



A MIDDLE LEVEL EDUCATION MONTHLY UPDATE

A MICHIGAN MIDDLE START PARTNER ORGANIZATION

MAY, 2005 * VOLUME 7 * NUMBER 10

Middle Start School Succeeds - Meets AYP for 5 years

In the fall of 1999 Harrison Middle School was awarded a Comprehensive School Reform grant by the Michigan Department of Education to implement the Middle Start Reform Model. This marked the beginning of changes for leadership, teachers, support staff, and students in this northern, rural school with a free-and-reduced-lunch population of 60%. Six years later, this school has made Adequate Yearly Progress for the **past five years!**

When asked to what he attributed their success, principal Ron Wilson stated that focused professional development from Middle Start and **Michigan Schools in the Middle**, combined with organizational changes including interdisciplinary teaming and block scheduling have paved the way for better outcomes for students. "Harrison Middle School now has a common focus and professional development gave us the tools to use and model best practices," said Wilson.

In retrospect, Harrison actually had a slow start in the reform initiative, with a lot of issues, concerns, and discussions around teaming and implementing the organizational aspects of a high-performing middle school. The dialogues paid off and helped everyone "own" the decision to engage in reform. The three years of CSR funding were only the start: Harrison has continued to engage in ongoing professional development through the use of Title funds. In the past three years, the staff has particularly focused on studying student work through the use of protocols; implementing backward lesson planning; and studying and implementing Marzano's nine research-based instructional strategies in their classrooms.

"One huge change for our school was learning about DuFour's work around professional learning communities," according to Wilson. The staff is reflective around the three core questions:

1. What do we want students to know and be able to do?
2. How will we know that they have learned it?
3. How will we respond to those who have not learned?

So, does the Harrison staff think the struggle was worth it? They say it was; it was a struggle, and a learning process, but better outcomes for students are always worth the effort it takes to engage in true reform. And it isn't over! The staff continues to improve its practice through collaboration and reflection.



Congratulations,
Harrison
Middle
School!



Leadership Lifeline

Building Teacher-Leaders

Schools for decades have operated in a hierarchal manner: district administrators, building administrators, and then teachers. Over time, duties and responsibilities in the classroom have increased, and today's teachers have acquired many new capabilities, talents, and credentials to meet these demands. However, in spite of better preparation and better education, teacher leadership seemingly has taken a backseat; although it is talked about, it is rarely implemented. It is time for a paradigm centered on teacher leadership to become a reality.

Research focused on teacher leadership has identified these four critical requirements:

1. Public and professional recognition and acceptance of the importance and value of teacher-leaders.
2. Support of district and building administrators in developing and nurturing teacher-leaders.
3. Inclusion of teachers in school reform and change efforts.
4. Recognition of the positive learning outcomes for students that accompany teacher leadership activities.

Leaders are people who wish to help others enhance, expand, and, when necessary, change current practice. Who better than teachers themselves to know when

and how to influence change that will affect their professional lives? The purpose of professional development in schools is consonant with that of leadership, with the additional goal of improving student learning. While there are a variety of models and delivery methods for professional development, several elements appear to be common in successful efforts. Research suggests the following components:

1. Identification of common goals and objectives
2. Effective, collegial leadership
3. Willingness of staff members to take risks and implement new ideas.
4. Supportive relationships with other educators.

When reform efforts are integrated with common themes and goals that have been identified over time, and when activities are planned with the end in mind, changes become sustainable. Teacher buy-in and support, time to work and learn together, and opportunities for leadership in planning and decision-making can help ensure success in meeting agreed-upon objectives.

Taken and adapted from...**Teacher Today**, Volume 20, Number 9--May, 2005



Teacher Topics

R-E-S-P-E-C-T

If asked, we all would agree that each member of the school's community deserves to be treated with dignity and respect. However, as our country becomes increasingly diverse in ethnicities, cultures, religions, and lifestyles, the importance of the value of respect becomes paramount. This is especially true in schools because we know that respect affects student learning.

