



Washington Association for Middle Level Education

P.O. Box 39126 Lakewood, WA 98439-0126

President's Message

By **Connie Weiner**
WAMLE President

In preparation of my new role as your WAMLE President, I attended the *National Middle School Leadership Summit* in Austin, Texas. It was a rewarding experience working with affiliate leaders, who are all passionate about middle level education, from across the nation. WAMLE is a small, yet growing affiliation and we are fortunate to have strong support from the National Middle School Association. As a matter of fact, Sue Swaim, who is NMSA's executive director, spoke of WAMLE's emergence during her keynote presentation. She praised Washington State for its commitment to middle level education and the progress we have made as a new affiliation! My thanks go out to all of you, the middle level educators who support our affiliation and who have helped us in reestablish-

ing a voice for middle level education in our beautiful state.

Our goal is to continue to recruit middle level educators and to continue to evolve as a powerful force for middle level education. To better serve you, WAMLE's board members are in the process of developing a WAMLE website, which should be up and running within the next month. We are also proud to announce that NMSA is coming to Washington State to hold a 2-day Workshop in April, 2007. We will keep you posted on this workshop as well as on other workshops and conferences. Please let me know if there is anything our affiliation can help you with in your pursuit to do what is best for your students and your school. I believe that by working together we can make great things happen in our schools.

On a personal note, I have been a middle

school advocate and teacher for a number of years. Currently, I am the program chair for middle level education at Central Washington University. We are offering a middle school endorsement program for math and science and we are in the process of submitting the paperwork for the new middle level humanities and social studies endorsement program. This is an exciting time at CWU to promote middle level education to all of our pre-service teachers.

It is my great pleasure to have the opportunity to work with you. Our present challenge is to continue to give our middle level voice greater strength in numbers. The more we come together as a group, the greater change we can bring about for our young adolescents and the quality education that develops their skills and talents to the fullest.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

President's Message	1
Spice It Up!	2-3
Celebrate and Congratulate!	3
WAMLE News	3
Poetry	4
Tips	4

CHECK IT OUT!

- Link to the National Middle School Association website

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

E-mail address for the WAMLE President:

weiner@cwu.edu

Spice It Up... Making Meetings More Meaningful

By Jan Burgess

Former middle school principal in Lake Oswego School District, Oregon.

Do you quote excerpts of *Napoleon Dynamite* verbatim? Is ZITS your favorite comic? Can you tie reality TV show titles to the essential middle school concepts? Do you circle, highlight or clip articles, poems and cartoons from everything you read? Are you the person at the conference who has a bag filled with every freebie vendor's offer? Do you gather ideas on scraps of paper and put them into a file for later use? You must be a team leader or school administrator.



PUT THESE "TALENTS" TO GOOD USE AND SPICE UP YOUR FACULTY MEETINGS OR INSERVICES!

Middle school faculties' behavior often resembles the students they teach, and nowhere is this more evident than at faculty meetings. A few draaaaggg themselves into the meeting, others carry on whatever conversation in which they were already engaged no matter where in the agenda you are, a couple roll their eyes at each other and look like they'll dash the second they can, while the same few really want to know the information you are sharing and might even ask a question or two.

Prior to faculty or in-service meetings do two things: review the meeting constants, and, dig into your file of tricks and wacky ideas to spice up faculty meetings and rev up in-service sessions.

Constants: those things you

do for each and every meeting.

Agenda ~this goes out 2 days prior to any meeting, on bright paper.

Presenters ~ vary who talks and list the names on the agenda. No one wants to hear the principal drone on.

Place ~ do vary where meetings are held from the library or faculty room to teachers classrooms. Highlight the location on the meeting agenda.

Timer ~ list the time needed for each agenda item and, ask for a volunteer to hold a timecard up at 4 minutes remaining and at 1 minute left so meetings end on time.

Meeting Summary ~ finally, following each meeting,

write a quick summary of each agenda item, list carry over items, and identify the next meeting date. This goes to all staff.

The Meeting: The attributes of good teaching hold true for faculty meetings and in-services so plan accordingly: set the stage with an * interesting activity that matches the meeting content, or do something novel to focus everyone's attention; vary the presentation or the presenter every 7-10 minutes; plan a 1-2 minute activity to allow the group to process information and end

the meeting with a quick summary of what is on the horizon.

Spice It Up

Here are a few quick ideas to add to your repertoire for spicing up your meetings.

- Gather business cards from those who get to the meeting on time for end of meeting drawings (give away gathered items from conference, items donated by local businesses, or "passes" you design for a "pass on bus provision for 2 days" "coupon good for principal as teacher for one period any day")
- Share a cartoon and give teachers a copy of the overhead to use if appropriate with their

"Meetings that are engaging, purposeful and worthy of teachers time are easy to organize. Adding a little spice to the mix is what we're about in middle schools!"

classes.

- Read a poem or picture book aloud to start your meeting and give it as a drawing prize.
- Arrange seating in novel ways so different folks sit together.
- Start with a video or movie clip and ask teachers how this applies to their work, your school goals, latest topic of discussion, etc.
- Have horns or toy boats available and give one to any-

"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

C's the Day - Celebration and Congratulations

You **C**oordinate, You **C**ommunicate, You **C**ollaborate.

We all do these. How about adding these additional “**C**'s”?

Celebrate and **C**ongratulate.

