

MLER Middle Level Education Research Special Interest Group

The Chronicle of Middle Level Education Research



Penny Bishop
University of Vermont

Message from the Chair

Penny Bishop, University of Vermont

Greetings and warm wishes to you all. It's been a busy few months in the life of our MLER SIG since we convened at our business meeting in April. I'm pleased to report on a number of exciting initiatives that comprise our work right now. Your officers and council members have been focused on several areas to keep our SIG strong, healthy and useful to you.

We are in the process of revisiting our strategic plan and preparing to solicit feedback from our membership about priority directions. We are also engaged in continual outreach efforts, including expanding our membership and developing new means of contact with members such as through social networking

sites. As you may recall from our last business meeting in Denver this year, we have broadened our recognition efforts by adding two AERA-sanctioned awards. In addition to our graduate student award, we will now be offering the Richard "Dick" Lipka Lifetime Achievement Award and an award to honor excellence in research. Details about the Lipka award can be found on our website. The research award is under development and will be posted soon. We are also committed to deepening our attempts at leadership development. This includes inviting greater involvement from the membership, mentoring graduate students in the field of middle level education research, and orienting our new officers

and council members to their roles. Finally, we are committed to continuing and expanding the strong record of publication opportunities our SIG has sponsored and supported.

We are eager to encourage the participation of all SIG members in these exciting initiatives. If you have interest in being a part of the work of our organization, please be in touch with me or any officer or council member to discuss how you might contribute. We welcome new energy and new ideas!

Looking ahead, our MLER Special Interest Group will be well represented at the upcoming National Middle School Association

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MLER
MIDDLE LEVEL EDUCATION RESEARCH
SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

News from the Executive Advisor

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

I hope everyone is doing well and that the fall semester has been rewarding. For sure, the fall has been one of the busiest semesters I have ever experienced. It is hard to believe that November will soon be here, which means that the annual NMSA conference is

right around the corner. I am looking forward to seeing you in Baltimore.

I encourage you to support MLER SIG researchers by attending their sessions at NMSA. I also ask that you attend the session that focuses on the

MLER National Middle Grades Research Project on Common Planning Time (CPT). This session is scheduled for Thursday, November 4, 2:15-3:30PM, in 312 Baltimore Convention Center. The title of the session is "What Research Says about Common Planning Time:

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Report from the AERA Program Chair

Steve Mertens, Illinois State University

With this issue of the Chronicle we are pleased to include an update on the status of the MLER SIG program for the 2011 AERA meetings. In accordance with new AERA regulations introduced last year, the SIG convened an expert panel of 16 reviewers to provide comprehensive

reviews of the proposals; each of whom reviewed approximately 10 proposals. Each proposal submitted this year received three reviews. Many thanks go to these folks, who dedicated considerable time and energy to ensure a high quality program:

REVIEW PANEL

Vincent A. Anfara, Jr.
Kathleen Brinegar
Micki Caskey
Danielle Dennis
Mickey Fenzel
Nancy Flowers
Dana Franz
Donald Hackmann

Penny Howell
Regina Rahimi
Mary Roe (Graduate student)
Kathleen Roney
Sandra Stacki
Mary Thomas
Keith Tilford
Mark Vagle

We were informed in late August that our SIG had been allotted three (3) paper/symposium sessions, 10 roundtable/poster presentations, and one (1) business meeting. Unfortunately, this was one less session than we received last year. Allotments for SIG sessions are determined by AERA based on the number of submissions and our SIG membership roster. In comparison to last year's numbers, it appears that we had fewer proposal submissions combined with a slight drop in our membership numbers.

As a result of our reviewers' hard work, I am pleased to report that our SIG has a high quality set of presentations to showcase in New Orleans next spring. We received 37 proposals and a symposium submission consisting of four papers. Given our session

allocations, we were able to accept 19 proposals, including the four from the symposium, resulting in an acceptance rate of 46%. The 2011 SIG program will include two symposia, one paper session, and two roundtable sessions. In order to accommodate as many submissions as possible, it was decided to include five papers in both the paper session and the two roundtable sessions.

The names and titles of accepted presentations will be announced at the SIG Business Meeting during the NMSA conference in Baltimore. Formal email notifications will also be sent by the end of October. We look forward to seeing you in Baltimore!

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NMSA Sessions

Wednesday, November 3, 2010,

8:30-9:45

Session at National Middle School Association's Symposium on Excellence in Middle Level Teacher Preparation

Research and Resources in Support of Middle Grades Teacher Education [Research Advisory Board Session]

Micki Caskey, Penny Bishop, David Strahan

Baltimore Convention Center Room: TBD

2:45 - 4:00 PM

Symposium on Middle Level Teacher Preparation.

