

THE WEST VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF MIDDLE LEVEL EDUCATION NEWSLETTER

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WVAMLE SPRING CONFERENCE JUST AROUND THE CORNER

Everyone is invited to another outstanding state Middle School Conference, sponsored by the West Virginia Association of Middle Level Education, Marshall University and the West Virginia Department of Education. Those who attended the 2002 conference give witness to the exciting Key Notes, General Sessions and Break-Out Sessions. Mark April 25-27 on your calendar and let us see you at Snowshoe. The keynoters this year are Debbie Silvers and Walt Grebing. Bill Tenney is returning to do some General Sessions. The conference will be surrounded by the beauty of Snowshoe, outstanding food and entertainment.

Registration Information is available at <http://www.marshall.edu/WVAMLE>

Tentative Conference Schedule

Friday, April 25

4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. Registration
7:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m. Opening General Session
9:30 p.m. – 11:30 p.m. Reception

Saturday, April 26

7:00 a.m. – 8:30 a.m. Continental Breakfast (provided)
8:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. General Session II
10:15 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. General Session III
11:45 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Lunch (provided)
1:15 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. Break Out Sessions
3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. Special Networking Opportunity
6:15 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. Dinner (provided)
8:00 p.m. – Until Social

Sunday, April 27

8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. Continental Breakfast (provided)
9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. Closing General Session
10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. WVAMLE Business Meeting

SCHOOLS TO WATCH

On the national scene, Dr. John Lounsbury and the NMSA have a program to identify Schools- to-Watch. The West Virginia Association of Middle Level Education hopes to initiate a similar program in West Virginia. There are some well developed schools around the nation such as in Gwinnett County and Rockdale County, Georgia, and Kansas City, Kansas. As West Virginia schools move to Middle Schools in concert with the development of a set of Middle School Identifying Standards, being put together by the state's Middle School Cadre, under the direction of Carla Williamson, WVDE, many have requested the identification of model schools that illustrate these standards. We hope to identify schools within West Virginia that have implemented some or all of the characteristics of exemplary middle schools. Several national leaders have expounded the identifying characteristics of exemplary middle schools including Paul George, John Lounsbury, William Alexander, Louis Romano and others who have invested their lives to the middle school movement over the last 30 years. Collectively, these experts have identified a list of model standards by which to recognize appropriate middle school practices. Some of these practices include:

- € Continuous Progress in which students are allowed to progress at their own individual rate, regardless of chronological age.
- A Multi-material Approach in which students have a wide range of easy accessible instructional materials.
- € Flexible Scheduling which encourages the investment of time based on educational needs rather than standardized time periods.
- Cooperative Learning as a major process of learning and in so doing acknowledges the correlation of cooperative learning to achievement and meets the social developmental needs of students.
- € Intramural and interscholastic programs,

assuring that physical activities provide for the physical needs of students.

- € Interdisciplinary Teaching Teams in which teachers are empowered to design and determine the curriculum, the bell schedule, the budget and the discipline policy for their team of students.
- € Exploratory Studies, Independent Study, Basic Skill Extension, Creative Experiences, Related Arts and Integrated Units of Study.
- Advisor/Advisee Program as systematic part of an overall student support program which includes both group and individual guidance services.
- Student Services, Parent Involvement, and Community Agencies in a varied and vital program of community relations and activities.
- Auxiliary Staffing to insure the adequate instructional support to the teachers.
- € Authentic Assessments in which a student's work is judged personally, positively and in a nonthreatening manner as a part of an overall evaluation process that also includes standard assessments.

If your school or others you know of have some of these model practices in place, please contact Dr. Cal Meyer, Marshall University Graduate College, 1-800-642-9842 ext. 1936.

NEW, IMPROVED WVAMLE WEBSITE

Check out the new look and updated information on the WVAMLE web site at <http://www.marshall.edu/WVAMLE/> We hope you like the new site and find the information useful. This newsletter will be the first posted on our web site and all the State Conference Information is available there as well. For Middle Level news locally, statewide and nationally, please use this exciting site.

ONLY IN THE MIDDLE: "You Want Me to Do WHAT??"

After being interviewed by the school administration for a sixth grade job at a new middle school, the eager teaching prospect said:

"Let me see if I've got this right. You want me to go into that room with all those kids, and fill their every waking moment with a love for learning. And I'm supposed to instill a sense of pride in their ethnicity, modify their disruptive behavior, observe them for signs of abuse and even censor their t-shirt message and dress habits. You want me to wage a war on drugs and sexually transmitted diseases, check their backpacks for weapons of mass destruction, and raise their self esteem. You want me to teach them patriotism, good citizenship, sportsmanship, fair play, how to register to vote, how to balance a checkbook, and how to apply for a job. I am to check their heads for lice, maintain a safe environment, recognize signs for anti-social behavior, offer advice, write letters of recommendation for student employment and scholarships and encourage respect for the cultural diversity of others.

My contract requires me to work on my own time after school, evenings and weekends grading papers. Also, I must spend my summer vacation, my Faculty Senate meetings, and my extra time, whenever I can find it, at my own expense working toward advance certification to obtain my Master's degree. And on my own time you want me to attend committee and faculty meetings, PTA meetings, and participate in staff development training. I am to be a paragon of virtue, larger than life, such that my very presence will awe my students into being obedient and respectful or authority. And I am to pledge allegiance to family values and this current administration. You want me to incorporate technology into the learning experience, monitor web sites, and relate personally with all 100 students I teach daily. That includes deciding who might be potentially dangerous and/or liable to commit a crime in school.

I am to make sure all students pass the mandatory state exams and help this school meet the No Child Left Behind Standards, even those who don't come to school regularly or complete any of their assignments. Plus, I am to make sure that all special needs students get an equal education regardless of the extent of their special need and lack of auxiliary support. And I am to communicate regularly with the parents by letter, telephone, newsletter and report card.

All of this I am to do with a piece of chalk, a computer, one textbook per child, a bulletin board, a big smile and a starting salary that qualifies my family for food stamps! You want me to do all of this yet you also expect me not to pray.