



Proud affiliate of the National Middle School Association
 P.O. Box 39126
 Lakewood, WA 9843-0126

Dedicated to serving the needs of middle-grade students and the people involved in their lives

It's all about Relationships!

A few months ago, Kathy Hunt-Ullock, a dynamic educational consultant, asked my Middle and High School staff to play the game "The Personal

Board of Directors." She asked us to list 10 People that impacted or helped us in shaping the person we are today. Then she encouraged us to list reasons (a single word or phrase) why we wanted them on our Personal Board of Directors. Next we labeled the people on our

list with C for the Cognitive Domain or A for the Affective Domain. As we shared our results, it became obvious that the majority of the people on our lists who influenced us in a positive manner came from the Affective Domain. Our Personal Board of Directors had such an impact on our lives,



because they cared and supported us. The same holds true when working with our middle school students: They don't care what we know until they know that we care.

Kathy kept on reminding us that emotions drive learning and we have to find a way to connect to our students.

When reflecting on the "Personal Board of Directors" exercise, I asked myself the question - What does it mean to be on a "Board of Directors?" Well, we are talking about a group of people who come together for a common cause. They are not get-

ting paid for their time and effort, but they believe so strongly in the cause that they are willing to sacrifice some of their time to make a difference. By becoming a member of Washington Association for Middle Level Education and by participating in our events, we are building stronger relationships

in our continued effort to improve middle level education in Washington State. Those relationships we build and the resources we pull together will play an intricate part in our effort to expand and align the supports available to young adolescent learners. As your president, I am inviting you to become actively involved in our growing organization. We also invite you to consider joining our Board of Directors!

Don't forget NMSA 2-day Workshop: Middle Level Promise and Practice from April 20th to 21st in Ellensburg. You'll find more information on program events by visiting NMSA website www.nmsa.org or WAMLE website: www.wamle.com. We hope we will convince you to fill out the registration form and start packing.

Connie Weiner, Ph.D.
 Washington Association for Middle Level Education
 President
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Help I'm Stuck!

Resources at your Fingertips
 By: Ian Burgess, West Region Trustee

With obligations pulling you in multiple directions, where do you find the time to search for and develop new ideas, inspiration, quick strategies, a new practice, a website, a presentation, or an article to share with others

in your department or on your team? When you are asked to speak at a Parent Club meeting or your school board needs some current research to support what you do in your school with middle level learners, there is an excellent, comprehensive and easy to use resource that awaits you. It is free to all, no membership required (though membership does have its benefits!). That resource is the

NMSA website at www.nmsa.org. Here are three examples that could make all the difference for you when you most need a reliable and useful resource.

!Fat or Phat?

Wondering what all the fuss is about with obesity? Need numbers to convince a group that PE on a daily basis is a MUST or that the pop machine shouldn't be available during the school day?

Log on to NMSA's website> click the Advocacy link> click the Health and Wellness link>click and read the Wellness Policy, then watch the Wellness Presentation described below:



"This presentation tool is a free resource appropriate for advocacy work with school boards, parent/family groups, school, staff, and community members. This 17-minute presentation reviews the national data on obesity and overweight trends in the United States.

It presents data and compelling arguments to support schools as they take action to improve physical activity and nutrition for young adolescents. The presentation also provides an overview of the Reauthorized Child Nutrition Act and outlines steps and resources to assist schools and communities to improve physical activity and nutrition for their students and staff." NMSA

Review this presentation and you will be absolutely convinced that the data and research are there to show the crisis that confront young adolescents and adults alike. You can even click "Submit a Story" and have your students highlight the good things you are doing in your school to address these issues. Talk about an authentic assignment!

2: Bored and restless?

Tired of your tried and true ways to get kids involved in the content you teach? Need a new teaching strategy or idea to use in your classroom? Click on the NMSA website>Link to

Publication> Click on Middle Ground> click Articles. Look at the themes for the various magazine issues listed and scan through the article titles on the topic that most concerns you. Each issue has "Hotlinks" by Brenda A. Dyck who identifies websites, webcasts, podcasts, webquests, differentiated lessons, and much more. There are articles that highlight instructional units and strategies teachers currently found successful in their classrooms. If you don't find an idea here, teacher and author, Rick Wormeli, is featured in each issue under "Teaching in the Middle" and his ideas are foolproof.

3: Is your practice or school configuration being questioned?

Research summaries that are succinct, clearly understandable, up-to-date with annotated references are



on the website. www.NMSA.org > Research >Research Summaries.

- Topics like:
- Adolescent, Health, Wellness and Safety (October 2006)
 - Transition from idle School to High School (Sept. 2006)
 - Student Achievement and the Middle School concept (Sept. 2006)
 - Parent Involvement (Aug. 2006)
 - Advisory Programs (July 2006)
 - Bullying (Feb. 2006)
- are all written for you to print and use! Oregon and PSU's own Micki Caskey is the editor of the Research Advisory group at NMSA and are well into creating and posting another dozen research articles for all of us in middle level to read and use to future our work together.