Magic in the Middle: Inspiring Aspiring Middle Level Majors for Over 70 Years

Jean Suchsland Schneider,
Donna Schumacher Douglas

Baltimore Convention Center Room: TBD

Thursday, November 4, 2010

8:30 - 9:45 AM

Get Ready for College by Going: A Week of Collegiate Life in Middle School

Mary Beth Schaefer

Baltimore Convention Center Room: 313

10:15 - 11:30 AM

Middle School and University Faculty Create a School-wide Career Development and College Readiness Program

Mary Beth Schaefer

Baltimore Convention Center Room: 313

10:15 - 11:30 AM

Student Engagement Does Make a Difference in Student Achievement

Jerry W. Valentine, Ph.D.

Baltimore Convention Center Room: 333

10:15 - 11:30 AM

We Can Do That! Helping the Next Generation of Middle School Teachers Prepare for the Multilingual Classroom

Dr. Douglas Hatch, Ellis Hurd

Baltimore Convention Center Room: 312

12:30 - 1:45 PM

Turning Points for the Global Age: Inspiring a New Generation of Young Adolescents

Judith Conk, Gayle Andrews

Baltimore Convention Center Room: 320

12:30 - 1:45 PM

Spotlight on Research Research Advisory Board Session

Penny Bishop, Micki Caskey, David Stahan

Baltimore Convention Center Room: 311

12:30 - 1:45 PM

Improving Middle Level Teacher Preparation: A Comparative Study of the Professional Development School Approach vs. the Traditional Program Approach

Steve Mertens, Ellis Hurd, Doug Hatch, Vicky Morgan, Gary Weilbacher, & Linda Wedwick

Baltimore Convention Center Room: 312

2:15 - 3:30 PM

Wayside Teaching: A Middle Grades Imperative

Sara Davis Powell

Hilton Key BallRoom 9

2:15 - 3:30 PM

What Research Says about Common Planning Time: Results of a National Research Project [Research Advisory Board Session]

Steve Mertens, Vince Anfara, Nancy Flowers, & Micki Caskey

Baltimore Convention Center Room: 312

2:15-3:30

What Research Says about Common Planning Time: Results of a National Research Project Research Advisory Board Session

Steve Mertens, Nancy Flowers, Vincent Anfara, Micki Caskey

Baltimore Convention Center Room: 312

2:15 - 3:30 PM

Common Planning Time: Strategies for Successful Utilization

Chris Cook and Shawn Faulkner

Baltimore Convention Center Room: TBD

2:15 - 3:30 PM

Connecting Curriculum Standards to Community Issues

Gayle Andrews, Katherine E. Thompson, Courtney Jackson, Mary Ponder, & Ashley Shaver

Baltimore Convention Center Room: 320

Friday, November 5, 2010

9:15 - 10:30 AM

The Status of Programs and Practices in the Nation's Middle Schools: A Report on Two National Studies

Dr. C. Kenneth McEwin, Dr. Melanie W. Greene

Baltimore Convention Center Room: 325

9:15-10:30 AM

Research and Resources in Support of This We Believe: Linking Research and Practice [Research Advisory Board Session]

Micki Caskey, Penny Bishop, David Strahan

Baltimore Convention Center Room: 312

9:15 - 10:30 AM

The Status of Programs and Practices in the Nation's Middle Schools: A Report on Two National Studies

C. Kenneth McEwin, Melanie W. Greene

Baltimore Convention Center Room: 325

9:15 - 10:30 AM

Building Community in and Managing the Differentiated Classroom

Kristina Doubet

Baltimore Convention Center Room: 336

11:30 AM - 12:45 PM

Learning Style Differentiation Ala Sternberg

Kristina Doubet

Baltimore Convention Center Room: 336

11:30 AM - 12:45 PM

What Research Says about Integrated School-Level Approaches to Dropout [Research Advisory Board Session]

Douglas Mac Iver

Baltimore Convention Center Room: 312

2:00-3:15

Pathways to Publications [Research Advisory Board Session]

David Strahan, Penny Bishop, Micki Caskey

Baltimore Convention Center Room: 312

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NMSA Sessions

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Saturday, November 6, 2010

8:30:00 AM - 9:45:00 AM

Assessment FOR Learning – The Driving Force Behind Differentiation

Kristina Doubet

Baltimore Convention Center Room: 315

12:30 - 1:45 PM

Test Prep that Teaches: Five Ethical and Appropriate High-Stakes Test Preparation Strategies that Work in Middle School

Steven L. Turner

Baltimore Convention Center Room: 327

Message from the Chair

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conference in Baltimore, Maryland. To begin, we have SIG members presenting on Wednesday, November 3rd at the Symposium on Excellence in Middle Level Teacher Preparation. A group of graduate students and new faculty members will present

their research at the “Spotlight on Research” poster session on November 4th. And other SIG members will be sharing their work in conference sessions throughout November 4th – 6th. Please see the listing included in this issue of the Chronicle for more

information about presenters, topics and times.

