The Vermont Middle Grades Collaborative

Making Change in the Middle:

A state-wide conference showcasing effective middle grades practice

November 19, 2010

Program

Silver Maple Ballroom
401, 4th Floor Davis Center
University of Vermont

middlegradescollaborative.org
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MGI 2011

7 middle grades courses for teachers and principals. Residency optional.

Middle Grades Collaborative
JOHNSON STATE COLLEGE
ST. MICHAEL’S COLLEGE
UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT

JUNE 27 – JULY 1, 2011

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GRADUATE COURSEWORK:
Nature and Needs of Young Adolescents
Middle Grades Organization
Middle Grades Curriculum
Embedded Literacy in Middle Grades
Middle School is Not a Building
Middle Schooling for Post-secondary Success
Middle Grades Learners and Technology

To be held on the campus of The University of Vermont
Agenda

11:00 am – 12:00 pm  Arrival & Set Up
12:00 pm – 12:15 pm  Welcoming Remarks
12:15 pm – 12:45 pm  Post Secondary Success
12:45 pm – 4:15 pm   Presentations
   12:45 – 1:45 pm  Session A
   2:00 – 3:00 pm  Session B
   3:15 – 4:15 pm  Session C
4:15 – 4:30 pm  Closing Remarks
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## Welcoming Remarks

Silver Maple Ball Room 401

## Post Secondary Success

Presentation  Silver Maple Ball Room 401

## Session A

12:45 – 1:45 pm

- Student Engaged Curriculum
  - Poster  Williams Family Room 403
- Building Community
  - Poster  Jost Foundation Room 422
- School – Family Relationships
  - Presentation  Chittenden Bank Room 413
- Connecting 2 Community (C2C)
  - Presentation  Sugar Maple Ballroom 400

## Session B

2:00 – 3:00 pm

- Promoting Literacy
  - Poster  Williams Family Room 403
- Student Voice in Science & Math
  - Presentation  Chittenden Bank Room 413
- Re-engaging Students
  - Presentation  Jost Foundation Room 422
- Connecting 2 Community (C2C)
  - Presentation  Sugar Maple Ballroom 400

## Session C

3:15 – 4:15 p.m.

- Developing Life Long Learners
  - Poster  Williams Family Room 403
- Organizational Factors for Engagement
  - Poster  Jost Foundation Room 422
- Community Based Learning
  - Presentation  Chittenden Bank Room 413
- Building Teacher & Student Relationships
  - Presentation  Sugar Maple Ballroom 400
Post-Secondary Success
12:15 – 12:45 p.m.
Silver Maple Ballroom

GEARed Up and On-Track: Students Articulate Pathways to Post-secondary Success
Milton Middle School

In an effort to intervene and raise student achievement, we would like to consider the impact of exposure to new knowledge and experience around post-secondary options on students' ability to articulate a pathway to those options. We will measure the efficacy of this project through qualitative assessment using student written responses. If this program is successful students will be able to articulate a clear vision of academic and vocational opportunities beyond high school.

Amira Bakr, Nathan Caswell, & Stacey Endres

Students: Cooper Bushey
Ali Field
Jordan Mongeon
Nicole Fortune
Kristina Payne

Grades 7 and 8

Spread the Word: Sharing Paths to Success
Hazen Union High School

Through sharing student testimonials and the stories of professionals in our community with middle school students we hope to increase students’ awareness and broaden their perspectives of their post-secondary options and how to achieve success in high school and beyond.

Angela Bauer, Teal Church, & Barb Delzio

Students: Audrey Barnett
Justin Bourdeau
Axl D. Errington
Mariann Kreis
Alexandra McAllister
Tyler Rich
Heaven Smith

Grades 7 and 8

Outside, Inside
Brattleboro Area Middle School

The Brattleboro Middle Grades students will conduct a presentation where they look outside and inside their school and inside and outside themselves.

Nancy Goodhue and Peggy Maxfield

Students: Cheickna Doucoure
Randi Elie
Risa Knapp
Tyler Putnam
Saul Rivera
Lukas Wallace

Grades 7 and 8
12:45 – 1:45 pm
Session A

Student Engaged Curriculum

The Muslim Invasion and Occupation of Spain 711-1492
The objective is to introduce and make students more familiar with the Muslim invasion and occupation of Spain. Using a multi-discipline approach, I hope to witness students using previous and new knowledge to obtain a deeper understanding of the time period and events, whose influence continues in Spain even today.

