

# MIDDLE LINK

Maine Association for Middle Level Education

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## Middle Level Education Institute MLEI Celebrates 25 Years of Success

The Middle Level Educational Institute has been synonymous with high quality professional development for twenty-five years. Its first year at Thomas College, with MAMLE in charge, was no exception. From the national and state consultants to the air-conditioned housing and terrific food, this Institute was one of the best.

This was not a sit and listen week; it was a get up and do week. Jill Spencer and Chris Toy, co-directors, along with the consultants modeled best practices in their group sessions. They started with energizers to get everyone's brains working such as the Goridan Knot, folding the line, and even walking as small groups using duct tape for skis. Replacing keynotes were interactive sessions exploring exemplary educational practices for young adolescents.

Mike Muir's cameo appearance at the beginning of the Institute got everyone twittering. Patti Kinney and Teresa Hinkle brought interesting accents and endless enthusiasm to the week as they spread their messages about positive environments, courageous and collaborative leadership, advisories, and other best practices. Mark Springer challenged participants in cooperative group activities. He also shared his passion for involving students in their curriculum including planning differentiation and formative assessment. Nancy Dodo brought the voice of the young adolescent to the institute. Participants created found poetry in her closing session that can be found on the MLEI wiki.

Maine educators shared their special talents during the week. Argy Nestor turned the Atrium into an art room with her book making session. Participants in Ann Marie Hutton's session learned how to make an interactive white board using

a variety of materials including a wiimote. Carla Burnham shared her experiences from an active teacher research project using the Internet Reciprocal Teaching model.

Barbara Greenstone, Phil Brookhouse, and Lisa Hogan were available for the always-needed one-on-one tech support. In addition to introducing Web 2.0 tools and sharing ways to integrate technology, they guided teams to applications and websites just right for their students.

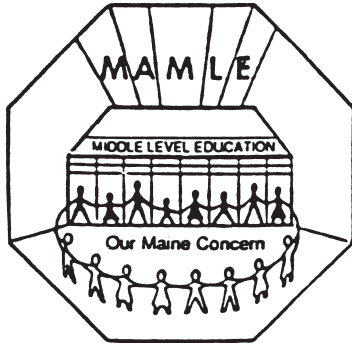
The Institute didn't end with supper; excitement and enthusiasm continued into the evening hours. Whether it was individual team bonding time or time spent in an activity planned by the directors and staff, such as cooperative activities, a movie, a game night with ice cream and door prizes, or a Camp Kieve presentation, people were connecting and having fun.

All attendants received 4.5 CEUs for the week. Wally Alexander, Associate Professor of Education at Thomas College, offered the opportunity for participants to receive 3 graduate credits for the Institute.

Bright Futures, Open Source Technology, pumpkin spice whoopie pies, staff members (Tug Kellough, Kara Smith, and me) to take care of you, video conferences with Rick Wormeli and Brenda Dyck – the week just kept getting better and better. If you missed this year's Institute, it's not too early to start planning to attend the 26th Middle Level Educational Institute.

More commentaries and info about MLEI09 and the upcoming MLEI10 are available on the Web. Visit <http://mlei.pbworks.com> and <http://www.mamleonline.org>. Open a twitter account and follow the discussion by adding MLEI to the groups you follow.

*Carol Ann Tomlinson to Keynote!*  
*Annual MAMLE Conference!*  
*October 22 - 23, 2009 @ Sugarloaf USA*



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*MAMLE Editor:* Wally Alexander

## *From the President's Desk*

For me, the most exciting part of an otherwise gloomy, rainy July was the opportunity to spend five upbeat days at the Middle Level Educational Institute (MLEI) at Thomas College. In its first year being hosted by MAMLE, the 25th Annual MLEI was a great success. The accommodations were wonderful, especially the food. More importantly was the chance to work with some great middle level thinkers and educators. Each day I was able to connect with national middle level leaders, including Nancy Doda, Theresa Hinckle, Patty Kinney and Mark Springer. I even got to see and hear Rick Wormeli on Skype.

MLEI also brought together super people from around the state of Maine. It was great to chat with Argy Nester, our voice for middle level at the State Department of Education. Lisa Hogan had good information on digital citizenship, and Phil Brookhouse and Barbara Greenstone will be my "best friends" this fall when I need help remembering how to "twitter", "flickr," make comics and all the other technology I learned. The staff, (fondly known as Staph), Carol Duffy, Tug Kellough and Kara Smith helped everything go smoothly. Wally Alexander gave everyone the opportunity to get graduate/ceu credit. Jill Spencer and Chris Toy pulled it altogether, getting us started each morning with great activities. I got to know many other middle level teachers and principals. They will be great connections during the school year.

