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MLER Middle Level Education Research Special Interest Group

# The Chronicle of Middle Level Education Research

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MLER
MIDDLE LEVEL EDUCATION RESEARCH
SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

## Message from the Chair

*Micki M. Caskey, Portland State University*

As 2010 begins, I extend warm wishes for a happy and healthy new year. I also offer my heartfelt thanks for the opportunity to serve the MLER SIG for these past several years. In a few short months, my term as Chair (President) of the MLER SIG ends. As I pause and reflect over my tenure as a SIG officer, I realize how wonderful it is to be affiliated with you and the SIG. Due to my involvement with the MLER SIG, I enjoy strong collegial relationships and rewarding professional and personal friendships with amazing and caring middle grades educators.

Upon reflection, I realize that my service started in 2001 when I volunteered to design a website for the SIG. As you undoubtedly know, we use the website as a primary means of disseminating information and communicating with the membership. Then, I recall with fondness my time as a Council Member (2002-2004), Vice President (2004-2005), and Program Chair/President-Elect (2005-2007). I believe that my years in these roles not only advanced my academic career, but also deepened my commitment to middle grades education. While I find that words cannot adequately express what an honor and privilege it is to serve the SIG, I want you to know how very much I appreciate your support and generosity across the past years.

Returning to the present, I encourage you to vote in AERA's 2010 Election, which began on January 15th and continues until February 15th. On the ballot, you will find candidates for AERA positions such as President-Elect, Member-at-Large, and the SIG Executive Committee Chair. Beyond this part of the ballot, you will find candidates for MLER SIG positions including Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, and Council Members. Additionally, you will come across a link to the MLER SIG's Bylaws. Once you review the Bylaws, you will be able to cast your vote regarding approval. If you have not done so, please take time to cast your vote in this important election.

Looking to the future, many MLER SIG members will

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## Report from the Executive Advisor

*Vincent A. Anfara, Jr., University of Tennessee Knoxville*

It is hard to believe that registration for the 2010 Annual Meeting of AERA is already open. Soon we will be meeting in Denver and it will be great seeing those of you who will be attending.

As a member of the AERA SIG Executive Committee, I would like to update you on some items that are in the forefront of SIG governance. First, the MLER SIG was one of the first SIGs to submit its revised bylaws. All SIGs were required to have revised bylaws submitted to AERA headquarters prior to December 31, 2009. Some late responders are still working on their revisions. As an MLER SIG member, you are being asked in AERA's upcoming election (mid-January 2010) to approve the revision of our bylaws. Please note that the changes are not substantive; the revisions are related to formatting and standardization that AERA's legal counsel has advised is necessary for the well-being of the organization. Second, the MLER SIG has effectively transitioned to utilizing AERA's electronic election system. I hope that all of you find it convenient to vote on our officers, council members, and other SIG issues. All SIGs are required to convert

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# Message from the Chair

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gather in Denver, Colorado for AERA's Annual Meeting, April 30th – May 4th. I hope you will join me in thanking Penny Bishop, Program Chair, for her leadership and outstanding work to develop an outstanding program of MLER SIG sessions. To this end, Penny recruited reviewers to serve on peer review panels—a newly adopted AERA process. Subsequently, she developed a program that includes paper sessions, roundtables, a symposium, and SIG business meeting. You will find a listing of sessions within this issue of the Chronicle. I also wish to acknowledge those who submitted proposals, served on review panels, or volunteered to serve as session chairs and discussants. I hope to see many of you at our MLER SIG sessions and business meeting.

I invite you to consider one way in which you can be active in the MLER SIG—the SIG's National Middle Grades Research Program. The first initiative is the Common Planning Time (CPT) Project, which began with Phase I (November 2007-December 2009) and continues with Phase II (November 2009-May 2011). This project promises to produce qualitative and quantitative data about common planning time that will be disseminated through presentations (e.g., AERA symposium) and publications (e.g., *The Handbook of Middle Level Education Research*).
You can join the project by participating in a training session this spring (April 30, 2010 at AERA) or summer (date to be announced). To sign up for a training session or learn more about Phase II of the CPT project, please contact Steve Mertens smerten@ilstu.edu.

As I transition from Chair to Past Chair, please know that I will continue to support and serve the MLER SIG. I will be "on call" for Penny Bishop (incoming Chair), Steve Mertens (incoming Program Chair/ Chair-Elect), and other SIG Officers and Council Members. I will also remain available to the MLER SIG membership. Please do not hesitate to call upon me.

Looking forward to seeing you in 2010!

