

MLER Middle Level Education Research Special Interest Group

# The Chronicle of Middle Level Education Research

# MLER

MIDDLE LEVEL EDUCATION RESEARCH  
SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

## Message from the Chair

### Points of Interest:

- MLER-SIG Business Meeting Minutes
- Requests for Manuscripts
- AERA 2011 Conference Information
- Executive Advisor Report

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I'm happy to report that our Middle Level Education Research SIG continues to be prolific in its mission to improve, promote, and disseminate educational research on early adolescence and middle level education. In November, we had a strong presence at the National Middle School Association's conference. Many MLER SIG members presented their work and we enjoyed a strong turnout for our SIG business meeting. The minutes of that meeting are featured later in this publication. You'll see in those notes that our officers, council members, and five working groups have been very productive, focusing on expanding SIG awards and

recognition; growing our leadership opportunities; and continuing an impressive publication agenda, among other tasks.

As we continue into 2011, please join me in thanking our Program Chair, Dr. Steven Mertens, who has put together a vibrant program of MLER SIG sessions for AERA's annual meeting. Many of us will gather in New Orleans, Louisiana from Friday, April 8 through Tuesday, April 12 to share our research, focusing on the theme of "*Inciting the Social Imagination: Education Research for the Public Good.*" Steve did an outstanding job assembling the review panel, (Continued on page 5)

## Penny Bishop

University of Vermont



## RMLE Online Call for Manuscripts

The editor of *Research in Middle Level Education Online* is seeking manuscripts concerning quantitative and qualitative research studies, case studies, action research studies, as well as research syntheses.

*RMLE Online* is an international, peer-reviewed research journal published by the National Middle School Association.

Guidelines for Contributors, a listing of the Editorial Review Board, and past issues of

*RMLE Online* are available at [www.nmsa.org](http://www.nmsa.org).

Please submit manuscripts and related documents via email to Micki M. Caskey, Editor, at [caskeym@pdx.edu](mailto:caskeym@pdx.edu)

## RMLE Online

Research in Middle Level Education

## Report from the AERA Program Chair for AERA 2011 - New Orleans

Steve Mertens

Illinois State University

We have a very exciting program scheduled for AERA New Orleans. This year the SIG received 38 proposal submissions and one proposal for a symposium. Based on our membership numbers, AERA allotted the SIG with one paper session, two roundtable sessions, two symposia, and one business meeting. Therefore, we were able to accept a total of 15 papers, in addition to the two symposia; this gave us a respectable acceptance rate of

39% for the 2011 program.

Our paper session, *Leadership, Decision Making, and School Improvement in Middle Level Schools*, was allotted a two-hour block enabling us to include five papers. Our two roundtable sessions, (1) *Concerns and Issues in Young Adolescent Development* and (2) *Varying Literacies in Educating Today's Young Adolescents*,

each include five papers. Additionally, we have two symposia this year, (1) *Middle School Teachers Listen to Students as Part of Professional Development and Teacher Education* and (2) *The National Project on Middle Level Common Planning Time: Emergent Research*.

Information about each session (day, time, location, and links to individual sessions) has already been emailed to the SIG membership. If you did not receive this information, please contact Steve Mertens.

## NEWS FROM THE EXECUTIVE ADVISOR

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

I wanted to take this opportunity to provide some information regarding the moratorium on SIGs that has been in effect since June 2009 and will continue until June 30, 2011. By way of context, there are currently 185 SIGs that comprise AERA with about 45% of AERA's membership belonging to one or more SIGs. SIGs were first introduced into AERA in 1967 and by 1973 there were 43 SIGs.

Issues related to SIGs have appeared and reappeared since SIGs were created. Such issues revolve around minimum number of members, session allocation at the annual meeting, and other governance related matters dealing with SIG bylaws, length of term of

officers, AERA membership of SIG members, election procedures, and the like.

As the AERA SIG Executive Committee engages in the data collection efforts to help address the current issues and provide a report to the AERA Executive Council, many of you responded to a survey (*SIG Membership Feedback Survey*) about SIGs that was administered via SurveyMonkey immediately before, and after, the 2010 AERA annual meeting. Thanks, if you provided your data.

It is interesting to note that SIGs that are below 100 members, on the average, receive only about 10.5 proposal submissions. The range of the number of proposals for these SIGs is from 0 to 34. It is also important to note that some

very large SIGs with membership numbers in the 300s are receiving as few as 50 and as many as 150 proposals for review. According to 2010 data, the MLER SIG with 185 members received 37 proposals for review. While it would be great to receive more proposals for review, we are certainly doing well with proposal submissions.

