SAMPLE ISSUE

Assessing for Student Success

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Measure of Success

We all have them...students who don’t submit assignments on time, or at all. Does turning in homework late mean you don’t have a grasp of the content? Not necessarily, but it does suggest something else is going on. These are students who might be struggling with organization skills, who are overscheduled, dealing with drama at home or school, or for whom “doing school” isn’t working. Do we lower their grade, which reflects mastery of the academic subject, or do we take a minute to figure out what’s going on and give them opportunities to demonstrate mastery?

And what about measuring the development of those skills that make us better able to manage our lives, our time, and our relationships? Are we attending to these skills and measuring progress?

It’s important during the middle school years—perhaps more so than at any other time in the K-12 continuum—for students to have multiple opportunities to develop and demonstrate social-emotional competencies in addition to developing and demonstrating academic learning. Measuring these separately is a significant topic of conversation in the education world, which is reflected in this issue of AMLE Magazine. If our goal is to develop healthy, productive, ethical citizens, then assessing both is important.

In this issue, Mandy Stalets covers the why and how of sound standards-based assessment. She helps us understand how focusing on the standards goes a long way to developing student self-awareness, a key aspect of social-emotional learning. Perry Finch describes the value in standards-based learning and assessment as a means to promote success for every student, dismissing the antiquated concepts of grading by comparison, grading with zeros, and grading as a gotcha. Julie Quast and Angela Stanford listen to the student voice when revisiting how we use rubrics as an assessment tool. And Phyllis Fagell offers ideas for helping students shift their thinking to look beyond grades.

As always, Rick Wormeli offers us a gem (and a mirror) as he holds us accountable for paying attention to research, though it’s sometimes messy, and moving our profession forward by watching the research, doing research in our own classrooms, and paying attention to our professional learning.
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