



an affiliate of the National Middle School Association

# Oregon Middle Level Association

September 2005

## Urgent Need: a Call for Assistance from a Mississippi Middle School!

Dr. Joseph White, principal at Pearl River County Middle School, in Carriere, Mississippi (21 miles up I-59 from New Orleans; 35 miles northwest of Biloxi and the gulf coast but not out of hurricane range) has been told to expect 600 to 1000 new students, evacuees from three neighboring states who have been displaced by hurricane Katrina. Pearl River County Middle School has sustained limited damage from the hurricane though many houses in the area have been completely wiped out. This grades 6-8<sup>th</sup> middle school normally houses 750 youngsters. His district has been told to expect between 1000-3000 new students; a majority of whom are in grades 6-8. Students began registering for school this week, and this morning (Friday 9-17-05) 129 new students registered, 128 from Louisiana!! More are still in line. Dr. White told us in a brief conversation today that the school has very limited phone service at this time, service comes on for an hour or two daily; they continue to boil all drinking water, teaching supplies are seriously depleted but (good news he reports) the US Postal Service and UPS are up and running again. Any donations we can send from the list he supplied will get to them and be put to immediate use.

If a tsunami hit Oregon, if floods along the Willamette devastated local towns and schools, if towns and schools were destroyed by grass or

forest fires, we would all rally to support our fellow Oregonians. What about helping in Mississippi? Middle school students have big hearts and want ways to participate and make a difference. Let's reach out to Pearl River County Middle School. The entire community needs our help.

### Here is what the school needs:

- § Paper
- § Pencils and pens
- § Composition books
- § Clear and mesh book bags
- § 3-hole punched paper
- § Binders
- § White board markers
- § Photocopier toner cartridges- Imagistic model # IM4511- the photocopier works but the school has no toner (their toner company was wiped out)
- § **In Focus projectors**- they have computers at school, but no internet. In Focus projectors would allow them to teach large numbers of kids with limited reaching resources. Dr. White says these are his highest priority need as classes are starting with 40-45 students and with very limited teaching supplies, these make all the difference (or send \$\$ to purchase projectors.)
- § Uniforms- sizes small to very large, new or gently used.
  - Khaki or navy slacks
  - Navy or white polo shirts (no emblem or logo)
- § Cash donations to cover shipping costs gladly accepted!

Checks should be made out to OMLA~*Pearl River* fund and sent to: COSA/OMLA

707 13<sup>th</sup> St. SE, Suite 100  
Salem, OR 97301

OMLA Executive Director Chris Brantley will send out information about where your donations will be housed as soon as a location is secured. You might check with your OMLA Regional Representative to see if that person would bring collected items to either Portland or Salem at their next board meeting.

The need is real, it's immediate and this plea is a way Oregon middle level folks can help a Mississippi middle school as they try to establish some normalcy to hundreds of displaced young people! Please give this serious consideration and lend a hand if you are able.

If your middle school can provide some assistance to Pearl River County Middle School, please contact:

Chris Brantley

OMLA Executive Director  
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503-581-5423

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Former OMLA Executive Director  
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### **From Your OMLA President Glen Martz**

Welcome back to another great school year! We hope that you have had a relaxing summer and you were able to spend some quality time with your families and friends.

Three members of the OMLA Board traveled to Nashville for the NMSA Affiliate Leaders' Summit in July. Despite the humidity, we were able to share a number of ideas to further support teachers at the middle level. Beth Madison, Micki Caskey and I presented our OMLA website in a breakout session, and a number of state affiliates similar in size to ours were very impressed. Kudos go to Chris Brantley, our Executive Director and Webmaster, for his creative talents and vision. Please visit our website ([www.omla.net](http://www.omla.net)) for the latest upgrades and new information.

Our annual conference will be held on March 10-11, 2006, at the Embarcadero in Newport. Our keynote speaker will be Jack Berckemeyer, the Assistant Executive Director of NMSA. He is also scheduled to do a breakout session and will be with us the entire weekend. The title of the Conference is "A Whale of a Show—Safe Harbor and

AYP". We will be sending out more information about room rates and conference costs in the near future. We hope everyone can attend, and there will be a special breakout session at the Oregon Coast Aquarium.