Simply put, a student who does not feel respected is far less likely to put forth effort. On the other hand, a student who feels valued and cared about is generally a more responsible and responsive learner. Here are some strategies to create a classroom community where each student feels valued:

- **Make academic assistance part of your job.** When students need further instruction or clarification, offer it willingly, even if it is at lunchtime, break time, or before or after school. It means a great deal to a student to see that an adult is willing to give up personal time to help him or her.

- **Be fair when dealing with controversy.** Listen to all viewpoints and problem-solve rather than punish. Invite student input or involvement when appropriate.

- **Honor student suggestions** for academics as well as for promoting a positive social climate in the classroom.

- **Avoid sarcasm and ridicule, and model kind and caring behavior.** Do not disregard or ignore negative behavior in word or deed.

- **Set high standards,** and provide the support necessary for all students to achieve. Enlist students to help others when appropriate.

Taken and adapted from...**Teacher Today**, Volume 20, Number 8--April, 2005





Student Station

Great Summer Reading!

The sun is shining, the grass is growing, the flowers are blooming, and soon it will be time for summer vacation! So, how are you going to fill those long, lazy days? After mowing the lawn, playing a game of soccer, or swimming in the local pool, take a break with a cold glass of lemonade and a good book.

Do you like mysteries? Pick up a classic young adult mystery series, like Nancy Drew, the Hardy Boys, or the Three Investigators. Or you could read *Detectives in Togas*, by Henry Winterfield; *The House of Dies Drear*, by Virginia Hamilton; or the Sherlock Holmes stories by Arthur Conan Doyle.

Are you interested in history? There are a lot of great young adult historical novels out there. If you'd like to know what life was like for the earliest humans, read *Maroo of the Winter Caves*, by Wendy Turnbull, or *Life in the Great Ice Age*, by Michael J. Oard. If Ancient Egypt is your thing, check out *The Golden Goblet*, by Eloise Jarvis McGraw. You can read some great books about the history of the United States, too. *Beyond the Burning Time*, by Kathryn Lasky, is a compelling story about the Salem Witch Trials. Gary Paulsen's *Nightjohn* gives its reader a window on the world of slavery in the 19th century. The frontier life of the westward expansion is chronicled in *The Ballad of Lucy Whipple*, by Karen Cushman; Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House* series; and *I Heard the Owl Call My Name*, by Margaret Craven.

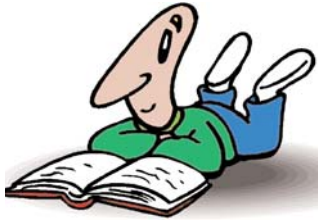
Want a historical novel that's a bit more current? Try *Glory Fields*, by Walter Dean Myers; *The Watsons Go to Birmingham - 1963*, by Christopher Paul Curtis; or *Dragonwings*, by Laurence Yep. *Grab Hands and Run*, by Frances Temple, and *Journey of the Sparrows*, by Fran Leeper Ross, tell the story of families fleeing war-torn El Salvador in the 1980's. *When Legends Die*, by Hal Borland, relates the tale of a Native American youth trying to keep his people's traditions alive.

Maybe you want to get out of this world altogether! Try a fantasy novel, like the *Harry Potter* series, by J.K. Rowling; *Westmark*, by Lloyd Alexander; or *Dealing with Dragons*, by Patricia Wrede. Or pick up some futuristic fiction: Lois Lowry's *The Giver*; *The Green Book*, by Jill Paton Walsh; or *The House of the Scorpion*, by Nancy Farmer.

Adventure fiction is also a good choice for summer reading. If you haven't read *Sasquatch*, by Roland Smith, give it a try -- it's a great story! *Hatchet*, by Gary Paulsen, is another good read, and so are *The Girl Who Owned the City*, by O.T. Nelson and *The Goats*, by Brock Cole.