Celebrations are ways to congratulate and inspire, to thank and motivate, to honor and acknowledge, to raise morale, to build community. Celebrations should not be only a year end event. Do you **C**ongratulate and **C**elebrate regularly with the adults in your school as well as you do for the students and volunteers who make a difference?

How and what do you celebrate in your school? The regular ones are Birthdays, Babies, Weddings, Staff Appreciation Week, and, Another Year Under Your Belt. How about celebrations around staff and students, teaching and learning? Here are some ideas to consider:

- Celebrate that Master's degree earned or Team project completed.
- Congratulate the teachers when students on a team reach the ___ % mark on their Reading tests with streamers and party hats.

Attendance at a team, grade level or all school reach a watershed mark~

Celebrate with high fives all around, balloons, and bottles of bubbles.

- Regularly have staff “bring and brag” ~ demonstrate some new instructional technique or tell a story about a team member's accomplishment with a student or unit of study ~ to a “round” of applause at your faculty meetings.
- Read a particularly poignant children's book and then pass on the new book to a

teacher or staff member following a particularly difficult week that turned the corner and made a difference in someone's life.

- After evaluating the team or school goals, note progress and celebrate with sparkling cider and banners for all to see. Do party hats and a desserts potluck fit in your idea of fun? Do this in January and again in April as well as in June.

- Find ways to perk up people with the February doldrums by reading a professional journal together, or by taking a faculty meeting to do reflective writing about a new strategy tried or what you learned from an interdisciplinary study your team did together. Writing about what you do and what you learn, then sharing that reflection with a colleague is another way to celebrate the work we do.



Spice It Up! ...Continued

one who toots someone else's horn at a meeting.

- Hand out a relevant middle school journal article with agendas and ask table groups to summarize and share why it has meaning.
- Draw names, then ask individuals to share what concepts their students are working on currently before the meeting ends.
- Post two prompts and ask everyone to write for 3 minutes on one of the prompts (these could be serious or just thought provoking).

- Invite faculty to come early and have a coffee cart service ready ~ with you as barista. Coffee, hot chocolate, tea, or bottled water set the stage.
- Invite faculty to come early to rate things from soda breads (March taste test in celebration of St. Patrick's Day) to paint swatches (repaint the faculty room or faculty restrooms).
- Survey faculty about anything: culture, climate, discipline, lunches, dress up days, themes, curriculum

connections, whatever you want information about. The caveat here is to be sure you publicize your findings and let staff know what you intend to do with the information!

Meetings that are engaging, purposeful and worthy of teachers time are easy to organize. Adding a little spice to the mix is what we're about in middle schools! Who knows ~ your faculty might even look forward to meetings.

News Worth Knowing

Logo Contest Winner

Congratulations to Brooke Hess (5th grade) from Bay View Elementary School! Brooke designed WAMLE's logo, which is being used on our official correspondence, business cards, and publications. Brooke won an Apple iPod! WAMLE board members also thank Brooke's teacher, Ms. Kay Boyce, for having her class participate in our contest.

My Opinion Section Coming

We encourage middle level educators to share their experiences and opinion with us. Our topic for the January Newsletter: *What are your thoughts about grading practices?*

Rick Wormeli, a NMSA presenter and author, promotes the "Turning Zeros to 60s" policy. For example, Mr. Wormeli cites a student who gets five out of six test scores of 100% and one test of 0%. This averages out to an 83%, which is a "C." Rick Wormeli contends that a student who can get 100% five out of six times should not get a "C."

"Turning Zeros to 60s" by Rick Wormeli appeared in the April 2006 issue of *Middle Ground*.

You may also join the conversation at www.nmsa.org – this will give you an opportunity to talk to your colleagues nationwide.

Upcoming Events

Are you planning to attend the National Middle School Conference in Nashville, TN?

If so, please look for us – WAMLE is sponsoring a Washingtonian Middle Level Educators Get-Together. We're looking forward to seeing you there.

The National Middle School Association will hold a 2-day workshop on April 20 to 21, 2007 at Central Washington University in Ellensburg, WA. Please mark your calendars! WAMLE will host the event and we invite all our members to come to our Annual Meeting.

Adolescents

I
do
see
them:
lively,
young,
growing
by leaps
and bounds;
bursting out
of poorly sewn,
mass-produced jeans,
to become individuals;
secure in their uniqueness;
no longer dependent on parents
or the uniformity of their own nonconformity:

castings dissatisfied with the constraints of the mold.

David Puckett – *Reflection From a Teacher's Heart*

Tips to Help You Stay Ahead of the Game

POPSICLE PARTICIPATION

Many teachers use popsicle sticks or cards as a way of randomizing student participation. Here is a suggestion from the book [Breaking Ranks in The Middle](#) by the National Association of Secondary School Principals:

"Academically proficient students are more likely to raise their hands, while students who struggle often sit quietly, become the passive learner and hope the teacher will call on others, right?"

Our solution: Use a deck of cards (or Popsicle sticks) and put the names of students scoring in the lower two quintiles (Far Below Basic and Below Basic) on *two* of the cards (sticks) and the names of other students on only one card. Rather than randomly choosing a student, the teacher draws from the stack and calls upon the student named on the card to answer the question. This ensures that lower performing students are asked twice as many questions. To date, the students have not figured it out. There can be no passive learners!"