IMLEA is dedicated to promoting, improving, and supporting middle level education.

MIDDLING AROUND

The Newsletter of the Indiana Middle Level Education Association

President's Message



by Bobby Thompson

Bridging the Gap

In mainstream media, we hear many people speak about finding life-balance. Those of us in middle level education find ourselves trying to strike the perfect balance between elementary and secondary education.

I like to personally think of middle school as a bridge between vastly different educational experiences. You have the magical land of education where we are teaching our future leaders the fundamentals in every subject, where learning is so exciting and new. On the other side of the educational pendulum, you have the land of focused areas of concentrated content and high pressures of credits, tests, and defining your career path. When you are working in a middle school, it is important to keep the educational balance; teach our kids the important information they need to be successful in the future but also keep learning fun and exciting as we shift our learning paradigms from learning to read to reading to learn.

At our middle school, we constantly talk about how to keep the balance of getting our students ready for the high stakes state assessments, preparing them for high school, and letting them find their life passions so that they can maximize their high school experience. This can be an interesting task as we continue to teach certain fundamental skills and go into greater depths with our standards.

An overarching theme that we have noticed after analyzing our state assessment results from across the state is that scores continue to decline; however, when you talk to educators from around the state, one constantly hears about how hard we are working to increase the scores. At our school, we have adopted a motto from Mike Rowe. Mike Rowe is host of the reality show *Dirty Jobs*. He has downgraded the saying "work smart, not hard," by using a play on words, and has coined a new phrase: "We need to work hard *and* smart."

Thus, we are working smart and hard as we are focusing our instructions using the very best work from educational specialists such as Robert Marzano, Mike Schmoker, Doug Reeves, Robert Dufour, Kristina Smekens, Sherry Parrish, Carol Dweck, and John Hattie. We have taken seven focal areas collectively from these great minds in education and are really working on our practices. The seven focal areas are as follows:

(Continued on page 3)



A special guest at IMLEA's State Conference! "Paws & Think" presented about Dog Therapy Programs. See more conference pics on pages 4-5!

IN THIS ISSUE...

- Bridging the Gap (p 1)
- Shirley's Desk (p 2)
- IMLEA State Conf Pics (p 4-5)
- Brew'in Cafe at Boston MS (p 6)
- Connecting in Plymouth (p 6)
- Creston's 30-Day Challenge (p 7)
- Decriminalizing Misbehavior (p 8)
- Student Engagement (p 9)
- Value of a PLN (p 10)
- PATINS Supports Educators (p 11)
- generationOn (p.12)
- Service-Learning Benefits (p 13)
- Hope for MS English Teachers! (p 14)
- Unique Approach to MS Math (p 15)

Bobby Thompson is Principal of Triton Central MS in Fairland. Contact him at bthompson@nwshelby.k12.in.us

Middling Around

A publication of the
Indiana Middle Level Education Association

Vicki Wertz, Editor - *imleanews@comcast.net*
Submission Deadlines: Sept 1 / March 1

IMLEA Executive Committee

President - Bobby Thompson
NW Shelby Schools, Triton Central MS, Principal

Past President - Susie Highley
IMLEA Director of Operations

President-Elect - Rita Turflinger
Ft Wayne Comm Schools, Retired 2015 Asst Superintendent

Executive Secretary/Treasurer - Terry Mucha
School Town of Highland, Highland MS, Principal

Secretary - Jessica Tubbs
Carmel Clay Schools, Creekside MS, Asst Principal

Executive Director - Shirley Wright

IMLEA Office: 317.894.2937
Fax: 317.894.9807
Website: ***www.imlea.org*** Email: ***imlea@iasp.org***



IMLEA Board of Trustees

Region 1 - Jeni Hirschy
Plymouth Comm Schools, Riverside Intermediate, Principal
Kristy Stephens - Hebron Corp, Hebron MS, Lead Teacher

Region 2 - Deborah Carter
LaPorte Comm Schools, Boston MS, Principal
Jana Vance - Rochester School Corp, Superintendent

Region 3 - Alan Jones
Ft Wayne Comm Schools, Lakeside MS, Principal
Deb Graf - Blackhawk Christian School, Asst Principal