I am looking forward to going back to school refreshed and ready to use all the the exciting ideas I got at MLEI. I am also looking forward to reconnecting with all my middle level colleagues at the Annual MAMLE Conference at Sugarloaf on October 22 and 23. The keynote speaker, Carol Ann Tomlinson, should be a great treat. I hope you all will be there to join me. Look for more Conference information in this newsletter and at mamleonline.org.

## Spotlight Your School

We see and hear about many outstanding programs and ideas in our Maine schools. Your Maine Association for Middle Level Education needs your help to spread the word. Please consider sharing your ideas and success stories in one of our publications. No article is too small. For more information, contact Wally Alexander at wallace.alexander@umit.maine.edu.



# The Learning Curve

A column by Todd Nelson

## School is a Verb

*Verbs act. Verbs move. Verbs do. Verbs strike, soothe, grin, cry, exasperate, decline, fly, hurt, and heal. Verbs make writing go, and they matter more to our language than any other part of speech.*

—Donald Hall

Each September, when a new school year starts up, I like to revisit May Sarton's remarkable, vigorous description of how she felt about her school when she was a child growing up in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The Maine poet wrote, "We children must have seemed a primitive insurgent tribe. We were not subjected to a theory of education. We were set down in the center of a primal force at work. We never knew what would happen next, but what did happen was always immensely interesting – everything we learned was alive, hunted down, a private possession."\* I like the vision of children and their teachers as a tribe of hunter-gatherers of knowledge and experience.

***To really appreciate a verb, or a school, or a school kid, you need to see it in action.***

I had the good fortune to teach for ten years at Sarton's former school – long after she went there – and some of that insurgency persisted and surely rubbed off on me. I can attest to the uncertainty and adventure of inquiry being a great, fundamental learning result of the teachers and children I worked with. Sarton also reminds me that "school" is a verb, with galaxies of helping verbs lurking within earshot of the predicate. It's not something static or walled-in, packaged, synthesized and data-bound. Start with "hunt" and shake or stir together with Bloom's taxonomy of the verbs of learning: name, define, list, quote, recite, explain, convert, translate, illustrate, reword, interpret, classify, compute, solve, demonstrate, diagnose, distinguish, outline, analyze, diagram, divide, point out, associate, differentiate, examine, reduce, conclude, discriminate, find, separate, designate, dissect, infer, determine,

devise, originate, revise, compile, expand, plan, rewrite, compose, extend, pose, synthesize, conceive, generalize, propose, theorize, create, integrate, project, write, design, invent, rearrange, develop, modify, critique, judge, assess, contrast, deduce, weigh, compare, criticize, evaluate, bagpipe.

***School belongs in a sentence with a cloud of objects, direct and indirect, circling its nucleus.***

Well, old professor Bloom can get a bit cerebral, can't he! It's tough to reduce so many subjects, plus lunch and recess, where a great deal of learning takes place, to a single English verb. Not all verbs carry the predatory oomph of "hunt." You certainly don't get a pungent whiff of the quarry from "compile;" and a verb like "outline" might be a little too much casual gathering of berries for a really exciting social studies class. You have to choose verbs carefully. You are what you conjugate, after all, and the more irregular the verb the more exciting the reading, writing, art, and arithmetic. School pounces, climbs, scratches, jumps, juggles, races, tugs, skips, laughs, explodes and plays. School blossoms. That's more like it. To co-opt another New England poet, Donald Hall, "Verbs make [school] go, and they matter more to our [learning] than any other part of speech."

But it's all good. Thinking is action. To really appreciate a verb, or a school, or a school kid, you need to see it in action. School belongs in a sentence with a cloud of objects, direct and indirect, circling its nucleus. It's kind of like observing quarks and neutrinos, the subatomic particles or invisible celestial objects whose presence is detected by the behavior of the matter and light around them. School has a powerful gravitational force that can run the universe. Let this year's hunt for learning's big game begin. Lights, Camera, Action!

\* I Knew a Phoenix

Todd Nelson is principal of the Adams School in Castine.