Finally, join NMSA! It is the best resource for professional and personal development. Remember that new ideas come from networking with others, and where better to do that than the annual NMSA conference; 11/08/07 in Houston, Texas. Do take in the OMLA conference this March as well. The professional growth sessions on many hot topics are invaluable. The breakout sessions offer so many ideas that are immediately useful in the classroom you'll leave

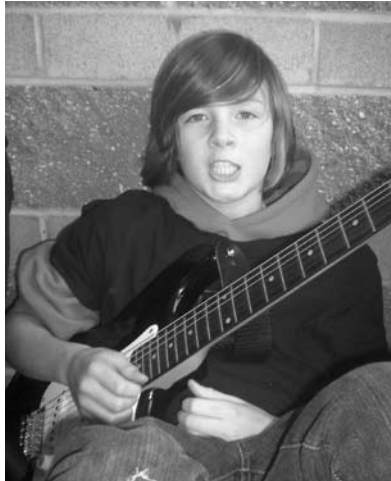
with your head and suitcase full. But when time and money are limited, make use of the NMSA website. This resource is available to anyone interested in furthering his or her work with young adolescents. Try it, you'll be pleased you did.



Advisory: Why it Failed! And What Works

First and foremost, and this is a biggie.....Advisory is NOT a curriculum. It IS a relationship! It is a relationship that is established between an adult and a small group of students that meet on a regular basis. That adult is an advocate for their advisees and that adult is a key communicator between the home of those students and the school. Period. If you accomplish those simple basics, you have the start of a GREAT advisory program.

However, most Advisory programs that I've seen are totally based on a curriculum model. Schools have purchased canned programs that are not related to what is going on in the team, what is going on in the school, or what is going on in the world. The very LAST thing that kids need is another unrelated program dumped on them, which has no meaning or relevance. In addition, the LAST thing that teachers need is another class to teach which is disconnected to the rest of the team curriculum. Please notice that I keep using the words "related" and "meaningful". The lack of this focus in Advisory programs has severely lead to its demise. We must create Advisory programs that are CONNECTED to the team structure, are full of meaningful connections between the teachers, students, and the curriculum, and activities and discussions that



are relevant to our students. The structure of the Advisory program is critical to its success. I firmly believe in a team based advisory program. The structure looks like this: let's say that we have a core team of four teachers with about 100 students.

(one for math, one for science, one for social studies, and one for language arts) Now, hopefully, this team also has a special education teacher who is a full member of the team. We now have 5h advisors for a team of 100 students. Finally, we MUST attach, in a meaningful way, 2 or so exploratory/elective teachers, which will be advising students from this team.

It is extremely important that exploratory/elective teachers are advisors. Those teachers are natural coaches to kids, should be closely linked to a core team to bring those adults together, and their involvement will help keep the advisory numbers down. As you will see later in this article, there ARE ways to keep the exploratory/elective



folks involved. Now, as we examine this structure, there are now SEVEN people that will be advising a team of 100 students. That's a ratio of approximately 15:1. Of course, each school must adjust these numbers according to their student and teacher population.

Now that we have established this structure, let's talk about how to use it. We MUST work smarter, not harder. Each week, or every other week, this group of SEVEN people must get together for about 20 minutes and plan ahead for the common experiences that they will ALL give to their students. Notice that I said ALL. Another reason for the demise of the Advisory program was that every advisor on a team was free to do whatever they wished. When ALL teachers are on board with common experiences, this program can strengthen the team itself! Remember that there are SEVEN people at this meeting.

Let's start sharing the planning responsibility and assigning weeks! Week one, we are all planning together for the opening of school. Week two, its the math teacher's responsibility to come up with our common plans. Week three, it's the language arts teacher. Week four, it's the art teacher. good at math, you have figured out that any teacher has to plan MEANINGFUL activities/discussions for students every 7 weeks!

You may be asking.....where do we come up with the time to meet for 20 minutes each week? When our core teachers are on planning time, the exploratory teachers are teaching our kids! Yep, that's a problem but I've seen a lot of solutions. Some schools group their teachers together by virtue of lunch periods. The teachers then agree to eat lunch together every other week and plan for advisory. Some schools allow the first 20 minutes of an already planned faculty meeting for the discussion. Some schools allow teachers to go home early the day after they plan if the planning takes place after or before school. Some schools have early release days where time is allowed for the group meeting. However you do it, the face-to-face meeting between all SEVEN people is critical. We want to create common experiences for our team students and involve the exploratory teachers in the planning.

Not only do I believe in team

based advisories, I also believe that advisory should be the FIRST thing in the morning, five days a week, for 20-30 minutes. I want students to start each morning on a positive note with their advocate. That advisor can get the students ready for the day, check their agendas, help them review for tests, (more about this in the next issue of this newsletter), make team announcements, and do MEANINGFUL and RELEVANT activities with the kids that are connected to what is going on in the team, the school, and the world.