Region 4 - Shannon Hudson
Crawfordsville CS Corp, Crawfordsville MS, Dept Chairman

Region 5 - Phil Lederach
Hamilton SE Schools, Dir of Secondary Ed

Region 6 - Beth Denham
Fayette School Corp, Connersville MS, Principal

Region 7 - Heather Branigan
MSD Wash Twp, Northview MS, Asst Principal

Region 8 - Travis Smith
NW Hendricks School Corp, Tri-West MS, Asst Principal

Region 9 - Sue Sims
Immanuel Lutheran School, Asst Principal

Region 10 - Dr. Daryl Werner
Jac-Cen-Del Comm Schools, Jac-Cen-Del Jr-Sr, Principal
Destiny Rutzel - S Ripley School Corp, S Ripley JHS, Principal

Region 11 - Tonya Brading
Greater Clark County Schools
Keith Paige - Warrick Cty Corp, Tecumseh MS, Principal

Region 12 - Mark Black
S Harrison Comm Schools, Corydon Central JHS, Principal
Dr. Mariane Carlton Fisher, Jeffersonville HS, Asst Principal

Ex-Officio Member
Joan Belschwender, generationOn Director
IMLEA Administrative Asst - Carolyn Terry

IMLEA Happenings

Shirley's Desk



Our Friends are YOUR Friends

IMLEA has been making friends... some are old friends, some are new, it doesn't matter though because the best part is that they are here for YOU! On our website, there is a tab at the top of the homepage titled "Partners!" Not everyone can be our friend... we only choose them because they can help our members in many different ways:

Lynn Schmale, Horace Mann, is our oldest friend. Not only does Horace Mann have special rates just for educators, but also for educators'' families–just ask Lynn! They also help educators with college debt reduction–really!; AND they match Donors Choose donations, sponsor the Shining Star awards and frequently show up with donuts at your school–and now they help fund our STW program!

Mike Furnish, Champions Together – Mike Furnish, President and CEO, Special Olympics, Indiana, brought the *Champions Together* program to IMLEA. Lee Lonzo will be the Director for the program in Indiana. Thanks to Mike's presentation to our Board we now have a collaborative partnership between the Indiana Middle Level Education Association and Special Olympics Indiana that promotes servant leadership among student athletes while changing their lives as well as the lives of those with intellectual disabilities! If you are interested in piloting this in your school, contact *Champions Together* Director Lee Lonzo at *llonzo@ihsaa.org*

Diane Baldessari, Achieve 3000 - How can any educator not enjoy talking to her about the great programs that Achieve 3000 has–IMLEA members are provided a 10% product discount for orders received by 12.31.17!

Daniel McNulty, **Patins** – Daniel McNulty, CEO of Patins, is a NEW friend! When we discovered that, "PATINS supports Indiana's K-12 public educators in universally designing an inclusive environment for all students through the use of Assistive Technology (AT), Accessible Educational Materials (AEM), Professional Development & Technical Support at no cost to the school," how could we not want to share this with our members?

Cathy Tooley, Tools for Success – National and international professional speaker and author of "Tools for Success" Cathy Tooley will come to your school to provide meaningful professional development for teachers, professional development for administrators, *and* offer a 5% discount to IMLEA member schools! Check out her PD for new teachers!

Richard Capone, **Let's Go Learn, Inc**. – One of our Schools to Watch districts had CEO Capone present to all of their principals and liked the program so well that they are now piloting it in all of their schools! See his article in this newsletter on page 15! Our agreement with LGL allows for a 10% Discount on LGL Assessments and a 5% Discount on LGL Edge for IMLEA Members

We hope you get to meet and work with our friends. Just like IMLEA, they care about you and want to support what you do!!!