# MAMLE Announces Its 2009 Exemplary Practices Awardees

Each year the Board of Directors of the Maine Association for Middle Level Education calls for nominations for the Exemplary Practice Award. This award is designed to recognize individuals, teams, and schools across the State of Maine who are incorporating “best practices” into their curriculum and instruction, and whose educational practices exemplify excellent middle level education. By recognizing such practices, MAMLE hopes to share and promote high standards of middle level education across the state. MAMLE will recognize these exemplary practices in Maine schools at the Annual Conference in October at Sugarloaf USA. Exemplary practices must reflect one or more of the following core values of MAMLE:

- Meets the developmental needs of young adolescents
- Promotes local professional development
- Promotes healthy work environment for both students and teachers
- Exemplifies high standards based on research
- Invites active participation by students, parents, and/or community

Since 1995, MAMLE has made 40 Exemplary Practice Awards. This year, MAMLE is pleased to make two new Exemplary Practice Awards.

## **Diana Mullins & Tom Sferes** **Biddeford Middle School** **Michael Chase** **Founder of "The Kindness Center"** *Am I Being Kind?* *Creating a Culture of Kindness* *Throughout the School*

Working with Michael Chase, founder of the “Kindness Center,” Biddeford Middle School began a year-long “Kindness Initiative” to create a culture of kindness. Students were challenged to ask themselves, “Am I being Kind?” in every interaction with their peers, teachers, parents, and others.

After starting with a pre-assessment survey of the entire student body to establish a beginning “Kindness Index” for the school, students began learning nine specific elements for adopting a lifestyle of kindness. Each student was encouraged to develop a heart that was *attentive, authentic, charitable, compassionate, courageous, enthusiastic, grateful, inspirational, and patient*. Each week, advisory teachers focused on a specific element of kindness, and challenged the students to practice that element.

Michael returned in January to make a full-school presentation; a highlight of the program was the entrance of sixty students carrying in a continuous 3,000+ chain link made from the individual classroom “chains of kindness”



as a concrete symbol of the growth of kindness throughout the year. In addition, every Biddeford Middle School student was presented with a blue “Am I being kind?” wristband to wear as a reminder of their commitment to making Biddeford Middle School “the kindest middle school in Maine.”

Additional information about this Kindness Initiative can be found on the “Biddeford Middle School Kindness Blog” at: <http://bmskc.edublogs.org> or at [www.thekindnesscenter.com](http://www.thekindnesscenter.com).

## Gail Hagelstein

### Presque Isle Middle School

### *History Club & Lunchbox Lectures*

“Great educators provide opportunities and encourage students to explore areas of interest. True educators have the ability to motivate students and pique their curiosity about subjects they may have never encountered on their own. *Exceptional* educators are able to do all of these things while simultaneously having an impact on the larger community that extends far beyond the walls of the school building. Gail Hagelstein, Presque Isle Middle School library media-specialist extraordinaire, easily falls into the exceptional category.” These are the words of Kristie Littlefield, School Partnership Coordinator with the Maine Historical Society. Gail’s History Club & Lunchbox Lectures are associated with the Maine Community Heritage Project (MCHP) of the Maine Historical Society and the Maine State Library. Presque Isle was one of eight Maine communities to be selected to participate in the first cohort year.

Littlefield continued, “Thanks to Gail’s vision and desire to connect with students, she developed two unique programs that take MCHP to an unsurpassed level. Gail, along with Dr. Kimberly Sebold, developed a middle school history club that connects middle level students with students from the University of Maine at Presque Isle around the study of local history.” Through this project, “she truly makes a difference in the lives of students and the Presque Isle community. Gail’s dedication and commitment to meeting the needs of her students is unrivaled. Her impact as an educator will be long-lasting.”

*Is there a team or a teacher who has a practice that you think should be nominated for MAMLE’s Exemplary Practice Award? You can learn more about MAMLE’s awards and download nomination forms, on MAMLE’s Web site (<http://www.mamleonline.org/mainesbest.html>).*

## mamleonline.org

### Newly Redesigned

*The Maine Association for Middle Level Education website has a new look. We have tried to provide you with information and resources related to middle level education in Maine and across the country. Stop in and find:*

*Teacher Resources  
Journal Articles  
Membership Information*

*News  
Links*

*Information about MAMLE  
Maine's Best - Award Winners  
Professional Opportunities & More*