Sara Rice
Hartford School District

A Sense of Place
Because adolescence is a time when students begin to question social conventions and to re-examine their own values and moral/ethical principles (Ozretich & Bowman, 2001), this is a prime time to engage them in a project where they can learn about their heritage and listen to the stories of others in their community.

Julia Melloni
University of Vermont

Pease Mountain Project
The Pease Mountain Natural Area (PMNA) lies nearly adjacent to Charlotte Community School (CCS). For many reasons, the space is currently under-utilized. Employing a combination of service learning, parent involvement and community support, there is an opportunity to stimulate use of this outdoor teaching space to supplement teaching and learning across all content areas for multiple grades. This proposal is the first step of a multi-phase plan to develop a strong partnership between the students of CCS, the faculty, the community, and the environment.

Nicole Gorman
Saint Michael's College

Biomes of the World
At the start of the year we will be working on building community in our Middle School. The students will first brainstorm what makes their town unique and gather information. The second part will have the students researching different biomes. I hope to learn that by taking the time to build community this will translate into more engagement in the study of their biome.

Michael Crocker
Cabot School

Prejudice in Our Lives
This project focuses on the following essential question: What is prejudice and how does it affect our lives? After establishing a basic working definition for the word "prejudice," students will learn about the life of Emmett Till and trace the ensuing American Civil Rights Movement. While preparing a report about Martin Luther King Junior, students will also engage in various activities designed to connect the topic to their own lives.

David Goss
Westford Elementary School

Building Curriculum in a Student-Teacher Partnership
In this project, students and teachers work together in a reflective, authentic and systematic way to establish themes of interest to pursue in the classroom throughout the year.

Matt Smithwick
Manchester Elementary Middle School

Students Understanding Math Through Service-Learning
I will lead sixth grade math students in a service-learning project. As students develop a proposal for a school garden, they will explore the mathematical concepts of rates, ratios, similarity, perimeter, and area. I wish to determine the effectiveness of teaching math in the context of a service-learning project.

Alyssa Krebs
University of Vermont

Building Community

Inclusion, Wikis and Advisory
A faculty wiki ([http://www.commoncraft.com/video-wikis-plain-english](http://www.commoncraft.com/video-wikis-plain-english)) will inform and energize the advisory program at Brattleboro Area Middle School. A wiki is an online web page that readers and users can edit, annotate and contribute comments. A wiki can be a dynamic list or a forum for exchange, resources and best practices. A small group of dedicated and enthusiastic colleagues who are passionate about advisory and inclusion will be recruited to contribute links, activities and reflections for the first six weeks of school. As more faculty participate, the wiki will become a resource and reference to help promote and define the advisory program at BAMS. A great advisory program will naturally be inclusive.

Nancy Goodhue
Brattleboro Area Middle School
Transition and Team Building at U-32
The hope of my study is to assist my collaborating teacher with the transition of a new group of 7th graders at U-32. This will be a very important time in these adolescents’ lives, and I hope to focus a lot of attention on the emotional, social and physical needs of these new students. I hope to gain both practical and impractical knowledge as to the nature and needs of young adolescents during the transition period from elementary school to middle school. Being directly involved with these adolescents as they make this change will be an eye-opening experience for me as well. The experience should be invaluable.
Ted Sheehan
Johnson State College

Building Adolescent Community through the All-Team Meeting
The All-Team Meeting configuration helps provide middle level teaming structures with an organized approach for young adolescents to foster a sense of belonging to a team, build leadership capabilities, and strengthen meaningful connections with adults. Implementing an effective once weekly all-team meeting will occur through modeling from adults and then gradually transition to student run all-team meetings. The format for each meeting will build a sense of team unity and community through an established agenda that includes routine items, student recognition, and student generated activities allowing for student voice and choice in the meeting.
Kim Scott
Main Street Middle School

Promoting family involvement
Promoting family involvement in the lives of adolescents is a fundamental job for all middle school teachers. The project goal will be a well-rounded plan for improving parental engagement in Winooski (including student, faculty and parental ideas). I gather this information in hopes of opening dialogue for greater communication and collaboration between families and Winooski middle school.
Chris Magistrale
Winooski Middle School

Transitions and Community Building in Williston Central School’s Swift House
I will be researching how Swift House eases transitions for incoming students (both incoming 5th graders and other new students) and build community and team identity with them. I hope to learn how this unique team manages to forge strong bonds across such a diverse age range.
MaryBeth C. Nuovo
Saint Michael's College