As of this time, 14 SIGs have not submitted their revised bylaws. These "delinquent" SIGs range in size from 41 to 385 members. A small number of SIGs are having difficulty in adjusting to the new AERA election procedures with electronic voting and at least two nominees for each vacant position being elected. The MLER SIG was one of the  
(Continued on page 4)

## MLER SIG Officers

**Penny Bishop, Chair**  
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penny.bishop@uvm.edu

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**Micki Caskey, Immediate Past Chair & Webmaster**  
Portland State University  
caskeym@pdx.edu

**Vincent A. Anfara, Jr., Executive Advisor**  
University of Tennessee Knoxville  
vanfara@utk.edu

### SIG Association Council Members

**Tariq Akmal (2010-12)**  
Washington State University

**Kenneth Anderson (2010-12)**  
Howard University

**Karen Bostick Frederick (2009-11)**  
University of Nebraska Kearney

**Donald Hackmann (2009-11)**  
University of Illinois

**Kezia McNeal Curry (2009-11)**  
University of Hawaii

**Molly Mee (2010-12)**  
Towson University

**Nicole Miller (2009-11)**  
Graduate Student  
Mississippi State University

# NMSA 2010 Annual Conference MLER-SIG Business Meeting Notes

November 5, 2010 - Baltimore, Maryland

Cynthia Reyes, University of Vermont

**Penny's Welcome and an Overview of the Agenda:** Contributions and kudos to the past leadership of MLER SIG. Explanation of the different working groups: strategic planning, outreach, recognition, leadership development and publication. Penny highlighted the upcoming elections

**Executive Advisor Report (Vince Anfar)**  
Vince's term ends in AERA, New Orleans, 2011. There is currently a moratorium on SIGs. The moratorium is based on a few SIGs that have not followed the by-laws. Vince is currently actively serving on an AERA leadership committee that oversees the governance of SIGs. Our SIG membership is around 200. Our SIG is in good standing with AERA; for example, it revised and returned the by-laws by the first round.

MLER SIG has received compliments from previous leaderships in the field and the website is considered one of the best. Currently, Vince's committee is reviewing the surveys on SIGs. They are also reviewing the connections between SIGs and Divisions – issues with size where a SIG is larger than a division.

Handbook series: George Johnson is publisher of Information Age Publishing. George contacted Vince in 2000 to talk about publishing a series of handbooks. As of

today, 8 have been published and 1 encyclopedia. About a week ago, Kathy Malu edited the last handbook, an exploration of the methods of narrative. The main part of the title is "Voices from the Middle: Narrative Inquiry By, For and About the Middle Level Community."

**Treasurer's Report (Shawn Faulkner)**  
Currently, the SIG has a balance of \$4,007.93, which includes an itemized list. Vince clarified one item on the budget \$750, which was paid to CPRD from the University of Illinois, related to Phase II data collection.

**Program Chair Report (Steve Mertens)**  
Steve gave an overview of the MLER SIG @ AERA 2011 submissions—there were 38 proposal and 1 symposium submissions. 15 papers were accepted with an acceptance rate of 36%. Some SIGs have an acceptance rate of 90% or above, but our submissions reflect a good, healthy competition. The program consists of 1 paper session, 2 roundtable sessions, 2 symposia, and 1 business meeting. Steve highlighted AERA's attempt to privilege poster sessions and the roundtable. He also discussed the rationale for not offering a poster session at AERA this year (It might not be seen by tenure committees as valuable as the roundtable/paper sessions), and the point system breakdown.

Someone asked if this formula was still driven by numbers that participate in the SIG. Steve clarified that we lost one session. AERA makes its decisions after looking at membership total and the number of submission of proposals. Submissions are down this year. We will once again remind members to submit proposals. Membership generally occurs in January.

Steve went over the Paper Sessions and the Program Reviewers (Provided in the PowerPoint slide portion of the Business Meeting)

Program reviewers reviewed 10 or more papers. A question was raised on the absence of discussants for the two symposia. Steve emphasized the challenge of asking a member to read, review and then discuss a number of 5 papers.