# Report from the AERA Program Chair

*Penny Bishop, University of Vermont*

The 2010 AERA Annual Meeting will be Friday, April 30th- Tuesday, May 4th in Denver, CO. Sessions will be held at the Colorado Convention Center and the headquarters hotels, Hyatt Regency Denver and the Sheraton Denver. Thanks to the many scholars who submitted quality proposals, the MLER SIG is pleased to present an outstanding line-up at the conference. Many thanks are also due to our Expert Review Panel, who provided excellent feedback in a timely manner.

Our SIG is sponsoring

- Two paper sessions with five papers each
- Three roundtables with a total of eleven papers
- One invited symposium
- A business meeting

Times and dates for each session will be posted on the AERA website in early April.

Registering for this year's Annual Meeting by March 19th entitles you to reduced hotel and registration fee rates so I encourage you to plan ahead. Visit the AERA website at www.aera.net for more information. Hope to see you all in Denver!

*(See next page for session descriptions)*

# MLER SIG Sessions for AERA 2010

## *Middle Grades Teachers: Positioning and Pedagogy (Paper Session)*

*CHAIR: REGINA E. RAHIMI*
*DISCUSSANT: NAN BAHR*

**Deep Thinking and Differentiation: Developing a Logic Model for Responsive Teaching in an Urban Middle School**
David B. Strahan, Western Carolina University; Jessy Kronenberg, Western Carolina University; Richard Burgner, Asheville City Schools; Jennifer Doherty, Asheville City Schools; Melissa Hedt, Asheville Middle School

**Differentiated Instruction: Exploring Implementation at the Middle Level**
Jim C Smith, University of Colorado – Colorado Springs

**Teacher-Student Relationships among Behaviorally At-Risk African American Youth**
Christopher J. Murray, University of Oregon; Keith Zvoch, University of Oregon

**Well-Prepared Middle Grades Teachers: Common Ground or Subtle Divide Between Practitioners and University Faculty?**
P. Maureen Musser, Consultant; William L. Greene, Southern Oregon University; Linda L. Samek, George Fox University; Micki M. Caskey, Portland State University; Jay Casbon, Oregon State University – Cascades; Younghee M. Kim, Southern Oregon University

**Repositioning Literacy Pedagogy through a Whole School Read**
Pamela C. Jewett, University of South Carolina; Jennifer L. Wilson, University of South Carolina; Michelle Vanderburg, University of South Carolina

## *Middle Grades Student Achievement, Engagement and Experience (Paper Session)*

*CHAIR: FRANCES R. SPIELHAGEN*
*DISCUSSANT: MARY F. ROE*

**Do Think-Aloud Protocols (TAPs) Lead to Higher Levels of Student Engagement, Metacognition and Narrative Writing Achievement During Game-Based Learning?**
Hiller A. Spires, North Carolina State University; Lisa G. Hervey, North Carolina State University; James Lester, North Carolina State University

**Longitudinal Impact of an Eighth Grade Inquiry Curriculum on Students' Beliefs and Achievement in Science**
Jacqueline J. Madhok, University of California – Berkeley; James D. Slotta, University of Toronto; Marcia Linn, University of California – Berkeley

**Measuring Engagement Structures in Middle-Grades Urban Mathematics Classrooms**
Roberta Y. Schorr, Rutgers University; Yakov Epstein, Rutgers University; Lisa B. Warner, Rutgers University; Robert M. Capraro, Texas A&M University; Mary Margaret Capraro, Texas A&M University; Gerald A. Goldin, Rutgers University; Robin K. Henson, University of North Texas

**What is the Relationship Between Student Engagement and Performance on an NCLB Accountability Test?**
Anthony C. Frontier, Cardinal Stritch University

**Preliminary Results from the Thinking With Data Project: A Cross-Curricular Approach to Data Literacy Education**
Mark A. van 't Hooft, Kent State University; Annette Kratcoski, Research Center for Educational Technology; Karen P. Swan, University of Illinois Springfield; Philip J. Vahey, SRI International; Dale Cook, Kent State University; Ken Rafanan, SRI International: Center for Technology in Learning; Louise G. Yarnall, SRI International

## *Middle Grades Teacher Development and Qualifications (Roundtable Session)*

*CHAIR: MARK D. VAGLE*

**In the Middle: Elementary Education Majors' Experience in Middle Level Education and Associated Field Experience**
Nicole C. Miller, Mississippi State University; Nicole L. Thompson, Mississippi State University; Jianzhong Xu, Mississippi State University

**Teacher and School Effects on Student Achievement: A HLM Study on Middle School Science**
Yun Mo, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University; Kusum Singh, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University; Mido Chang, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

**Co-constructing Student-informed Pedagogy in the Middle Years**
Emily Jane Nelson, University of Waikato

**"As If They Were Real People": Partnering with Students in Middle Grades Professional Development**
John M. Downes, University of Vermont

