

Frameworks for Success: What Works in the Middle Workshop

Culture That Makes a Difference

The Cinderella Story

Gwyn Russell - Pontotoc Middle School, Pontotoc, MS

Session Topics: School Culture/Climate

Is morale at an all time low in your school? Do many of the teachers feel overlooked and under appreciated? Do the other schools within the district seem to excel academically, and your school seems to lag behind despite the long hours of hard work? That was the story of Pontotoc Middle School. Teachers within referred to themselves as the "red-headed step children." The culture was negative and the attitudes reflected defeat. At least that was the climate four years ago. This year, the staff is sharing their Cinderella story from a different perspective. The previous years afforded many challenges and changes, but the hard working staff recently received the state's accountability news. For the first time ever, Pontotoc Middle School received an "A" rating-- the highest level in the state. If you think you've tried everything and have almost given up on the morale of your school, the growth of your students, or the mindset change of staff, come hear how Pontotoc Middle School moved from a level C to a level A school in one year. You will laugh at the mishaps and you may even shed a tear as you hear the success story of how a rural, Title 1 school makes the most of meager resources to grow their students. If Pontotoc Middle School can rewrite the script, you, too still have time to make the needed changes.

Changing School Culture Through a Successful Advisory

Jon Pede - Jackson Elementary School, Hillsboro, OR

Session Topics: Advisory/Advocacy, Bullying/School Safety, Differentiated Instruction

Poynter Middle School in Hillsboro, Oregon is changing the culture in our school through a school created advisory program. Our successful advisory starts school off four days a week on a positive tone. Advisory includes team building, mindfulness, tutorial, homework help, positive behavior lessons, life lessons. Our Advisory was created so that all students have a person to go to and connect with daily. Everyone in our school has a hand in advisory. Even our Principal and Assistant Principal teach Advisory! We are in year 2 and we are seeing a change in our student culture.

Culturally Responsive Instruction - Representing ALL Our Students

Jon Pede - Jackson Elementary School, Hillsboro, OR

Session Topics: Curriculum, Diversity and Social Equity, Leadership

Principal Jon Pede and 7th grade Teacher Vanessa Ceccarelli will discuss their efforts to change instructional practice to Culturally Responsive Education at Poynter Middle School. Jon will talk about big picture cultural change and Vanessa will talk specifically about 7th grade language arts and the success she is having with culturally Responsive Education.

Middle School: A Place to Belong and Become

Patti Kinney - Talent, OR

Session Topics: Leadership, School Culture/Climate

Middle level educators have been entrusted with the care, nurturing, and education of young adolescents and therefore, their schools must be places where students feel they belong, where they are respected and valued. They must also be places where students can become, where their potential is recognized and nurtured. Based on the AMLE book of the same name, a co-author and past National Middle Level Principal of the Year will share strategies and practices that help ensure middle schools are a place where students can both belong and become.

Effective Interdisciplinary Teaming for Engaging Diverse Learners

Jennifer Elizabeth Martin

Session Topics: Diversity and Social Equity, ELL/ESL/ESOL, School Culture/Climate

How can interdisciplinary teams implement strategies to engage diverse learners? The 7/8 Dual Language Immersion Team at Alder Creek Middle School will present several techniques that have proven effective in raising student achievement and fostering an academic culture. This presentation will highlight three pillars of a strong team: team structures, shared instructional strategies, and an emphasis on community building.

Rebrand and Relaunch: Bringing the Spark Back to Your PBIS System

Sean O'Malley - Warrenton Grade School, Warrenton, OR

Session Topics: School Culture/Climate

These days it seems like everyone has a PBIS program. Many have gone largely unchanged since they were originally rolled out. In this session we will share what we learned at Warrenton Grade School when we Relaunched our PBIS program to enhance our culture (not change it). How did we avoid a token economy that is all about "stuff"? What can we learn from other buildings. What non-negotiables must staff hold each other to in order to make the culture stick? What did we do to embed the values of empathy, generosity, and maker-culture?

Inspiring Students and Teachers: Imagine a Place

Dr. Micki M Caskey, Ph.D. - Portland State University, Portland, OR

Session Topics: School Culture/Climate

Middle grades teachers have stories about the joys and demands of teaching young adolescents. The purpose of this session is to share the stories and hear the voices of middle grades teachers. Middle grades teachers have stories about the joys and demands of teaching young adolescents. The purpose of this session is to share the stories and hear the voices of middle grades teachers. Imagine a Place--a place that honors and responds to young adolescents' most essential needs. In this session, we begin by sharing stories of middle grades teachers who inspire young adolescents and find inspiration in teaching them. Then, we invite participants to exchange their views and ideas for creating safe, meaningful, and hopeful learning experiences for young adolescents. This session's goals are to: (a) explore places—classrooms and schools—that honor young adolescents' central needs (e.g., belonging); (b) share stories of middle grades teachers who inspire young adolescents and find inspiration in teaching them; and (c) exchange ideas for creating safe, meaningful, and hopeful learning experiences for young adolescents.

