Content Breakout Sessions – San Diego, CA

Providing PD for Tech-Hesitant Teachers
Barbara McCarty
While the possibilities of educational technology excite many educators, there are just as many teachers who are intimidated by the idea of incorporating technology into their lessons. In this session, we will consider some of the common concerns of tech-hesitant teachers as well as explore ways to meet their needs and support their growth. We will examine practical approaches and suggested applications to help you support teachers in integrating 21st century technology into their classrooms.

Transforming School Culture
Linda Hopping
Research shows that good schools do not occur without first establishing a positive, collaborative culture that involves all stakeholders. This transformational piece is often time-consuming and difficult. However, with time and systematic approaches this collaborative culture can be achieved, and the result is a shared vision that energizes all stakeholders through teaming and collaboration that propels the school forward to optimum performance in all areas.

Understanding Learning Styles
Sue Caron
We all know that every student learns differently – but what does that really mean and what implications does that have in today's classrooms? What factors affect learning styles? Knowing and understanding the differences in our student's learning styles allows for educators to implement best practice strategies into daily activities, curriculum, and assessments. In this session we will explore different inventories and thoughts around learning styles as well as cooperatively and collaboratively discuss ways to incorporate the knowledge of learning styles into teaching, learning, and assessing. You will leave here with new strategies and inventories ready to use with your learners!

Trauma-Informed Schools and Classrooms
Dru Tomlin
Are you looking to create a safe and caring learning environment for all students? Understanding the impact of trauma is one of your first steps. Research shows that traumatic experiences can alter the brain and affect children and adults in all facets of their life. In this session we will explore the various types of trauma, how it affects us both in and out of the classroom, and learn how adverse life experiences can impact the behavior of your students in the classroom. We will explore what we as adults can do to help and learn strategies for creating a safe and informed classroom/school.

Making School, Family, and Community Connections
Ruthie Stevenson
Too often we forget about the importance of our external stakeholders: families and the community. Few can disagree that all schools are in need of support. When schools have support from families and the community, the schools thrive; thus, it is imperative that school leaders seek ways to get the entire community to support schools. Research has shown that when schools, families, and the community partner, the results are improved learning for all students. This session will examine ways participants can engage its stakeholders; identify resources in the community; and provide strategies for communicating with families and the community. Participants will be invited to share their strategies for working with the community.

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivators
Juan Rodriguez
In today's fast-paced world, engaging students is a major challenge for teachers. Oftentimes, it's all about finding the proper motivation. But which type of motivation are we talking about: intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, or perhaps a combination of both? Is there room for both? A student's poor performance is often attributed to a lack of motivation. We often put complex programs or systems in place to get the students to perform better. In an effort to increase the motivation on student achievement, rewards are given. Does this work? What exactly are the effects of rewards on students? Let's find out.

Seven Principles of Instructional Core
Cedrick Gray
The model of the instructional core provides the basic framework for how to intervene in the instructional process to improve the quality and level of student learning. Seven principles guide the work of the instructional core. In this session, we will examine the seven principles and develop key strategies to improve the quality of instruction in our classrooms.

Work Smarter Not Harder
Tracie Abercrombie
Today, teachers and leaders have more on them than ever before. Maximizing your time is important. Come explore 11 digital tools that will help you use your time more effectively. Learn the difference between Chrome extensions and Google Add-Ons as well as which ones you must have to make your life a little easier! Whether you are a school level leader or the leader of your grade level, this is for you!

Future Planning and Goal Setting for Students
Sue Caron
Future Planning??? But they are so young! Do we really need to worry about this with middle school learners? The answer is yes! According to the Association for Career and Technical Education, "research has identified middle school as a time when students can benefit the most from career exploration, a process of building self-awareness, learning about potential careers, and developing a plan for future goals." In this session we will explore different facets of future planning with students as well as skills they will need to plan ahead including career awareness, financial literacy, Habits of Mind, and more. We will look at templates and goal setting documents, we will look at events and processes to help students explore careers and trades, and we will share information and tools to move forward in our own communities with this exploration. Participation, collaboration, and sharing of ideas are welcomed!

Breakout of Boring Lessons
Barbara McCarty
Harness the power of this innovative activity to engage your students with curricular material. Participants will learn about the benefits of creating blended escape rooms and gain an understanding of the practical strategies and tools needed to create their own escape room experience. After seeing examples of completed activities as well as the accompanying planning materials, participants will leave with the ability to integrate this activity into their program. Let the games begin!