## *Literacy in the Middle Grades (Roundtable Session)*

*CHAIR: PAMELA S. ANGELLE*

**Reading Attitudes of Middle School Students (RAMSS): An initial validation study**
Jenna Jeanne Bachinski, University of Connecticut

**Does Spelling Matter? Examining the Relationship between Adolescents' Orthographic Knowledge and Overall Reading Ability**
Danielle V. Dennis, University of South Florida; Diane C Kroeger, University of South Florida

**What Do Urban Middle School Girls Read and Why Do They Read That? A Pilot Study**
Ambika Gopalakrishnan, California State University – Los Angeles; Sharon H. Ulanoff, California State University – Los Angeles

## *Transformation in Middle Grades Education (Roundtable Session)*

*CHAIR: PENNY B. HOWELL*

**Reclaiming Camelot: Capturing the Reflections of Exemplary Middle School Teachers in an Age of High Stakes Accountability**
Darby Claire Delane, University of Florida; Nancy F. Dana, University of Florida

**Beyond Technology Integration: Meaning, Significance and Engagement in the Middle Grades**
John M. Downes, University of Vermont; Penny A. Bishop, University of Vermont

**Improving Academic Performance by Promoting the Relevance of the Core Curriculum: An Evaluation**
Dennis Orthner, University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill; Roderick Rose, University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill; Patrick Akos, University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill; Hinckley Jones-Sanpei, University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill

**Schools-to-Watch Principals: How They Make Sense of Their Roles**
Keith Tilford, Illinois State University

**Assessing Common Patterns of Sucess: Lessons Learned in the Implementation of Required Middle-Level Student Advisory Programs**
John M, Niska, Rhode Island College

## *Symposium*

**The National Project on Common Planning Time: Emergent Research**
Steven B. Mertens, Illinois State University; Vincent A. Anfara, The University of Tennessee; Nancy Flowers, University of Illinois; Micki M. Caskey, Portland State University

**A Case of the Impact of Common Planning Time on Middle School Teachers and Students**
Molly Mee, Towson University

**Exploring the Role of the School Administrator in Fostering the Effective Use of Common Planning Time**
Shawn A. Faulkner, Northern Kentucky University, Chris M. Cook, Northern Kentucky University

**Reading and Writing Challenges for a Sixth Grade Team: Literacy's Place in Common Planning Time Discussions**
Francine Falk-Ross, Pace University

# Report from the Executive Advisor

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to this electronic election system to ensure full democratic participation in the election of SIG officers. Unfortunately, there has been some pushback and resistance to doing this on the part of some SIGs (not the MLER). Third, there is a moratorium on the formation of any additional SIGs until the AERA SIG Executive Committee has evaluated the current role that SIGs play in the functioning and governance of AERA. There are currently about 166 SIGs and the SIG Executive Committee is even looking at the possibility of trying to encourage the merger of some of the smaller SIGs who are struggling to survive due to very low membership numbers. The good news in all of this is that the MLER SIG is alive and well with a very healthy membership, a good pool of current and future leaders, and some very exciting initiatives in process (e.g., the Common Planning Time Research Project).

I want to thank each of you who have taken the time and invested your expertise in making the MLER SIG a great organization of middle grades researchers. Again, I look forward to seeing you in Denver. Please contact me with any ideas or concerns. I welcome hearing from you.

# Middle Level Research SIG Business Meeting Minutes

*Notes submitted by Christopher Cook*

*MLER SIG Business Meeting*
*November 5, 2009*
*4:30-5:30*

## *Members Present:*

Micki Caskey (Chair), Penny Bishop (Chair-Elect/Program Chair), Steve Mertens (Vice Chair), Vince Anfara (Executive Advisor), Chris Cook (Council Member), Nancy Mizelle (Council Member),Nancy Flowers, Chris Weiss, Joe Pitts, Nancy Ruppert, Ellis Hurd, David Virtue, Robin Mis, Jan Carpenter, Gayle Andrews, Elizabeth Pate, David Strahan, Michelle Williams, , Joanne Previts, Nancy Dana, Anne Ogg, Robert Capraro, Mary Margaret Capraro, Joshua Smith, Keith Tilford, John Downes, Dan Bauer, Al Seed, Donald Larsen, Tariq Akmal, Kim Ruebel, Melanie Greene

## *I – Welcome & Introductions*

Participants introduce themselves. 32 members present.

## *II – Chair Report (Micki Caskey)*

**Membership:**
Current membership is 193. Goal is to get over 200 members. Members are encouraged to recruit their colleagues.

**Bylaws:**
Reformatted to connect to AERA guidelines. New proposed bylaws will be posted to website so members can compare the new to the old and provide feedback.