**Working Groups Report: Nominations (Chris Cook)**  
At present there are 3 council seats available and 1 graduate student seat. We need a total of 6 nominees according to the bylaws, in addition to two graduate students. Chris talked about the value of being part of this SIG and the value of service on the tenure papers is important. Please send nominations to Chris Cook (Cookc2@nku.edu) or Penny Bishop ([pbishop@uvm.edu](mailto:pbishop@uvm.edu))

**Outreach (Molly Mee)**  
Purpose of the committee is

up to our membership. This group will be setting its priorities to retain current members, promote our SIG, and to involve more graduate students. One goal is to find out how many grad students we already have. We have 185 current members, 39 new, 104 lapsed members. We hope to create a SIG advertisement flyer to distribute, as well as social networking options. Is there a reduced membership rate for graduate students? Yes, a considerable discount rate for AERA membership for grad students.

**Leadership Development (Kenneth Anderson)**  
Looks at opportunities of mentoring and pairing a veteran mentor and new scholar.

**Publications (Chris Cook)**  
There are 3 outlets that are available for us as SIG members: Handbook Series, a publication that parallels the Common Planning Time project, Phase II, and the Chronicle that comes out three times a year with a peer-reviewed article. Submissions should be sent to Chris Cook (cookc2@nku.edu). Comes out in January, June and October. Please send literature reviews, etc. Also mentioned the RMLE (Research in the Middle Level Education Online), which is edited by Karen Swanson. The question was raised about how many submissions have been sent to the Chronicle. For the Handbook, Vince noted the 8 handbooks and described  
(Continued on page 5)

## NEWS FROM EXECUTIVE ADVISOR (Continued)

*(Continued from page 2)*  
first to submit its revised bylaws and these have been approved by AERA Executive Council and our membership in last year's election process administered through AERA.

Looking at graduate student membership provides some noteworthy information. Graduate students comprise from 4.17% to 63.11% of a SIG's total membership. The MLER SIG is currently at 16.22% student membership with 30 out of 185 total members being graduate students.

I hope you have taken the opportunity to register for AERA 2011. I am a member of the Program Planning Committee and there are some great sessions being planned for New Orleans that focus on Katrina and its effects on the local school system—both PK-12 and higher education.

Recently you received an email about registering as a reviewer for AERA 2012. I know our program Chair, Dr. Steve Mertens, would be grateful if you would register to serve the SIG in this capacity.

As they say in New Orleans, laissez les bon temps rouler! "Let the good times roll!"

See you in the hometown!

Vince



## Save the Date!

### 38th Annual National Middle School Association Conference

November 10-12, 2011  
Louisville, Kentucky

<http://www.nmsa.org/annual/>

## 2011 AERA CONFERENCE MLER SIG SESSIONS

### Friday, April 8, 2011

**2:15-3:45** - Sheraton, Grand Ballroom D  
*Concerns and Issues in Young Adolescent Development*

**Participants:** Lisa Harrison, Kathleen Malu, Erika Daniels, Cheryl Rose Ellerbrock, Sarah Kiefer, Hilary Hughes  
**Chair:** Nan Bahr

**6:15-7:45** - Sheraton, Rhythms Ballroom II  
*MLER SIG Business Meeting*

### Saturday, April 9, 2011

**12:25-1:55** - Sheraton, Bayside B  
*National Common Planning Time Project: Emerging Results from Phase II*

**Participants:** Steve Mertens, Nancy Flowers, Vince Anfara, Micki Caskey, Molly Mee, Heather Rogers Haverback, Chris Cook, Lenore Kinne, Shawn Faulkner

### Sunday, April 10, 2011

**10:35-12:05** - Sheraton, Grand Ballroom D  
*Varying Literacies in Educating Today's Young Adolescents*

**Participants:** Jenna Bachinski, Melissa Mitchell, Amy Hoffman, Mark Storz, Jennifer Wilson, John Robertson, Clayton Leishman, Jennifer Wimmer, Carol Gilles, Danielle Johnson, Joanne Smith, Yang Wang

**Chair:** Cynthia Reyes

### Sunday, April 10, 2011 (Continued)

**12:25—1:55** - Sheraton, Rhythms Ballroom II

*Middle School Teachers Listen to Students as Part of Professional Development & Teacher Education*