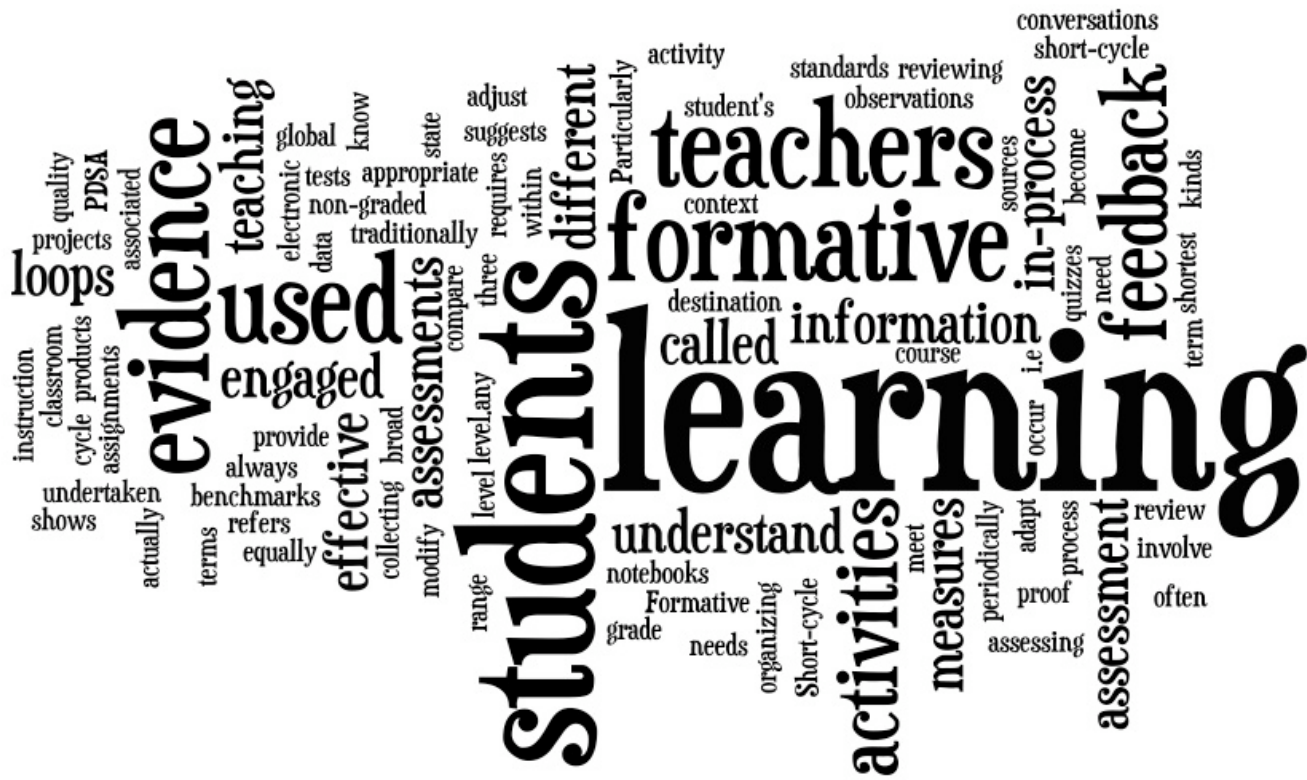
*Download 2009 Annual Conference information and registration*



## Eye On Research

Using the latest information to shape and validate our practice

# Assessment for Learning



Assessment for Learning Wordle Cloud (<http://www.wordle.net/>)

A Wordle Word Cloud emphasizes words that are used often in text by making those words larger than surrounding words. This wordle was created using comments about assessment for learning/formative assessments from leading assessment gurus such as Anne Davies, Dylan Wiliam, and others. The word *learning* pops out indicating that it is a major focus of the discussions surrounding formative assessment. The size of other words such as students, evidence, measures, in-process, effective, and different also indicate that they were used multiple times. What is the relationship among these ideas? Assessment for learning is interpreted in a variety of ways — quizzes, standardized test done multiple times during the year, classroom activities, etc. Some educators believe they should be graded, others say no. Educators need to educate themselves on this topic in order to join district-wide conversations on the topic designed to craft a common understanding of the concept of formative assessment/assessment for learning. Below are some ideas, research findings, and principles put forth by a variety of experts in this area.

What is the definition of assessment for learning? Here are two:

*Assessment for Learning (AfL) is part of everyday practice by students, teachers and peers that seeks, reflects upon and responds to information from dialogue, demonstration and observation in ways that enhance ongoing learning.*

Position Paper on Assessment for Learning (draft): Third International Conference on Assessment for Learning Dunedin, New Zealand, March 2009 [http://www.annedavies.com/assessment\\_for\\_learning\\_ar\\_a010.html](http://www.annedavies.com/assessment_for_learning_ar_a010.html))



...refers to all those activities undertaken by teachers, and by the students in assessing themselves, which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged. Such assessments become formative when the evidence is actually used to adapt the teaching to meet the needs.

Black and Wiliam, 1998 [http://www.tki.org.nz/r/assessment/one/formative\\_e.php](http://www.tki.org.nz/r/assessment/one/formative_e.php)

In both definitions students are actively involved in the process beyond taking quizzes and standardized tests. They are reflecting on their work. Another common component is that the teacher adapts his/her *daily* instructional plan using information gained through the assessments to further the learning of students.