**Elections:**
SIG uses electronic elections—pioneers in this effort. Several have volunteered for the upcoming elections. Will be posted soon and election will take place in January.

**National Middle Grades Research Program:**
Has been in motion since 2006, now in full effect. Goal is to create some synergy in collecting data and providing opportunities for presentation and publication. Phase I (started in November 2007) is currently wrapping up and Phase II is now underway. First training for Phase II took place on Wednesday, November 4. Next training will take place in late April 30th at AERA 2010. An additional training will take place in Summer 2010 in Chicago.

**Handbook Series:**
Call for manuscripts will be released soon on the Phase I Common Planning Time Research Project. Call will be distributed to participants in the Phase I Project. Additional volume is anticipated for Phase II of the CPT Project.

## *III – Executive Director Report (Vince Anfara)*

**AERA News:**
Reviewed the reasons for the changes in the bylaws. SIGs need to submit new proposed bylaws by the end of December. There are 163 SIGs currently in AERA. MLER SIG was one of the first to submit their bylaws. In addition, provides an update on the process for establishing a SIG. AERA is looking at this process and exploring what is best for SIGs. Minimum number of members needed to start a SIG is now 45.

**National Middle Grades Research Program:**
Establishing an advisory board. Needs to contain members who can help us secure funding for this project, as well as identify future projects. Current project has been completely self- funded.

**Handbook Series:**
Seven handbooks published to date. Plan to create two from the CPT Project. Announced call for Distributing Leadership in Schools Educating Young Adolescents.

## *IV – Treasurer Report (Steve Mertens)*

Explained both additions and deductions. Revenue comes from membership dues. Expenses were for graduate student award plaques and stipend ($500.00), outgoing SIG officers plaques ($250.00), SIG management fee ($225.00), and shipping fee for SIG board ($98.00) . Ending balance = $3853.76.

## *V – Program Chair Report (Penny Bishop)*

Outlined changes to selection of proposals. Created a review panel consisting of 16 reviewers. Each reviewer reviewed

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# Middle School Teachers' Ability to Identify Creative Thinking in Their Students

Dr. Vicky Morgan, Dr. Nancy Latham, Dr. Rena Shifflet, Illinois State University

**Abstract**

*The primary purpose of this study was to obtain information about middle school teachers' ability to accurately identify creative thinking ability in their students. Two types of accuracy scores were derived from comparing teacher ratings of students' creative thinking based on classroom interactions and actual student test scores on the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking. A secondary purpose of the study was to determine if teachers' own creative thinking ability, as indicated on the Abbreviated Torrance Test for Adults, was related to their ability to accurately identify creative thinkers. Also of interest was teachers' accuracy in identifying creative thinking in male and female students.*

## Introduction

Middle school philosophy and the resulting components that are present in good middle schools include "ensuring success for every student" (Jackson and Davis, 2000, p. 30). In fact, the original 1989 version of *Turning Points* in which this idea is expressed as *ensuring success for all students* was modified to specifically replace "all" with "every" for the later *Turning Points 2000.* It was thought that "all" was probably interpreted as "most" (p. 30) and because one of the basic premises in a sound middle school approach is to meet the needs of every young adolescent, reaching "most" students was unacceptable. Success for every student implies that, regardless of the unique characteristics of a given student, opportunities must be available for that student's success. While academic success is certainly a priority, a good middle school approach attends to the whole child including unique characteristics such as creative thinking. All educators, middle school teachers included, are taught to identify and address the many types of unique needs that students exhibit. Teacher education programs strive to provide their candidates with the broadest preparation possible in regard to identifying and addressing these student needs. Individual student characteristics such as learning styles and intellectual development are typical factors that determine student needs and subsequent instructional design. In spite of the best overall efforts of teacher education programs, these authors' experiences suggest the topic of creative thinking is absent from the training of teachers.

There is often confusion about what it means for a person to think creatively. The term "creativity" is frequently used in a broad sense and includes talents and divergent thinking. Early efforts by J. P. Guilford and Paul Torrance described creativity broadly, but viewed divergent thinking as the "basis of creativity" (Sternberg, 2006, p. 87). For purposes of this study, creativity will be defined as divergent thinking and refers to thinking that is original or unusual, or is unlike the thoughts one's peers might have in a given situation. While talent such as artistic expression most probably has

originality as its basis, the focus here is on thoughts that are unusual as compared to others, and those thoughts may result in unusual behaviors or products.