Shirley Wright
IMLEA Executive Director
"Schools to Watch" State Director

Shirley Wright is the Executive Director for the Indiana Middle Level Education Association. Contact Shirley at the IMLEA Office by phone at 317.894.2937, or email at IMLEA@IASP.org

(Continued from page 1, "Bridging the Gap")

Focal Area #1: Prioritize the Standards and Offer a Viable and Guaranteed Curriculum
Focal Area #2: Utilize Essential Questions
Focal Area #3 Develop Literacy with Close Reading
Focal Area #4: Develop Mathematical Reasoning and Number Talks
Focal Area #5: Emphasize Assessment Vocabulary
Focal Area #6: Align Assessments to ISTEP+ Rigor and Formatting
Focal Area #7: Teach Students about Growth Mindset

Using this as our road map for school improvement, we focus our efforts on the balance beam of performing well on standardized tests four days a week. We use one day a week for a delayed start to allow for professional development for our staff. After this time, we allow our teachers and students the opportunities to explore multiple areas and learning experiences. Our teachers use a workshop model to offer learning experiences such as coding, genius hour, autocad, book clubs, dorm room cooking, woodshop, service learning, robotics, and many, many more. We have found that this model has allowed us to continue to outpace the state averages on state assessments, show growth in our NWEA scores, increase student and teacher attendance, and grow our engagement the other days of the week.

We feel that this model allows us the opportunity to reach a life-balance while bridging the gap between the elementary and secondary learning experiences. We feel our students are equipped with the necessary knowledge they need to be successful as lifelong learners as well as finding their passion and love for learning on their educational journey.

Introducing the...
IMLEA Monday Minute

IMLEA members began receiving a short newsletter deemed the "Monday Minute" in August. Our goal is to send an update each week that contains important news, deadlines, grant/award opportunities, and more. Some weeks may have a short poll question, with results to be shared the next week. An article or website of particular interest to middle level educators may also be included. The idea is that it should not take you much more than a minute to peruse the contents and select anything that might warrant further investigation.

Feel free to forward it to staff members. If you have not been receiving the "Monday Minute" and would like to be on the direct mailing list, please contact Susie Highley, *shighleyimlea@iasp.org* Members are also welcome to send in links, news, pictures, or videos to be included. All issues are archived on our IMLEA webpage, *www.imlea.org* on the Publications tab.

Personalized Learning Begins with Our Diagnostic Assessments

Let's GoLearn

Supporting Teachers in Today's Complex Classroom

DORA: Genuine Reading Diagnostics Assessments
ADAM/DOMA: Foundational Math Diagnostic Assessments
LGL Edge: Amazing Personalized Learning in Math & Reading
LGL Data Portal: Data to Support Site Level PLCs, RtI, and Interventions



- **Diagnose Student Learning Gaps**
- **Analyze Student Data & Skill Level**
- **Share Data with Students and Families**
- **Perfect for Blended Learning**
- **Aligned to Indiana Standards**
- **Solutions for Elementary, Middle, & Secondary**

"Need more information? Contact me so we can start a conversation!" **- Brenda Robidou**
317-399-5005
brobidou@letsgolearn.com

FREE Trial go to: www.letsgolearn.com/trials/imlea2017
www.LetsGoLearn.com 1-888-618-7323

Personalized Learning Continues with Our Diagnostic Data and Online Personalized Learning Courses

IMLEA State Conference

Over 300 excited middle level educators came to Indianapolis to the Sheraton North Keystone at the Crossing Hotel to hear Dr. Todd Whitaker on Sunday afternoon, September 17, and Dr Jennifer McCormick welcoming everyone on Monday morning followed by Cathy Tooley, author of Tools for Success opening the day at our first session on September 18.

Attendees learned, laughed and participated in their choice of five sessions out of the 35 offered the rest of the day! A delicious sit-down plated lunch was enjoyed at noon with entertainment by the 7th grade choir from Rochester Middle School who sang and clapped and danced to an African song sung in the native language of Swahili.

After lunch a new collaborative partnership was announced between IMLEA and *Champions Together* of the Special Olympics, *http://soindiana.org/champions-together/* and *http://soindiana.org/who-we-are/*. *Champions Together* was launched by Mike Furnish, Indiana President and CEO, and IMLEA Executive Director, Shirley Wright. "Unified Sports" joins people with and without intellectual disabilities on the same team. It was inspired by a simple principle: playing together is a quick path to friendship and understanding. "Playing unified can be as easy as picking up a ball and inviting someone not quite like you to play. Or you can participate in an organized Unified Sports event." Contact *imlea@iasp.org* to become a *Champions Together* school.