It's often interesting and instructive to inquire into the practices of other states and countries as we build our own understanding of a concept. Here is what the Ministry of Education in New Zealand has to say about formative assessment:

“Key elements of formative assessment include:

- \* The identification by teachers and learners of learning goals, intentions or outcomes and criteria for achieving these.

- \* Rich conversations between teachers and students that continually build and go deeper.

- \* The provision of effective, timely feedback to enable students to advance their learning.

- \* The active involvement of students in their own learning.

- \* Teachers responding to identified learning needs and strengths by modifying their teaching approach(es).”

([http://www.tki.org.nz/r/assessment/one/formative\\_e.php](http://www.tki.org.nz/r/assessment/one/formative_e.php))

In a presentation entitled “Assessment for Learning: Why Bother?” to the SSAT Academies Conference in 2009, Dylan Wiliam discussed research findings of the role of formative assessment and learning. He did a similar presentation here in Maine for the Maine DOE several years ago. SSAT stands for Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, part of The Schools Network (<http://www.specialistschools.org.uk/>).

1. When teachers are trained in “minute by minute and day by day assessment for learning,” the increase in the *speed of student learning* is 80%. Compare this result to what happens when teacher content knowledge is increased from poor to strong. The increase in the speed of student learning is only 10%.

2. He included a chart that demonstrates the different aspects of formative assessment. A facsimile is reproduced below:

	<b>Role</b>	<b>Actions</b>
<b>Teacher</b>	Clarify & share learning goals	Engineering effective discussions, tasks and activities that elicit evidence of learning  Providing feedback that moves learners forward
<b>Classmates</b>	Understand & share learning goals	Activating students as learning resources for one another (students learning in collaborative groups)
<b>Student</b>	Understand learning goals	Activating students as owners of their own learning

Looking at this chart it is evident that both the teacher and the students must be very clear about the learning goals and what it looks like to achieve them. Secondly, there must be evidence of learning that the teacher and students can readily identify. A third component is that the instructional plan should incorporate collaborative learning opportunities so that classmates can support one another in their quest to reach the learning goals or meet the standards as we say here in Maine. Wiliam add one last critical aspect of formative assessment as state in # 3 below.

3. “Use evidence about learning to adapt teaching and learning to meet student needs”

This presentation and Wiliam’s other work can be viewed at his website, <http://www.dylanwiliam.net/>. He publishes



these works using a Creative Commons license which means they can be used freely as long as attribution is given.

Returning to the Wordle Word Cloud at the beginning of this piece, it becomes evident why words like student, learning, evidence, in-process, activities, and formative stand out. An effective formative assessment plan is an on-going process *embedded in classroom activities* that helps the teacher and learner identify critical evidence of learning as the student strives to meet a well articulated goal. Both the student and teacher use this evidence to shape their next steps. The teacher knows what to alter or emphasize in the next day's lesson and the student knows specifically how to improve his/her work before the final evaluation.

One last quote from Dylan Wiliam...

*...any activity where the information is used to adjust the instruction is formative, but the evidence suggests that not all kinds of feedback loops are equally effective. Particularly, it shows that the shortest feedback loops are the most effective. So when teachers ask me how often they should do formative assessments I say to them, not more often than once every five seconds. That is a very tight, tight cycle. Then checking children's work every two or three weeks making adjustments, that is too slow and is too late. (newsletter@annedavies.com)*

**Awesome websites on formative assessment/assessment for learning:**

- Assessment Reform Group: <http://tiny.cc/assessment981>
- Learning How to Learn: <http://tiny.cc/Assessment417>
- New Zealand: <http://tiny.cc/Assessment491>
- Dylan Wiliam: <http://www.dylanwiliam.net/>
- Anne Davies: <http://annedavies.com/>

**Works Cited**

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New Zealand Assessment. [http://www.tki.org.nz/t/assessment/one/formative\\_e.php](http://www.tki.org.nz/t/assessment/one/formative_e.php) (Accessed August 10, 2009).

Position Paper on Assessment for Learning (Draft): Third International Conference on Assessment for Learning. Dunedin, New Zealand: March 2009. [http://www.annedavies.com/assessment\\_for\\_learning\\_ar\\_a010html](http://www.annedavies.com/assessment_for_learning_ar_a010html) Accessed August 10, 2009).

Wiliam, D. Zealand has to say about formative assessment.

