



February 2012

Dear Colleagues,

I have three pieces of information. First, an update from Al Seed on the May Symposium. He is calling for more proposals. I have attached proposal and registration forms. Second, in the next few weeks you will be receiving a newsletter from John Lounsbury and his team of colleagues at Georgia College providing information and activities going on around the country regarding middle level education. I have shared the opening piece to this important document. It provides a compilation of multiple constituents, their activities, and their commitment to middle level education. Third, we are looking to our future and need your feedback and input on how to create more opportunities to collaborate and communicate. Will Waidelich, AMLE Executive Director, asked if we would like to have a symposium at the AMLE conference in Portland. Your feedback is requested via surveymonkey.org.

Part I: Memphis Symposium Update

We are looking for more proposals for the May Symposium in Memphis. **The deadline is March 1.** We are looking at adding workshops to identify Speakers for AMLE leaders to come give a session.

Part of the registration fee includes a tour of Graceland or a tour of Memphis. It is the 100th anniversary of the University of Memphis and we are very pleased to celebrate their roots as a Normal School and their support of this symposium. So, it is time to talk to your colleagues, talk at your state conferences, through your newsletters, and listserves to bring people to Memphis May 14-16. The registration and call for proposals is attached to the newsletter.

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Part II: The Georgia College Symposium Continuation...

John Lounsbury, Nancy Mizelle, Karynne Kleine, Dan Bauer, and Joanne Previts, have been working to compile a digest of news and views that have transpired since last May. It is quite impressive. They will be sending it to us by mail within the next two weeks. I asked if I could give the opening statements to give you an idea of what it includes and they are thrilled with

the product. We are very excited about this direction of communication and collaboration. Congratulations on the great work.

A Good Year for the Middle School?

Are the stars finally lining up? Have there been enough recent events and actions, enough on-going or planned activities, research reports, and special projects to constitute that “critical mass” said to be needed for significant change to occur? There is good reason to think that 2012 might, indeed, be a good year for the middle school. Consider these items

1. 21st Century Skills have taken center stage and “everybody” is endorsing them as critical for today’s global citizens. And even though often presented as if they had just been discovered, these skills are exactly ones the middle school concept has been promoting “forever,” including working together as part of a team, problem solving, critical thinking, and creativity.
2. The Middle Level Education Legacy Project persevered and now has brought to light and new life our rich history, particularly in, *The Legacy of Middle School Leaders: In Their Own Words*.
3. The very active Middle Level Special Interest Group of the American Educational Research Association, with close ties to AMLE, has advanced research efforts considerably. Its members have gained places at the table of nationally recognized researchers.
4. NMSA, now AMLE, not only survived the recession but came out a leaner, cleaner organization ready to actively be the national voice for young adolescents.
5. NASSP, likewise, with a recognized middle school expert heading its middle level activities, is a positive and active force.
6. The National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform with its expanding Schools to Watch Program is playing a key role in reform efforts.
7. The National Professors of Middle Level Education (NaPOMLE) has grown in numbers. Its importance to the future of the Middle School concept cannot be overstated as is true of CLMA.
8. The Collegiate Middle Level Association (CLMA) has become a critical force. Large numbers of its members from various campus chapters attending the annual conference have given us all a lift and is optimistic for the future. (needed a space between the words)
9. ASCD has circulated a petition with 25,000 signatures to the Obama administration calling for a President’s Council on the Whole Child.
10. The U.S. Department of Education has all but acknowledged the failure of the NCLB Act and has taken steps to revamp it in less restrictive ways.
11. The Southern Regional Education Board has issued a new report on the middle school.
12. The former First Lady, Laura Bush, is heading an initiative “Middle School Matters.”

There are other specific happenings that might well be noted, but a dozen is sufficient to make evident there is good reason to believe “middle school” will be a top item on many agendas in the months ahead. Serious consideration of the fundamental flaws in current reform efforts will

be acknowledged and will open the door for the middle school concept to be examined. It is important to note the groups identified above all spoke of their interest in collaborating. As you examine the materials contained in this document, I'll be surprised if you don't come away with a sense that better days are ahead for the middle school- and with a personal commitment to take some action to bring the new day about.

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Part III: It is time to start recognizing good work and thinking about the forthcoming AMLE conferences. As you know, NaPOMLE celebrates the good work of its members, middle school programs, and CMLA groups. If there are programs and people you would like to recognize, please send information to Betty Dore.

On a second note, I received an email from AMLE Executive Director Will Waidelich asking for input into the annual conferences in Portland and Minneapolis. He is asking if we would like to have a **Middle Level Professors Symposium at the 39th Annual Conference in Portland and/or the 40th Annual Conference in Minneapolis?** I have set up a survey monkey to gather your feedback. The survey is <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/QY3MVH5> . If you have additional feedback, let me know.

Thanks and have a peaceful spring. It has been a pleasure being your president. (:

Nancy