I’d like to end by highlighting our MLER SIG Business Meeting to be held on Friday, November 5th, from 3:45-5:00pm in the Baltimore Convention Center, Room 312.

If you are planning to attend NMSA’s Annual Conference, please plan to join us at the Business Meeting and other SIG-related sessions.

I hope to see many of you in Baltimore!

News from the Executive Advisor

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Results of a National Research Project.” The CPT project was created for MLER SIG members and it is our desire to involve as many members as possible. We currently have over 80 members involved.

Recently, Dr. Steve Mertens from Illinois State University and Nancy Flowers from The Center for Prevention Research and Development (CPRD) at the University of Illinois presented on the CPT project at the October meeting of the National Forum. The presentation was well received and we are hoping to create some

synergy between the MLER SIG and the National Forum around this project.

Hopefully everyone is familiar with the *Handbook of Research in Middle Level Education*. Our SIG has been publishing this book series since 2001. The latest volume, *Voices from the Middle: Narrative Inquiry By, For and About the Middle Level Community*, is available. The 8th volume in the book series was edited by Dr. Kathy Malu from William Patterson University of New Jersey. Flyers, which can be used to order the book at a special price, will

be distributed during NMSA’s annual conference. Thanks to Kathy for the great job she has done on this book.

As a member of the AERA SIG Executive Committee, I continue to work on issues related to the governance of SIGs. Currently we are looking at survey data collected in the spring 2010 from AERA members. The intent of this research is to discover what SIGs are doing to grow membership, nurture future SIG leaders, and involve their members in meaningful ways. I will keep you informed on this project as reports are

available. There should be some interesting findings that may help the MLER officers effectively plan for the future of our organization.

Finally, I want to call everyone’s attention to the new MLER SIG award, the Richard “Dick” Lipka Lifetime Achievement Award. I encourage all of you to visit the MLER website to read about this award. It was named for the founding father of our organization, a person who dedicated his life to advancing the education of young adolescents through quality research and advocacy.

Does Spelling Count?: Spelling Awareness, Responsibility, and Accuracy

Erika Daniels, Ed.D California State University San Marcos

Jennifer Hamby, Ed.D Oceanside Unified School District

Cynthia McDaniel, Ed.D Southwestern Community College

Leif Fearn, Ed.D San Diego State University

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate what would happen if teachers focused middle school students' attention on spelling during the writing event. Young adolescents especially crave opportunities to take more control of their learning, and this study explored whether explicitly giving them responsibility for spelling correctly would lead them to improve their spelling accuracy. The students were asked to circle any words they thought were misspelled during a four-week series of writing prompts. No other spelling instruction or directions were given. Results showed that students increased the number of words they wrote overall while decreasing the number of words they misspelled. Students noticed misspelled words in other writing tasks and were more conscious of identifying correct spelling patterns. In alignment with existing research on young adolescent research, students began to take responsibility for spelling words correctly when told that it was their responsibility to do so.

Middle school students were asked to "write as much as you can as well as you can" for one minute on the topic of either music or art. Sam's writing included the sentence: "I think if music wasent inventid thier would be nothing to talk about." Before he began writing, however, he asked "does spelling count?" Middle school teachers in every content area know that "does spelling count?" is their students' driving question.

INTRODUCTION

The authors of this article have experience with students in grades K-12 and the university. Our students of all ages frequently either ask if spelling counts, or indicate they do not believe it matters

through their misspellings, or both. We have heard many reasons for our students' misspellings. The reasons include:

1. Students do not feel they are capable of spelling the words they really want to use when they write.

2. They do not think spelling is important for writing well.

3. They may not think about spelling at all, especially in the age of spell check.

Many of our students (of all ages) tell us that spell check on their computers renders knowledge of correct spelling irrelevant. Spell check, however, does not catch mixed-up homophones nor does it help when students are filling out job applications. It is a useful tool, but one that does not eliminate the need to recognize misspellings. The latter possibility, that young writers may not think about spelling at all, provided the impetus for this study.

We explored the notion that encouraging middle school writers to think about spelling while they write might influence the likelihood they would spell more words correctly. While we recognized that knowledge of orthographic patterns is an essential component of conventional spelling, this area of study has been well researched (e. g. Ouelette & Senechal, 2008). We wondered what would happen if teachers drew students' attention to spelling during the drafting process; could we document the existence of a spelling responsibility? Because young adolescents especially crave opportunities to exercise control over their lives (Lipka, 1997), middle school was the right age with which to explore our question.