The famous IMLEA Board, Sponsors and Partners Gift and Raffle finished the hour. Screams of delight were heard in the ballroom as winning attendees came to claim prizes valued from $25 to $100.

The afternoon sessions followed – it was hard for attendees to choose from so many. PowerPoints and information from most of the speakers can be found on the Events page at *www.imlea.org*. Watch our emails and website next spring for information on the 2018 IMLEA State Conference!



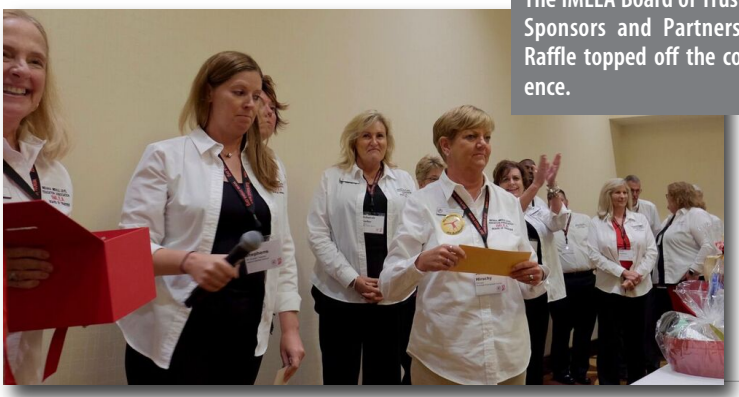
Keynote Speaker Dr. Todd Whitaker kicked off the conference on Sunday afternoon.



In Session I educators received inspiration and practical strategies to take back to their schools from Cathy Tooley, President and CEO of Tools for Success.



Dr. Jennifer McCormick, Indiana Superintendent of Public Instruction, welcomed conference attendees.

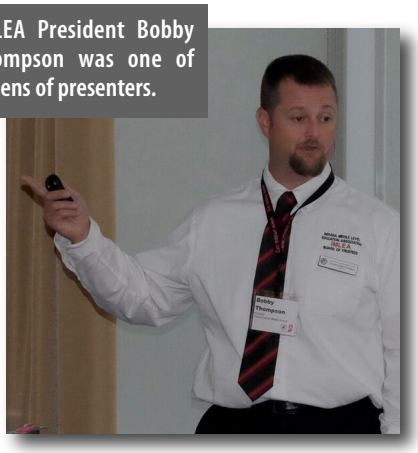


The IMLEA Board of Trustees , Sponsors and Partners Gift Raffle topped off the conference.



Pam Millikan, Association for Middle Level Education, congratulates Steven Stoner on winning free registration to the AMLE Conference.

"Unite in the Middle"



IMLEA President Bobby Thompson was one of dozens of presenters.



Groupwork can be stressful!



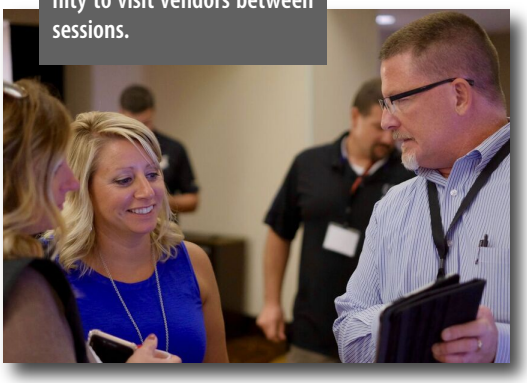
Sessions offered the latest best practices and innovative programs.



IMLEA Board member Sue Sims poses with the winner of the gift basket she donated.



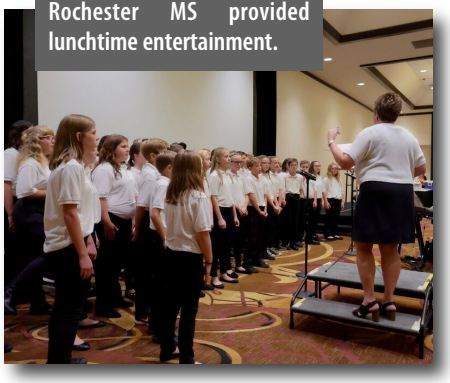
Educators from all over the state convened for the IMLEA State Conference.