When you're ready to really stretch your brain, pick up *The Outsiders*, by S.E. Hinton; *Fallen Angels*, by Walter Dean Myers; *The Miracle Worker*, by William Gibson; or *The Red Pony*, by John Steinbeck. These books will pull you into their interesting plots, and challenge your reading and thinking skills at the same time!

You've got a whole summer's worth of reading ahead of you -- so, grab a book and get started!



Student Book Review

Tuck Everlasting
Author: Natalie Babbitt

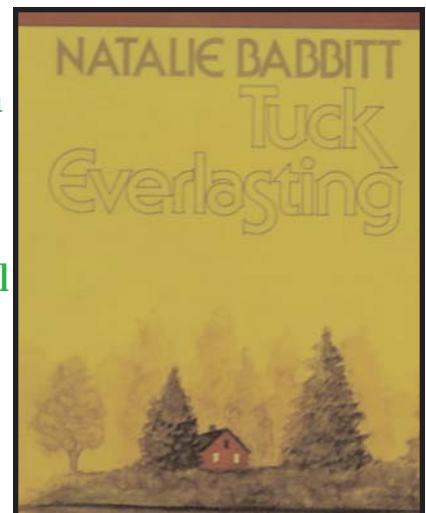
If someone offered you the opportunity to live forever, what would you do? Would you accept the offer or turn it down?

That is the question faced by Winnie Foster when she meets a very strange young man named Jesse Tuck, who appears to be about seventeen years old, but who claims to have lived for over a hundred years. At first, Winnie thinks he is joking, but then she meets the rest of his family -- his mother, father, and older brother. They tell her that, many years ago, they drank from a small spring in the woods behind her house, and that they haven't aged a day since.

The story is so unlikely that Winnie can't believe it... and, yet, the Tucks tell it with such sincerity that she finds herself wondering if it might really be true. As she spends time with this odd family which is so different from her own, she finds herself wanting to drink from the spring, too, just to see if the Tucks' story could be true.

While she is still trying to figure out whether or not to believe in the power of the spring, an unscrupulous stranger begins hanging around, hoping to find the source of the lifegiving water. He reveals that he wants to bottle the water and sell it, getting rich in the process. The Tucks tell him that the spring must remain a secret which only they and Winnie know about. After all, if people found out about it, everyone would want to drink from it! And living forever, the Tucks say, is not as wonderful a thing as it might seem.

What happens to the spring? Does the stranger get his wish and begin bottling and selling the water? And will Winnie decide to drink from it, making her immortal? Pick up a copy of *Tuck Everlasting* at your local library, and find out!





Family Focus

Preventing the "Summer Blahs"

You've seen it happen before -- school lets out for the summer, and for the first couple of weeks, your kids are full of energy and excitement. They go to the park, play basketball with their friends, maybe spend some time at a summer camp. But the routine quickly gets old, and before you know it, your kids are complaining of being bored and having nothing to do. They start spending more time indoors, watching TV, playing video games, or just sitting around doing nothing. They get cranky and restless, and they can't seem to snap themselves out of it -- so they watch more TV, play more video games, eat more junk food snacks, and get crankier and more restless. It's a vicious cycle.

So, what can you, as a parent or caregiver, do to help your kids make constructive use of their free time in the summer? Here are a few simple suggestions:

- Spend a little time each evening helping your kids decide what they'll do the next day. Remember, your young adolescents may find it hard to go from the rigid structure of the school day to the freedom of summer vacation. Help them plan ahead so that they have interesting and productive things to do at specific times each day. Kids with lots of unstructured, unsupervised time on their hands often make choices that end up harming them later.
- Make sure your kids spend time outside and get some exercise every day. Young adolescents are growing and developing, and they need regular outlets for physical activity. They also need fresh air and sunshine, as we all do. Even if they just take a short walk every day, you will notice that their moods improve and they are less restless.
- Set specific limits on TV watching and video game playing, and stick to your limits. We all know by now that spending too much time watching television and playing video games is bad for kids and adults alike. Set some limits for your kids, and stick with them. It helps if you set a good example for your young adolescents by limiting your own TV and computer time, as well.
- Provide options for your kids. Try to have other things around your home for your kids to do. It certainly doesn't hurt to assign them some household chores. Also, if you can, keep a basket of art supplies -- paper, crayons, markers, scissors, glue, and the like -- around for kids to use. Books of crossword puzzles, word searches, or maze games can be lots of fun, too, and they're cheap. You don't have to spend a lot of money or time to provide some things for your kids to do on rainy days. Perhaps you could take a trip to the local library once a week or so,

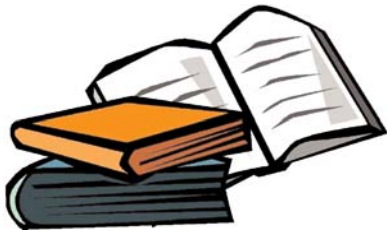
and let your young adolescents check out books to read.

- **Limit junk food snacks.** It's tempting to have a lot of sugary or salty snacks around, especially during the summer; but remember that your kids will tend to snack more when they are around the house all day. Young adolescents particularly need good nutrition, since their bodies and brains are growing and changing so rapidly. If you allow your kids to snack between meals, try to replace junk food snacks with healthful choices such as carrots, celery, cheese, and fruits. Get them to drink water or milk instead of soda.
- **Monitor, monitor, monitor!** Although it's often hard to keep track of where your kids are and who they're hanging out with, especially if you're a single parent or a working couple, remember that young adolescents still need guidance in making

choices that are positive and healthy. If, like many parents, you can't be home with your kids during the day, make sure that they are in the care of someone you know and trust. Get to know your kids' friends, and the families of those friends. Insist on knowing where your kids are, and with whom, at all times. It is your right as a parent to know these things -- and it is also your responsibility!

- **Schedule some time for fun.** Set aside some time at least once a week to just relax with your kids and do something that all of you enjoy. It doesn't have to cost money; it doesn't have to take lots of time, energy, or other resources; it can be as simple as sitting down to a meal together, reading a book together, playing catch in the back yard, or just sitting and talking. When your kids see that you care enough to spend time with them, their self-esteem will soar.





Resource Review

Discipline with Love and Logic
Presenters: Jim Fay & Foster W. Cline, M.D.

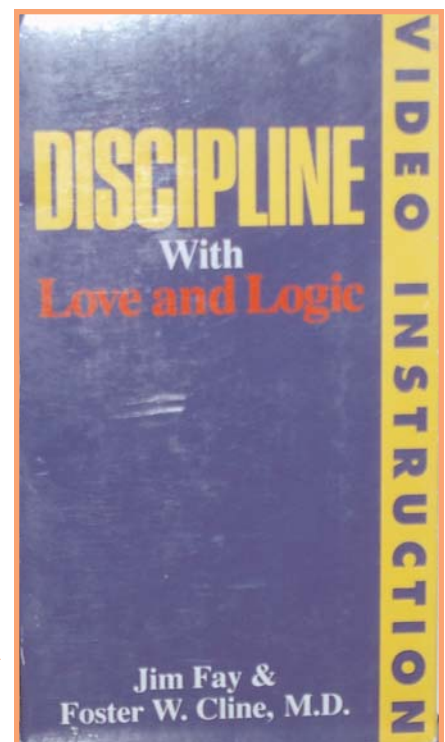
This video series presents Fay and Cline's "Discipline with Love and Logic" program in a user-friendly format. The program is divided into the following eight "modules," each of which addresses a particular aspect of Love and Logic:

1. Positive Discipline in the Classroom
2. Teaching Responsibility
3. Enhancing Childhood Self-Concept (Pt. I)
4. Enhancing Childhood Self-Concept (Pt. II)
5. Kids Who Can't and Kids Who Won't
6. The Keystone Years
7. Schoolwide Discipline
8. Win/Win Discipline

Each of the eight videos is accompanied by a detailed Study Guide which provides background reading, thought-provoking questions, and useful discussion starters.