Are you going to the National Middle School Association annual conference? It will be held in Philadelphia from November 3-5. There is a brochure included in this mailing.

You will also notice the very informational *Classroom Connections* in this newsletter. This publication from NMSA will be included in each issue of the *OMLA News*.

Please submit a "Promising Practice" for inclusion on our website. Schools from around the state are listed in this section of our website so that others can contact them and learn from them what they are doing that's working. If you've got something that's working, share it!

Present a successful practice at our Annual Conference. Our conference gets rave reviews every year because of our focus on practitioners sharing what works in their schools. If you've implemented a teaching

strategy, curriculum, or climate enhancing program that has made a positive difference for your students, come and share it at our conference!

Join OMLA. When you join our organization, you will begin receiving our newsletter. You will also receive reduced rates at all OMLA events. But most important, you will support the continuation of the efforts of our organization to help Oregon's middle schools be the best in the world!

As the dust settles from the start of the school year, let's continue to remember why we exist as an organization. Our students need daily support during the middle school years, and our organization is dedicated to finding the best instructional practices to support their achievement academically, socially, and as a complete person. We also exist to support each other for our own professional development. Networking is the key, and the more we can share resources, research, and results, the better our collective schools will be in the future. Thanks for your dedication and commitment, and have a great year!

## **OMLA Officers and Directors**

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## **English Language Learners: Who are they and what do we do with them?**

by Kris Kibbee, Assistant Principal, Cascade Middle School

English Language Learners (ELLs), students whose native language is something other than English, come from all over the world, as well as from within our own borders. In some cases, they are the children of immigrants fleeing war-torn countries, leaving areas of civil unrest, escaping the ravages of natural disasters or simply looking for a better way of life. In other cases, they are the children of indigenous peoples born into families where they retain their heritage language as their first language. In all cases, they are the people who help weave the diverse tapestry that is the United States.

Researchers David and Yvonne Freeman have identified three general categories of English Language Learners: long-term ELLs, older students with limited formal schooling and new arrivals with adequate schooling.

### ***Long term ELLs have:***

- been in the United States for at least seven years
- have conversational proficiency but may lack academic language
- are usually below grade level in reading and writing
- may get adequate grades but score low on tests
- may have had English as a Second Language (ESL) or bilingual instruction, but no consistent program

### ***Older ELLs with limited formal schooling:***

- are typically recent arrivals with less than 5 years in the US
- have interrupted or limited schooling in their native country
- have limited native language literacy
- are usually below grade level in math
- have both limited conversational and limited academic language proficiency
- have poor academic achievement

### ***New arrivals with adequate schooling:***

- have less than five years in the US
- have an adequate education in their native country
- may lack conversational language proficiency
- soon catch up academically, but may still score low on standardized tests given in English

According to the U.S. Department of Education, there are over four million students identified as ELLs speaking more than three hundred languages living in the United States. Over 79% percent of them speak Spanish as their first language. At the same time, US English, a citizens group working to make English the official language of the United States, has identified 135 separate languages spoken by the more than 40,000 ELLs attending Oregon schools. This population increased roughly 250% during the decade from

1992 to 2002 and 72% of these students are listed as native Spanish speakers.

Given these changing demographics, educators are faced with the challenge of how to teach core content to more and more students who do not speak English as their first language. Fortunately decades of studies by myriad researchers have shown that the best techniques and strategies for teaching ELLs are many of the same best practices that work with all students. Teachers can create a non-threatening classroom environment, use authentic instruction and make learning meaningful and relevant, involve students as active participants in an active learning environment, provide support for understanding the concepts by activating students' prior knowledge and scaffolding new content, use different modes of instruction to include a variety of learning styles, and employ visual aides, graphic organizers, demonstrations, realia, and manipulatives. Above all, enjoy working with English Language Learners and appreciate the rich diversity they bring to your classroom.

\* Freeman, D. and Freeman, Y. (January, 2002).