*Eye on research is written by Jill Spencer*

**Mark your calendars!**

**2010 Middle Level Education Institute**

**Monday, July 12 through Friday, July 16, 2010**

**Thomas College in Waterville, Maine**

**Graduate credits available**

For more information, contact:

Chris Toy ([christoy.net@gmail.com](mailto:christoy.net@gmail.com)) or Jill Spencer ([spencerj51@yahoo.com](mailto:spencerj51@yahoo.com))



# Daring to Take a RISC: A Middle School Works with Reinventing Schools Coalition

Bill Zima

Massabesic Middle School

As a student, I remember returning to school following summer break and being asked, "What did you do on your summer vacation?" In kindergarten it was a sharing time. By eighth grade, we were writing in our journals. I expect to once again hear this question asked of me as I return to school for the 2009-2010 school year. This is because Regional School Unit (RSU) 57 was one of two districts chosen by the State of Maine Department of Education to be a full implementation site for the reforms put forth in *Delivering on the Promise* by the Reinventing Schools Coalition (RISC). This summer, 30 teachers and administrators spent a week in early August discussing the model, our future as a district and how the two will come together. For each issue of *Middle Link* this year, I will write an article describing how we are moving through the process of discussing reforms to meet our expectations for our students and their learning. I would first like to introduce our district, the RISC framework and then discuss what happened that first week of August.

Regional School Unit 57 is a six-town district located in Southern Maine. The towns are Alfred, Limerick, Lyman, Newfield, Shapleigh, and Waterboro. The district is one of the largest geographically in the state. It is a rural district with limited business and no large manufacturing. There are approximately 3200 students system wide. Test scores on the Maine Educational Assessment (MEA) and the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) are a point either side of the State average.

Massabesic Middle School is located in Waterboro. Our challenge is bringing all students from the five sending elementary schools together under one roof. In past years we have been a seventh and eighth grade school. This year, however, we are transitioning in the sixth grade students. Our demographics are 44 percent free and reduced lunch, 23 percent special education and no English Language Learners.

The RISC model was originally implemented in the Chugach school district in Alaska. Once success was seen, other districts began trying the model. They included the Bering Strait School District, Anchorage School District and Adams 50 in Colorado. The model has four equally important, key components; shared vision, leadership, standards-based and continuous improvement. As we move through the process I will describe these and how RSU 57 approached them in more detail. Currently in education, time is the constant and learning is the variable. Students progress in our schools

*The schools that have implemented the RISC model have changed the equation. Student learning becomes the constant and the time it takes them to demonstrate mastery is the variable.*

after spending the appropriate number of days in a classroom. Their learning is variable. How much a student knows and can do once they leave the classroom can range from mastery to very little. The schools that have implemented the RISC model have changed the equation. Student learning becomes the constant and the time it takes them to demonstrate mastery is the variable. Students move through the system satisfying performance levels not associated with a grade level. When they have demonstrated mastery, they are ready to move to the next level. They are not constrained by the calendar or age group. If they do not meet the required level of mastery, they continue working on the standard.

Being a full implementation site will give us the opportunity to discuss meaningful reform and look into the RISC model. The institute never talked about a program or a prescription that must be followed. It is about finding time to get input from all stakeholders, which includes teachers, parents, students and business leaders, to review, identify and in some cases create a shared-vision for what we want from our schools, our students and our selves. This shared vision will then guide our steps to reform.

By publication of the next issue of *Middle Link*, RSU 57 should have completed the shared-vision step. I will review the process we used and the outcomes we achieved. I look forward to sharing this process with you. If you have questions or comments, please email or call me. [bill\\_zima@fc.sad57.k12.me.us](mailto:bill_zima@fc.sad57.k12.me.us) or 207-247-6121.



# Must-Read Books:

## *Inventing Powerful Pedagogy: Share. ‘Steal’. Revise. Own.*

by Ross M. Burkhardt

Reviewed by Jill Spencer

Check any major educational publishing company’s catalog, and we see a multitude of titles on assessment, professional learning communities, data-driven decision-making, staff development activities, or differentiation. Rarely do we see books these days that focus on developing the love of learning in our students, books that make us shout out loud – “I can’t wait to try that with my kids!” Well...Ross Burkhardt’s new book from NMSA, *Inventing Powerful Pedagogy*, made me do just that – shout out loud – at least in my head because I was on a plane when I was reading it – didn’t want to scare the folks at 16,000 feet over New Jersey. What I really wanted to do what pop out of my seat and ask my fellow travelers, “Listen folks, wouldn’t you want your children in a class like this!?” But flying rules and sky marshals preclude this kind of action, so I stayed put. However, my mind was filled with ideas that we could adapt for the then upcoming Middle Level Education Institute (MLEI). *Inventing Powerful Pedagogy* fires the imagination and inspires action to make our classes places of passion and focused energy where students truly care about the work they do because they know it is important and valued.