To value spelling, to think about it in the writing event, has occasionally been referred to as "spelling conscience" (Turbill, 2000). We have chosen to use the term spelling *responsibility* as opposed to spelling *conscience* because the latter connotes a moral overlay that the former does not. The question in this study, therefore, was whether a

sense of responsibility for spelling words correctly exists as anything other than a theoretical construct. If it does exist, could that sense of responsibility for spelling words correctly in writing be influenced so students would spell more words more correctly more often? Before we discuss what we learned, however, it is important to understand how spelling instruction has evolved in the United States.

EARLY RESEARCH ON SPELLING

Much of the early research on spelling focused on emergent spelling habits such as invented spelling and word study (Read, 1971; Richgels, 1995). Fitzsimmons and Loomer (1980) identified ten «research-supported procedures» for teaching spelling. All ten procedures focused on *word study*, which included teaching sound-letter correspondence and orthographic patterns. None of the procedures included the notion of spelling responsibility, which might resonate with middle school students who thrive when they are expected to take responsibility for their work (NMSA, 2003).

The early literature showed the majority of the spelling research focused on teaching students how to spell words on tests, not on how to spell words correctly when writing (Bean & Bouffler, 1987). However, spelling correctly on worksheets and tests is not the same as spelling words correctly in actual writing.

A revolution in writing instruction changed the nature of people's attention to spelling (Atwell, 1998). Atwell (1998)

worked extensively with middle school students to improve their writing skills and ability. Students needed proficient examples of language, direct teaching on aspects of the craft, and time to actually write. As a result, perspectives on spelling became more writer-friendly. Getting words on the page became the priority. In order to keep spelling from interfering with ideational flow, many teachers honored and promoted "invented" spelling (Mann, Tobin, & Wilson, 1987). Researchers realized that students' inventions reflected their understanding of phoneme-grapheme correspondence and orthographic patterns and were not actually "invented" constructions (Read, 1971). Understanding the reciprocity between phonemic awareness, phonics, and morphology (Richgels, 1995) helped teachers and parents understand that invented spelling provided a window into children's understandings of the how written language worked.

In spite of the research on word study, however, there still exists a tension between teaching student writers to pay attention to spelling words correctly and not compromising ideation. Correct spelling while writing does not occur by itself. A review of the literature reveals scant attention to the fact that many students spell words incorrectly in their writing that they spelled correctly on their spelling tests. This area of teaching spelling appears to be largely ignored.

SPELLING RESPONSIBILITY

Spelling responsibility, as we use the term in this paper, refers to writers consciously understanding that

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they *should* spell the words correctly when they write. Spelling responsibility implies an understanding that spelling contributes to meaning. In his seminal study on invented spelling, Read (1971) found that preschool writers “create most of their own spellings by trying to represent the sounds as they relate them to the letter-names they know” (p. 6). He also found a noticeable move toward conventional spelling around ages five and six. Hughes and Searle (2000) found that students’ understanding of the impact of spelling on their conveyance of meaning improved as they moved through their elementary grade years. By the end of sixth grade, students had a stronger understanding of why spelling matters. Finally, Thibodeau (2002) studied middle school students whose teachers wanted correct spelling to be a habit. By creating a list of “unforgiveable” spelling mistakes, teachers at one middle school drew students’ attention to correct spelling and saw a decrease in misspelled words. These findings suggested that young adolescents could be taught they should spell words correctly when they write.

THE STUDY

This study was conducted in a Southern California Title I middle school. Fifty-five percent of the students were English-language learners, one-third of the students scored Below Basic or Far Below Basic on the English-Language Arts portion of the state’s standardized assessment, and seventy percent of the students qualified for the free and reduced price lunch program. Two questions were explored.

1. Can we document the existence of spelling responsibility?
2. If so, can classroom teachers positively influence that responsibility?

STUDENTS

All of the 55 participants were students in the second author’s multi-grade reading support classes. Any students scoring two or more years below grade level on the state’s standardized tests were required to take the course as their regular Language Arts class. The classes consisted of students in the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades. Because they were all performing well below grade level, the school grouped them together and tasked the author with filling in their academic gaps.

We felt that middle school was an appropriate place to explore the concept of spelling responsibility because this is the time when students begin to move from concrete to abstract thinking (Powell, 2005). As students begin to develop their critical thinking, they also become more metacognitive and reflective about their learning, which increases their desire to be responsible about their learning.

