

an affiliate of the National Middle School Association



# Oregon Middle Level Association

February 2007

## Message from the OMLA President

by Jill O'Neill, Principal, Meadow Park Middle School, Beaverton

As I drive from my home to school each morning, I pass through ever-changing rural landscapes. Through the blossoming promise of spring, to the harvests of summer and fall, to the restful renewal of winter, I'm constantly reminded of the potential and growth of the young people with whom I'm privileged to work. On recent mornings I have been captivated by the presence of both the waning moon, full and opalescent, skimming the coastal range and the promising glow of the sun rising behind Mount Hood's graceful silhouette. One view reflects in my rear view mirror while the other presents itself in my windshield.

This tipping point between night and day strikes me as a juxtaposition strikingly similar to the physical, socio-emotional, and cognitive balance point at which many middle schoolers find themselves. Childhood is not yet in their past and adulthood is not yet in their grasp. What then is our role as middle level educators in helping young adolescents fulfill the promise of their future?

I invite you to join with other middle level educators from around the state to explore this question! March 16-17 marks the annual OMLA Conference, which will be held at the Hood River Best Western. This year's theme "Surfing the Winds

of Change: Reaching Diverse Learners in the Middle" will focus our conversations, with our eyes both on the best practices we have implemented in the past and on the promising practices that will help our students learn and succeed in the future.

As the new OMLA President, I look forward to meeting you and joining with you in conversations about middle level learner. If you have any suggestions for how OMLA can better meet your professional growth needs, I welcome the opportunity to listen to your ideas. Like our beautiful state, our middle level students contain a bright promise. Together, let us reflect on the waning moon and welcome that promising glow of the sun.

## Laugh, Learn, and Share

from the majestic Colorado Rocky Mountains . . . to the sugar white beaches of Florida

**Boulder, Colorado**  
**July 26-29, 2007**  
at the **Omni Interlocken Resort**  
Join Us for Our 18th Year  
of this Outstanding Symposium!

- \* **Ten national consultants including:**  
-Dr. Debbie Silver -Dr. Monte Selby  
-Mark McLeod -Charles Beaman  
-Rick Wormeli -Kathy Hunt Ullock
- \* **Three Keynotes/ over 100 sessions**
- \* **Six Pre-Conferences:** How the Brain Learns, Literacy on all Fronts, Goodbye to Boring English Class, At Risk Strategies for Reaching All Students, Classroom Management, Teaching Tips I've Stolen from My Friends.
- \* Middle Grades Book Center
- \* Welcome reception/ conference gift



**nuts  
& bolts**  
**Symposiums™**  
of Middle Level Education

### A Focus on the Practical

These symposiums have gained a national reputation as the premiere conferences for middle level practitioners in the past seventeen years, say over 13,050 educators from 50 states and 49 foreign countries!



**Destin, Florida**  
**June 10-13, 2007**  
at **Destin Middle School**

Join Us for our 9th year of this  
Premiere Middle Level Conference!

- \* **Twelve national consultants including:**  
-Dr. Debbie Silver -Rick Wormeli  
-Jack Berckemeyer -Mark McLeod  
-Charles Beaman -Dr. Lavonne Rodrigue-Landry
- \* **Three Keynotes/over 100 sessions**
- \* **Six Pre-Conferences:** Literacy on all Fronts, Motivational Classroom Activities, Raising Standardized Test Scores with Technology, Great Teaching Tips I've Stolen from My Friends, Classroom Management, At Risk Strategies for Reaching All Students
- \* Middle Grades Book Center
- \* Welcome reception/conference gift



For Brochures, Registration Information, or Applications to Present:

Phone: (303) 466-5337 Fax: (303) 465-0882

[www.nutsandboltssymposiums.com](http://www.nutsandboltssymposiums.com)

E-Mail: [grebingjw@att.net](mailto:grebingjw@att.net)

## Running on Dreams

*Herb Heiman, a former special education aide at Talent Middle School in southern Oregon has recently published *Running on Dreams* that is loosely based on his work with an autistic student while at the school. The book is available through [amazon.com](http://amazon.com) or through his website <[www.runningondreams.com](http://www.runningondreams.com)>.*

*Herb can be contacted at [hhenterprise@gmail.com](mailto:hhenterprise@gmail.com).*

*“All of us have challenges; for some of us they are just more obvious.” (Quote from a teenager with Autism)*

My life as a special education classroom aide for nearly a dozen years at Talent Middle School was filled with memorable incidents and encounters with challenged students. I thought, at the time, that I was fulfilling my role as a tutor, mentor, role model and friend. But this journey in my life was to have yet another purpose, one that I hardly imagined during my tenure as an aide.