Participants had the opportunity to visit vendors between sessions.



We love our enthusiastic Indiana educators!



The 7th grade choir from Rochester MS provided lunchtime entertainment.



Across the State

Good Things Are Brew'in at Boston MS

September marked the opening of the Brew'in Cafe in the Boston MS Media Center in Laporte. The catchy name is derived from the school mascot which is a bruin or large black bear. Boston's café is manned by baristas supplied by the Life Skills classes. Students are learning important lessons on customer service and inventory.



Cafes such as this are opening across the country in Middle Schools and High Schools alike. They provide real world experience and training for students while providing a much needed pick-me-up in the morning.

According to an article about Carmel HS's Carmel Cafe and Market published in the *Indianapolis Star* on May 10, 2017, "The Carmel Café & Market was started and run entirely by students ... is booming, bringing in $90,000 so far this school year. Carmel Clay Schools is adding its support by spending an estimated $140,000 on renovations this summer to create a real coffee shop space, complete with production stations, an ice machine, dishwasher and seating for about 35."

The Brew'in Cafe will be open to faculty and staff from 7:30 AM- 8:00 AM, Monday - Friday. It is hoped that as time goes on, the Café will include general education students acting as mentors to the life skills students. Future plans also include establishing delivery service with students bringing teachers coffee to their classrooms.

Rose Sgambelluri, Media Specialist
Boston MS, LaPorte



Learning and Connecting Beyond the Classroom

It's a given that learning takes place in the classroom setting each and every day. However, the students at Riverside Intermediate School are doing something this year that allows for learning to take place in a different setting. All students have the opportunity to go to Miller's Merry Manor Assisted Living Complex in Plymouth to spend some time and connect with the residents. Riverside is made up of nine academic teams, and each team has a month where they will go to Miller's to visit. Riverside has also invited the residents at Miller's to come to the school for some of their daily programs throughout the school year.

In August, Stars team leaders Wade Mattis and Jordan Kubaszyk, along with their 55 sixth-grade students, took the five-minute bus ride to Miller's for the first visit in this new partnership. Prior to leaving Riverside, the students were put in groups of three to five. Upon arriving, the students were warmly greeted by Cindy Flagg, the Activity Director at Miller's, and each student group was then matched up with a resident.

The goal was to give back to the Plymouth community, while also allowing the students to have a learning experience unlike one they can gain in the classroom. While visiting Miller's, each student took 3-5 minutes to read a book, article, or excerpt of their choice to the resident. Once each student had read, there was time for discussion between student and resident. Some of the conversations were centered around what was read, the student's school day, the adult's experiences, career options, and the changing community of Plymouth. The conversations were limitless.

The group of students were at the Assisted Living Complex for about 30 minutes, and that was the only negative comment that was heard, "The visit was too short!" The students came back to school excited about some of the things they had learned, and many have requested a return visit!

These visits are not only for the students to learn by listening to the adults at Miller's, but also a way to practice some of the character traits that Riverside promotes throughout the school year (Perseverance, Respect, Integrity, Discipline, and Empathy). Students are able to practice respect while being in a public setting with a person they do not know who is also different from them. Empathy is an area of focus at Riverside this year and the students are able to practice this trait by hearing the stories that the residents tell them. The students are able to build and feel self-worth and pride by doing something for someone else. This trip is something that goes beyond talking and learning to valued members of our community. It is building a connection to someone, while also developing skills that will help the students become positive citizens in our community!

Ryan Welch, Assistant Principal
Riverside Intermediate, Plymouth

Creston Middle School's 30-Day Challenge

No one ever said it would be easy.

Educating the minds of middle schoolers can be downright challenging. Each student comes to us with a different story and a complex background. As students make their way through elementary and then to middle school, they have several complex layers and gaps in their learning, not to mention lots of emotions.

Warren Township educators are continually striving to meet the individual needs of their students through data driven decisions, differentiated path and pace, targeted small group instruction and opportunities to take ownership of the learning. As an instructional coach at Creston Middle School, I work with teachers as they navigate the waters of personalized learning.