Because creative thinking is an unknown topic for both teacher candidates and inservice teachers, they may misinterpret creative behaviors as problem behaviors and address them as classroom management issues. Unusual behaviors may, in fact, be just that… classroom management issues and nothing else. However teachers owe it to their students to at least consider the possibility that an unusual behavior may have creative thinking behind it. A creative middle school student might be one who asks a seemingly unrelated question during a class discussion. While a teacher may initially view it as disruptive, the relevant (but unusual) connection between the question and the discussion may become apparent if the student is allowed to elaborate. Students today who think creatively may generate critical yet unusual solutions to the unknown problems of the future. Especially for middle school teachers, acknowledging this strength (and hopefully nurturing it) should be considered as educators regard the unique needs of every child as indicated by *Turning Points 2000*.

## Research Questions

This study focused on whether middle school teachers could accurately identify students in their classrooms who were creative thinkers. The following questions guided the study:

1. Was there a relationship between teachers' ratings of students indicating how creative they thought students were and students' actual scores on a standardized creativity test?
2. Was there a relationship between how accurate teachers were in their ratings (as indicated by a derived accuracy score) and students' actual scores on a standardized creativity test?
3. Was teachers' own level of creative thinking ability related to how accurate they were in their ratings of students?
4. Was there any difference in the accuracy scores of teachers for male and female students?

## Methodology

Subjects included 153 sixth, seventh, and eighth graders (85 females and 68 males), and 15 teachers. A brief discussion was held with participating teachers on the definition of creative thinking so that students who displayed musical, artistic, or similar talent were not automatically considered creative thinkers. The emphasis was on students who tended to think of ideas that their peers did not. Using the pool of students for which parental consent was given, teachers of these students were asked to rate on a Likert scale of one to five (five being high) how creative/divergent these students were in their thinking, based on the teachers' interactions with students in the classroom. A written reminder of the previously discussed definition of creative thinking appeared at the top of the scale. While it was necessary for teachers to know the names of the students as they completed the first task of rating their creative thinking, code numbers were immediately given afterwards to both teachers and students, so that personal information became anonymous.

After the students were rated, middle school students were given the *Torrance Test of Creative Thinking* (TTCT; Torrance, 1966) Figural Form A, according to the directions described in the administration manual. All teachers were then given the *Abbreviated Torrance Test for Adults* (ATTA; Goff & Torrance, 2002). The TTCT was sent to Scholastic Testing Service for professional scoring. The ATTA was scored by the investigators in a group setting. Scholastic Testing Service was consulted about scoring the ATTA to ensure accuracy.

Accuracy scores were determined for the teachers in the study in two ways. The first was a simple accuracy score that showed how close or far teachers were in their ratings as compared to students' actual test scores. The range of students' test scores were divided into five equal categories and given numbers one to five, with five indicating higher scores. Those scores were compared to the ratings the teacher gave on the one to five Likert scale. The simple accuracy score that resulted from this comparison is described in Table 1.

**Table 1**
***Method of determining simple accuracy scores***

| Matching criteria | Simple accuracy score |
|---|---|
| Scores that match exactly *(e.g., rating=3, student score=3)* | **5** |
| Scores that deviate by a value of one *(e.g., rating = 3, student score = 2)* | **4** |
| Scores that deviate by a value of two *(e.g., rating = 2, student score = 4)* | **3** |
| Scores that deviate by a value of three *(e.g., rating = 4, student score = 1)* | **2** |
| Scores that deviate by a value of four *(e.g., rating = 1, student score = 5)* | **1** |

A directional accuracy score was intended to give some information about whether teachers were rating students higher or lower than the students' test scores. In this case, a nine-point scale was used to indicate not only how close teachers were in their ratings as compared to students' test scores, but the direction in which they were rating them. Table 2 illustrates how directional scores were assigned.

**Table 2**
***Method of determining simple accuracy scores***

| Matching criteria | Directional accuracy score |
|---|---|
| Scores that deviate by a value of four, but rating was higher than student score *(rating = 5, student score = 1)* | **9** |
| Scores that deviate by a value of three, but rating was higher than student score *(e.g. rating = 5, student score = 2)* | **8** |
| Scores that deviate by a value of two, but rating was higher than student score *(e.g. rating = 4, student score = 2)* | **7** |
| Scores that deviate by a value of one, but rating was higher than student score *(e.g. rating = 3, student score = 2)* | **6** |
| Scores that match exactly *(e.g. rating = 3, student score = 3)* | **5** |
| Scores that deviate by a value of one, but rating was lower than student score *(e.g. rating = 3, student score = 4)* | **4** |
| Scores that deviate by a value of two, but rating was lower than student score *(e.g. rating = 3, student score = 5)* | **3** |
| Scores that deviate by a value of three, but rating was lower than student score *(e.g. rating = 1, student score = 4)* | **2** |
| Scores that deviate by a value of four, but rating was lower than student score *(rating is 1, student score = 5)* | **1** |

### Analysis and Findings

To explore the first question of whether middle school teachers can accurately identify creative thinkers, correlations were performed between the teacher ratings and the students' actual test scores. The results indicated no significant relationship between the teacher ratings and the student test scores. This suggests that it is not the case that students who scored higher on their tests were also rated higher by their teachers or that students who scored lower on their tests were also rated lower by their teachers.

