

January, 2006

Volume 1, Issue 1



*Fill this space and win a free iPod!*

As a newly formed organization, we don't have a logo yet and we need your help. Please invite your students to submit original artwork for our new logo. All ideas are wel-

NEWSLETTER TITLE

## President's Message

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Hello!

We are WAMLE, the Washington Association for Middle Level Education. We are an affiliate of the National Middle School Association. You may remember a previous middle level organization in Washington called Washington State Association for Middle-Level Education. WSAME has been inactive for a number of years. Last spring, a number of middle level educators began the work of reviving an NMSA affiliate in Washington State. An executive committee was established and we have met several times to re-establish a voice for middle level education in our state.

At the recent NMSA conference in Philadelphia, we had a lot to celebrate. WAMLE held our first public meeting on a Friday evening in the convention center. A number of you stopped by

pledging support looking forward to joining our organization. It was great to make new friends and see the passion for the middle level that exists in Washington.

Each year, NMSA calls for proposals for Teams That Make A Difference. Of the four teams selected by NMSA this year, two of them are from Washington State. They are Eisenhower Middle School in Everett and Billings Middle School in Seattle. These two teams were excellent examples of the quality of work we are doing in our state. Congratulations for their outstanding effort!

### Free iPod for Logo Design Winner

You noticed that our masthead is an empty text box. This is not a publishing error. WAMLE is having a contest for a logo. We are inviting middle school (junior high too!) students to de-

sign the logo for the Washington Association for Middle Level Education. The logo will be used on official correspondence, business cards, in our publications, wherever the organization is involved. The prize – an **Apple iPod!** Student submissions should be mailed to:

Washington Association for Middle Level Education  
 PO Box 39126  
 Lakewood, WA 98439-0126

Please let the students know that it may be necessary to alter their designs a bit for graphic purposes, but every effort will be made to maintain the integrity of their work. Submissions are due by March 5, 2006.

Thank you for the work you do with our students.

John Miller,  
 President

### CHECK IT OUT!

- Link to the National Middle School Association website

<http://www.nmsa.org/>

E-mail address for the WAMLE President:

[jmiller@cloverpark.k12.wa.us](mailto:jmiller@cloverpark.k12.wa.us)

# No Exploratory Left Behind

By Kathy Ullock

Executive Board Member  
for WAMLE

In this age of "No Child Left Behind", we must indeed acknowledge that gains have been made in some areas of academic achievement but the question must now be asked, "at what price?" One of the areas that has been seriously compromised is the area of exploratory/elective opportunities for our middle grade students. It seems as though when budgets get cut, so do programs such as Art, Music, Drama, Foreign Language, and sometimes even Physical Education. Ironically, these are the very programs that keep lots of kids excited about school and give them opportunities that may lead to life-long hobbies and often careers. In addition, if a student is struggling with a "core" academic subject, we often take away these important opportunities and replace them with another math or reading class. Please note that this author *absolutely* understands that math and reading are indeed important skills to master, but we must find other ways to reinforce these skills without denying our kids opportunities to shine in the arts. I cannot imagine this world without music. I cannot imagine this world without art. I cannot imagine this world without people learning to eat well

and being physically fit. I cannot imagine this world without theater. I cannot imagine a middle school that does not value these things and does not give kids exposure to them. If we don't, we are denying them an important part of a well-rounded education.

The National Middle School Association, which is the "parent" organization to WAMLE, has published a

position paper regarding middle level education. This document is now in its third revision and was last updated in 2003. On

page 23 of that document, you will find the following statement regarding the exploratory nature of middle schools:

"There is a particularly critical side to the exploratory responsibility of the middle level. In many respects, the level of school is a last chance. If youth pass through early adolescence without broad, exploratory experiences, their future

lives may be needlessly restricted. They deserve opportunities to ascertain their special interests and aptitudes, to engage in activities that will broaden their views of the world and themselves. They need, for instance, the chance to be a member of a musical group, though never destined to become a professional musician, to have a part in a play, though never to become an actor, or to create visual

images through drawing and painting, though never to become an artist. Curriculum that is exploratory also has potential career value,

leads to healthy recreational and leisure time pursuits, or is a precursor for significant community service. It enriches life, and makes a major contribution to the development of well-rounded, more self-sufficient adults. Exploratory and enrichment experiences are fundamental components of a successful middle level school and deserve our full attention."