I first heard about Ross when a colleague visited his classes at Shoreham-Wading River Middle School on Long Island and brought back and implemented his magazine project. Then Ross came to Maine as a keynote speaker at MAMLE’s Annual Conference at Sugarloaf. Of course Ross, a great empowerer of kids, did not come alone – he brought his students and they delivered the keynote. They were a big hit!

Ross has retired from the classroom but continues to inspire teachers with his writing and presentations. In *Inventing Powerful Pedagogy* Ross reminds us that rarely is a classroom activity the result of one person’s idea, rather it probably has evolved through several reincarnations of a strategy that itself resulted from multiple adaptations. He says, “I wasn’t inventing so much as I was busily engaged in ‘educational repackaging.’ Acquiring good ideas from others and slowly improving them just as others had done with my imperfect ideas.” He encourages us to follow the lead of Pablo Picasso, “I am always doing which I cannot do, in order that I may learn how to do it... When there is anything to steal, I steal.” Of course this attitude would not sit well with those who think they know better than teachers what powerful pedagogy is and that scripts and rigid

formats guarantee that students will become the learners we need in this century.

*Often the educator-innovator feels very alone because his/her ideas seemingly go against the grain of what everyone else is doing.*

As late August melts into September, I think about the students starting their new year. Some excited to connect in person with those they have been emailing and tweeting all summer, and far too many others hoping that this year will be different. This is the year they will fit in, be one of the in-crowd. This is the year they will shine academically. This is the year they will not be marginalized as learner or a person. Feeling that one is a valued member of a group is a natural desire, and one of Ross’s early chapter addresses this subject. He offers his strategies for building a welcoming and inclusive community for the reader to *steal, revise, and own*. His subtopics in this chapter include: Designing the Set, Establishing Expectations, Opening Day Ceremony, the Distinctions, Regular Maintenance, and the Last Class. It is obvious that as much thought and energy went into creating a classroom culture of acceptance framed by high expectations as went into what others might call more traditional academic lessons and unit plans. I don’t believe students felt marginalized on Ross’s team; they became competent and confident learners. He also *shares* the genesis for his ideas and how colleagues from across the country have adapted many of his ideas.

I remember Ross’s students talking about the “Distinctions” in their keynote at MAMLE and the positive impact these concepts had on them as individuals and their learning. It was obvious that these young adolescents understood that they had a major responsibility for their own learning. Simply



stated, the Distinctions were a list of concepts that were the critical attributes of the team culture that Ross, his teammates and their students lived by. They included acknowledgement, cooperation, respect, contribution, and compassion. Many schools and classrooms have core values posted in conspicuous places and those values stay there – right on the wall. Ross explains how he, his teaching partners and students brought these ideas to life with journaling, festivals, and, class meetings. As I reflected on this chapter, I realized that I regret not spending more time in this aspect of my teaching. He goes on to explain how Theresa Hinkle adapted “Distinctions” in her work. Fortunately, “T” was a consultant at this summer’s MLEI, and I immediately emailed her and asked her to incorporate her version of the “Distinctions” into her presentations. The *sharing* continues.

Sharing and adapting ideas is obviously a key theme in *Inventing Powerful Pedagogy*. And so Ross incorporates one of the best 21<sup>st</sup> century tools for sharing, stealing, revising, and owning powerful pedagogy – NMSA’s MiddleTalk. Middle-Talk is a listserve discussion forum open to any member of the National Middle School Association where middle level

educators from across the world ponder, wrestle and wonder about pertinent middle grades issues while offering ideas and support to one another. Included in the excerpts in this chapter are comments from Maine educators including Jacquie Leighton and Chris Toy. Web 2.0 has opened the world not only for our students but also for us.

Often the educator-innovator feels very alone because his/her ideas seemingly go against the grain of what everyone else is doing. It’s true now when we measure student progress almost solely through test scores, and it was true in grandfather’s time prior to WWI when as a superintendent he had to fight against rote memory instruction. Ross’s last chapter “Bearing Torches” provides us with icons of innovation to inspire us to “put our beliefs into action.”

*Inventing Powerful Pedagogy: Share. ‘Steal’. Revise. Own.* – Read it for yourself to renew your commitment to your students, to rejuvenate successful activities from the past, and then look around for a new idea to incorporate into your teaching this year. Pass the book on to a new teacher to give him/her the courage to become the teacher s/he wants to be. Become a torchbearer of powerful pedagogy.