THE PROCEDURES

Once a week for a year, the students did a Power Writing activity (see Fearn and Farnan (2001) for a detailed description). Data for this study, however, were collected from four weeks worth of Power Writing prompts. In short, the participants were given a choice of two cue-words for each timed writing. For example, choices included “mountains

or oceans” or “ice cream or cake.” Then students were asked to “write as much as you can as well as you can about the idea/word you selected from the two on the board.”

In order to explore the notion of “spelling responsibility,” one direction was added to the instructions during each of the four Mondays during which data were collected. Students were told to “circle any words you think might be spelled wrong. Circle words also if you are just not sure about the spelling.” After the students wrote, the author collected the prompts and continued the day’s instruction.

DATA ANALYSIS

This research was conducted over the course of four weeks, and students’ writing samples were used as pre and post data. The students’ weekly five-minute writing samples were scored by a method known as Analytic Assessment (Fearn & Farnan, 2001). First, we counted the total number of incorrect spellings (labeled “Misspelled Words”). Next, we counted the number of misspelled words not circled (labeled “Unidentified Errors”). For example, in a prompt with three misspelled words but none circled, the data were recorded as three misspelled words and three unidentified errors.

Here are three sample sentences to show how they were scored. Italics have been used in place of circles.

Sentence 1 “I like to lison to mucic it mak me happy.”

This was scored as zero identified errors, three misspelled words, showing three unidentified errors. The student identified none of the misspelled words.

Sentence 2 – “I like all kinds of music and *espehly* rap.”

This was scored as one identified error and one misspelled word leaving zero unidentified errors. The student circled the one misspelled word.

Sentence 3 – “Also some of them are *crystls* and *dimends*.”

This was scored as one identified error and two actual errors, leaving one unidentified error because only one of the misspelled words was circled.

Table 1 shows an example of the data that were collected.

TABLE 1:
Example of Analytic Assessment

Weeks 1 - 4	Identified errors	Actual errors	Unidentified errors	Fluency	Accuracy (fluency / unidentified errors)
Sample 1	3	17	14	150	10.71
Sample 2	4	15	11	158	14.36
Sample 3	2	15	13	182	14
Sample 4	3	13	10	216	21.6

THE RESULTS

While we recognize that the data were collected over a short period of time (four weeks), the results were promising. The data showed that 76% of the students increased the number of words written, while decreasing the number of spelling errors. An additional 11% of the students also increased their fluency. Even though their spelling errors increased, the percent of words spelled correctly also increased. Table 2 shows a graphic representation of the results.

TABLE 2
Comparing Fluency and Spelling Errors

Percentage of students	Number of students	Fluency (word count)	Accuracy (% words correct)	Misspelled words	Unidentified errors
76%	42	Increased	Increased	Decreased	Decreased
11%	6	Increased	Increased	Increased	Increased
4%	2	Decreased	Increased	Decreased	Decreased
9%	5	Increased	Decreased	Increased	Increased

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ROW EXPLANATIONS

1. Seventy-six percent of the students wrote more words with greater accuracy, made fewer spelling mistakes, and identified spelling they thought was incorrect.
2. Eleven percent of the students' fluency increased to the point they spelled a higher percentage of words accurately even though there was an increase in misspelled words and unidentified errors.
3. Four percent of the students wrote fewer words, but their accuracy increased because their misspelled words and unidentified errors also decreased.
4. Nine percent of the students showed an increase in fluency, but their accuracy decreased because their misspelled words and unidentified errors also increased.

DISCUSSION

The only instructional difference in the four weeks during which these data were collected was the prompt to circle words they thought were misspelled. When students were reminded of their responsibility to notice misspelled words, they began to spell more words correctly.

Although classroom observations were not part of our original methodology, the teacher-researcher noticed that the students began to pay more attention to their spelling in situations other than the Power Writing prompts. Her observations reinforced our findings. When writing essays or in their journals, the students circled words about which they were unsure even though they were not prompted to do so. Often they would

also get dictionaries off the classroom bookshelves or ask friends to check the spelling after they had finished drafting.

SPELLING RESPONSIBILITY

The majority of students increased both fluency and accuracy in their Power Writing prompts. The teacher-researcher had not admonished students that spelling matters or provided direct spelling instruction. She had not done anything other than directing students to circle words that might be misspelled in Power Writing. Nonetheless, students' writing showed more accurate spelling at the end of the four weeks. Simply knowing that they needed to circle words they were unsure of appeared to make students focus more on correct spelling.

