



2021 Institute for Middle Level Leadership Session Descriptions

A CONVERSATION ON GRADING PRACTICES AND POLICIES **TODD BRIST**

Successful grading reform starts with a meaningful conversation about the purpose of grades and confronting long standing beliefs and entrenched practices. From zeros to standards-based grading and everything in between, we will consider some do's, don'ts, and do-betters that can help us to more effectively communicate student progress and needs. Come and join the conversation about the research on grading and what works best for students so educators can propose more meaningful practices and policies that focus on foundational issues, not just details.

FROM STANDARDS TO ASSESSMENT: DESIGNING TEACHING AND LEARNING **TODD BRIST**

You have your standards now what? How do you know the students understand what was taught? What should you teach? Where should you start? Where should you end? Too often the focus is put on the curriculum materials and/or the instructional strategies, but the real emphasis should be placed on aligning the standards and assessments. The goal of this session will be to share the curriculum mapping process that includes starting with the standards and turning them into assessments and then designing teaching and learning around the assessments.

PLCS--THE MODEL FOR TEAMING

TODD BRIST

The professional learning community (PLC) model is a grand design—a powerful way of working together that profoundly affects teaching and learning--the perfect model for successful middle school teams. This session will provide you with the background knowledge and tools to launch PLCs, the most promising and powerful process for sustained, substantive school improvement in your school. We will discuss the foundations, characteristics, tight-loose culture, big ideas, and the cultural shifts required to transform teams into high performing PLCs.

TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THE BLOCK

TODD BRIST

Bueller? Bueller? Teaching in the block is not about a 90-minute lecture, it is so much more! From differentiation and inquiry to independent practice and group work, variation is your friend in the block. This session will look at the pros, discuss ways to mitigate cons, and explore various schedules, but will focus on the strategies that can make the block an effective tool. Time is the most precious resource we have at school and while the block won't add more minutes to the day, it can certainly add to the quality of the time students spend in school.

CONDUCTING THE 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, accountability and commitment to high expectations. Where do we learn how to handle healthy conflict, 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 social media and "water cooler" chat continue to focus on all the ways things are not working.

PROVIDING EXTRINSIC/INTRINSIC MOTIVATION

JUAN RODRIGUEZ

Engaging students is a major challenge for teachers. A student's poor performance is often attributed to a lack of motivation. In today's fast-paced world it's all about finding the proper approach. But which type of motivation are we talking about? Intrinsic motivation? Extrinsic motivation? Or perhaps a combination of both? Is there room for both?

Are self-efficacy and confidence as learners factors in how students decide to engage? 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.

PREPARING FOR RE-ENTRY TO A FULL IN-PERSON ENVIRONMENT

JUAN RODRIGUEZ

Assuming school buildings may reopen this fall in some form, we understand that it won't be business as usual. We want things to return to "normal". How do we insert precautionary measures at the same time that we have more face-to-face contact? How can we ensure social distancing, limit group size, provide transportation, limit large gathering places, maintain healthy environments, modify usage of physical space while not sure about school budgets? How can we ensure that remote learning , if needed, is helping students learn? Let us engage in a conversation, make connections and share ideas.

DEVELOPING PERSONALIZED LEADERSHIP GROWTH

JUAN RODRIGUEZ

Do we know the characteristics associated with individuals who initiate self-development activities to grow leadership skills? Through open conversations, hands-on experiences, case study, and reflections, participants will begin to build their leadership capacity to create successful middle level schools. Using deep reflections, participants will understand the abilities they have and the areas they need to work on to become better middle level leaders. This session will assist participants in launching a personalized leadership plan.

GETTING TO THE HEART OF THE MATTER:
IMPLEMENTING TRAUMA INFORMED INSTRUCTION
CEDRICK GRAY

One thing more important than what you teach is who you teach. knowing and understanding our students emotionally yields tremendous relational dividends. This session will explore the causes of trauma, its impact and how to effectively provide sound instruction for all students, particularly those in need of a response to trauma. Participants will also explore strategies to mitigate the traumatic impact of adverse childhood events for middle school students of color.

By the end of the session, participants will be able to answer the following: Why is it important for all middle school students and their teachers to understand trauma and how it impacts their lives? What can middle school educators do to better relate to middle school students who've experienced adverse childhood events? What strategies can middle school educators execute to enhance the experience of those students?

**PROMOTING THE POSITIVE AND ADDRESSING THE TOXIC
IN SCHOOL CULTURE**
CEDRICK GRAY

If the phrase, “one step forward, two steps back” describes the culture of your school, this session is for you. Participants will learn how to transform toxic cultures into collaborative endeavors. Building a collaborative culture doesn’t happen by accident. It takes a focused strategic approach to lift effective teachers while shifting ineffective ones.

In this session, participants will analyze their current school culture and begin the development of a plan to make the culture more collaborative. We will also explore how the culture of a school building impacts the climate of the school building.