In closing, I'd like to offer these thoughts: 1) When

*"If youth pass through early adolescence without broad, exploratory experiences, their future lives may be needlessly restricted."*

*NMSA Position Paper*



"I HAVE FOUND THE BEST WAY TO GIVE ADVICE TO YOUR CHILDREN IS TO FIND OUT WHAT THEY WANT TO DO AND ADVISE THEM TO DO IT."

HARRY S. TRUMAN

"ADOLESCENCE IS THAT PERIOD IN KIDS' LIVES WHEN THEIR PARENTS BECOME MORE DIFFICULT"

RYAN O'NEAL

## WAMLE Hosts First Annual Conference

Middle level educators will have the opportunity to learn and laugh together at the first annual conference hosted by WAMLE in partnership with the National Middle School Association, on April 29, 2006. This benchmark event will take place in Tacoma at Gaudrone Middle School. Two outstanding and entertaining speakers, Kathy Hunt-Ullock and Jack Berkemeyer will keynote and a number of interesting breakout sessions are planned. Participants will learn about best practices in math, language arts, student-led conferences, and more.

Registration for the conference will include a year of membership in WAMLE. We look forward to seeing you there.

Following is information on one of our distinguished feature presenters:

### Jack C. Berckemeyer



Jack Berckemeyer is the assistant executive director for National Middle School Association.

During his eight years of teaching, Jack taught various subjects, including language arts, social studies, health, expression skills, and physical education. He was named outstanding educator after two years of teaching at Scott Carpenter Middle School in Denver, CO, and shortly

thereafter was identified as one of the outstanding educators in the Adams County School District. In 2003, Jack received the Outstanding Alumni Award from the Falcon School District, in Colorado Springs, CO. Jack has also co-authored two recent releases from NMSA, *HELP for Teachers* and *The What, Why & How of Student-Led Conferences*.

Jack has presented to several school districts around the country on middle level topics. He has also presented to middle level educators in 30 different national and international locations. Jack is known for his practical teaching ideas that engage and motivate young adolescents.

## No Elective Left Behind...Continued

one gets home after a stressful day, one relaxes by listening to soothing music, not by tackling an algebra problem. 2) We can lose ourselves in a beautiful art museum or gallery and find ourselves once again. 3) We can get away from it all at a movie or a play. 4) We can learn to express ourselves

and get some great exercise though dance. 5) If we get the chance to travel outside of our own country, maybe, just maybe, we can communicate with people in THEIR language.

Please take a good look at your exploratory/elective program and policies toward that program and HUG an elective teacher when you get a chance! They need it and deserve it!



Washington Association of Middle Level Educators  
PO Box 39126  
Lakewood, WA 98439-0126

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MAILING ADDRESS LINE 1

MAILING ADDRESS LINE 2

MAILING ADDRESS LINE 3

MAILING ADDRESS LINE 4

MAILING ADDRESS LINE 5

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## Creed: Original Work from a Washington Middle Schooler

### Creed

I believe in family and friends that make up who you are and will always be there for you if you stumble or fall.

I believe in a universe in which failure leads to success and if trial and error proves troublesome, stronger and more omniscient forces will guide you.

I believe that everyone is equal, and we all play a significant part, we are all needed to create the right picture.

I believe that everyone, whether it is in depths of their subconscious or on the verge of their brain, is capable to succeed.

I believe in faith so that it may guide me, bobbing in and out of shadows like a lantern along a dark path, but that the

light of the lantern will die unless one is prepared to refuel it.

I believe that imagination is so boundless that if you let it, it would most likely consume you.

I believe that all religions are attempts to comprehend the truth of our existence and should be respected for that.

I believe that it is possible to experience directly the true nature and mystery of the universe and that many people in many cultures have, but it is not possible to explain it.

I believe that death is a natural part of the cycle of life and should not be hastened or fought, beyond the necessity to ease suffering.

I believe that we are all part of the interweaving web of existence and do not act

without being acted upon in turn.

I believe that I have a duty to the rest of the universe to heal my emotional wounds, even if they seem miniscule, so I will not pass my pain onto someone else.

I believe it is a greater challenge to be creatively good than deviously evil, and that one should always challenge themselves.

I believe in a world cuddled and cradled by peace, where we drift into sleep each night not worrying about the following days, not having to fret about war, a world silenced by the power of peace.

**Michael Kennedy**

**8<sup>th</sup> grade student from**

**St. Joseph School, Seattle**