



Message from the President . . .

As I sit down to write this report I cannot help but think of all of our members (and those good teachers yet to join the Association) who work so hard to bring the best teaching and learning practices to their classrooms. I wonder if it has been as much of a struggle for them as it often has been for me as I have tried to explain to others what middle schooling means... I really believe that the International Conference planned for May next year will do much to raise awareness and clear up misconceptions of what middle schooling means. Meaning, motivation and management are crucial concepts in middle schooling. I have heard others remark that middle schooling strategies are really just good teaching practice and that they can be applied to any age group. I would agree up to a point, but I do believe the middle years are particular and therefore we need to cater for these students in particular ways.

In my last report I asked readers to consider their philosophical beliefs; those ideas which underpin their work in the classroom. In this report I would like to focus on learning communities.

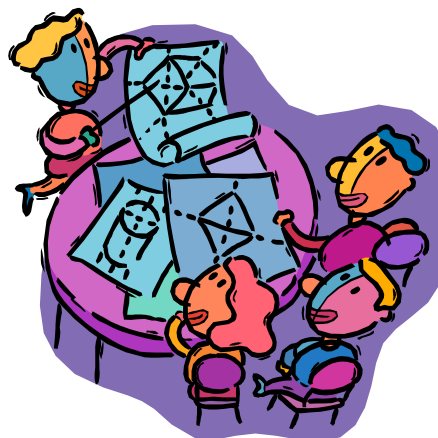
In 1989 the Carnegie Corporation's Council on Adolescent Development issued *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century*. In this document eight core principles of middle years education were outlined. These principles apply equally to young people anywhere in the world. I would like to choose one particular principle cited in this document which is, I believe, the key to all the others and to a successful middle schooling education. We need to "create small personalised communities for learning". These can be created in a purpose-built middle school or in a traditional high school: the physical surroundings are not paramount to fostering community. It is the relationships which are developed between students, between teachers and between students and teachers which build a learning community. What is specific about the middle years that is different from other years is the amount of physical, emotional and intellectual changes that are occurring to young adolescents. We have a tremendous opportunity to guide these young people as they lose their "L" plates and move on to be empowered, competent learners ready for senior school. How does your community shape up?

The conference committee have been working hard to bring the international middle schooling conference - such a momentous event - to the West. Can we count on your support?

Looking forward to catching up with you on 3 August for our fantastic PD, *Numeracy Across the Curriculum*. This PD is being presented by Paul Swan (President of MAWA) and Mark O'Brien and it has relevance for all learning areas. Afternoon tea will be provided. After the PD we will be providing wine and nibbles, before the commencement of the AGM.

Christine Lee

The editors invite you to respond to the generalist versus specialist teacher debate. See our first contributions on pp 2 - 3.



Special Points of Interest:

- **President's Address**
- **Pedagogic Transformation within a Middle School Reform Initiative, a case study. Read the full transcript on the e-publications section of our website.**
- **A request for help from Middle School Team Leaders.**
- **(Very) interesting websites.**
- **Generalist v Specialist teachers in the Middle School. Have your say!**
- **AGM information - put 3rd August in your diary now ...!**
- **Another fantastic PD brought to you by your committee - Numeracy Across the Middle School Curriculum. Book early to avoid disappointment—3 August before the AGM.**

Exciting news about the International Middle Schooling Conference - motivation, meaning & management in the middle years - which MSAWA will be hosting *here* in Perth from 13 - 15 May 2006. We can now confirm that the two keynote speakers will be Professor James Beane and Dr Robin Fogarty. Please see the enclosed 'Call for Papers and Presenters' brochure for details about these outstanding presenters.

We hope your school will take the opportunity to be involved in the conference and that many of our members will attend.

This survey on this important topic was conducted to stimulate debate about the pros and cons of having either specialist or generalist or a mix of both teachers in middle schools. This debate extends to the issue of academic rigour in middle schooling, too. We are very keen to hear your views about this. Please write to Terry de Jong or Pat Kershaw: School of Education, Edith Cowan University, 100 Joondalup Drive, Joondalup 6027 or t.dejong@ecu.edu.au or p.kershaw@ecu.edu.au

The main question asked of staff was whether their middle school employed generalist or specialist teachers. My sincere thanks to the staff who agreed to be interviewed – Bernadette Jones, Vice Principal Middle School, from Ballajura Community College, Hylton Hayes, Principal, from Kinross College and Michael Evans, Head, Middle School from Shenton College. Bernadette and Hylton were interviewed in person and Michael kindly responded to a set of questions, in writing.

