



A MIDDLE LEVEL EDUCATION MONTHLY UPDATE

A MICHIGAN MIDDLE START PARTNER ORGANIZATION

FEBRUARY, 2005 * VOLUME 7 * NUMBER 7

Michigan is Schools To Watch State

Collaboration from several organizations interested in middle-grades education has resulted in Michigan being chosen by the National Forum To Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform as a Schools To Watch state. The announcement was made at the January Forum meeting in Dallas. Michigan joins 10 other states which have the STW program in place. As many of you may recall, in 1999 the National Forum implemented the national STW program and selected four middle-grades schools as Schools To Watch based on the criteria outlined in their vision: Academic Excellence, Developmental Responsiveness, and Social Equity. These schools--two in urban areas, one rural, and one suburban school--are featured on the STW website (www.schoolstowatch.org) and provide educators with a real-life look at high-performing middle schools.

In 2002 the Forum began the state STW program so that quality middle-grades schools could be identified and serve as examples for schools in each state. Michigan middle-grades leaders are very excited about the opportunities this will bring to our state. The timeline for the Michigan STW program is as follows:

April 2005 Four or more trainers will travel to Indianapolis to receive training to become site reviewers for

Michigan

May-August, 2005 The lead trainers will train other volunteer STW reviewers in Michigan

June 2005 Michigan is inviting middle-grades teachers and administrators to attend the National STW Conference in Washington, DC (**see attached flyer**)

Fall 2005 Schools in Michigan will be invited to submit applications to become a STW

Spring 2006 Schools will receive site visits and feedback based on the Standards and "look-fors" (can be found on the MSIM website: www.schoolsinthemiddle.cmich.edu)

Late Spring/Summer 2006 Middle-grades Schools in Michigan will be selected as Schools To Watch

For more information regarding Michigan STW, visit or contact STW consortium member organizations: Michigan Coalition of Essential Schools, Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals, Michigan Department of Education, Michigan Middle Start, Michigan Schools in the Middle, or Walden University. Other organizations are being invited to join the Michigan STW consortium.

MSIM would also like to thank

Amy Voegel for doing outstanding work in writing/editing and pulling together Michigan's application to become a STW state. Thanks, Amy.



Michigan Schools in the Middle is offering scholarship dollars for teachers and administrators from member schools to attend the National Schools to Watch Conference June 9-11, 2005 in Arlington, Virginia.

The application is on the following page. Funds are limited, so apply soon. Deadline is March 18, 2005.

The conference flyer is being sent as a second attachment to your email containing this FYI.

**Michigan Schools in the Middle
National Schools To Watch Conference
Support Application**
Application Deadline is March 18, 2005

Name of School: _____

Contact Person and Title: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

_____ Fax: _____

_____ E-mail: _____

How do you believe participating in the Schools To Watch Conference will enhance your student outcomes?

Show or explain how your school has used the Standards & "Look-Fors" for High Performing Schools:

How many participants from your school will likely attend the Schools To Watch Conference?

Is your school considering applying to become a "Michigan School To Watch"?

Comments or further information:



Leadership Lifeline

Successful Principals in Middle Schools

Throughout the nation there are numerous middle level schools that are meeting the requirements of standards-based reform, high-stakes testing, and accountability while still maintaining their commitment to providing learning environments that are developmentally responsive to the needs of young adolescents. Over the years these schools, and others like them, have continued to demonstrate that developmental support and academic rigor are complementary in creating schools where young adolescents are successful learners.

Research is very consistent in showing that highly successful schools have strong, competent leaders. In fact, in a comprehensive review of leadership research, Leithwood and Riehl (2003) found that school leadership had significant effects on student learning. In addition, they concluded that leadership effects were second only to the effects of the quality of curriculum and teachers' instruction.

Research also shows that principals play key roles in instructional change in their schools, and their level of involvement often dictates whether attempts to change are successful.

What is it that principals of highly successful middle schools do to make their schools places where every student is a successful learner and where all new policies and initiatives are implemented in just and equitable ways?