Dealing with Difficult Parents
Ruthie Stevenson
When a parent or family member shows up mad, or a parent is just downright difficult, what can you do to cope? Are there strategies to move difficult situations from confrontation to problem solving? Is it possible that there may be nothing you can do except let the individual vent? Most of us have probably experienced the stress of dealing with parents who are angry, hostile, defensive, and even threatening. The magic bullet does not exist for dealing with these parents. However, there are some strategies that have been effective with dealing with some of these difficult parents. This session will engage participants in conversations about ways to cope or turn bad situations into ways to positively affect students, parents, teachers, and administrators**.**

Planning and Implementing This We Believe in Your Building

Linda Hopping

One of the most important characteristics of successful middle grades schools is the establishment of small learning communities of teachers and students, established to provide close, lasting relationships between adults and young adolescents. Both looping and multiage teaming provide bonds that last throughout the middle level experience for students, parents, and teachers. This presentation explores the advantages of these exciting alternatives and how they can operate within the structure of a middle school.

Health and Wellness Concerns for Students and Staff

Juan Rodriguez

When we travel we are told to put on our oxygen mask first before helping others, but as educators we do not. We face many challenges to address the health and wellness needs of our students and staff. In our fast paced schools we give everything away often leaving little for ourselves. Teachers and school leaders are overworked and stressed, and self-care is what makes them capable of being the best they can be and able to sustain the energy needed for their demanding job. It's time to stop the madness and get serious about self-care. It's not a luxury. It's not weakness. It's not self-indulgent. Although improving the mental health and wellness for students and staff in our schools are top concerns, we struggle with maintaining a balance and focus between school demands and having the necessary resources to get it done. We all know that healthy eating, sufficient sleep, and being physically active are good practices. But how do we truly break through our habits and start self-care practices that actually stick?

Instructional Walkthroughs for Principals and Principal Supervisors

Cedrick Gray

How does a principal who didn't teach math evaluate a mathematics classroom? What should the former English/language arts teacher turned principal look for in the pre-algebra lesson? This session will provide a step-by-step process for evaluating instruction in every classroom regardless of subject or content. Participants will also refine their instructional lens to help even the master teacher improve.

Monitoring Student Progress Using Early Warning Indicators

Linda Hopping and Gail Heinemeyer

The research is clear that the school dropout crisis begins in the middle grades. This session will familiarize you with the research and the urgency for interventions in the middle grades years. As early as sixth grade, schools can identify those students who are in danger of not graduating on time or at all. This session will provide a framework for how to set up tracking systems of the ABCs, (attendance, behavior, and course grades) and develop specific interventions.

Supporting English Language Learners

Juan Rodriguez

Every day, millions of linguistically and culturally diverse students enter our schools. Increasing diversity in schools places increased demands on all middle level educators. Successful middle schools ensure that all students are achieving in all aspects of their middle school experience. This session looks at classroom strategies and school-wide interventions to support the English Language Learner. We will provide the teacher and principal perspective on developing instructional strategies, forging cultural connections, creating a supportive environment, facilitating assessments, and designing professional development.

Homework - To Assign and Assess or Not

Ruthie Stevenson

The arguments for and against homework are not new. A 2007 article in *Educational Leadership* by Robert J. Marzano and Debra J. Pickering asserted, "Teachers should not abandon homework. Instead, they should improve its instructional quality." Research has shown that there are pros and cons to doing homework. Some questions that will be addressed during this session will be:

What's the purpose of the assignment?

- Is it merely a way to show parents and administration what's going on in the class?
- Is it a means to help keep the grades up?
- Is homework being graded for accuracy or completion? If so, then what if the assignment is wrong?
- Have the necessary skills been taught so the student can master the material on his or her own?

Participants will engage in discussions on the pros and cons of homework; how and why they use homework or why they do not assign homework.

Reducing Conflict and Violence in the Middle Grades

Dru Tomlin

Supporting our middle grades students to become more literate will help them navigate text and achieve academically. However, how do we help our students improve their behavioral literacy so we can reduce conflict and violence in our schools? In this engaging session, we'll tackle this critical question and explore ways that we can develop a complete behavioral literacy "lessen plan" to decrease the number of disciplinary referrals we handle every day.

Stepping Up Tech Integration with SAMR

Barbara McCarty

Looking for a way to use technology to make an impact in your classroom and promote deeper learning? The SAMR model of technology implementation can help teachers evaluate how they are using technology in their educational practices. In this session, we will examine the four levels of technology represented by the SAMR acronym (substitution, augmentation, modification, redefinition), explore practical examples from a variety of subjects, and investigate ways to use SAMR to enhance your existing technology use.