High Impact Strategies in the Classroom

STEM on a Shoestring Budget

Brad Fulton - Teacher To Teacher Press, Millville, CA

Session Topics: STEM/STEAM, Technology

The integration of science, technology, engineering, and math empowers student learning today and employment tomorrow. Learn how to integrate powerful STEM lessons on a tight budget for pennies per student. You will see how you can teach your grade-level content standards through a STEM and project-based learning format to maximize engagement and results. You'll also learn the rationale for implementing STEM instruction and see how this strategy can help struggling students overcome failure paralysis and risk aversion. Ready-for-Monday projects are included.

How Math Should Be Taught

Brad Fulton - Teacher To Teacher Press, Millville, CA

Session Topics: Common Core State Standards, Curriculum, Teaching
According to research, the way we typically teach math is radically different from how we teach other subjects. Simple and effective strategies can help rectify this discrepancy and maximize results for our time invested. We'll learn how to integrate and interrelate multiple standards simultaneously to maximize cognitive connections across strands.

Mathematical practices will be developed and reinforced during the process of teaching content. We'll also see how we can capitalize on student knowledge in a constructivist approach that will allow even struggling students to understand math and develop rich number sense and computational fluency.

Ready-to-Go Instructional Strategies that Impact Middle School Achievement

Denise White - Tulsa, OK

Session Topics: Teaching

The key to improving student achievement isn't more teacher time—it's more teacher impact. Meaningful instruction in today's world of information overload is a demanding task; however, high impact instructional strategies increase the odds that middle schoolers are actively learning and getting prepared for the world beyond school. This interactive session will equip middle level educators with the tools to provide intentional, purposeful instruction that will allow them to get the "most bang for their buck" in every lesson, every day. Come prepared to craft a culture of engaging, student-centered learning.

Small Strategies - Big Impacts!

Gretchen M Cruden - Kettle Falls, WA

Session Topics: Young Adolescent Development, Teaching

Want simple strategies with big impacts? How about the ability to tap into critical thinking skills with every lesson? Come and learn about the "Big Five" - easy tools you can use in your classroom every day that research shows have the biggest pay-offs in learning. These strategies boost learning through the roof because they are brain-friendly and fun! You will learn not only HOW to use these strategies in ANY content area, but also WHY these strategies are so effective in learning, especially for the middle school mind. You will walk out the door, ready to implement the "Big Five" and ready to be amazed by your students' learning!

A Community in the Middle: Creating Inclusivity through Community in Middle School

Karin DuMont - Kelowna, BC Canada

Session Topics: Assessment, Differentiated Instruction, Diversity and Social Equity

In this session attendees will participate in hands-on, collaborative activities that will provide strategies to engage all learners, promote collaboration, activate critical and creative thinking, encourage engagement through emotional activation, and tap into the social and experiential nature of middle level learning. Attendees will live the experience of being in a Learning Community where individual strengths and differences are recognized, diversity is celebrated, and personalized learning is a daily occurrence. This session will also allow educators to use technology to create online portfolios of student work that reflect growth of all learners and allow for educators to implement meaningful assessment practices. All who attend will experience working with cross-curricular units that fully integrate arts education, and they will leave the session with easy to implement strategies, ready for immediate use in their classrooms.

Middle School Literacy – Expanding Critical Thinking in the Content Areas

Jacob Williams - Portland, OR

Session Topics: Professional Development, Special Education/Inclusion, Teaching

Participants will be provided a set of simple reading strategies and tips to aid all students, including English Learners and students with disabilities, to access and comprehend content specific complex text. During the session opportunities will be provided for hands-on practice with the strategies and opportunities to interact and share ideas with other participants.

Better Behavior = Better Learning: Learn Simple Strategies to Improve Both

Jim Utterback - Boca Raton, FL

Session Topics: Classroom Management, Professional Development, School Culture/Climate

In this session attendees will learn about teacher/student relationships, desirable teacher characteristics, and simple techniques to control and eliminate 80-90% of misbehaviors that steal valuable instruction time. These proven methods can return 6-10 hours of learning time to the classroom each week. More learning means higher success. Smart phones, surveys, and worksheets will be used in this session to give attendees the opportunity to participate, share, and learn from their colleagues as well as the presenter. Take away low stress tools that have a positive impact in the classroom.

Creating a School-wide Writing Program

Ms. Alice Greiner - The Write Tools, Centennial, CO

Session Topics: Common Core State Standards, Language Arts and Literacy , Professional Development,

National and state academic standards put more emphasis on writing than ever before, and many middle schools know they need to “do something about writing”. This dilemma is often compounded by an independent contractor approach of close the door and do your own thing when it comes to writing. This causes confusion for students and frustration for teachers since there is neither common language nor common strategies in place across grade levels or content areas. In this session, participants will learn and practice four essential elements that must be part of a successful school-wide writing initiative. Audience participation, sharing of student writing samples and opportunities to work with a small group will make this a lively and interactive session. The instructional strategies shared are teacher and student friendly, can be used tomorrow, and when implemented with fidelity will improve everyday classroom writing as well as assessment scores. If you know it’s time for your building to “do something about writing”, then this is the session for you!