**CONFRONTING EQUITY ISSUES: WHY BLACK LIVES
MATTER MATTERS TO ALL MIDDLE SCHOOL LIVES**
CEDRICK GRAY

This session will examine the impact of The BLM movement on educating ALL middle school students. This session provides the context around the BLM movement and an examination of how it affects students of color developing through adolescence. Participants will reflect on the historical need for the movement as well as its current context. Participants will also explore strategies to mitigate the traumatic impact of adverse childhood events for middle school students of color.

By the end of the session, participants will be able to answer the following: Why did the BLM Movement start? Why is it important for all middle school students to understand how African American history, including the Movement, impacts their lives? What can middle school educators do to better relate to middle school students of color? What strategies can middle school educators execute to enhance the experience of students of color?

ADDRESSING THE LEARNING GAPS: 7 PRINCIPLES OF THE INSTRUCTIONAL CORE **CEDRICK GRAY**

The model of the instructional core provides the basic framework for how to intervene in the instructional process so as 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.

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 also guide the participant through instructional coaching methods that include providing effective feedback that leads to instructional growth.

LESSONS LEARNED: MOTIVATING YOUNG ADOLESCENTS IN A VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT **ERIN SCHOLES**

Zoom... Meets... Teams... Remote...Hybrid... Social Distancing...You are muted!

What have we learned in the last year and a half? What works? What should we keep? What do we never want to do again? If there is one thing that is certain, technology has plunged its way into education. No matter what next school year will look like, there are things we can do to prepare. Most importantly, let's figure out how to engage our students. Focusing on the how and what of technology, let's get ready for the year.

Let's focus on what worked, and build up our tool box for motivating our students to engage in a virtual environment.

**MANAGING MOODS IN THE MIDDLE: ENCOURAGING
STUDENT SELF-CARE AND STRESS MANAGEMENT**
ERIN SCHOLES

During middle school adolescents are growing, experiencing lots of changes, and trying to figure out who they are/who they want to be. Students cannot learn if they are not able to manage their emotions and stress levels. As teachers, we are excited to share our awesome lessons and exciting content with our students, so how can we ensure that they are in the best place to learn? We will explore strategies that can be implemented within the classroom to help students practice self-care and manage their stress, so they can get back to learning.

A focus on strategies that can be implemented in the classroom to help you and your students with self-care and stress management.

**MORE ENGAGING THAN A TEST: ASSESSING STUDENT
LEARNING**
ERIN SCHOLES

There are lots of ways to assess students' knowledge, in this session we will discuss a variety of ways to assess students that are not a pencil and paper test. From formative to summative assessments, authentic projects, use of technology, and allowing for student choice, we will discuss possibilities for assessments that may look different to you and your students. We will also explore technology that can help with assessment. There will also be opportunities to share your own ideas of how to best assess our students.

You will leave this session with a variety of ideas to use in your class to assess student knowledge.

AVOIDING THE DON'TS: PROMOTING DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP AND LITERACY

ERIN SCHOLES

When thinking about students interacting online oftentimes adults turn to the list of “don’ts”, rather let’s focus on teaching students how to positively and safely interact online. Providing students with a safe space to practice how to use technology will help them develop their digital skills and allow them to become good digital citizens. We will look at strategies to promote digital citizenship and literacy while also looking at different apps and websites that can help teachers with lessons and online interactions.

Our students are living in a digital world, so as teachers we are helping to influence these already digital citizens, let’s help them put their best footprint forward.

SUPPORTING THE TECH HESITANT TEACHER IN A TECHNOLOGY DRIVEN ENVIRONMENT

BARBARA MCCARTY

While 2020 forced us into virtual environments, there are many teachers who continue to be intimidated by the idea of incorporating technology into their lessons in meaningful ways. In this session, we will consider some of the common concerns of tech-hesitant teachers as well as explore practical ways to meet their needs and support their growth. Help your teachers choose to use technology to enhance their lessons in any environment in which they might be placed.

GAMIFY YOUR LESSONS AND EVERYONE WILL WIN!
BARBARA MCCARTY

Learn how to engage students in your lessons through gamified elements. Investigate what makes something "gamified" and how to incorporate those qualities into your classroom activities and assessments in any content area. Be prepared to play as we experiment with sample websites and activities that will allure even your toughest students into learning your content material. Let's explore using gamification as a fun, built-in assessment tool fostering participation, choice and voice...ready, set, go!

EXPLORING TECH TOOLS FOR LEARNING
BARBARA MCCARTY

The shift to remote learning sent many teachers scrambling to find effective, collaborative and user-friendly technology tools to reach and engage their diverse population of students. With so many websites, apps and digital activities out there, which ones do you choose? In this session, we will not only examine and model some our favorite sites and activities, but also discuss how to thoughtfully integrate these tools into any content area classroom. Leave with more confidence, excitement and desire to incorporate these new online activities to reach all of your middle school students through a variety of technology tools.