Instructional Coaching for Principals and Supervisors

Cedrick Gray

The best way to impact instruction in your classrooms is to impact the instructors in your classrooms. Teachers need support, resources, and effective feedback to improve. This session will guide the participant through instructional coaching methods that include providing effective feedback that leads to instructional growth.

Making Thinking Visible

Tracie Abercrombie

Seeing our own thinking and the thinking of others gives us a unique opportunity to properly digest what we are learning. The ability to make thinking visible increases academic discourse in the classroom and enables us to gather real-time, meaningful feedback to quickly dispel common misconceptions. Come learn five digital tools to enhance your students' ability to think out loud. Whether you are a classroom teacher or leader of professional learning, these tools will help you interact with your audience as well as review session reports afterwards.

Active Engagement Strategies

Sue Caron

Do you know what it's like to sit down at a staff meeting and look around and see people not paying attention? Grading papers? Reading emails? Texting? Students aren't a whole lot different than adults; if they aren't absorbed by what's going on, they'll find something else that interests them. We can define active learning as the process of involving all learners in activities that encourage them to develop a deeper understanding of content by working with and reflecting on the material being presented. In this active, collaborative session we will explore strategies to build your arsenal of routines, strategies, and activities to take back to your schools and implement right away!

Digging into Data for School Improvement

Dru Tomlin and Cedrick Gray

Building an effective and amazing middle school is challenging work. Middle level leaders want to not only create great schools, but they want to maintain and sustain them. The essential key to this process is knowing how to gather, analyze, and utilize critical data about best middle school practices and the level at which they are being implemented at one's school. Explore this topic and the AMLE School Improvement Assessment tool at this engaging session.

Moving Students from Consumers to Creators

Tracie Abercrombie

Students today learn differently than we did growing up. Information at our fingertips, through technology, has changed even the way we once learned. So, why do we keep trying to teach the same way we were taught? Many of us have successfully transitioned to using devices in the classroom but are stuck in the idea that students can only use them for research or simply looking at a resource. Come gain a better understanding of how to move students from passively consuming content on their device to creating products in a way that transforms your classroom as well as student learning. Walk away with four tech tools that encourage the digital creation of a product to allow students to demonstrate the highest level of learning. This session is for classroom teachers as well as leaders looking to raise the level of technology integration in their schools.

Making VR and AR a Reality

Barbara McCarty

Interested in using virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) to enhance your program, but unsure where to start? In this session, we will explore ways to integrate VR and AR into your classroom activities to enhance student learning and engagement. Delve into the ways your students can benefit from being consumers and producers of this innovative technology. Experience the apps and learn about practical lesson ideas to make virtual and augmented reality a true reality in your school!

Multi-Age Teaming and Looping

Linda Hopping

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How to Have Difficult Conversations

Juan Rodriguez

The ability to manage difficult conversations effectively is a key leadership skill and critically necessary to achieving almost any significant change. What knowledge and skills are needed to engage in difficult conversations and give effective feedback? How do we deal with our own emotions? Asking everyone to give just a little more and "push it" requires strong relationships; a culture of trust, respect, and accountability; and commitment to high expectations. Where do we learn how to handle healthy conflict and debate with tact and a lot of patience with one another? Do people in our schools deal with conflicts directly, routinely, and well? Or does the email and water cooler chat continue to focus on all the ways things are not working.

The Un-faculty Faculty Meeting Making PD Meaningful
Tracie Abercrombie
Learning is personal. It doesn't just happen on a certain day of the week at a certain time. We encourage teachers to give their students choice and time to collaborate to ensure learning happens at the deepest level. Teachers need the same opportunities. Transform your professional learning as well as your faculty meetings into a place teachers want to be! Nobody likes to waste time in an unproductive faculty meeting. Administrators and leaders should consider transforming their faculty meetings into engaging, teacher driven, professional development sessions. Everyone, at any given time, has something to share that can help someone else. If leaders can simply provide the vehicle for educators to connect and collaborate about topics relevant to them, teachers can walk away feeling refreshed and fed so that they can pass that to their students. Come explore the edcamp components and learn how to use them to create several types of meaningful professional development sessions for your teachers. Walk away with several other PD ideas to use that will bring the fun and authenticity back to teacher learning!

Building a Strong Advisory Program
Sue Caron
Right off the pages of *This We Believe* comes a way to build a safe, inclusive, and supportive culture within your school community. By creating and investing in an advisory program, you provide *EVERY* student with an adult advocate whose focus is the whole child's social, emotional, and educational needs. In this session we will explore components and structures of strong advisory programs as well as look at and participate in hands on activities to build quality relationships and foster understanding, tolerance, and kindness amongst your learners.