Educators often say with a knowing smile, “That incident or kid has the makings of a great book.” That line got me thinking... what if I paired a student with Autism with a super popular jock in a middle school

environment? This idea germinated for well over five years and finally took root as the fictionalized story, *Running on Dreams*.

My writings, up until recently, were limited to travel articles and play reviews; this was a whole new ballgame. I desperately wanted my novel to forcefully deal with the basic issues of acceptance of those who look or act differently, of what true friendship entails, of peer pressure, of racism, and in equal measure, what it’s like for a boy with autism to try to fit into a mainstream middle school setting. Shaping these themes into a vibrant, entertaining and persuasive novel became my challenge.

I’m eager to share these concepts, as well as the all-encompassing processes of formulating, writing and

publishing a novel (published by Asperger-Autism Publishing Company). In order to facilitate this goal and reach out to students and educators, I have worked with middle school teachers to develop a study plan that I hope will make classroom work on *Running On Dreams* a reality.

Recently an interview with a savant who is diagnosed with Aspergers Syndrome aired. This young man summed up his goal for life: “I don’t want to use my gift to entertain or simply amuse... I want to know that in some small measure I have left mankind better because of my presence on this planet.” This is a goal that I hope to attain with my book, *Running on Dreams*.

### Board Position Open Still

Looking for a new line on your resume? We have an opening for a region director: METRO = Multnomah County. The last newsletter was wrong when it said we had a Central region opening. OMLA will reimburse you for the cost of travel to the board meetings. Please email OMLA President Jill O’Neill at [jill\\_o'neill@beavton.k12.or.us](mailto:jill_o'neill@beavton.k12.or.us)

### OMLA Officers and Directors

#### President

Jill O’Neill, Beaverton

#### Presidents Elect

Sue Hukari, Hood River  
Terri Bothwell, Gresham

#### Secretary

Marsha Eckelman, Newport

#### Treasurer

Glen Martz, Bethel

#### Executive Secretary

Chris Brantley, Salem

#### NMSA West Region Trustee

Jan Burgess, Beaverton

#### Region 1 Director

Sue Hukari, Hood River

#### Region 2 Director

TBA Soon!

#### Region 3 Director

Ann Erickson, Astoria

#### Region 4 Director

Amy Tiger, Medford

#### Region 5 Director

Cydney Vandercar, Eugene

#### Region 6 Director

Steve Nelson, Salem

#### Region 7 Director

Open, Metro Region

#### Higher Ed Representative NMSA Online Journal Editor

Micki Caskey, Portland State Univ.

#### ODE Representative

To be appointed

#### OASSA Representative

Linda Hall, Beaverton

#### OESPA Representative

Larry Williams, Bethel

#### Member-at-Large

Dave Putnam, Salem

#### Newsletter Editor

Beth Madison, Portland



# Help I'm Stuck!

## ~ Resources at your Fingertips ~

by Jan Burgess, NMSA West Region Trustee

With obligations pulling you in multiple directions, where do you find the time to search for and develop new ideas, inspiration, quick strategies, a new practice, a website, a presentation, or an article to share with others in your department or on your team? When you are asked to speak at a Parent Club meeting or your school board needs some current research to support what you do in your school with middle level learners, there is an excellent, comprehensive and easy to use resource that awaits you. It is free to all, no membership required (though membership does have its benefits!). That resource is the NMSA website at [www.nmsa.org](http://www.nmsa.org). Here are three examples that could make all the difference for you when you most need a reliable and useful resource.

### 1: Fat or Phat?

Wondering what all the fuss is about with obesity? Need numbers to convince a group that PE on a daily basis is a MUST or that the pop machine shouldn't be available during the school day?