Parents, Students, and a Brain-Friendly Classroom
The purpose of this project is to develop a plan for increased and improved communication between families and the classroom/team. The specific focus of this communication at the beginning of the year is a new unit about how the brain learns.
Nancy Standley
Mt. Abraham Union Middle School

New Voices: Effective Teaming and its Impact on Student Voice
In this project, my aim is to investigate the dynamics of a newly formed team that draws its teammates from a variety of different experiences and philosophies to get at the essential question: How does our partnership impact student voice on Voyager House?
Sam Messer
University of Vermont

School – Family Relationships

Using 21st Century Communication to Promote Student Success
As middle level educators we need to embrace new methods and develop ways to effectively use technology as a means of communication to increase parental involvement. Through the use of a classroom WIKI page, three-way communication between parent, student and teacher can be established to promote student success.
Rebecca Sweeney
Readsboro Central School

What’s Up? Family Involvement & Increased Communication
We are creating a web site for our 7th grade students and parents. We hope to become more effective communicators through the use of technology. As teachers, we hope to improve our technology skills.
Lynn Ryan
Wendy Lozyniak
Rutland Town School

Improving School-Home Communication Via Team Website Use
This action research project aims to improve school-home communication and therefore parent involvement and student achievement through a team website. Through building and updating the site I hope to improve my mastery of web tools. I will also be taking this as an opportunity to initiate early and frequent contact with parents as a first-year teacher.
Alaina Palombo
University of Vermont

Connecting 2 the Community (C2C)
Join students in the Sugar Maple Ballroom from Edmunds Middle School’s Navigator Team as they unveil their service learning projects on the big screen! Through their Connecting to Community unit, students will showcase the digital public service announcements they created for more than 20 non-profits in the Burlington area. Among the organizations that got involved were the Tarrant Foundation, Bike Recycle VT, the Boys & Girls Club and the Chittenden County Humane Society.
2:00 – 3:00 pm  
**Session B**

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**Promoting Literacy**

► **Experimenting with Expression: Journal Writing as a Tool for Developing Content Knowledge in Science**

The 6th, 7th, and 8th grade classes at Guilford Central School will implement a science journal to record questions, concerns, musings, and explanations related to course content. This project seeks to determine the effect of consistent journaling on science literacy and content understanding.

*Rachel Davis*  
*Guilford Central School*

► **“The comma goes where?” Finding the Relationship between Writer’s Workshop and Improvement in Writing**

One of the academic areas middle school students have difficulty with is writing cross curricular. Initiating a Writer’s Workshop will help the students to work on, and accomplish some of the trouble areas of writing. During these writer’s workshops, I will discuss the students writing assignment, and if there are constructive ways for improvement.

*Jennifer Severance*  
*Mill River Union Middle and High School*

► **Convince Me: Persuasive Writing in the Middle School Classroom**

This study will focus on teaching a group of 8th grade students a unit on persuasive writing. By intentionally scaffolding elements that contribute to a proficient piece of persuasive writing, I hope to improve their persuasive writing. In conjunction with this, we will practice how to critique and disagree in a socially and academically acceptable manner.

*Mary Gunn*  
*Benson Village School*

► **Suspense, Mystery, and Twisted Tales: The Art of Storytelling & Narrative Writing**

In my short story unit this fall I hope to include students more in the creating of the unit. For years I have taught them in a rather traditional way. My growth will lie in my ability to let go a bit, to let the students decide how they learn best. I aspire to build a curriculum that delves deeper, ensuring that students understand the intrinsic value of the tasks I teach.

*Emily Beattie*  
*Mt. Abraham Union Middle School*

► **Service Learning Action Plan: Finding Cape Cod and Ourselves**

Service-learning is a way for students to get involved in their community and have an authentic learning experience. I will implement a service-learning project during my fall weekly “seminar” course. Students will identify a need, and learn about the identity of Cape Cod and themselves as residents of that community.

*Hannah Kast*  
*University of Vermont*

► **Co-teaching to Improve Writing**

As a language arts teacher and a math teacher, we have designed a process to teach literacy and writing in our classes. Our presentation will share the challenges and successes of this collaboration.

*Peggy Stevens*  
*Roni Murphy*  
*North Country Union Junior High*

**Student Voice in Math & Science**

► **Supporting Intentional Nonlearners**

This project develops and implements a systemic intervention (as prescribed by the Pyramid Response to Intervention) for students who are identified as intentional nonlearners. Technology is used as a tool to implement this intervention and attempt to re-engage the intentional nonlearners and shift their attitudes toward learning.