The second question focused on the derived accuracy scores for teachers and whether they were related to student test scores. In this case, a significant inverse relationship ($p = .006$) was found between the simple teacher accuracy scores and the student test scores. This inverse correlation indicates that teachers' accuracy scores go down as student test scores go up, and the accuracy scores go up as student test scores go down. In other words, a teacher would be more accurate in his/her rating for a student with a lower test score than a student with a higher test score. When examining the directional accuracy score, there was a significant relationship ($p = .000$) but it was again inverse. This result indicates that student scores that are higher are associated with directional scores that are lower, and student scores that are lower are associated with directional scores that are higher. Since the directional scores are indicators of underratings or overratings, this suggests that students who score higher on their test are more likely to be underrated by their teachers, and students who score lower on their test are more likely to be overrated by their teachers.

The third question asked whether a teacher's own level of creative thinking was related to their accuracy in identifying students who were creative thinkers. In this case there was no significant correlation between teacher creativity test scores and their accuracy scores. This was true for both the simple accuracy score and the directional accuracy score. This indicates that a teacher's own level of creative thinking as indicated on the ATTA is not related to how accurately they identified a student's level of creative thinking.

The fourth question focused on students' gender and whether there were differences in teachers' accuracy scores when rating male and female students. T-tests were performed to ascertain any differences. First, it was determined that there were no significant differences between the males and females in their TTCT scores ($p = .083$). Teachers' simple accuracy scores were significantly different ($p = .034$) between the two groups. They were significantly more accurate in their ratings of males than females. Teachers' mean accuracy score was 3.39 for females and 3.72 for males on the five-point scale. On the nine-point directional accuracy scale, there was again a significant difference ($p = .037$) in how teachers rated males and females. Teachers' mean directional scores were 3.72 for females and 4.19 for males, which indicate that they are underrating both males and females, but they are underrating the females significantly more than the males.

### Discussion

The primary purpose of this study was to determine whether middle school teachers could identify students in their classes who were creative thinkers. It was also of interest to see if those teachers' own level of creative thinking was associated with this ability to identify students. In addition, the question of whether teachers differed on their accuracy scores for males and females was explored.

The lack of correlation between teachers' ratings of their students and the students' actual test scores indicates that teachers' beliefs about their students' creative ability, based on their interactions with those students, is not related to students' actual ability to think creatively as indicated on a creativity test. This suggests that teachers do not rate higher-scoring students higher, or rate lower-scoring students lower. There appears to be no pattern to their ratings.

It was found that there was a significant inverse correlation between teachers' accuracy scores (both simple and directional) and the students' test scores. Because the correlation between the simple accuracy score and student scores was inverse, it suggests that higher student test scores are associated with lower accuracy scores on the part of the teacher, and lower student test scores are associated with higher accuracy scores. The higher the student scored on the

TTCT, the less likely the teacher was to be able to accurately identify that student as a highly creative thinker. But the lower the student scored on the test, the more likely it was that the teacher was accurate in his/her identification of the student as less creative. The relationship was also inverse between the directional accuracy score and student scores, suggesting that students who score higher on their test are more likely to be underrated by their teachers, and students who score lower on their test are more likely to be overrated by their teachers. Noteworthy is the fact that on average, teachers are underrating students more frequently than they are overrating them, as indicated by the mean directional accuracy score of 3.94 on the nine-point scale.

When examining the relationship between teachers' own creative thinking test scores and their accuracy scores in identifying creative thinkers it was found there was no correlation. This suggests that no matter the level of a teacher's creative thinking, there is no connection to how accurately they identify their students' ability to think creatively.

The last question, which explored whether teachers differ in their accuracy scores for their male and female students, yielded some interesting results. Teachers were significantly better at identifying male students' level of creative thinking than they were their female students, whether considering the simple or the directional accuracy score. Even though the directional accuracy score indicated they underrated both male and female students, teachers significantly underrated the females more frequently than the males.