**Participants:** John Downes, Kathleen Brinegar, Regina Toolin, Daniel Sithole, James Nagle

**Chair:** Penny Bishop

**Discussant:** Christopher Harris

### Monday, April 11, 2011

**8:15-10:15** - Sheraton, Bayside C  
*Leadership, Decision Making, and School Improvement*

**Participants:** J. Patrick Grenda, Donald Hackmann, Ginger Mink Teague, Vincent Anfara, Nicole Wilson, Cherie Barnett Gaines, Jennifer Beavers, Victoria Henley, Dana Bickmore, Mark van't Hooft, Karen Swan, Phillip Vahey, Dale Cook, Annette Kratcoski, Ken Rafanan, Tina Stanford, Louise Yarnall, Jerry Valentine, Justin Collins

**Chair:** Penny Howell

**Discussants:** Mickey Fenzel & Mark Vagle



## Message from the Chair (continued)

*(Continued from page 1)*  
managing the entire review process, and developing the program, which includes two paper sessions, two roundtables, one symposium and one business meeting. Thanks are also due to the many reviewers who spent time thoughtfully critiquing proposals, the individuals who submitted their work for consideration, and those who offered to serve as chairs and discussants. A listing of all sessions appears in this issue of the Chronicle.

One of the presentations at AERA 2011 will feature the National Middle Grades Research Program. The MLER SIG launched this ongoing and successful program in 2006 in order to

develop a national database on middle-grades education issues for research. Now in Phase II, the program has prepared researchers to conduct teacher surveys about CPT practices, benefits, outcomes, and its impact on students and teachers. Thanks to Steve Mertens, SIG Program Chair; Vince Anfara, SIG Executive Advisor; Micki Caskey, SIG Past-Chair; and Nancy Flowers, of the Center for Prevention Research and Development, for their invaluable leadership of this phase. Please visit our SIG website to learn more about the CPT project and about how to propose similar middle grades research projects that are national or international in scope.

As we look ahead, another exciting SIG initiative is our increasing focus on mentoring graduate students. Our Leadership Development Working Group is in the midst of creating an informal mentorship program, designed to link graduate students with veteran scholars in middle grades education research. Keep your eyes out for an upcoming email providing more details on how you can get involved! We will also post the information on our website: [www.rmle.pdx.edu](http://www.rmle.pdx.edu).

In closing, please note that AERA's 2011 election was recently completed. On the ballot were candidates for AERA officers, a proposed amendment of AERA bylaws, and candidates for council

member positions in our Middle Level Education Research SIG. I hope you took the opportunity to vote.

Hope to see many of you in New Orleans! Please stop by to say hello and make plans to attend the MLER SIG business meeting.

Warm regards,  
Penny Bishop

## MLER SIG Business Meeting Minutes (Continued)

*(Continued from page 3)*  
how the call is always sent out, yet the call is never sufficient enough to make a book.

### Recognition (Shawn Faulkner)

This group is responsible for taking care of awards we use to recognize members. The two awards our SIG presents at AERA include a graduate student award and the Lipka Lifetime Achievement award. Nominees for the Lipka award is open until Dec. 31<sup>st</sup> and the criteria is on the MLER website. We've had opportunity to submit an additional award for research. Shawn is requesting for more input from the members. Should the award be for a

significant piece of scholarly work or should it be an award for a significant body of work in middle level education research? He would like some input before they approach the AERA for application of this new award. The possibility of numbering citations was mentioned. But there is an issue that not all citations are reflected in the middle level education journals.

A question was raised about using one or both. Lipka mentioned an example of a piece of work that changed the character of a field, which was actually a dissertation. Lipka stressed the importance of keeping

open to this type of significant research that changes the direction of a field, albeit a single piece. What criteria will we use to qualify a good piece of research? Vince stressed the rationale for offering this third award. Originally, they wanted to recognize a member of the SIG who has contributed a piece of significant research.

Could we examine the criteria of the Palmer Johnson award and to see whether it makes sense? We could also pull together criteria from different research committees in other organizations that have these criteria (Example: teacher research award, National Council of Teachers of English). It was suggested

that we look at the general patterns of criteria.

### Companion Series (Steve Mertens)

Over the past couple of years, there have been proposals sent to the Handbook that were more practice-related and therefore they brainstormed the idea of creating a parallel series. There is a book that has been submitted on the origins of the founding fathers and mothers of middle level education, but did not seem appropriate for the Handbook of Research Series. There was mention of a collaboration of the SIG with NAPOMLE and this special Handbook could  
*(Continued on page 6)*

## Send In Your News!

Please send any items, announcements, or information you would like to have considered for publication in the *Chronicle of Middle Level Education Research* to Chris Cook at [cookc2@nku.edu](mailto:cookc2@nku.edu)

The Newsletter is published three times annually – Spring, Summer, & Fall.