*Betsy Memoe*  
*Manchester Elementary Middle School*
Do Instruction and Learning Opportunities with Mathematical Vocabulary Improve Students' Achievement in Problem Solving?

Even though new and higher-level vocabulary is introduced throughout successive years of mathematics, most students continue to rely on their more elementary language. This action research will inform me of more meaningful vocabulary instruction. It is hoped that with better vocabulary instruction, there will be a measureable improvement in problem solving performance.

Jim Mitchell
Hartford Memorial Middle School

Re-Engaging Students

Invitation to Literature: Using Choice and Voice to Create a Reading Community

This study will follow the journey of nine students as they engage in scaffolded literature circles as a means to increase their self engagement and self efficacy. Students will have a voice and choice in designing ways to organize and prepare for literature circles, as well as the ways in which they communicate within the group.

Kayla Toher
Chelsea Public School

The Components of a Successful School-Family-Community Partnership

This study will examine the successful components of school-family-community partnerships (SFCP’s) by focusing on parental involvement, service learning and community outreach. I will examine three schools that are proficient in one of the above topics. I hope to learn about the following questions:
What are the benefits of SFCP’s?
How do SFCP’s contribute to academic success?
How do SFCP’s promote relationships?
How do SFCP’s promote citizenship?

Amanda Clark
University of Vermont

Connecting 2 the Community (C2C)

Join students in the Sugar Maple Ballroom from Edmunds Middle School’s Navigator Team as they unveil their service learning projects on the big screen! Through their Connecting to Community unit, students will showcase the digital public service announcements they created for more than 20 non-profits in the Burlington area. Among the organizations that got involved were the Tarrant Foundation, Bike Recycle VT, the Boys & Girls Club and the Chittenden County Humane Society.
Developing Life Long Learners

► Fostering Independent Investigators in Science Education
Students will learn to use the scientific method through hands-on exploration and guided inquiry using an Investigative Lab Sheet. Student centered labs will be performed throughout the year. The intended outcome is that students will have a more global view of scientific inquiry and demonstrate more ownership of their learning.
Jessica Contois
Williston Central School

► Correlating Relationship-Based Literacy Events with Learning Outcome Data
Student accounts and adult presentations show a clear connection between literacy experiences and relationships. Harnessing this emotional energy through fluency practice may deeply embed content knowledge while increasing family participation. This investigation will gather data to see if there is a correlation between reading aloud to an adult and student learning outcomes.
Joe Speers
Peoples Academy Middle School

► Increasing Literacy Content in Middle Level Design and Technology Education through Journal Writing
The goal of this project is to create opportunities in my Design & Technology curriculum for journal writing to allow students to accompany and reflect on their projects as well as to demonstrate and deepen their knowledge of the subject and subject-specific vocabulary through reading, writing and other appropriate media.
Karsten Weiss
Peoples Academy Middle School

► How Does Providing Multiple Note-taking Formats and Involving Students in Creating Their Own Study Guides Improve Science Content Mastery?
This project will focus upon the efficacy of two literacy tools in promoting comprehension of science content. Students will employ three different graphic organizers (standard outline, concept web, and t-chart) as note-taking devices and then reflect upon the effectiveness of each. They will also create individualized study guides and evaluate their efficacy as a study tool.
Mike Baginski
Main Street Middle School

Organizational Factors for Engagement

► Morning Meeting and Beyond
I will institute a daily Morning Meeting during my homeroom period and a TA during an extended homeroom one day a week. I’ll begin with organizational lessons, an online learning styles inventory, a question protocol for answering questions about themselves and the world. I’ll continue by instituting the Morning Announcement routine. The TA will include team-building activities, the teaching of core values, decision-making, and in-depth study skills.
Joanne Prouty
Flood Brook Union School

► Student Voice
This project serves as a vehicle to engage students by providing them the opportunity to help construct, implement/facilitate, and reflect on classroom lessons. It is my goal to create lessons and activities that implement a strong student voice and help nurture positive relationships, leadership skills and peer engagement.
Matt Hayes
University of Vermont

► What is the Academic Effect of Service Learning on Students? Service Learning in Northern Vermont
Connecting students with their communities is not a new phenomenon. Teachers have been integrating community service into their curriculums for decades. This action research project will explore local efforts to immerse students in service learning. The goal of this project is to identify the direct effects these experiences have on students’ academic success.
Abby Lanfear
Saint Michael’s College