Program Coherence

Researchers identified 9 outstanding schools and found the following characteristics of successful middle-grades schools. Successful schools supported the middle level concept in a variety of ways; they also looked to other complementary programs to bring instructional and curricular coherence to their schools. Program coherence, which is considered essential to high performing schools, is present when three conditions exist in a school: (a) a common instructional framework that guides curriculum, instruction, assessment, and learning, (b) working conditions that support the

implementation of the framework, and (c) allocation of resources such as materials, time, and staff assignments that advance the school's instructional framework.

Factors Contributing to School Success

In addition to the presence of program coherence, leaders in successful middle grades schools focused on three factors that appeared to contribute significantly to their being highly successful.

Commitment to a vision

Successful schools held two important beliefs:

1. high expectations for all students
2. education of the whole child (developmental responsiveness)

Focus on learning

Based on their extensive knowledge of young adolescent development, middle grades curriculum and instruction, student and adult learning, and accountability and assessment, principals in the schools were able to place emphasis on the following:

1. curriculum breadth
2. curriculum assessment and alignment
3. appropriate instructional strategies
4. student and adult learning
5. accountability for learning

Building and sustaining relationships

Relationships were important to these principals and they worked very hard to establish warm and supportive relationships with teachers, students, parents, and community members. In these schools principals developed relationships by:

1. supporting and nurturing students and adults
2. collaborating and sharing leadership

If you would like a copy of the complete article, call MSIM at 989-774-7678 to obtain one. Article taken from Middle School Journal, November 2004, by Clark & Clark



Teacher Topics

Creating an "Anti-Bullying" Classroom Environment

In this issue of the FYI, the Student Station and Family Focus sections highlight a topic which has been in the news in education a great deal in the past several months---bullying. The topic makes me wonder whether behavior among and between students is really worse than it has been in the past. Does "bullying" in our schools mirror a similar phenomenon in society at large? If so, what are some possible causes? What is the role of the classroom teacher? Does the building administrator need to do more than schedule an anti-bullying program for professional development?

At the risk of appearing naive, foolishly out-of-date, or worse yet, simply a "crotchety aging adult"--I suggest that we, as a society, have become neglectful of ordinary kindness. As a nation, for example, we seem addicted to "reality TV shows" which appear to recruit participants who are indeed much more focused on being competitive than cooperative, on being "in each other's faces" than in engaging in constructive dialogue, and who readily engage in bully-like behaviors to win the prize. The object of these shows is to eliminate the competition rather than to succeed by working collaboratively. I could elaborate on numerous examples of society's "winner take-all" attitude, but the question really is, what can we do about this as classroom teachers?

We can deliberately and very consciously design our classrooms, lessons, assignments, and interaction with and among students to value cooperation. And the toughest part of

this is that IT MUST BEGIN WITH THE TEACHER. Not only must we, as educators, state and enforce the anti-bullying code of conduct, but we must truly and deeply respect each of our students. Ever catch yourself saying to a student something that you would never tolerate from them, or that you would never consider saying to colleague? Ever notice "that tone" creeping into your voice? It is easy to do, and paying attention to this generally corrects our waywardness.

Another way to build a spirit of cooperation in the classroom is to use what Spencer Kagan refers to as Classbuilders and Teambuilders. These activities are designed to create the "will" to cooperate with other students. Classbuilder and Teambuilder activities often engage students in conversations which allow them to get to know each other better--find common interests. They also add laughter in the classroom, and brain researchers tell us this is important for learning. Call the Center to request a description of dozens of these types of activities.

A friend recently suggested a new idea for a "reality TV show": this one creates a spirit of cooperation, and everyone wins when they help each other succeed--not a bad idea for a classroom project, heh?

The first 10 schools to email MSIM at duvallp@cmich.edu will receive a free set of Classbuilder and Teambuilder Smart Cards.