Transitioning To and From the Middle Grades
Dru Tomlin
According to *This We Believe*, young adolescents need educators who value them and who are prepared to teach them. In addition, they (and their families) need and deserve effective and amazing transitional programs to and from the middle level. This interactive session will provide you with the tools, ideas, and examples you need to make this happen for every student in your school. Participants will take away a "blueprint" to create your own transition camp for incoming middle grades students

Developing Teacher Teams
Linda Hopping and Ruthie Stevenson
Many middle school leaders have instituted teaming as the basic organizational structure of their school, and teachers practice basic teaming principles every day. Come explore ways to move to the next level, where teams look closely at data on a regular basis, coordinate and integrate curriculum, engage in their own ongoing professional development, and even develop innovative teaming structures that extend beyond the norm.

Digital Citizenship in the 21st Century—More than Internet Safety
Barbara McCarty
It's time to reexamine how we approach digital citizenship with our middle school students. Let's move our conversations past personal safety to empower our students to become thoughtful consumers of information who use technology to make their voices heard and their communities better. In this session, we will examine ways to shift this focus through practical lessons and projects. Leave with resources and ideas to create effective, active digital citizens in your middle school.

Leader vs. Supervisor: Effective Practices of Supervision for Principals
Cedrick Gray
Is your school supervision culture like Little Bo Peep or The Good Shepherd? Do the sheep scatter unless you're standing over them or do they stay and graze even when you're not in the field? This session explores the difference between leadership and management in the area of supervision and the Ambitious Leadership Practices that leaders embrace to keep the flock focused and engaged.

Planning and Implementing Student-Led Conferences
Sue Caron
For our students to be involved and invested in their own learning and to create a culture where growth mindset and achieving goals are at the heart of what we do, learners need to be involved in conversations about their own strengths, struggles, and goals. Student-led conferences promote a culture of engagement, empowerment, and growth by asking the learner to take the driver's seat in planning, demonstrating, and sharing their learning. In this session we will look at:
- What are student-led conferences and why should we do them?
- Important parts of student-led conferences
- Tips for running effective student-led conferences
- Benefits for holding student-led conferences
- Templates, formats, and technology that can benefit a student-led conference

Closing Access and Opportunity Gaps in Middle Schools
Dru Tomlin
Keeping students connected to school in the middle grades is essential to their academic, behavioral, and social growth. We want them to stay for clubs after school, but transportation is an issue. We want them to be celebrated more, but we only have Honor Roll at certain times of the year. We want them to achieve academically, but access to technology is lacking. So how do we help ensure that students have unfettered access to activities, recognition, technology, and more? Let's discuss the answers, examples, and the challenges to this critical question in this engaging session.

Digital Tools that make Formative Assessments Easy
Tracie Abercrombie
What exactly is a formative assessment and how can we use it to really improve learning? Formative assessments can become meaningless if we are not intentional with their design and we don't utilize the data produced from them to change our instruction. Grading assessments in a timely manner so that we can give meaningful, specific feedback can be quite difficult. Come learn some digital platforms and tools that will give your formative assessments new life so that they begin to work for you by reducing grading time and allowing you to give timely feedback that helps students go deeper in their learning.

Courageous Conversations About Adolescent Suicide and Bullying
Ruthie Stevenson
Unfortunately, teenage suicide is increasing, and rapidly. It had been decreasing in the 1980s and 1990s, but now is becoming much more prevalent. In 15- to 24-year-olds, it is the second leading cause of death in the United States. Many external forces pressure young people to consider suicide, such as bullying, and with the relatively recent advent of advanced communication technology, such as the Internet, this pressure is even greater. Clearly, much work needs to be done, but many barriers have existed to turn the tide of this ongoing tragedy. In too many instances, the suicide crisis among adolescents is not addressed until it happens. Fortunately, that is not always the case. Some school districts have openly addressed the problem. This session will actively engage institute attendees in "courageous" conversations and activities to examine what may be described as an epidemic among adolescents.

School Safety: How to Ensure that Everyone Feels Safe
Juan Rodriguez
We are all shocked by the recent violent events in our schools that affect how we feel about safety and security. Although improving the security measures in our school campuses and buildings are two of our top concerns, school administrators struggle with maintaining a balance between having a user-friendly, welcoming school climate and a facility that is secure from unwanted intruders. While even the best school access control efforts will not guarantee preventing a determined outsider from gaining access to the school, we must take reasonable steps to reduce the risks of unauthorized access. Campus security does not happen overnight, but we can begin the journey today.