

The Best is in the Middle

West Virginia Association for Middle Level Education

Fall 2005

Volume 2, Issue 6

Spring 05 Conference Enjoys Record Attendance

Our Spring Conference proved to be another resounding success! Dave Shepard was the keynote speaker at the conference with a humorous and thought provoking challenge for us to remember the “voices from the middle” and our attendance was higher than any previous year.

The numerous concurrent sessions varied from presentations on recent research about the impact of integrated curriculum in our middle schools, to the newest technology of using handheld computers to explore concepts of energy. Other topics included enhancing student-teacher relationships as well as meeting the reading needs of middle level students. The continued success of the conference depends on dedicated educators providing many more of these top-quality presentations.

In this Issue:

- Spring 2005 Conference was a huge success
- 2006 Conference dates announced
- New online tool for Language Arts Teachers
- Middle School students recognized.



Above: Participants enjoy one of the sessions

Date for Next Year's Conference

Mark your calendars now for next year's WVAMLE Conference on April 28-30, 2006, at Stonewall Jackson State Park Conference Center. Check out the conference information in this newsletter.



Right: Renewing acquaintances and meeting new friends

WV Middle Level English Language Arts Units Now Online

Middle school teachers are just a click away from Reading and English Language Arts lesson plans. The West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE) has gone “virtual” by placing a new in-depth learning tool online.

The lessons within these units of study are designed to activate the students' prior knowledge, develop vocabulary, build basic skills, and engage students in research-based active and post literacy strategies.

The units of study are also designed according to the research identifying the effective use of a 90-minute class period of instruction, as well as the high yield strategies of the 21st century middle school as identified in the Framework for High Performing Middle Schools. The WVDE is now in the process of writing approximately 50 additional units; half of which will be posted by February 2006 with the remainder posted to the website by June 2006.

The Department has recruited West Virginia teachers from approximately 15 counties who have received professional development in high yield literacy strategies, vocabulary development, and the integration of 21st century skills that promote the relevant application of knowledge and understanding in the classroom to write the units. The units can be accessed by going to the WVDE website and clicking on lesson plans under teachers on the left hand column of the home page.

If you have any questions, please contact Closing the Achievement Gap Liaison Carla Williamson in the WVDE Division of School Improvement Services at 304-558-8098 or email her at cljwilli@access.k12.wv.us.

Award Winning Middle Students

State Farm Insurance announces the selection of students for Academic Achievement Awards. The awards are based on the overall grade point averages. The winners were Brinkman Murray of Bridgeport, Breanne Kosar of Wheeling, Anne Seabright of Wheeling and Sarah Thorn of Mullens.

Also, Shilo Summers of Monongah was named as one of West Virginia's top youth volunteers by receiving the 2005 Prudential Spirit Community Awards.

Congratulations to all of these students for their achievement and the honor they bring to themselves and our state.

Keynote Speaker Announced for 2006 Conference



Keynote Speaker
John Simmons

John Simmons, author and award winning educator, from Calgary, Alberta, Canada has agreed to be the keynote speaker at the WVAMLE 2006 Conference. This conference marks the **25th Anniversary** of the **WVAMLE Annual Conference**. Mr. Simmons will bring his unique and entertaining style to help celebrate the milestone.

John Simmons has taught in public and private schools for over 20 years. He is a member of the Canadian Association of Professional Speakers and an executive member of the Canadian Association for Therapeutic Humor. John will help the attendees become more focused, laugh more and approach their tasks with a positive sense of purpose. His combination of insight, practicality and humor inspires his audiences to embrace personal and organizational development.

John will present his keynote address titled **Top Ten Ways to Have Fun at Work Without Getting Fired** on Friday, April 28th, 2006 beginning at 7:30 pm. A reception complete with heavy hors d'oeuvres and cash bar will follow. Following breakfast on Saturday morning, John will speak at the morning general session with his presentation of **Where There's Laughter, There's Learning! Humor in the Classroom**.

Poorly Structured Middle Schools

Humor in the Middle

The father of a teenager answering the phone: "No, this is NOT Dreamboat! This is the supply ship!"

With "No Child Left Behind" bringing a focus on testing and standards that all students must meet at grade level, there has been an increased concern that many middle schools are failing to educate students to high levels. Common characteristics of such schools include:

- A curriculum that is poorly aligned with the state's standards.
- Few or no cross-discipline connections.
- Skills being taught in isolation.
- A factory model of organization in which students are moved in a rigid time schedule rather than a flexible schedule that ties curriculum to learning that leads to transferability.
- Classroom practices that reflect what teachers are comfortable doing rather than what works to help young adolescents best learn.
- Few, if any, effective student support systems.
- Limited institutional responses for addressing academic concerns.

