

About This Issue

In 2007, the editorial board of the *North Carolina Middle School Journal* converted its paper journal into an electronic journal. An electronic journal is environmentally and fiscally responsible, and it expands accessibility of the journal to middle level educators in North Carolina and beyond. Response to the electronic format has been enthusiastic. Last year, the editorial board decided to launch a new initiative - special issues that focus on a particular theme and a particular University. By highlighting participating universities and regions of the state, the *Journal* hopes to invite expanded conversations about approaches to educating young adolescents and the teachers and professionals who serve them.

We are now delighted to publish the first issue with this focus. Tracy Smith has assembled an impressive set of articles from an impressive institution - Appalachian State University. Long a leader in Middle Grades Education across the state and nation, ASU features cutting edge programs and bold conversations. As managing editor, I am sure you will find the features in our Fall issue energizing and thought-provoking. Thanks, Tracy, for leading us in this new direction.

As noted in our "Call for Submissions for 2011," the next issue of the *North Carolina Middle School Journal* will feature articles that explore issues related to "future ready learning." 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."

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. I would really like to hear from you.

David Strahan, Managing Editor

Taft B. Botner Distinguished Professor of Elementary and Middle Grades Education,
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From Tracy W. Smith, Guest Editor

This Fall 2010 issue of the *North Carolina Middle School Journal* highlights the programs, practices, and history of teacher education, especially middle grades teacher education at Appalachian State University. The theme of the issue is "Teaching and

Learning in the 21st Century.” Many of the articles reference the new North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards which were developed by the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Commission in response to a charge from the North Carolina State Board of Education. The Standards were to reflect the State Board’s mission: “Every public school student will graduate from high school, globally competitive for work and postsecondary education and prepared for life in the 21st century” (2006). In this issue of the *North Carolina Middle School Journal*, a variety of authors offer their perspectives on and responses to the mission of the State Board, the resultant standards, and the implementation of a new system of teacher and teacher candidate evaluation in North Carolina.

In “A Star to Guide Us? Questions about the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards (NCPTS) and the Ideology of Education in the Service of Global Economic Competition,” **Vachel Miller** challenges readers to examine the idea of standards in general and the NCPTS in particular and to evaluate them before beginning to align our work – our programs and practices – to them. He critiques the fundamental values, motivations, and outcomes of a mission focused on competition and standards intended to foster consumerism more than issues such as social and environmental responsibility. Four of the articles in this issue describe recent changes in ASU teacher education programs or courses. In “Courageous, Collaborative Leadership: Using Online Resources, Presentations, and Public School Partnerships to Structure a Preservice Internship Program,” **Diane Marks** describes the Field Experience Improvement Project (FEIP), a collaborative program between elementary education program faculty and teacher interns at ASU and administrators and mentor teachers in two elementary schools in Caldwell County. Diane discusses how the model that was developed might be used to improve field experiences and university-public school partnerships in other teacher education programs. In “Preparing Preservice Teachers to be Content-Ready for School Internships,” **Robert Heath** describes an approach he has used in a senior-level middle grades teacher education course to increase teacher candidates’ knowledge of curriculum within and across subject areas. He asserts that fostering their knowledge of content and curriculum improves their confidence and performance in their internships and frees them to focus on learning other critical aspects of becoming a new teacher. **Susan Colby, Tracy W. Smith (ASU M.A., Curriculum Specialist, 1995), and Michael Jacobson** describe a new course that has been added to the teacher education professional core of courses required for all ASU teacher education majors. Their article, “Preparing Teacher Candidates to Understand the Assessment of Teaching and Learning in the 21st Century” provides a rationale for an introductory course related to assessment policies and practices in North Carolina and the United States. The article also includes practical elements such as a list of course topics and assignment descriptions. In “Using Dossiers to Assess Middle Grades Teacher Candidates’ Content Knowledge,” **Melanie Greene and Ken McEwin** explain efforts of the middle

grades faculty to support and assess teacher candidates' knowledge of content. They provide examples of two specific assignments that have been added to the program to help teacher candidates critique and showcase their own depth of content knowledge.

A final article, written by **Whitney Sims (ASU B.S., Middle Grades Education, 2009)** and **Donna McGee (ASU, Principal Add-on Licensure in School Administration, 2009)** with contributions from Brad Hamby (ASU B.S. Middle Grades Education, 2009), Malen Braswell (M.A. Middle Grades Education, 2006), Elizabeth Grogan, Mitchell Wright (M.A., Middle School Education, 1998), and Phyllis Land (ASU B.A. Early Childhood Education, 1980, and ASU M.A. Middle Grades Education, 2000) describes "an innovative high school exploiting middle school concepts to foster student success." In "Caldwell Early College High School: A Middle School Approach to High School," these authors and contributors describe how practices such as teaming, advisory, integrated curriculum, and flexible scheduling, traditional attributed to the middle school concept and philosophy, are being used to maximize student success. Readers may view additional information about the Caldwell Early College High School by visiting the following pages:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7l-h7kksTlQ> or
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rB9-46BpnAU>

Also included in this issue are several feature articles about the ASU middle grades program, faculty, and students and an exemplary teacher and school in our partnership region. In "C. Kenneth McEwin: North Carolina Middle Grades Education Groundbreaker, Trailblazer, and Caretaker," Tracy W. Smith and Melanie Greene pay tribute to Dr. Ken McEwin, "the best friend and advocate of middle grades education in North Carolina," for his long-term commitment and passionate devotion to NC young adolescents and the professionals who serve them. In "Middle Grades Teacher Education at Appalachian State University," Tracy W. Smith and C. Kenneth McEwin describe the beginnings and development of the first specialized middle grades preparation program in North Carolina. In addition, biographical information about current middle grades faculty is included. "Anna Crooke: 2010 North Carolina Middle School Association Region 7 Teacher of the Year" features an eighth grade teacher from William Lenoir Middle School who exemplifies outstanding middle level teaching. Anna was honored at the 2010 North Carolina Middle School Association Annual Conference.

On a personal note, I am grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with my colleagues at ASU and with our wonderful teacher partners (many of them ASU alumni) to develop this special issue of the *North Carolina Middle School Journal*. Once again, I am reminded how fortunate I am to work in a university and school community characterized by a high degree of professionalism and dedication to the young adolescents and other students we serve. I would also like to thank Dave Strahan, your journal editor, and my doctoral advisor, mentor, and long-time friend and colleague, for his guidance in this effort. Indeed, we are so fortunate in North

Carolina to have such a wonderful community of committed middle level educators in our universities and public schools.

References

North Carolina State Board of Education (2006). NC State Board of Education Goals.
Retrieved from <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/stateboard/about/goals>