The fact that they started circling misspelled words in their journals and asking peers and their teacher how to spell words throughout the day, suggested that students do care about conventional spelling. They demonstrated awareness that they were responsible for spelling words conventionally.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SPELLING INSTRUCTION

After data were collected and analyzed, the students saw the results. They discussed the idea of a spelling responsibility, and those conversations provided an introduction to more explicit spelling instruction. The author taught them to identify orthographic patterns and to use rhyming, chunking, and sounding out as spelling strategies. Since the direct instruction took less time, the students

had more time to actually write and practice their spelling.

The students practiced the words and spelled them correctly because they were words the class wanted to use in their daily writing. When introduced to a lesson with words the students had circled in their own writing, they paid attention to what she was saying. The students wanted to learn the words, they listened to the instruction, they practiced the words, and they tried to spell the words correctly in journals, class assignments, and notes to each other. Because middle school students want to understand why they need to learn what we teach them (Perlstein, 2003), they responded positively in this study. By explicitly raising their awareness of spelling accuracy, we encouraged them to take responsibility for their own work. Simply making students aware that words have correct and incorrect spellings, and that writers are responsible for knowing them, appeared to improve spelling accuracy. These results hold potential because teachers are consistently asked to do more with less time and fewer resources. Improving students' spelling does not require the purchase of expensive, commercial programs.

The literature on young adolescent development tells us that students need to be vested in their academics if they are to be successful (Wilcox & Angelis, 2010). The students in this study began to take more responsibility for spelling correctly when told it was important to do so.

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FINAL THOUGHTS

It is reasonable to wonder whether students would show similar increases in accuracy over a longer period of time. It is also reasonable to wonder whether students in a regular grade level class would respond as positively. These results hold promise for classroom teachers who find students' spelling performance a compromising factor in writing performance. They suggest that a spelling responsibility does exist and can be influenced. Further

study is needed to see if the results can be replicated with other students and over a longer period of time.

Modern technology has made it easier for students to spell more words correctly. However, students often write without a word processing program or use homophones or other words that are beyond spell check's capacity. They need to be willing and able to recognize misspelled words. Writing is about conveying meaning. Correct spelling

makes that meaning more clear. When words are spelled correctly, readers' sense of text is enhanced. Incorrect spelling, on the other hand, distracts readers from the text's meaning. Too often, readers misunderstand misspelled text or completely abandon it. When that happens, the meaning for which the writing was intended is lost. Yes, spelling counts. And, yes, it appears that a spelling responsibility exists.

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BOOK DESCRIPTION

Preventing Long-Term ELs. Transforming Schools to Meet Core Standards.

Margarita Espino Calderón and Liliana Minaya-Rowe.

Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2010, 176 pages, \$28.95 (paperback).

Margarita Espino Calderón and Liliana Minaya-Rowe make a case for English Learners (ELs) who struggle with English and academic content throughout their school years in *Preventing Long-Term ELs. Transforming Schools to Meet Core Standards* by providing ten evidence-based components for educators to close this achievement gap. The authors articulate an evidence-based professional development program for teaching ELs effectively with step-by-step instructions for integrating language, literacy, and subject matter to improve students' learning throughout their schooling and especially during the critical early years. They examine the key features, benefits or drawbacks of a variety of program types, including dual language and two-way bilingual, transitional, ESL, and structured immersion programs, and propose ways to implement the program while meeting core standards and content objectives.

In Chapter 1, "U.S. Schools are Failing English Learners: A Call for Change," Calderón and Minaya-Rowe condense the state of affairs, the urgency for change, what is already known, and the moral and legal commitments to meet the urgent instructional needs of long-term ELs. The chapter poses an empirically-based theory of action with a focus on quality of instruction and school structures in an age of core standards, globalization, and 21st century skills to

address the achievement gap of ELs so that they graduate and attain career or university goals.

Chapter 2, "Who are the ELs?," describes the range of EL educational backgrounds and provides an exploratory profile that can help schools target the areas for assessment, and the type of instructional intervention most appropriate to their needs. ELs are not a homogeneous group. They differ in various ways, including level of oral English proficiency, literacy and academic ability in both their native language and English, and cultural backgrounds. The chapter also provides tools to inform a school's improvement planning for educators to learn about their students and to implement its own theory of change.

The chapter "Tools For Schools --The Framework for Preventing Long-Term ELs" presents ten components or factors of quality instruction, professional development, and school structures for effective schooling for ELs and school success. They are: school structures; language, literacy, and subject domain instructional components; equitable materials in the ELs' first and second languages; comprehensive professional development; leadership; parent/family support teams; tutoring; benchmark assessments; coaching of teachers; and monitoring implementation. The chapter also sets the groundwork for the most

basic feature: extensive professional development which consists of intensive training, follow-up coaching, refresher workshops, and observation protocols to measure fidelity of implementation affecting student performance.