Reaching and Teaching Outliers

Trevelyn Everitt-Gyure - Flower Mound, TX

Session Topics: Classroom Management, Professional Development, School Culture/Climate

Do you have students who are simply not engaged or feel isolated in your classroom? This session is a high-leverage opportunity to improve your classroom and the school's performance while making breakthroughs in individual student learning. One of the highest leverage points in moving a school toward the improvement goals is through outliers. In this session, you'll gain an understanding of how to identify the outliers and what might be causing student concerns or behaviors, discover the feelings and consider the thought process of your outlier students. During the presentation we will talk about student traits and characteristics which cause outliers and ways to break through to these students which will build connections. We will work on various strategies to engage these students in order to ensure all students are reaching their potential and feel connected. This presentation will be very collaborative with many hands-on activities to ensure the participants are learning and engaged. Participants will gain an understanding of how it feels to be an outlier and unable to free yourself of the chains that hold you there. Engagement strategies will be practiced throughout the presentation to ensure the participants understand how to reach these students and also to develop muscle memory of strategies when the teachers return to their classroom setting. Embracing all students is best practice. All students are entitled to an outstanding educational experience throughout the academic career. Many teachers are all too willing to leave these students behind creating an internal void within these students. Developing strategies to engage and educate these students will drive the school in a positive fashion and will forever change a student's perspective.

Teaching Reading through Sound - Synthesis in the Classroom

William Arnold, M.Ed. - Harding Academy, Nashville, TN

Session Topics: Differentiated Instruction, Language Arts and Literacy , Professional Development

Most information we present in English/Language Arts classrooms is either visual or oral, sometimes both. The use of sound outside the context of music is often overlooked as a teaching resource. Learn ways to include sensory experiences rich with sound to help students develop their reading skills. Leave with a set of tools and ideas to make reading exercises in your classroom truly multisensory experiences.

High Performing Middle Schools

Small Schools and Big Success - What Works Across All Schools Small and Large

Leo Lawyer - Neah-Kah-Nie MS, Rockaway Beach, OR

Session Topics: Young Adolescent Development, Common Core State Standards, Curriculum

This session will be based on the experiences of the high levels of performance for one small, high poverty middle school on the Oregon Coast. Neah-Kah-Nie Middle School, with a free and reduced lunch percentage of 67%, and a mobility rate above the state average has been able to beat the odds and consistently perform at the top levels of the state in language arts, math, science, and attendance.

Recently, the Portland Business Journal ranked Neah-Kah-Nie Middle School as the 22nd ranked middle school in the entire state of Oregon.

Leadership that Empowers & Builds Capacity

Office Discipline Referrals: Prime Learning Opportunity or Exercise in Futility?

Patricia Wells - Creating Student Success, Columbia, MO

Session Topics: Leadership

When behavior disrupts learning, discipline referrals remain the primary response. Done well, ODRs can be a turning point for the student. Learn a process that helps students regain self-control, learn critical social/life skills, and be prepared for successful classroom re-entry. This research-based protocol strengthens the child and affects behavior change, while increasing comfort and consistency for administrators. It unifies staff, creates a collaborative culture, and maintains high expectations for behavior/learning, while keeping students successfully in school. There is scarcely a school that doesn't utilize ODRs as an eventual response for disruptive students. Yet few report their referrals result in changed behavior. This is unfortunate, as the student referred to the office has a prime learning opportunity. He has been "fired" from his job of being a student, and has an opportunity to learn critical alternative behaviors immediately useful to survive in school and be successful in life. Few recognize this optimal learning opportunity, and even fewer have the skills to effectively assist the student to change his/her behavior. Administrative Intervention is based on principles of applied behavior analysis and social learning theory, and was first adapted for school use from the well-researched Teaching-Family Model at the KU. The protocol includes a sequential set of practices for the administrator/designee to de-escalate behavior, obtain and maintain instructional control, teach alternative behaviors, and prepare students for successful classroom re-entry. After this session, participants will be able to: 1) establish a shared vision of ODRs as a system of support and collaborative endeavor between staff, administrators, parents; 2) embrace the role of ODRs in teaching critical life/social skills; 3) understand a three-phase protocol for successful ODRs, helping students regain self-control and problem-solve, learn alternative behaviors, and repair relationships with referring staff; 4) know how to utilize consequences that keep students in school, hold them accountable, and change behavior.

Systems

Middle School Instructional Coaching: A Systemic Approach

Susan Coleman - Springfield SD 19, Springfield, OR

Session Topics: Leadership, Professional Development, Organizational Structures

The goal of this session is to provide a clear picture of how our district created a Middle School Instructional Coaching Model with a focus first on systems, and for participants to leave with practical ideas to help build or strengthen their own systems. Participants will (1) have a clear understanding of the system elements that are necessary to a well functioning Middle School Instructional Coaching Model, (2) be able to apply their understanding of system elements to their own situation, no matter what the system may be, and (3) be EXCITED about systems and convinced of their importance in moving forward with the work that matters to their district!