Student Station

Dealing with Bullying

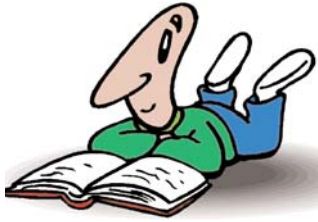
- o You're walking to school, and you get a sudden craving for a candy bar. But you have no money with you. You spot a younger child walking alone, and you threaten to beat him up if he doesn't give you his lunch money.
- o You're in the cafeteria at lunch hour, and a couple of your friends begin making snorting, snuffling pig sounds at an overweight classmate. You can't help joining in the giggling.
- o You're in the locker room after gym, and you and a couple of other guys decide to throw a smaller boy in the shower with his clothes on.
- o One of the popular girls asks you to join her and her friends in teasing another girl about her greasy hair. You know that if you refuse to join, you'll be the next victim, so you go along with the teasing.
- o There's an e-mail going around the school which contains a nasty rumor about one of your classmates. You're not sure if the rumor is true or not, but you forward the e-mail to five of your friends, just for kicks.

Have you ever done any of these things, or anything similar to them? Chances are that you have. Once in a while, almost all of us get drawn into doing or saying something that we later regret. You may have gotten caught up in the moment, or you may have been afraid

of retaliation if you refused to join in the teasing. Does this make you a bully? Probably not. Does that mean it's okay to act that way once in a while? Of course not. We all know that bullying is hurtful and wrong.

The best way to decide if you're getting involved in bullying is to listen to your conscience. Ask yourself how you would feel if you were the person being teased; if you know it would be uncomfortable for you, then you can be pretty sure it's uncomfortable for your victim. And ask yourself why you are feeling the need to pick on someone else: is it because you want to show off for your friends, because you need to vent some anger, or because you like the feeling of power that it gives you?

If you find yourself doing or saying things that hurt other people, it's time to take a close look at yourself. Is this behavior something that you can stop on your own? Do you have the strength to say "no" when your friends try to get you involved in picking on someone? If so, great! Do it! If you don't think you can stop, then it's time to ask for help. Find a friend or an adult whom you trust, and ask for help in learning how to treat other people kindly. Remember, part of becoming a young adult is learning to take responsibility for your own actions. Scary as it may be to admit your mistakes, doing so will help you to learn not to repeat them. You'll be amazed at the difference it makes in how you feel about others and about yourself!



Student Book Review

The Goats

Author: Brock Cole

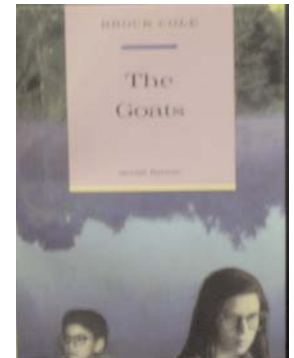
When Howie heads off to summer camp, he has no idea what is in store for him. On the first night of camp, the other boys strip him and maroon him on a deserted island in the lake near the campground. He remembers hearing stories of a joke that is traditionally played by the campers: each year, the popular kids choose a boy and a girl to be Goats, and then abandon them overnight, naked, on the island. Howie realizes that the other boys have made him this year's Goat; and he soon finds Laura, the girls' Goat, huddling beneath a blanket in a small, abandoned tent.

At first, Howie and Laura are afraid, out there on the island alone; and they both feel humiliated by the way the other kids have treated them. Howie wants to run away from the island and the camp, and he wishes he never had to see any of the other

boys again. But, as the long night wears on, he and Laura decide to turn the tables on the other campers and play a practical joke of their own. They decide that, when the others come to pick them up in the morning, they will not be on the island. The only problem with this plan is that they don't have a boat, and Laura can't swim.

Howie's plan for getting off the island doesn't go quite the way he expects it to, and neither does anything that happens afterward. Howie and Laura must learn to depend on each other and to trust each other as their journey heads toward its inevitable conclusion.

To find out more about Howie's and Laura's adventures, pick up *The Goats* today!