Workshop presented at the National Association for Bilingual \* Education Annual Conference, Philadelphia, PA.

\* <http://www.us-english.org/foundation/research/lia/regions/oregon.pdf>

\* (October 2002). Oregon census data. Washington, D.C.: Office of English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement for Limited English Proficient Students.

\* U.S. Department of Education, *Survey of the States' Limited English Proficient Students & Available Educational Programs and Services, 2000-2001.*

### **Interested in Running for Office?**

**OMLA's Board of Directors' year begins in January. We will be electing the following offices. If you are interested, consult [www.omla.net](http://www.omla.net) for region director locations, and by October 31 email [bmadison@pps.k12.or.us](mailto:bmadison@pps.k12.or.us) for information.**

#### **Open Positions:**

**\*Secretary**

**\*Region Directors 4, 5 and 6**

## Finding "IT"

by Terri Hjelm, Co-President, Portland Council International Reading Association

Labor Day and the opening of classroom doors signal a new year and one more chance to become the smooth, highly effective, organized and polished teacher we so often aspire to be. Once again, I've noticed that September has nearly passed and I'm headed back to the same question. "Am I there yet?"

When I was a less experienced teacher I kept asking myself, "When will I have "It" down?" I often wandered into classrooms and found teachers quickly setting up. I wondered, "How did they get so good at developing routines? How did they get so good at anticipating individual needs?" I thought that being an established teacher meant desks in rows, having time to hear all the students read, taking time to build their self-esteem, worrying about the quiet ones, and rarely having to outmaneuver students who are sure they should always be in control of the class. Over time I felt good at spotting colleagues that had "teacher magic" and wondered when it would rub off on me. Now when September comes around I realize that I ask my question a little more specifically. "Have I figured out how to keep my

students quiet, on task, but still asking themselves thought-provoking questions that galvanize deeper learning?"

The learning curve in September always seems steep. Then, just when I get comfortable wearing another new hat like middle school teacher, handicapped learner specialist, Middle School Chapter I Coordinator, Elementary School Chapter I Coordinator, Computer Technology Coordinator and teacher when I didn't even know how to use my own Apple, Journalism teacher, or Math and Science Teacher when the last biology class I took predated DNA and promoted Vitamin C as a cure for the common cold, I find that I've overcome trembling feet by mid October. Then I suddenly look up and it's June. Happily, the year has moved me on. Taking stock, I have observed that patience, practice, and honest reflection, collaboration, rigorous analysis of my own practice, and willingness to move forward are what keep me refreshed and excited about teaching and the need for changes I encounter.

At the end of my second year of teaching I went to a retirement celebration. I found it impossible to

imagine how that teacher spent 30 years in one room, teaching the same grade. Those times are gone, but I knew that would be my career path. However, I did wonder how many years it would take to feel secure about lesson plans, engaging students, garnering support from parents, colleagues, and develop a magic touch with students, all signs of a successful and established teacher. What I can say now is wearing many hats has been a positive experience for me. Moving forward helps me see that I can help shape the change instead of being knocked about by its impact, like a house being hit by one more hurricane. Despite change, I maintain my sense of stability. Needless to say, I see that I am growing forward, mostly in baby-steps, sometimes punctuated by giant leaps.

The intensity that has been September is moving on for all of us. What new challenges did the start of your year bring? How are those challenges shaping your vision for the year and dreams for your career in the future? Do you feel the positive energy?

**kids  
ARE SPECIAL!**

### Month of the Young Adolescent



"No other age level is of more importance to the future of individuals, and, literally, to that of society; because these are the years when youngsters crystallize their beliefs about themselves and firm up their self-concepts, their philosophies of life and their values - the things that are the ultimate determinants of their behaviors."

*Understanding and Appreciating the Wonder Years*, John H. Lounsbury

NSMA has proclaimed October to be the Month of the Young Adolescent. See their website, [www.nmsa.org/moya/moya\\_2005/index.htm](http://www.nmsa.org/moya/moya_2005/index.htm), for endless ideas on activities. There are so many things you can do to celebrate this wonderful age group.