Whilst the three schools that took part in interviews are all purpose-built middle schools, their physical campuses are quite different. Kinross College caters for Years 6 - 10 and has its own campus. Ballajura Community College Middle School caters for Years 7 – 9 and has a senior campus on site. Shenton College Middle School caters for Years 8 – 9 and has a senior campus on site.

Both Ballajura Community College and Kinross College agreed that there is probably a finite pool of teachers wishing to teach middle school students. BCC commented that there could be a misconception about teaching in middle schools, as a number of their staff are drawn from people who have seen the school in action, such as student and relief teachers.

Ballajura Community College

BCC seeks to attract a diverse pool of candidates. The first factor is not whether teachers are generalists or specialists, but whether they are flexible, talented teachers with strong relationships with the age group. Before employing new staff, the whole make-up of the present staff is examined and the expertise and experience of new staff is matched to areas of need. It is the ability to be a good middle schooling pedagogue and relate to the age group that is most important.

If a staff member has an interest in a particular learning area, that interest can be nurtured and developed, if the teacher is able to meet the needs of the age group in an energetic and exciting way. A diverse range of teaching strategies is needed, including cooperative learning strategies, and a range of resources needs to be employed to stimulate and motivate learners. A subject specialist who relates well to the age group is valued also. But in the areas of Mathematics and Science the pool of applicants is usually going to be depleted.

The middle schooling model at Ballajura Community College places great importance upon teachers collaborating. A culture in which classroom doors are open and people are moving from classroom to classroom comfortably is valued highly. It is important to encourage opportunities which promote in staff a sense of being able to develop in a supportive environment. . . A Classroom Observation and Peer Support program operating in Year 9, places great importance upon building a framework for looking at what students are learning. This in turn promotes reflecting on what we as teachers do and the professional confidence to affect change, with the object of developing a true learning community.

BCC is a dynamic school which offers a rich and exciting environment in which to work. The team leaders are good role models and the environment is nurturing and supportive for new, as well as established, teachers. Fluid movement throughout the middle school is encouraged, rather than staying with one year group. But there are also benefits to the students of staff who are highly experienced in working with a Year group and keen to stay with that age level. A priority is to ensure that teams have common DOTT for planning. Teachers are constantly involved in relevant professional learning which relates directly to their classroom practice.

It is the prospective teacher's preparedness to share in a collaborative culture, commitment to children, the sense that their relationship with children is significant and that they can make a difference, which is more important than a specialist or generalist focus. The question of what we prefer, specialists or generalists, isn't easy to answer. Good teaching is more complex than that. So too is building a culture of sincere collaboration.

Kinross College

Across Years 6 – 9, generalist primary and secondary teachers with greater depth within one learning area, but the ability to take two or three learning areas within the MESS (Maths, English, Science and S&E) learning areas, are employed.

As Kinross is a purpose-built middle school operating on true middle schooling principles, it is important for prospective teachers to see the school in action. The school staff believes it is a privilege to work in such an environment, as well as being professionally rewarding, and the calibre and abilities of the people working there is evident. It is necessary for a teacher to have a lot of energy, particularly in this period (early adolescence) of students' education. It is a time of emotional, social and physical change for young adolescents and they need to know that teachers are 'with them'.

A good middle schooling pedagogue

- understands curriculum and outcomes.
- is a 'change agent'
- has the flexibility to work within an environment that needs to respond to students' needs, rather than having a teacher-centred approach.

Kinross teachers

- are part of a team and the team leader models good middle schooling behaviours
- make sure students are actively engaged with their own curriculum and learning
- show a commitment to middle schooling

- have an understanding of curriculum
- have good interpersonal skills
- have an understanding of 'self' – strengths and areas that need development
- analyse and reflect on their own work practices
- undertake relevant PD
- plan collaboratively with colleagues
- are keen to work with the young adolescent age group
- are prepared to take a risk
- incorporate ICT across the curriculum

They are people who are able to 'live' the middle schooling philosophy. Working within the school, teachers are 'professionally exposed'; so they must know themselves. The focus is on delivering all middle schooling principles, with a particular focus on students, teams and a developmental approach. Ingredients for success are there, with good pedagogy and the structure within which to achieve it. DOTT is structured to allow teams to have productive planning time together.