Family Focus

Nip Bullying in the Bud

As the parent of a middle-schooler, you're probably concerned about the growing problem of bullying. Perhaps you've read news reports about the effects of bullying on young adolescents; or maybe you've seen firsthand the damage that bullying can do to a child. You may wonder what you can do to protect your children from this frightening experience.

Bullying has changed over the years. It has expanded from the physical schoolyard aggressiveness of a few decades ago to a much more subtle and sophisticated type of harassment. The following are four major types of bullying which are common among young adolescents today:

- o Verbally abusive bullies use name-calling, insults, and rumor-spreading as weapons.
- o Social bullies focus on getting other people to exclude or reject their victims.
- o Electronic bullies use the technology of the Internet and text messaging to send intimidating or threatening e-mails and to spread rumors.
- o Traditional physical bullies are still out there, too, using physical intimidation to dominate other children.

The best way to know if your children are being bullied is to keep your lines of communication open. Spend time with your children, encourage them to talk about things that are important to them, and really listen. If your children know that you will be supportive, they will be much more likely to come to you for help if they are experiencing bullying.

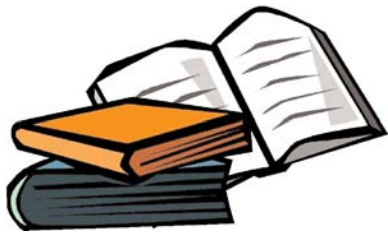
If you suspect that your children are being targeted by bullies, there are several impor-

tant things you can do to help:

- o Talk about it. Let your child know that you want to be supportive. Understand that young adolescents are often embarrassed or afraid to talk about what is happening to them.
- o Acknowledge your child's efforts. Ask her how she has coped with the bullying so far. What has worked? What hasn't?
- o Get help from teachers, counselors, or other parents. They may be able to offer solutions which you haven't thought of yet.
- o Encourage your child to seek support and protection from his friends. Bullies usually pick on kids who are alone and vulnerable.

If you suspect that your child is bullying others, it's also important to help put a stop to the behavior.

- o Talk with your child, and try to get him to acknowledge his actions and their consequences. Remember that it can be difficult for children to admit to these behaviors and to the feelings which underlie their actions.
- o Help your child to identify her reasons for bullying, and work with her to identify other, more positive, behaviors in which she could engage.
- o Get help. Counselors, teachers, and peer support groups can be just as helpful for the bully as they are for the victim. Remember that excessive bullying is a sign that your child needs help and support.
- o Work with your child to set goals for reducing and eliminating his bullying behaviors. Support him as he works toward these goals, and celebrate his successes.



Resource Review

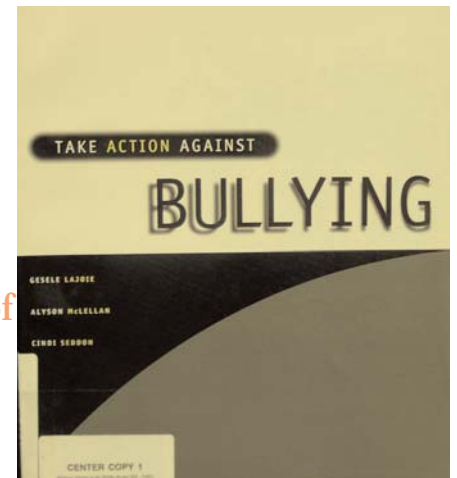
Take Action Against Bullying

Authors: Lajoie, McLellan, and Seddon

This brief but comprehensive book deals specifically with the problem of bullying in schools, suggesting a step-by-step program for eliminating bullying. It begins by discussing the characteristics and motivations of bullies and of their victims; continues with a detailed description of the role of authority figures (teachers, school administrators, parents, etc.) in identifying and putting a stop to unhealthy behaviors; offers a step-by-step plan for implementing an anti-bullying policy in schools; and provides important tips for establishing and maintaining a climate of caring, in which all students feel safe and valued. Extensive appendices include masters of all the materials needed to implement the program, as well as information about additional anti-bullying resources.

This slim volume is well worth the time it takes to read! To borrow a copy, call MSIM at (989) 774-7678 and ask to check out resource number G-33.