CREATING AN ADVISORY PROGRAM TO REACH ALL OF YOUR STUDENTS, EVEN IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

BARBARA MCCARTY

We know that middle school students are more likely to succeed when they have a meaningful relationship with an adult at school. In a typical year, this is a challenging task. However, add in the chaos incited by a pandemic, and it seems almost impossible. In this session, we will examine ways to provide the academic and social-emotional supports that are key to an advisory program. Explore the components of planning and executing an advisory program that can be adapted to any environment, whether you are in-person, virtual or hybrid. Leave with practical ideas to implement your own advisory program.

UNDERSTANDING AND IMPLEMENTING TWB

LINDA HOPPING

Successful Middle Schools: This We Believe is a research-based document that sets forth 18 characteristics centered around five attributes that, if instituted with fidelity in middle level schools, will provide students with an academically challenging education in a developmentally appropriate environment. Come explore specific strategies centered around these attributes that provide engaging instruction for all students.

DESIGNING INTEGRATED INSTRUCTION **LINDA HOPPING**

Throughout our days and throughout our lives we use an integrated set of skills to work, to learn, and to live our daily lives. If one of the major goals of education is to help students learn to achieve and be successful in life, why do we teach them in separated subjects that do not overlap? This session will focus on developing an integrated approach to instruction that parallels successful life skills and teaches young adolescents the importance of utilizing multiple disciplines to achieve success.

USING EARLY WARNING INDICATORS TO ADDRESS STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT **LINDA HOPPING**

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 grade years. It will provide a framework for how to set up tracking systems and develop specific interventions.

EXPLORING THE POSSIBILITIES OF MULTI-AGE TEAMING/LOOPING **LINDA HOPPING**

One of the most important characteristics of successful middle level 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.

TRANSITIONING TO AND FROM MIDDLE SCHOOL **DRU TOMLIN**

According to *The Successful Middle School (AMLE)*, 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 in a remote or blended/hybrid environment to make this happen for every student in your school. Participants will: Identify the stakeholders in the transition process, determine their concerns, develop strategies to address those concerns, explore strategies to strengthen relationships and ease the anxiety for students in grade-level transition and the families who love them. There will also be a "blueprint" to create your own "transition camp" for incoming middle grades students.

FOSTERING ATTENDANCE & ENGAGEMENT IN THE HYBRID WORLD **DRU TOMLIN**

Students in the middle grades need learning atmospheres in hybrid and/or remote worlds that respond to their unique needs. But what exactly does a classroom, virtual space, and/or school built for young adolescent achievement look like, sound like, and feel like? Let's answer this question by exploring students' developmental characteristics, key terms, and critical concepts to reach every student and create a great middle grades school! This session will look at best instructional practices in the middle grades and how middle level leaders can support their teachers as they implement them.

**PROMOTING STAFF MORALE AND CARE IN
HYBRID/REMOTE**
DRU TOMLIN

The familiar adage of “if you don’t feed the teachers, they’ll eat the children” is even more evident today in the hybrid/remote learning landscape. More than ever, our tremendous middle level educators are spending exhaustive amounts of time, energy and effort supporting the students they serve. They are being asked to pivot but also to be consistent. They are being told to be flexible but also firm. They are being challenged to plan ahead but also leave space in their lessons for change. And as a result, many teachers are tired and worn down--and they are looking for our help! With this leadership challenge and reality in mind, this session will present simple, yet effective ways that we can take to support our teachers and staff--and take them from feeling extinguished to distinguished every day.

ADDRESSING SEL DURING THE HYBRID EXPERIENCE
DRU TOMLIN

Young adolescents aren’t just trying to achieve academically in the critical middle grades. They’re trying to adjust and succeed socially and emotionally, as well. This fact has been amplified by the challenging times in which we’ve been living in--whether our students have been experiencing them face-to-face, totally remote or in a hybrid model. Students are concerned about their friendships in the midst of isolation; their health and wellness during a pandemic; the clarity of their futures while the present seems murky; and much more. How do we adequately and collaboratively address the SEL needs of our middle school students? In this session, we’ll answer that robust question together by discussing research-based SEL strategies and solutions that we can implement immediately for the students and families we serve.

CAREER EXPLORATION IN THE MIDDLE GRADES: A HANDBOOK FOR EDUCATORS

Please join us as we unveil our collaboration with AMLE on a playbook designed to plan, implement, and sustain middle school career exploration programming in schools. The playbook will feature best practices, implementation guides, action plans, and case studies for district and school leaders, guidance counselors, and teachers on building, sustaining, and funding a program of their own. An extensive, free digital resource library will also offer school-wide event planning resources, budget templates, and a digital middle school curriculum. Don't miss this dynamic and game changing way to incorporate career innovation into your middle grade classrooms.

American Student Assistance® (ASA) is committed to helping students know themselves, know their options, and make informed decisions to achieve their education and career goals. We help students, as early as middle school, discover their own interests, passions, and talents, and draw connections between those abilities and potential careers for the future. Today you'll find us online, in schools, and in communities making our mark through digital programs, partnerships, and advocacy. With the help of like-minded leaders, educators, and organizations, we're working to upend the stigmas, misinformation, and opportunity gaps standing between students and the lives they envision for themselves.