During their first month at the school, new teachers are mentored by someone from administration, and then by their team leaders. A buddy system is also in place, with a new staff member having a new 'buddy' teacher each fortnight for the first term.

While the emphasis is on employing generalist primary and secondary teachers, the most important aspect is employing a person who will commit to middle schooling principles.

Shenton College

Shenton College chooses specialist teachers, as their teachers must be prepared to teach in senior school (Years 10, 11, 12) as well as middle school (Years 8, 9). All teachers are expected to be able to teach in two areas.

Successful middle school teachers know their students. They provide a caring, safe and enjoyable environment that succours individuality and is responsive to individual learning styles. They encourage students to be fair and to do their best.

Shenton College has outstanding staff, including curriculum and team leaders, many of whom were involved in developing the school's teaching and learning values. It would be important that a teacher applying for a position aspired to meet these values in practice.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be seen that what is premium within these three schools, over and above choosing generalist or specialist teachers, is the ability of the teacher to relate to young adolescents and to provide authentic learning experiences within a middle schooling context.

DEFINING THE ROLE OF MIDDLE SCHOOL TEAM LEADERS

Middle schooling is a progressive form of education that requires a 'new breed' of middle leader. This study will focus specifically on middle leaders who are responsible for small middle school teams or learning communities. The title of this role used in this study, is 'Middle School Team Leader' (MSTL).

A variety of factors impede the curriculum leadership capacity of MSTLs. Subject Associations and HoLAs can act as a counter influence by implying or stating that teaching in middle school is not as prestigious, rigorous or career minded as a position in senior school. Continued domination of TEE results as an indication of successful teaching and learning adds weight to this perception. Teachers with no specialised training and/or little interest in middle schooling can be recruited as team members. Few, if any members of the educational community at any level have long-term experience of middle schooling. Teacher employers hold no official policy on middle

schooling. Hence, the work of MSTLs is complex and challenging, but to date has received very little attention as a focus for investigation. In light of this, the central research question for the study is: *How do MSTLs define and manage the situation they face as curriculum leaders?*

If you are a MSTL I would love to talk to you about your work. Your voice is an important one in understanding the work that we do, the support that we need and the future of our role. Interviews are generally done over the phone whenever suits you, and take about an hour. If you would like to know more, or you are interested in making your voice heard, please contact me.

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Interesting Internet Sites ...

Many thanks to Mark O'Brien, co-presenter of our upcoming PD, for the following two Maths sites, which are sure to whet your appetite for the Numeracy Across the Middle Years Curriculum PD. Mark has given us a number of other maths sites, which will be included over time.

<http://www.subtangent.com/maths/index.php> A site that includes resources for teachers such as worksheets, graph paper and presentations.

<http://www.mathxtc.com/NNasties.htm> MathXTC.com Stephen Corcoran has set up this site at St Stephen's School Carramar, W.A. It contains 50 motivational problem solving sheets with comprehensive solutions. Ideally suited for middle and secondary school students who wish to develop their mathematical problem solving or thinking skills. They enable students to implement a broad range of problem solving strategies within varying contexts. To work mathematically.

Many thanks to Maria Northcote for providing the following two sites.

<http://www.curriculum.edu.au/download/lesspln/lesson.htm> Curriculum Corporation A large range of lesson ideas. An Australian site with an emphasis on relevant, outcomes-based education for Australian students.

<http://education.qld.gov.au/corporate/newbasics/> Queensland Government New Basics Project The New Basics Project is a bold and exciting undertaking by Education Queensland to prepare our students for the future. It deals with new student identities, new economies and workplaces, new technologies, diverse communities and complex cultures.

Pedagogic Transformation within a Middle School Reform Initiative, a case study

Dr Val Faulkner, Edith Cowan University

Abstract.

In this article I consider the reform initiative “middle schooling” through an analysis of one school site – Riverside. Initially I will introduce the rationale that highlights why the school embraced such an approach. This will be followed by a comprehensive discussion focused on the notion of “authentic” pedagogic choice and the phases teachers pass through in order to achieve pedagogies that are transformative, and therefore, more conducive to engaging young adolescents. I will be exploring pedagogic choice through a concern for Adolescent Literacies. The research question guiding this study was – “What does authentic literacy pedagogy look like in the middle school?”

The phases through which teachers pass to achieve authentic pedagogies, are outlined in the table below.