In addition to this book which deals with the specific issue of bullying, MSIM's resource library also includes many books and videos which address the deeper, but closely related, issue of teaching young adolescents to treat themselves and the people around them with respect and compassion. Call us and ask to borrow any of the following resources:



- | | |
|---|------|
| o Promoting Social and Emotional Learning | G-40 |
| o Educating Hearts and Minds | G-39 |
| o Educating for Character | G-38 |
| o Growing Good Kids | G-37 |
| o Emotional Intelligence | G-29 |
| o Teaching Emotional Intelligence | G-31 |
| o The Students Are Watching | G-44 |
| o A Simple Justice | G-42 |



CELEBRATING OUR CSR SCHOOLS



Morley Stanwood Middle School Morley, Michigan

Principal: Terry Baker
Coach: Mary Alice Krajenta

Grade Configuration 5-8
Students: 540

Great things are happening at Morley Stanwood Middle School! The school was recently featured on TV 9&10 News with information about a new gender-based reading program. Faculty members also recently presented this information at a CSR Meeting in Mt. Pleasant. They will be glad to share some exciting results with you.

New this year at Morley Stanwood is a full-time Literacy Coach, Lee Ann Moore. The coach helps to embed Literacy principles identified through the CSR Grant, and this in-house expert is an example of the internal leadership which is so important in achieving academic improvement. The school has adopted several CSR Strategies, including Looking at Student Work, Student-Led Conferences, and Walk-Throughs. They have completed the Reading Across the Curriculum literacy program and have implemented cross-curricular novels and reading strategies.

A mentoring program, "Guardian Angels," is being used to involve teachers and administrators in assisting students without strong parental guidance. Each teacher/administrator has two students that they mentor and greet each day to provide adult advocacy and support.



Northwestern Middle School Battle Creek, Michigan

Principal: Scott Millin
Coach: John Rasmussen

Grade Configuration: 6-8
Students: 500

Northwestern is a busy place these days! Each quarter, students are asked to read an article in a particular content area and complete a double entry journal, which is a reading comprehension strategy used at Northwestern in all classes. After completing the double entry journal, students respond to a question about the article in an organized essay. Teachers score student responses in grade level teams using a common rubric. Two teachers read each paper, discussing differences in score until agreement is reached-amazing what this does for the sense of what things make writing good! The goal, of course, is to have every student at Northwestern Middle School at the top levels of our rubric.

Also being used at Northwestern is Vision Start, a program that helps visually challenged students improve how they track words on a page. Trained professionals who come to work with the children use computers in the process. Students have measurably improved their reading abilities with this help.

"Fun" for a lot of our staff and students comes with improving mental and physical fitness, and we do all we can to realize this Smart Goal. In the Fall we take one complete day for the Presidential Fitness test and then we do it again in the Spring to measure improvement. In between, besides goals for each child, we have events that give our students benchmarks for improvement like our Pumpkin Run in October, Turkey Trot in November, April's Bunny Hop and our Read one/Run one-where students pick a book from our "Free Book" shelf and then immediately run or walk a mile. We will see in the Spring how much progress we have made!

Powerful Quote

Human beings, by changing the inner attitudes of their minds,
can change the outer aspects of their lives.

William James

Opportunity for Public Advocacy

The Michigan League For Human Services is looking for a few great teachers interested in advocating for public policy. If you like to make calls and write letters to legislators, you would be a great area contact person. MLHS would like some teachers to serve as local catalysts for action on public policy. The League would furnish you with all the information on issues, and your responsibility would be to contact associates requesting action such as calling a legislator, emailing or phoning policy makers, or writing letters to key persons. This is a unique opportunity to be an advocate for public policy!

If you are interested in this activity, please contact:
Don Sweeney, Michigan League for Human Services, 1115 South
Pennsylvania Avenue, Suite 202, Lansing MI 48912
(517) 487-5436 Fax: (517) 371-4546 sweeneyd@mshf.org



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