Chapter 4, titled "Instructional Program Options for ELs" proposes ways to ensure that ELs not only become proficient in English, but that they also have the content knowledge they need to succeed in school and in life. The program options offer ELs bilingual or monolingual English instruction. Programs that offer instruction in two languages include: transitional bilingual, maintenance or dual language; and, two-way bilingual instruction. Programs that instruct ELs in English include: pull-out English as a second language/bilingual; push-in ESL/bilingual; structured English immersion; English immersion; sheltered English instruction; and integrated language literacy and content instruction by all mainstream teachers in middle and high schools. Programs provide for the language and academic development students need to succeed in school and be part of the global skills race. Program options are listed, along with key features/descriptors, their benefits and potential drawbacks.

The next chapter, "Closing ELs' Vocabulary Gap with High-Quality Instruction" is the first of four chapters

(Continued on Page 12)

that cover characteristics of high quality instruction in depth. Vocabulary is the first important steps toward school success for ELs and other students. Past research and recent studies form the basic premises of the vocabulary instruction that has helped many ELs and struggling students accelerate their English learning and academic success regardless of the language of instruction. The chapter goes beyond “just word teaching” by wrapping words around socio-linguistic features such as syntax/grammar, morphology, phonetics, semantics and pragmatics.

The chapter “Up to Par with Reading in the Content Areas” continues to articulate the characteristics of high quality instruction and highlights key features of reading comprehension and gaps that need to be addressed at K-12 grades for low-level readers, as well as instructional strategies and lesson application for higher order reading processes. These strategies and processes help ELs make it in a schooling system that may be new to them. The chapter describes strategies from how to explicitly teach the simplest book conventions and concepts of print to the more sophisticated strategies of selecting key information, organizing and mentally summarizing information. The chapter suggests ways to incorporate reading in the content areas for ELs into school improvement plans with five steps for language and literacy development.

Chapter 7, titled “Writing Strategies in the Content Areas for ELs,” is based on recent meta-analyses of research on writing. It emphasizes content specific reading and writing practices

to bridge ELs’ reading comprehension levels, build background and strengthen English proficiency. The chapter provides learning-to-write and writing-to-learn recommendations on how to adapt 11 different models of writing for ELs. Our recommendations are based on teacher adaptations and results on their ELs writing outcomes.

The chapter “Engaging ELs via Cooperative Learning and Classroom Management” sets the stage for ensuring ample EL interaction that leads to more practice of academic language, reading comprehension, and learning of content. Cooperative learning environments motivate students and cultivate intellectual development, college preparation, and career development. The chapter describes a myriad of cooperative learning strategies, how to set up and facilitate class management under low-anxiety situations, student responsibility for staying on task, and learning the assignments in a positive classroom climate.

Chapter 9, “Race to the Top: What Administrators Need to Do,” just as the next two chapters, focuses on the leadership’s role. As schools race to become great schools (with or without specific funding), the administrator at the helm needs as much support and tools as teachers do. The authors focus on ways for school leaders to become continuous learners and motivators. It offers tips to turn the school improvement plan from an “everything” agenda to student (long-term ELs) agenda. At the heart of the School Improvement Plan is improved and ongoing professional development.

Chapter 10, “How a Middle School went from Reconstituted to Highest Performing in Two Years,” written by an exemplary principal, describes his entry into creating a context of success for his teachers and students and whole school efforts year after year. He narrates how he brought his urban school the ingredients for student achievement and success on a sustained basis. He offers recommendations for sustainability by creating an ExC-ELL school culture based on his walk-through/instructional rounds, observations, discussions and analyses of teaching and learning.

Chapter 11, “Systemic School Reform: Partnering to Ensure EL Success,” written by a superintendent of a large school district, poses priorities for organizational challenges with a focus on what matters most to close the achievement gap: quality of instruction. He offers recommendations for comprehensive and collaborative systemic changes that are student-centered and meet the district’s mission and vision.

In the concluding chapter, “Long-Term English Learners and Core Standards,” the authors capture the essence of this book and address the myths that keep the implementation of the Core Standards to a minimum. It poses “reality” responses with specific recommendations for challenging, rigorous, yet sensitive classroom instruction at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. They are supported by structures and services to accomplish the standards using the 10 features of school success and fidelity of implementation.

Call For Manuscripts

Research in Middle Level Education Online

Research in Middle Level Education Online is an international peer-reviewed research journal published by National Middle School Association. It publishes quantitative and qualitative studies, case studies, action research studies, research syntheses, integrative reviews, and interpretations of research literature. NMSA's Research Advisory Board provides guidance for the publication. Issues of RMLE Online, members of the NMSA Research Advisory Board and a listing of the editorial review board are available at www.nmsa.org

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Manuscripts, including references, range from 25 to 40 double-spaced pages. Tables and figures should be placed at the end of text.