Many schools and classrooms are adopting Fay and Cline's program as an effective way to improve classroom climate, to teach responsibility, and to raise students' sense of self-efficacy. This video series lays out the program in a manner that's ideal for viewing and discussion by a professional learning community, for small-group study, or for individual examination.

Educating yourself and interested colleagues about "Discipline with Love and Logic" would make an ideal summer project! Call the Center and ask for resource number CCMV-20.





CELEBRATING OUR CSR SCHOOLS

This month we are featuring schools from the Pontiac School District. Professional development sessions were conducted district-wide in September and January by Pat Benson and Carolyn McKanders on Professional Learning Communities, Teaming and Who Are the Kids in the Middle?

Jefferson Middle School

Principal: Wendy Fitzpatrick

Coach: Mary Alice Krajenta

Grade Configuration: 6-8

Students: 501

Jefferson has been involved in developing a school-wide writing assessment as a result of a program from the December Seminar presented by Battle Creek Northwestern. We have used the Slice protocol for studying student work and have used the Standards in Practice with the whole staff. Toby Kahn-Loftus has conducted professional development in Literacy.

Lincoln Middle School

Principal: Gloria Hill

Coach: Ed Griffen

Grade Configuration: 6-8

Students: 553

Our Leadership Team meets on a weekly basis. We have just finished a series of Looking at Student Work using the Slice protocol with each of the grade level teams. We have been studying Reading Across the Curriculum with Toby Kahn-Loftus.

Madison Middle School

Principal: Lisa Ewing

Coach: Ed Griffen

Grade Configuration: 6-8

Students: 788

The Leadership Team has taken an active role in planning two school-wide professional development sessions that focus on the school goals in math Problem Solving Across the Curriculum.

Washington Middle School

Principal: Billie Fair

Coach: Ed Griffen

Grade Configuration: 6-8

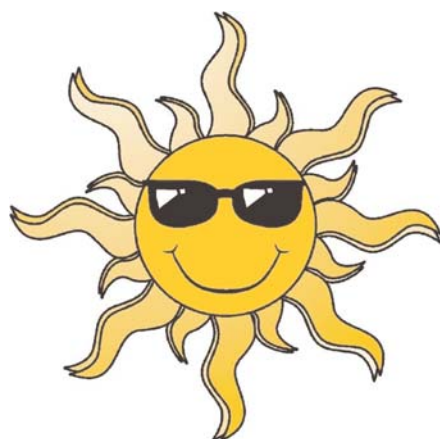
Students: 470

Washington is finishing a series with Real Reading in the Middle and we have had our first meeting with Toby Kahn-Loftus on Writing Across the Curriculum. The Leadership Team continues to meet regularly. We have just finished two rounds of Looking at Student Work using the Slice protocol in content area groups.

As this school year comes to a close, we wish to thank you for your support in "doing what is best for young adolescents." We look forward to working with you again next year.

This will be the last FYI for the school year. We will be back again in August with more helpful articles and news from Michigan Middle Schools.

Please send us your success stories. We would love to share them in the upcoming issues of FYI.



The MSIM offices on CMU's campus will be open during the summer months. Feel free to stop in and visit or check out resources at your leisure. We will have more relaxed hours during the summer. It would be wise to call ahead to be sure that someone will be here to help you.

It is time to **renew your MSIM membership**. Do it now before the year ends to avoid misplacing the application and missing out on all of the great information and tips in the August newsletter. The membership form is the next page. Print it and send to MSIM with your \$160.

Have a wonderful and rejuvenating summer!