## Conclusion

Although there is no detectable pattern in teachers' ratings of students' creative thinking when compared to actual student test scores, it appears teachers' accuracy scores are more likely to be on target with lower-scoring students. Teachers' own level of creative thinking is not related to this outcome. An earlier study with younger students (Morgan, Latham, & Shifflet, 2009) produced similar results that indicated teachers' accuracy scores were correlated with lower student test scores. As it was with the middle school students, when gender was examined teachers of younger students were more accurate with the lower-scoring students. However, in the earlier study the lower scoring students were female; while in the current middle school study, the lower scoring students were male. It should be noted that the difference between males and females was significantly different ($p = .034$) in the sample of younger students (males scoring higher) which was not the case in this study ($p = .083$). Although not significant, females in the current study did, on average, score higher than males. (Males' average score was 4.22 as compared to females' average score of 4.51.) The fact that teachers were more accurate with the males (lower scoring students in this case) supports the idea that teachers are more accurate with lower-scoring students, regardless of whether they are male or female. This argument would be yet stronger if there had been a statistically significant difference between males and females in the middle school sample.

That teachers more accurately identify students who score lower on the TTCT suggests some interesting interpretations. One of the reasons teachers are not identifying students who are more creative thinkers may be because they are not trained to do so, as mentioned earlier. In most cases teacher education programs, although focused on preparing teacher candidates to meet the individual needs of their future students, do not train them about creative thinking. Teachers simply may not recognize what they are seeing in these students. The differences in how teachers are able to identify males' as opposed to females' creative thinking may require a different type of interpretation. In the present study, females on average are scoring higher on the test of creative thinking than males, yet the relationship between teachers' accuracy scores and student test scores indicates teachers are more accurate with the males. Is it possible that females, especially those in middle school, are masking their creative tendencies, thus demonstrating no creative behavior for teachers to observe? Students in this sample were all in mixed-gender classrooms and some research suggests that females are more vocal (e.g. Spielhagen, 2006) in an environment such as a same-sex classroom. Would different results be obtained in a classroom setting where females were more comfortable exhibiting more overt behavior? In addition, is there a point to be explored

among the male sample that may have to do with teachers' perception of male behavior? Is it possible that even among males that did score somewhat higher on the creativity test, teachers perceive the corresponding behavior as "acting out" or some other type of stereotypically expected behavior of young adolescent males? If so, teachers may not be likely to identify such behavior as creative.

Possibly the most interesting result from this study that strongly suggests further research, albeit in a slightly different direction, is the question of why males would score lower than females in middle school (although not significantly so in the current study) and yet younger males scored significantly higher than their female peers in a previous study. Information that would shed light on this issue could be extremely informative for educators when creating learning environments and planning instruction for students at different grade levels.

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# Middle Level Research SIG Business Meeting Minutes

*(Continued from Page 4)*

about 8-10 proposals. Four researchers reviewed each proposal. Fourth reviewer was a graduate student researcher. One challenge was the deadline for applying to serve on the panel—occurred before the deadline to submit proposals. Several missed the opportunity as a result so we will communicate earlier for the coming year to ensure a high-quality panel. Allocation resulted in an increased number of roundtables and reduced number of paper presentations.

**AERA Program:**
Information has not been released for announcement. Hope to announce in the coming week. Accepted 21 of 41 proposals: 10 in 2 paper sessions, 11 in roundtables, and 1 invited symposium.

*Dr. Lipka makes two motions for the Council and Officers to explore and consider for further discussion.*

**Motion 1 –**
Closed system of acceptance: Those who submit proposals to the SIG be members of the SIG.

Discussion followed motion 1 —want to know numbers (members versus non members).

**Called for the question**
For – 10, Against – 12, Abstain – 2, Motion fails.

**Motion 2**
Consequences for not showing up for presentation

Discussion included waiting until the AERA SIG business meeting and needing a vote opened to all members.

**Called for the question**
For – 4, Against -10, Abstain – 8, Motion fails.

*VII – Graduate Student Award*

Recognized Kathleen Brinegar, though she was unable to attend.

*VIII – Announcements*

Distributed call for 2010 Graduate Student Award

Gayle Andrews, outgoing council member, was recognized for contributions to SIG and honored with plaque

May 19-21 Southeast Regional Middle Level Professors Symposium in Boone, NC

*IX – Member Networking*

Members encouraged to interact and network with one another


# Call for Manuscripts and Reviewers

## Middle School Journal

Middle School Journal is a peer-reviewed publication of the National Middle School Association (NMSA). The journal editor is seeking research-based manuscripts that promote quality middle level education and contribute to an understanding of the educational and developmental needs of youth between the ages of 10 and 15. For more information about the journal or to submit a manuscript, please visit the Middle School Journal Guidelines for Authors at

http://www.nmsa.org/Publications/MiddleSchoolJournal/GuidelinesforAuthors/tabid/405/Default.aspx

NMSA is also seeking members with expertise in middle level education and experience writing for publication to serve as reviewers for the journal.

***For more information about serving as a reviewer, contact:***
Cheri Howman
Assistant Editor
howmanc@nmsa.org
1-800-528-NMSA.