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The text and references should be double-spaced with 1" wide margins in 12-point font. Authors need to

- Follow the 6th edition of Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association.
- Include a 150-200 word abstract.

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The Middle Level Education Research Special Interest Group of the American Educational Research Association endorses RMLE Online.



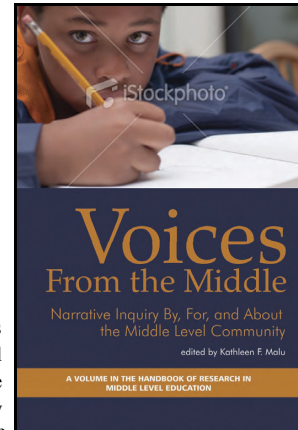
New Book Information

Voices from the Middle: Narrative Inquiry By, For and About the Middle Level Community

Edited by **Kathleen F. Malu**, *William Paterson University of New Jersey*

A volume in *The Handbook of Research in Middle Level Education* series
(Sponsored by the Middle Level Education Research Special Interest Group
and the National Middle School Association)

The need for continued research at the middle level is clear and urgent. The previous volumes in this *Handbook* series testify to this urgency. While quantitative studies continue to be essential, there is a critical need to understand the complexities of the middle level community. One way to capture the rich, diverse mosaic of the voices and experiences of middle level participants and stakeholders is to use narrative inquiry methodology. The intent of this volume in *The Handbook* is to give voice to and broaden our understanding of the wide variety of participants and stakeholders who weave through the middle level. Such participants and stakeholders may include middle level teachers, school psychologists and counselors, students, parents, administrators, middle level researchers, research foundations, and community groups. In addition to hearing directly from these groups, this volume will focus on the intricate webs, connections and questions that these narratives hold and frame them within current middle level research, theory, and practice. Ultimately this volume will highlight the nuance, diversity and future directions that research may need to explore.



CONTENTS: Preface, *Stefinee Pinnegar and Cheryl Craig*. Introduction: Narratives in the Middle, *Kathleen F. Malu*. Walking in the "Swampy Lowlands": What It Means to be a Middle Level Narrative Inquirer, *Jeong-Hee Kim*. The Lived Experiences of Middle School English Language Learners: Shifting Identities Between Classrooms, *Bogum Yoon*. Xavier and the Bully Box: Immigrant Adolescent Girls in a Bully-Free World, *Cathy Coulter*. It's Not Black and White: Stories of Lived Experience, Reading, and Assessments, *Susan V. Piazza*. Adolescent Readers' Voices, *Carole S. Rhodes*. From Loathing to Love: Sandy's Reading Journey, *Mary Beth Schaefer*. "This is the Way it is:" The Experiences of Preservice Middle School Teachers Integrating Instruction With High Stakes Test Preparation, *Steven L. Turner*. Reclaiming Camelot: Capturing the Reflections of Exemplary, Veteran Middle School Teachers in an Age of High Stakes Testing and Accountability Through Narrative Inquiry, *Nancy Fichtman Dana, Darby Claire Delane, and Paul George*. Teaching to the Middle in Australia: Four Teachers Tell Their Stories, *Nan Bahr and Donna Pendergast*. Reflections on Shared Middle Level Experiences: A Case Study, *Shirley M. Matteson, Richard M. Fletcher, Tamera Tidwell, and Doris I. Garrett*. The Middle Level Literacy Coach: Navigating Multiple Roles in Context, *Anthony T. Smith*. Middle Level Education Through the Window of a Writer's Workshop: Developmentally Responsive Education, *Rita S. Brause*. Can a K-8 School Address the Needs of Adolescents? *Nancy Bell Ruppert*. "Sit Tight": The Uneasy Alliance Between Freedom and Control in a Middle School Classroom, *Ruth Vinz*. Parent Involvement and Student Success: Black and White in the Middle, *Kathleen F. Malu*. Locating an Authorial Voice: Engaging a School Reform Debate Through the Roles of Mother, Teacher, Community Member, and University Professor, *Cynthia C. Reyes*. The Family Learning Institute: Committed to Improving the Reading Skills of Middle Level Learners, *Denise L. McLurkin*. Recommendations and Resources for Narrative Inquiry and Research, *Kathleen F. Malu*. About the Authors.

Publication Date: 2010

ISBNs:

Paperback: 978-1-61735-177-8

Hardcover: 978-1-61735-178-5

E-Book: 978-1-61735-179-2

Price:

Paperback: \$39.99

Hardcover: \$73.99

Trim Size: 6 X 9

Subject:

Education, Middle Level Education,
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