++ Log on to NMSA's website> click the Advocacy link> click the Health and Wellness link>click and read the Wellness Policy, then watch the Wellness Presentation described below:

“This presentation tool is a free resource appropriate for advocacy work with school boards, parent/family groups, school, staff, and community members. This 17-minute presentation reviews the national data on obesity and overweight trends in the United States. It presents data and compelling arguments to support schools as they take action to improve physical activity and nutrition for young adolescents. The presentation also provides an overview of the Reauthorized Child Nutrition Act and outlines steps and resources to assist schools and communities to improve physical activity and nutrition for their students and staff.”

NMSA

Review this presentation and you will be absolutely convinced that the data and research are there to show the crisis that confront young adolescents and adults alike. You can even click “Submit a Story” and have your students highlight the good things you are doing in your school to address these issues. Talk about an authentic assignment!

### 2: Bored and restless?

Tired of your tried and true ways to get kids involved in the content you teach? Need a new teaching strategy or idea to use in your classroom?

++ Click on the NMSA website>Link to Publication> Click on Middle Ground> click Articles.

Look at the themes for the various magazine issues listed and scan through the article titles on the topic that most concerns you. Each issue has “Hotlinks” by Brenda A. Dyck who identifies websites, webcasts, podcasts, webquests, differentiated lessons, and much more. There are articles that highlight instructional units and strategies teachers currently found successful in their classrooms. If you don't find an idea here, teacher and author, Rick Wormeli, is featured in each issue under “Teaching in the Middle” and his ideas are foolproof.

### 3: Is your practice or school configuration being questioned?

Research summaries that are succinct, clearly understandable, up-to-date with annotated references are on the website: [www.NMSA.org](http://www.NMSA.org) > Research >Research Summaries.

Topics like:

- Adolescent, Health, Wellness and Safety (October 2006)
- Transition from idle School to High School (Sept. 2006)
- Student Achievement and the Middle School concept (Sept. 2006)
- Parent Involvement (Aug. 2006)
- Advisory Programs (July 2006)
- Bullying (Feb. 2006)

are all written for you to print and use! Oregon and PSU's own Micki Caskey is the editor of the Research Advisory group at NMSA and are well into creating and posting another dozen research articles for all of us in middle level to read and use to future our work together.

**Finally, join NMSA!** It is the best resource for professional and personal development. Remember that new ideas come from networking with others, and where better to do that than the annual NMSA conference; November 8-11, 2007 in Houston, Texas. Do take in the OMLA conference this March as well. The professional growth sessions on many hot topics are invaluable. The breakout sessions offer so many ideas that are immediately useful in the classroom you'll leave with your head and suitcase full.

But when time and money are limited, make use of the NMSA website. This resource is available to anyone interested in furthering his or her work with young adolescents. Try it, you'll be pleased you did.

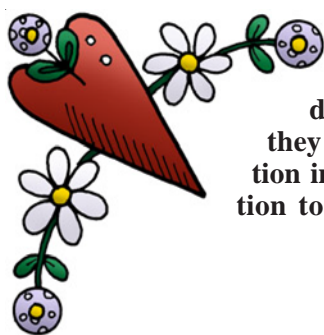


**Oregon Middle  
Level Association**

Confederation of Oregon  
School Administrators  
707 13th Street SE, Suite 100  
Salem, OR 97301-4035  
503-581-3141

Presorted Standard  
US Postage  
PAID  
Salem, Oregon  
Permit #185

### Teaching from the Heart



We'd like to include a new feature in this newsletter. *Teaching From The Heart* will feature teachers who devote themselves to the growth and development of young adolescents. Everyone knows a teacher who does an outstanding job in the middle. Please give that person the recognition they deserve. Both the author and the recognized teacher will receive recognition in upcoming newsletters! Fill out the information below and email the information to: [jill\\_o'neill@beavton.k12.or.us](mailto:jill_o'neill@beavton.k12.or.us)

- \* Teacher's Name:
- \* School:
- \* Teaching Assignment:
- \* Three words describing the teacher's personality:
- \* A sentence or two describing the teacher's relationship with:
  - a) Students:
  - b) Colleagues:
  - c) Community:
- \* Anything else you would like mentioned . . .