**We're on the Web!**  
<http://www.rmle.pdx.edu/index.html>



The purpose of the MLER SIG is to improve, promote, and disseminate educational research reflecting early adolescence and middle level education.

Membership in the MLER-SIG connects AERA members who are committed to research issues related to young adolescents. SIG members exchange information and ideas through Annual Meeting presentations, newsletters, and informal gatherings.

Membership cost is \$15/year. The MLER-SIG (#88) is listed on the third page of the AERA Membership Application Form.

## MLER SIG Business Meeting Minutes (Continued)

*Continued from page 5)*

also be an outlet for this kind of research. Vincent shared the current experience in Pennsylvania where middle level education was recently created. He stressed the advantage that this type of Handbook/book could have had for administrators and teachers in Pennsylvania who were creating courses, syllabi, and other materials for a licensure program in middle level education, as well as a valuable resource for us all.

Is there a risk of melding both practice and research? One of the criticisms that we in education receive is the separation between research and practice. Tariq mentioned that in our conference today, NMSA has been asked policy questions by the federal government. As a SIG we should strive to collaborate with the National Forum to accelerate Middle Level Education research. Steve and Nancy Flowers were also invited to present on Common Planning Time.

Closer connection to NAPOMLE – this resource Handbook would be a good connection to NAPOMLE. Mentioned the website at North Carolina that reflected the same kind of resources that we describe with this new Handbook.

### **John Niska**

#### **(Outgoing President – NAPOMLE)**

Described the work that NAPOMLE has been doing and efforts to honor John Lounsbury via the Legacy Project. May 18-20 is set aside to honor significant figures. The Southern Group has had their regional conference (from 15 states). John received positive feedback about joining NAPOMLE to the beginning of the NMSA conference. There will be more advertisement the next year. They have been concerned with the visibility of their organization and they integrated the new awards, which will bring more visibility. They welcome

the collaboration with MLER SIG.

### **NAPOMLE Executive Board Officers**

<http://napomle.org/board.html>

Current President: Nancy Ruppert, UNC Asheville

Past President: John Niska, Rhode Island College

Treasurer: Calevin Meyer, Morehead State University

Secretary: Anita Dutrow, Presbyterian College

### **National Middle Grades Research Program (Steve Mertens)**

Update on Phase I (finished in December). Creating an online training for Phase II. An article in May 2009 was published on the common planning time. An article is currently being submitted to an AERA journal with the purpose of highlighting the SIG. Submitted an application to AERA to create a common planning time meeting anchored to the NMSA conference in Louisville, KY next year. If accepted, they will be able to use funds to bring together the folks who were instrumental to the phase I and II of the project.

### **Greetings from the NMSA Board of Trustees**

#### **(Tariq Akmal)**

Tariq brought greetings from the Board of Trustees. Please bring issues or questions to Tariq, so he can bring them to the board. He also encourages members to run for the board, and he talks about the collaboration that the Board would like to further establish with NMSA.

### **Next Business Meeting**

AERA Annual Conference

New Orleans, LA

Friday, April 8, 2011

Sheraton, Rhythms Ballroom II

6:15pm - 7:45pm

*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 spring, summer, and fall. 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.

Manuscripts should (a) be approximately 2,500 words in length; (b) be double-spaced with 1-inch margins in 12-point font; (c) follow the 6th Edition of *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2001) style guide; and (d) 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 Chris Cook at [cookc2@nku.edu](mailto:cookc2@nku.edu)

For additional information, please contact:  
Chris M. Cook, Editor  
Chronicle of Middle Level Education Research  
[cookc2@nku.edu](mailto:cookc2@nku.edu)

## Note from the Editor

I hope everyone is enjoying the new year and preparing for a relaxing spring break. As many will notice, this edition of the *Chronicle* does not include a peer-reviewed piece. As the new editor of the *Chronicle*, I wanted to take this opportunity to highlight the intention of the peer-reviewed section of the *Chronicle* and encourage you to submit your work for consideration. This section serves as an excellent opportunity to highlight the research being conducted in the field of middle grades education, as well as recognize the research contributions of our MLER SIG members. It is the goal of the MLER SIG that this section will become another valuable outlet to improve, promote, and disseminate educational research. In order to accomplish this task, it is important to get the word out about this publishing opportunity. Please consider submitting your work and sharing this opportunity with your colleagues and graduate students.

Thanks.  
Chris M. Cook