# Call For Manuscripts

## Research in Middle Level Education Online

*Research in Middle Level Education Online*, an international peer-reviewed research journal, publishes quantitative and qualitative studies, mixed methods research studies, case studies, action research studies, research syntheses. Published by the National Middle School Association (NMSA), RMLE Online is an established publication outlet for middle grades researchers. Full-text issues of the journal are available on the NMSA website.

Additionally, the journal is indexed in educational databases including Academic Search Premier, ERIC, and Professional Development Collection. The journal can also be accessed through the Directory of Open Access Journals (www.doaj.org)— an international repository of free, full text, quality controlled scientific and scholarly journals.

RMLE Online benefits from guidance of the NMSA's Research Advisory Board and endorsement by the Middle Level Education Research Special Interest Group, an affiliate of the American Educational Research Association.

For submission information, please refer to the Guidelines for Contributors at http://www.nmsa.org/Publications/RMLEOnline/GuidelinesforContributors/tabid/592/Default.aspx.

***If you have questions, please contact***
Micki Caskey,
Editor, RMLE
caskeym@pdx.edu
503.725.4749

MIDDLE LEVEL EDUCATION RESEARCH
SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

# Call for Submissions

## The Chronicle of Middle Level Education Research

The Chronicle of Middle Level Education Research, the online publication of the Middle Level Education Research SIG, is seeking submissions. The MLER SIG publishes the Chronicle three times a year in January, June, and October. We invite you to submit book reviews, descriptions of research or publications, or other events/information of interest to MLER SIG members.

In addition to the above, we are also seeking submissions for our peer-reviewed section. We encourage MLER SIG members to submit brief articles of scholarly work, including original research and reviews of literature. We welcome manuscripts on an ongoing basis.

***Submission Guidelines***

- Manuscripts should be approximately 2,500 words in length
- Double-spaced with 1-inch margins in 12-point font
- Follow the 5th or 6th Edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2001) style guide
- Include a separate title page with author name, affiliation, and contact information. Aside from the title page, manuscripts should have no reference to the author(s) to ensure a blind review. Note: Manuscripts need to be prepared and submitted electronically as Word documents

***Submit the manuscript and title page to***
Kathleen Brinegar
University of Vermont
Kathleen.brinegar@uvm.edu.

***For additional information, please contact:***
Kathleen Brinegar, Co-Editor,
Chronicle of Middle Level Education Research
Kathleen.brinegar@uvm.edu

NMSA

# Call for Research Summaries

***Micki M. Caskey, Chair***

## NMSA Research Advisory Board

The Research Advisory Board of the National Middle School Association is seeking submissions for the peer-reviewed online Research Summaries in Support of *This We Believe*. NMSA research summaries are abbreviated reviews of the literature—not exhaustive reviews. The intent of the research summaries is to share research about focused topics in middle level education. Following a peer-review process, accepted research summaries are posted on the NMSA website for access by practitioners, researchers, policy makers and others interested in middle grades education. See http://www.nmsa.org/Research/ResearchSummaries/tabid/115/Default.aspx

***If you are interested in authoring a Research Summary for the National Middle School Association, please contact***
Micki Caskey caskeym@pdx.edu
Chair of the NMSA Research Advisory Board
to discuss prospective topics and guidelines for manuscripts.


# IAP Acquires MGRJ

**Publication Date:**
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*Institutional Print:* $149.00
*Individual Print:* $80.00

**Trim Size:** 7" x 10"

**Subject**:
Education, Middle Grades

***Special Price for all MLER SIG Members***

## Middle Grades Research Journal (MGRJ)

(*A Research Journal Published Quarterly by Information Age Publishing)*

Edited by **Vicki L. Schmitt**, *University of Alabama*

*Beginning January 1, 2010, MGRJ Publication Offices moved to Charlotte, NC*
*The Editorial Office moved to the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, AL*

## *Call for Manuscripts -- Middle Grades Issues*

***Middle Grades Research Journal (MGRJ)*** is a refereed, peer-reviewed journal that publishes original studies providing both empirical and theoretical frameworks that focus on middle grades education. A variety of articles are published quarterly in March, June, September, and December of each volume year.

**Guidelines for Contributors**
All manuscripts must adhere to APA fifth or sixth edition format, include an abstract of 200-300 words, and range between 20 - 30 pages in length (including camera ready tables, charts, figures, and references). If hard copies of manuscripts are submitted for review, the lead contributing author must send four "blind" copies including title and abstract along with a letter of transmittal to:

Dr. Vicki L. Schmitt, Editor-In-Chief
Electronic submissions as Word documents are strongly encouraged and should be e-mailed to: vschmitt@bamaed.ua.edu


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