To summarize: 1) Advisory is NOT a curriculum, it is a relationship. 2) Advisory should be team based with extended teachers advising a team of students such as special education teachers and exploratory teachers. 3) That team based group of teachers should meet on a regular basis and plan common experi-

ences for their students. The planning should be rotated and shared. 4) Advisory should be FIRST thing in the morning for 20-30 minutes on a daily basis. It is the home base for kids.

If Advisory is first and foremost a relationship, not a curriculum, what does an advisor do during the Advisory time? What is the job description of an advisor? What are some activities that work? What are some good resources for this program? These issues will all be addressed in the next issue of this newsletter. Please stay tuned.....



Cell phones and ipods; who really needs them? School is no place for excessive talking and blasting music into your ears. Allowing cell phones and ipods into the school is the same thing as letting students talk non-stop and damage their eardrums. Students are already bringing ipods and cellophanes to school without permission. The injustice should be ended immediately by banning the use of cell phones and ipods at school altogether.

Texting, talking, ringing and games are all distractions of a cell



Winning Student Essay Cell Phones and I-Pods

By: JiHea Shin

phone. There are even more accessories that will keep more middle school students with short attention spans away from teacher's words. Then they'll drift closer to a cell phone. Even right now the students bring their cell phones into the class when they should be kept in lockers. Why don't we just end the madness and prohibit cell phones in the entire school?

In emergencies the cell phones won't even be needed. Throughout the



school there are phones and during blackouts and lockdowns, school phones are there as well. The school phone can always be accessed to call your parents or guardian. Why else do you need a phone unless they use it for non-emergencies?

Listening to ipods can damage your ears permanently. Ipods and mp3s being listened to school not only bring health issues to attention, but also disorder to the school. Having an ipod with you is a distraction to the entire learning experience. No one can fully concentrate on a teacher's lecture or lesson when they're too busy singing along to the latest songs they've added to their ipod.



essay continued...

There's another issue that students have already encountered; the death of an ipod or cell phone. In other words; a broken or damaged cell phone or ipod. Then students will blame the school because they allowed it to happen. Middle school students are not as innocent as their first grade selves used to be so long ago. Now a days it's pretty common when a jealous seventh grader will steal someone's ipod or cell phone. Then mobs of angry parents are confronting the school board; but weren't they the same angry mob that wanted cell phones and ipods allowed in school? Look at these reasons which explain so much of why the schools aren't allowing them. Why change the rules now?

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Awards:

Promising Practitioner Award (\$250.00)

Purpose: WAMLE honors teachers beginning their teacher career, who have one to four years of teaching experience.

Master in the Middle Award (\$250.00)

Purpose: WAMLE honors teachers who are devoted to young adolescents, committed to best middle level practices, and who have taught for five years or more.

Student of the Year (\$50.00 plus a book for the library in the amount of \$25.00)



Application forms are posted on our website.

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Haiku Poems:

They are written by Central Washington students who are taking the "EDEL 477 Middle School Students and Their Environment:

Hormones running wild. Does he really care for me?
But he feels so good.
By: Jennnifer Beerbower

Rapidly Changing
Hormones, feelings, body, and friends
Adolescence is hard
By: Stephanie Delp

Embarrassing blotch
Blaringly requests swift heed
Popping the pimple
By: Nick Reykdal

What an awkward time
Girls giggling and being mean
Boys getting boners.
By: Maggie Keegan

Healthy food and junk food
I just can't eat it
In fear I am too fat.
By: Sarah Mask

What do I do now
When it comes to my self-
worth?
Damn the magazines.
By: Ben Hansens



CONGRATULATIONS: Our NMSA 2 day workshop was a huge success! Here are some of the comments from the evaluations:

-Good presenters, I would hear any of these presenters again. – Well organized and topical. – I attended all Beaman’s sessions. I would love to attend all other sessions as well. Perhaps a 2 day workshop would have been more beneficial to me. – Great conference! I really enjoyed all of the presenters! This was my first teacher conference and I really learned a lot that I believe is going to help me in my classroom. It was good with excellent organization and good people. – I got many great ideas. I want to have my class be a better learning environment and these things seem great!- Awesome! Please offer more workshops by her!(Debbie Silver) – Loved it- I want more! – Thank you! Great learning! Great fun! – Bring the conference back to Washington! – The discipline piece was exactly what I needed at this point in my career! – Terrific presenters- high e energy and motivating. – Priceless – Conference was outstanding! Thank you! – All of the presentations provided good information and tools for me to bring into my future classroom. – I would enjoy listening to these speakers more. They provided information that we need to heard in school. – We hear the art of teachers, but this conference focuses on how to teach by loving the students and making the students our focus. – Thanks for a great conference! Looking forward to the next one. – Very informative, entertaining and useful Thanks!- I very much enjoyed the workshop and look forward to attending others.

Credits: Brian Jones, Newsletter Organizer
Gabby Jones, Techie
Photos courtesy of Caleb Gentry , Sequim Middle School Annual Advisor and his students.
Sequim Middle School Office Assistants