Source: New York State Middle School Association, Pamphlet – Series 8, Issue 2.

Wisdom for Kids of All Ages

Peer Pressure:

Submit to pressures from peers and you move down to their level.

Speak up for your own beliefs and you invite them to your level.

If you move with the crowd, you will get no further than the crowd.

When 40 million people believe in a dumb idea, it is still a dumb idea.

Simply swimming with the tide leaves you nowhere.

So, if you believe in something that is good, honest and bright, stand up for it.

Maybe your peers will get smart and drift your way.

Source: The Wall Street Journal

This newsletter is published by the West Virginia Association for Middle Level Education.

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In Cooperation with



100 Angus E. Peyton Drive

South Charleston, WV 25303

Make your reservation now for the 25th Annual Conference. Call Stonewall Jackson Resort at (304) 269-7400.

Conference Rates

Single Room \$128.00 per night

Double \$126.00 per night

Rate does not include meals. Meals are included in the conference registration fee.

You must reserve your room by March 29th, 2006 in order to receive the quoted rate. Make sure to mention you are attending the WVAMLE Conference.



WVAMLE conference features sessions on “nuts and bolts” issues for middle level educators.

Stonewall Jackson provides many recreational activities such as:

- Golf
- Full service spa
- Indoor/outdoor pool
- Hiking and biking trails
- Exercise facility
- Supervised activities for children
- Fishing and water activities

For additional information visit www.stonewallresort.com or call (304) 269-7400.



Call For Presenters

Do you or your colleagues have something to share? WVAMLE is looking for you! If you and/or members of your staff have information to share with other middle level educators, principals or college students, now is your chance.

The WVAMLE annual conference provides an opportunity to present the unique and successful techniques used at your school or in your classroom. Presentations should be geared to experienced middle level educators and those new to the field of middle level education. Sessions should be approximately 45 minutes in length and we encourage practical hands-on workshops as well as those that provide researched-based information.

Some topics for consideration include:

- Interdisciplinary teaming
- Student-led conferencing
- Standards-based instruction
- Differentiated instruction
- Parent involvement
- Shared leadership
- Subject area (math, science, social studies, English/language arts)
- Related arts or exploratory classes
- Presentation of specific units
- Same gender classes
- Meeting AYP
- Improving test scores
- Classroom management
- Any other area that may be of interest to middle level education

Anyone who is interested in presenting at the state conference is encouraged to apply. To apply send your

•Name

•School

•Address

•Names of additional presenters (if more than one)

•Title of presentation

•And a brief session description (50 words or less)

to John Huxley

WVAMLE—Marshall University

100 Angus E. Peyton Dr.

South Charleston, WV 25303

Entries should be submitted before January 31, 2006, for consideration. All presenters *must* register for the conference. Presenters will receive a \$20 discount on registration fees.

Registration Form 2006 Conference

April 28-30, 2006 Stonewall Jackson Lake Resort

Name _____

E-Mail Address _____

Phone _____

School/Organization _____

Home Address _____

(City) (State) (Zip Code)

Registration Information

Before April 14, 2006—Registration to conference including all meals and a 1 year membership in WVAMLE **\$190.00**

Current members get a \$15.00 discount and pay only \$175.00! (If you attended last year you are a member)

After April 14, 2006—Registration to conference including all meals and a 1 year membership in WVAMLE **\$225.00**

Please include check or school purchase order (payable to WVAMLE) with registration. Registration is not complete without payment or purchase order. ***Refunds (minus a \$25.00 processing fee) will not be made after April 14th, 2006.***

Mail payment and registration form to: **John Huxley**
WVAMLE—Marshall University
100 Angus E Peyton Dr.
South Charleston, WV 25303

****Please duplicate this form as needed.

HOUSING INFORMATION

Make reservations directly with Stonewall Resort by calling (304) 269-7400. Make sure to mention that you are attending the WVAMLE Conference to get the rates of:

Double Room \$126.00 per night

Single Room \$128.00 per night

Ask about companion rates for guests not attending the conference. A representative from Stonewall will be able to provide information on companion rates.



Proud sponsor of the WVAMLE Conference