► Morning Meeting and Beyond
I will institute a daily Morning Meeting during my homeroom period and a TA during an extended homeroom one day a week. I’ll begin with organizational lessons, an online learning styles inventory, a question protocol for answering questions about themselves and the world. I’ll continue by instituting the Morning Announcement routine. The TA will include team-building activities, the teaching of core values, decision-making, and in-depth study skills.
Joanne Prouty
Flood Brook Union School

► Student-led Conferences with On-line Portfolios
The project of students developing on-line portfolios will help all students describe themselves as learners and communicate their needs and assets using technology as a tool. The student-led conference will help adults partner with students to better understand each individual’s learning process and support their learning in and out of school.
Emily Beeman
Manchester Elementary Middle School
Creating Voice and Community through a Middle Level Advisory
The advisory at Lamoille Union Middle School will serve as a place for 16 students to examine choice, voice, and community building in a safe, non-threatening environment. The purpose is to promote engagement and create a sense of belonging for them during their middle school years.
Amie Desautels
Lamoille Union Middle School

Parent Night
I intend to organize a Middle School Parent night at Benson Village School early in the year. The parents and the students will be invited. The purpose is to teach the parents about our middle school program. The students will learn the expectations for the coming year. During this event I hope to address some concerns of the parents and the students.
Arlene Disorda
Benson Village School

An Advocate for Every Student: A Compilation of Teacher Advisory Ideas and Activities
I believe that every student deserves an adult advocate. Teacher based guidance is critical to the development and success of our students. I am committed to discovering effective ways to create lasting relationships in and outside of my classroom. As a new teacher, I need the resources to do so. The final product of my action research project will be a compilation of teacher advisory ideas and activities in the form of a wiki. I will encourage my colleges to use and contribute to the wiki in order to achieve a common goal: fostering positive relationships with our students.
Rebecca Katz
University of Vermont

Advisory Groups aka Morning Meeting
Last year when I went to the Middle Grade Collaborative for the first time, I learned about advisory groups in the middle school. Since I was teaching second grade last year, I knew that I would not be able to do it. Now that I am going to be teaching fourth grade next year, I could do a Morning Meeting and use parts from advisory and morning meetings. I know that it is a large undertaking. I want to do it in smaller pieces. I hope to connect with the students on a deeper level than just being their teacher. I honestly believe that all students need an advocate. I hope to accomplish that and much more.
Diana Day
Weathersfield School

Growing an Organic Community
A brand-new organic vegetable garden was recently added to the grounds at Lyman C. Hunt middle school in the new north end of Burlington, VT. I will be student teaching at Hunt this fall, and it is my goal to center this project around the growth and development of a sustainable garden. At its core, this project will be service learning based, and will begin with an in-class exploration of sustainable agriculture - followed by a hands-on link between the garden itself, the students, and their impact on the greater Burlington community.
Robert O. Dolan
University of Vermont

Goose-xing: Providing a Safe Street Crossing for Geese and Other Wildlife at Lake Hortonia
Students attempt to convince the Vermont Department of Transportation to construct a safe under/overpass for wildlife crossing Route 30 in Hubbardton en route to Lake Hortonia. This integrated unit will combine persuasive writing, biology and ornithology, history of the area, and the mathematics needed to construct the passageway.
Charles McCarthy
University of Vermont
Building Teacher & Student Relationships

This action research proposal will provide an opportunity to utilize research based strategies on teaming. By using systems and processes through structured templates and steps in team meetings, I hope to learn how our time can be efficient and productive.
Sarah Bowering
University of Vermont

► Creating Cohesive Teacher Advisory at Peoples Academy Middle Level
This coming school year PAML is transitioning from a home team model to a multi-age teacher advisory. This transition will create many changes. To help ease the angst of the transition I would like to create a TA handbook to help teachers better understand TA’s and how to use them effectively.
Elizabeth Emerson
Peoples Academy Middle Level

► Transition into 9th Grade at Champlain Valley Union High School: A Comparison of CSSU Sending Schools
This research project aims to understand the process through which incoming freshmen are prepared for their transition from middle school to CVU, and how that process is supported by CVU once they have arrived. It will look at similarities and differences between the process from at least two CSSU sending schools to determine what, if any, effect those differences have upon students as they transition into high school.
Jessica Mongeon
Saint Michael's College

Middle Grades Institute
June/July 2010
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Find it on the map!
Thank you for joining us today.

Have a safe trip home and a very pleasant evening.

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A special thank you to:

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