

**MAKING A
DIFFERENCE
IN MIDDLE
LEVEL
EDUCATION!**



○ ISSUE 1 ○ VOLUME 2 ○ DECEMBER 2007

Arizona Middle Level Association

Spotlight On...

NMSA – National Middle School Association’s National Conference



Imagine attending a conference where everyone you meet understands what it is like to work with middle level students and where every session is immediately applicable on Monday morning. That is the experience of attending a National Middle School Association’s national conference. It is where teachers and administrators come together to share their ideas and experiences.

The conference is held annually during the first part of November. This year’s conference was in Houston, TX on November 8-10, 2007. The conference is big with over forty courses to choose from during each 75 minute session over the three days.

Practical Classroom Tips: Building Relationships

Even if it sometimes seems that you only talk to children, as an educator, you interact with a wide range of individuals. Working and communicating well with others can help build a strong network of support

This is not a conference for someone that has difficulty making a decision! Strands to help attendees concentrate on a specific area group the sessions; however, attendees can hopscotch across strands to gain a greater understanding of several strands or topics. Many presenters are teachers, administrators or teams of teachers that want to share their ideas with others. It is practitioners sharing with practitioners. It is so much fun to meet teachers and administrators from across this great land whom share in your love of middle level.

Make plans to attend next year’s NMSA conference in Denver, CO October 30-November 1, 2008.

both for your students and your own professional growth. It’s a win-win situation! Visit the following National Education Association site for tips:

<http://www.nea.org/tips/relate/>

IMPORTANT DATES & EVENTS

▶ **AAGT & AMLA CONFERENCE**
FEBRUARY 6, 7, 8
(FEBRUARY 7 IS DEDICATED TO MIDDLE LEVEL GIFTED LEARNERS)

TO REGISTER FOR THE CONFERENCE, VISIT THE ARIZONA ASSOCIATION FOR GIFTED AND TALENTED (AAGT) WEB SITE



ARIZONAGIFTED.ORG/

BLACK CANYON CONFERENCE CENTER
9440 N. 25TH AVENUE

PHOENIX, AZ 85021

▶ **AMLA BREAKFAST**
WEDNESDAY APRIL 23, 2008 @ 8:30 AM
GRAYHAWK COUNTRY CLUB

Join AMLA Today!
MAKING A DIFFERENCE
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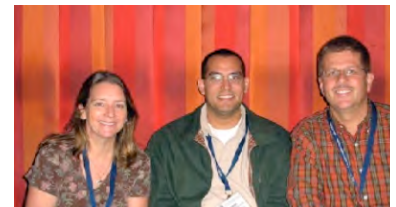
Join AMLA at:
<http://cmweb.pvschools.net/~bbecke/amla>

Send Your Teaching Tips to:

ahiemstra@susd.org



AMLA Board Member and Hospitality Liaison Carol Kendrick welcomes Arizona Educators at the state affiliate meeting.



Desert Shadows Middle Level teachers enjoyed the session offerings at NMSA.



AMLA President Marianne Bursi enjoying a conversation with Leslie Allen, DSMS English teacher.



DSMS teachers collaborate and share ideas with their principal Carol Kendrick.

Teaching in the Middle

What Constitutes Rigor?

Written By: Carol Kendrick
Principal of Desert Shadows MS, PVUSD

Research tells us our curriculum should be relevant and rigorous. We get “relevant” but often struggle with what “rigor” means.

Some teachers and administrators believe rigor means more – more content, more homework, more stuff. Others think rigor means offering higher level classes and still others believe rigor means inclusion of higher level thinking skills. So, how would you define rigor? What does it look like at your school and in your classroom?

How to Make the Middle School Philosophy Work When You Don't Have All of the Pieces

Written By: Carol Kendrick
Principal of Desert Shadows MS, PVUSD

Dr. Santo Pino from Florida shared how middle schools can incorporate some of the pieces of the middle level philosophy even though your school doesn't have all of the pieces in place.

According to Pino, the absolute essential ingredients of a middle school are teaming, common planning period for team members, and exploratory classes. Many middle schools have these elements in place but struggle to implement some of the other elements of the middle school philosophy such as advisory and flex time.

One solution to implementing advisory is to take the elements of an advisory period and place them within the

Terry Harris and Eileen Friou held a session at Houston's NMSA conference about rigor. Their suggestion was to get everyone on the same page with rigor within your district and within your school. This process includes common vocabulary and common goals.

Harris and Friou also developed a rubric for school or organizations to use to help them determine what rigor might look like at their site. If you would like a copy of their rubric contact Carol Kendrick at ckendrick@pvschools.net or the authors at terry.harris@risd.org

curriculum. For example, his staff selected a theme for every six weeks. Themes included: No put downs, Doing your personal best, Active Listening, Friendships, Truthfulness, Trustworthiness, etc. One theme is concentrated on school wide during the six week period of time. Teachers use the “teachable” moments in their classrooms to discuss and educate their students about the topic. While some components will be the same in every classroom, the discussions will be different from room to room. Dr. Pino suggests that it is the end result that is important not how each class gets there. By the end of the first six weeks of school, everyone knows the school will not tolerate put downs and all of the students have had several discussions in their classrooms about the topic.



AMLA Member Schools

Arcadia Neighborhood Learning Center

Cheyenne

Cocopah

Copper Ridge

Supai

Desert Canyon

Superior

Desert Shadows

Estrella

Explorer

Glassford

Greenway

Heritage

Hillcrest

Ingleside

Mohave

Mountain Trail

Mountainside

Prospect

Shea

Sierra Vista Academy

Sierra Vista MS

Sunrise

SUSD Executive Director of Middle Schools

SUSD Curriculum Specialists



AAGT Conference Keynote Speaker - February 7, 2008

Susan Rakow, Ph.D.

*Thursday Includes Middle School Focus
(Partnering with Arizona Middle Level Association)*

Co-Chair NAGC Middle Grades Division

Author: “Educating Gifted Students in Middle School: A Practical Guide”