Authentic Pedagogies

Elements of Authentic Pedagogy (Newmann et al.1996)	Dimensions of Authentic Pedagogy at Riverside
Deep Knowledge	<i>Challenge student thinking</i> <i>Analyse and synthesise information</i> <i>Rigour</i>
Substantive and substantial conversations	<i>Time to think</i> <i>Problem solve</i> <i>Decision making</i> <i>Think creatively</i> <i>Critique new knowledge</i>
Higher-order thinking	<i>Infusing high order thinking</i> <i>Vigour</i> <i>Time to explore issues</i> <i>Time to experiment with possible solutions</i> <i>Supported risk taking</i> <i>Learn from mistakes</i>
Connectedness to the world beyond the classroom/Problematic Knowledge	<i>Meaningful applications</i> <i>Make sense of the world</i> <i>Construct meaning in their own mind</i>

Please go to the e-publication site to read this article in full. Click on the publications link at www.msawa.asn.au



MIDDLE SCHOOLING
ASSOCIATION OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA (INC)

Annual General Meeting

Wednesday August 3, 2005

Broadwater Pagoda Resort Hotel

112 Melville Parade
Como

Wine & Nibbles ~ 6.30pm
Followed by the AGM

Nomination form enclosed

RSVP 1 August 2005:
Pat Kershaw
Email: p.kershaw@ecu.edu.au
Phone: (08) 6304 5978
Fax: (08) 6304 5850



MIDDLE SCHOOLING
ASSOCIATION OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA (INC)

Nomination Form

I wish to nominate _____ for the position of (please circle below):

- President
- Vice President (2 positions)
- Secretary
- Treasurer

Nominated by: _____ Please Print Clearly

Seconded by: _____ Please Print Clearly

Date: _____

Signature of nominated Applicant: _____

Please return by fax to *Pat Kershaw* at Edith Cowan University on 6304 5850 by 3.00pm on 1 August 2005.

Exciting PD opportunity for you!
Numeracy Across the Middle Years Curriculum

Recently the "Quality Maths in the Middle Years" national conference was held in Perth and highlighted many issues related to the development of numeracy in the middle years.

The discussions indicated that there are very few simple answers to what is the right or wrong way to go about educating students. Such issues as whether we embed our mathematics in rich tasks or teach it explicitly were discussed at length. There was no simple answer. What was obvious is that ongoing discussion by teachers in a professional environment will enable all of us to find the best place to be on the continuum for each group of students, each set of concepts and each desired outcome.

The other significant thought was the need to cater specifically for students in the middle years. People in this age group, where transition from child to young adult takes place, have behaviours and needs that require pedagogies, learning experiences, environment and management designed for them. These things will not be the same as when they were children, and will not be the same when they mature into young adults.

Paul Swan (President, Maths Association of WA) and Mark O'Brien will endeavour to tease out these issues within an *interactive workshop* designed to highlight numeracy across the curriculum. Practical suggestions will be made and opportunity to debate the issues will be given. The workshop promises to be stimulating and professionally rewarding.

VENUE: Broadwater Pagoda Resort Hotel, 112 Melville Parade, Como

WHEN: Wednesday, 3 August 2005

4.30pm Afternoon Tea

4.30pm—6.30pm Numeracy Across the Middle Years Curriculum PD

6.30pm Wine and nibbles, with AGM to follow

COST: **Only \$25.00 for MSAWA members \$30 for non-members**
Sensational value!

PAYMENT: 1. Please register by completing a registration form and returning it with your payment (cheque or postal order only) by **Friday, 29 July 2005**
2. Post to: MSAWA, c/- Safety Bay SHS, PO Box 6122, Waikiki WA 6169
3. For further information about payment, please contact Christina Kemp (08) 9527 0200

CONTACT: To find out more about venue and registration, contact Pat Kershaw on (08) 6304 5978

Middle Schooling Association of WA Tax Invoice - Numeracy Across the Curriculum PD

ABN: 94250-851-782

(Please make cheque payable to MSAWA and forward together with registration form to PO Box 6122, Waikiki 6169)

Name & Position: _____

School: _____

Address: _____

Contact Ph: _____ **Fax:** _____ **Email:** _____

MSAWA Annual General Meeting

VENUE: Broadwater Pagoda Resort Hotel
112 Melville Parade, Como

WHEN: Wednesday, 3 August 2005
6.30pm Wine and nibbles, followed by the AGM

NOMINATIONS: Please see AGM flyer and nomination form on the inside back cover of this newsletter. Separate AGM flyer and nomination form also enclosed.