CSR schools, we will see you in Traverse City August 1st & 2nd.

CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE IN MIDDLE LEVEL EDUCATION

2005-2006 Membership application
Membership Period: July 1, 2005 - June 30, 2006

Questions? Call 989-774-7678

School: _____

Name: _____

Title: _____

Street: _____

City/State: _____

Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Fax: _____

E-mail*: _____

Website: _____

Date Processed: _____

* Newsletter (FYI) is sent via email. Please include email address.

Grade Configuration:

Number of...

Students: _____

Teachers: _____

Counselors: _____

Administrators: _____

Type of Community: (circle one)

Rural

Urban

Suburban

Small Town

OFFICE USE: # _____

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99: ___ 00: ___ 01: ___

02: ___ 03: ___ 04: ___

Please mail this application and \$160 check to:

Michigan Schools in the Middle
CMU
678 Ronan Hall
Mount Pleasant, MI 48859



CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE IN MIDDLE LEVEL EDUCATION

www.schoolsinthemiddle.cmich.edu

New Series Begins this August ---



Coaching Instructional Thought with Carolyn McKanders

Don't miss out on this fabulous learning opportunity!

Dates of this session:

August 22 & 23, September 30, October 21, & November 11.

Cost: \$495 (includes instruction, materials & lunch)

Location: yet to be determined. We are looking at the central or east central part of the state. Once the location is determined, we will send out emails to all member schools.

Three hours of CMU graduate credit is available for CIT participants.

Schools to Watch Update!

On April 21 and 22 the Michigan Leadership Team comprised of Pat Benson (Michigan Schools in the Middle/CMU), Linda Chase (Walden University), Nancy Fenton (Michigan Coalition of Essential Schools), Steve Hoelscher (Michigan Middle Start), and Dave Spaulding (Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals) participated in Schools To Watch training in Indianapolis. The Michigan team was joined by a group of six from Arkansas which was also named a Schools To Watch state in January.

Training was conducted by Schools To Watch national and state leaders from Georgia, Virginia, California, and North Carolina. It was a great opportunity for the Michigan STW Leadership Team to learn firsthand from other state leaders about the process of training reviewers, developing our application, recruiting schools, and conducting site reviews. Next steps for the Michigan team are to recruit involvement from other state organizations, including Michigan Association of Middle School Educators (MAMSE), Michigan Department of Education, Michigan Education Association, Michigan Staff Development Council, Oakland University, Northern Michigan University and other organizations involved in education in Michigan.

The Leadership Team will meet again later this month to develop the Michigan STW application and plan information sessions which will occur late this summer. It is anticipated that applications will be available to schools by early June and will be due in the fall. The Team expects to review applications prior to December holidays and conduct site visits early 2006. Please feel free to contact any of the Leadership Team members for additional information.

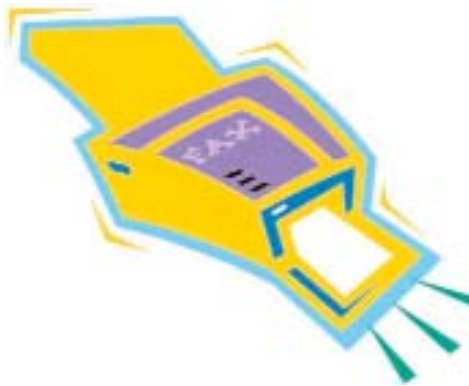
We also hope you will join us in Washington DC June 9-11 for the first annual STW Conference--- it will be a great time to learn from other Schools To Watch around the nation. Go to www.schoolstowatch.org for a conference application.

Powerful Quote

"Make no little plans; they have no magic to stir men's blood and probably themselves will not be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work."

-Daniel Hudson Burnham

Contact us:



989-774-7684



www.schoolsinthemiddle.cmich.edu



989-774-7678



CMU - 678 Ronan
Mt. Pleasant, MI 48859