *North Carolina Middle School Journal Online* .