### ***Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, Thomas Armstrong (2001)*** **A Book Review by Nicole Fecteau, Biddeford Middle School**

In the book, *Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom*, Thomas Armstrong discusses the Multiple Intelligence theory, its foundation, and its applicability in schools. He provides tools and resources for educators that are immediately useful in the classroom. His goal is to teach the educator about his or her own multiple intelligences, the multiple intelligences of students, the visibility of MI (multiple intelligences) inside the classroom, and how MI affects school culture. The book is not exclusive to the teacher; it reaches out to administrators, leaders, and educational support staff.

Armstrong is an educator and psychologist. He is published by ASCD and has written four other books: *Awakening Genius in the Classroom* (1998), *ADD/ADHD Alternatives in the Classroom* (1999), *The Multiple Intelligences of Reading and Writing* (2003), and *The Best Schools: How Human Development Research Should Inform Educational Practice* (2006). He writes in a manner that is coherent and understandable for educators at all levels of education. This third edition focuses on the eight intelligences of the human mind: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic. He presents a possible ninth intelligence, existential. The reader learns about each of the intelligences and becomes aware of the role it plays in educating students.

*Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom* begins by taking an inventory of your MI followed by describing MI in students. Curriculum development and teaching strategies are clearly outlined for all content areas and student levels. Armstrong includes a chapter wholly for MI and Special Education. The book considers MI Theory with respect to classroom environment as well as to classroom management.

I was drawn to this book because I wanted to learn how to teach to *all* of my students. As the book unfolded, I recognized my MI strengths as a teacher and found areas in which I could improve to be more effective in my classroom. Secondly, the book does not exclude content areas. I teach World Languages and I frequently find that strategies for my content area are not always established. The design of the book really assists a teacher in progressing to new levels of awareness not only of the self, but also of the students and of the environment at school. Finally, this book is an excellent reference book when I need to find a refresher to enhance lessons or my classroom surroundings.

I recommend *Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom* by Thomas Armstrong for any teacher or school staff who is working toward formative assessment, or who would like to reinforce the practice of teaching to all students.

Armstrong, T. (2001). *Multiple intelligences in the classroom* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.), Alexandria VA: ASCD

# *Annual MAMLE Conference!*

*October 22 - 23, 2009*  
*Sugarloaf USA*

The Maine Association for Middle Level Education invites one and all to our Annual Conference at Sugarloaf U.S.A., October 22 - 23, 2009. The conference will feature two full days of concurrent sessions, workshops, team presentations, keynote addresses, exhibits, and networking among teams and schools. The Annual MAMLE conference is designed to allow teams of teachers to attend sessions and meet with their team for staff development time. Teams and schools use this conference as a beginning-of-the-year staff retreat, a great way to set goals and direction for the rest of the year. Low-cost, overnight lodging in Sugarloaf condominiums makes it possible for teams to stay and work together.

This year's Conference will feature an opening keynote address and sessions with Carol Ann Tomlinson. Carol Ann is recognized for her work in curriculum and instruction for struggling learners and advanced learners, effective instruction in heterogeneous settings, and encouraging creative and critical thinking in the classroom. Her career as an educator includes 21 years as a public school teacher, including 12 years as a program administrator of special services for struggling and advanced learners. She was Virginia's Teacher of the Year in 1974. More recently, she has been a faculty member at the University of Virginia's Curry School of Education, where she is currently William Clay Parrish, Jr. Professor in Education and Chair of Educational Leadership, Foundations and Policy. Also at U.VA., she is Co-Director of the University's Institutes on Academic Diversity. Carol Ann is widely published and highly sought-after as a speaker. We are very fortunate to have her coming to Maine.

Spend two exciting days with teachers, principals and other practitioners from excellent middle level schools to learn more about: Using Computers in Classroom Instruction -- Implementing Learning Results -- Student-Involved Conferencing With Parents -- Teaming -- Portfolios & Performance Reporting -- Inclusion Issues -- Gifted & Talented & Middle School -- Doing More With Less -- Advisory Programs -- Involving Parents & Community -- Middle Level Programs in K-8 Schools -- Integrated Curriculum -- & More.

**For information:**

**E-mail Wally Alexander at [wallace.alexander@umit.maine.edu](mailto:wallace.alexander@umit.maine.edu).**

**Registration materials are available at [mamleonline.org](http://mamleonline.org)**

**Group Rates Available!**

**MAMLE is happy to offer special registration rates for groups of 12 or more. Groups of 12-20 receive a discount of 20% off regular registration fees. Groups of 20+ receive a 25% discount.**