Last spring two of my colleagues decided to commit to making some small, sustainable changes in student ownership and reflection. Jumping off the famous Ted Talk "Try Something New," we did some research, created a plan and took a leap to intentionally providing students with opportunities to set authentic goals and reflect on their learning. Through this process we uncovered the importance of guiding students in setting meaningful goals, overcoming obstacles and understanding the process of how they learn. We were blessed with the opportunity to share our learning and experiences at the annual IMLEA conference.

So why did we pick student goal setting and reflection? This was often the area that we overlooked or saw as an afterthought. As we dug into the book, *Teaching Students to Self-Assess*, by Starr Sackstein, we realized goal setting and reflection was really the missing piece to the puzzle.

Teaching students how to reflect allows them to decode what they know and what challenges them. Ultimately, it allows them to understand the difference between the two. If we want students to truly become invested in their learning, they must see value in what they are doing. Here are some key takeaways from our journey.

Before you have your students set goals or dissect their learning, you first must **model what good reflection looks like**. When students see that you value goal setting and the process of reflection they will value it as well. Do this by daily carving out time in each class to model how to set a goal. We found that using the imagery technique, WOOP (Wish Outcome Obstacle Plan), was incredibly powerful for our students. Whether you dive into WOOP or use SMART Goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Results-focused, Time-bound), walk students through the process and provide feedback. Teach students to question everything and to make the reflection more about learning and less about if they liked the activity or the content.

Secondly, **conferencing with students** is just as powerful as the process itself. As a mentor and facilitator, the teacher can ask students pointed questions to help them dig deeper and process. It allows students to create meaning in what they are learning. With all the standards and pressures that educators face today, taking the time to meet with students to talk about their learning gets overlooked. Put this back into your day and you will see a transformation of student drive and ownership in the process.

Finally, **use technology** to enhance what you're doing, not to replace it. For example, creating a simple Google Form to collect student reflection allows you to quickly pinpoint needs and provide individual feedback.

If you are looking to try something new this year, start today with small sustainable changes, stick with it and you will find it rewarding.

Sara Uebbing
Instructional Specialist
Creston MS, Indianapolis

Decriminalize Misbehavior and End the Pipeline to Prison



Amber Schroering
Asst Principal
Brownsburg East MS

A teacher friend of mine recently wrote that a former student is under investigation for severely beating his girlfriend's seven-month-old son, who is not expected to live. Upset and angry, my friend struggled to reconcile this terrible news with the memory of his student:

"I remember this man as a 14-year-old freshman who had just been kicked out of his mother's house. He hadn't done anything wrong; his mom's boyfriend just didn't like him. At 15, he got emancipated and was trying to figure out how he could devote time to the high school football team, his studies, and to a pizza place job in order to earn enough money to afford his own apartment. With no support outside of the school, he quickly found such a delicate balance to be unsustainable.

"He never stood a chance. His teachers and counselors knew he needed help, and we did what we could. At some point, however, he slipped through the cracks, dropped out, moved, etc. (There's always a story, but teachers are rarely privy to it.)

"From what I heard, he developed a drug problem, which isn't at all surprising, considering the difficult life he had. And that life is about to get a lot worse. What he has allegedly done is horrendous, and I would never dismiss it as anything less.

"Let us remember, however, that this tragedy is a byproduct of generations of abuse and neglect, and when a member of my community falls, I am complicit as well. We all are. Monsters are made, not born."

When I read this post, I was struck by that all-too-familiar feeling that we simply aren't doing enough to help our most vulnerable students. Though educators cannot right every societal wrong, most of us know that we can do more to help students, especially those with emotional, socioeconomic, and behavioral challenges.

Over the past 10 years, I've worked with our school community on implementing effective Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS). I have discovered two key strategies that leverage this system toward the success of all students, especially our most at-risk:

Collaborative Problem Solving

At Brownsburg East MS, a best PBIS practice we have found is Collaborative Problem Solving (CPS). We were inspired to take this approach by the work of Ross Greene, child psychologist and author of *Lost at School*. He tells us that "kids do well if they can," and believes that an educator's primary role is to help students overcome obstacles that give rise to negative behaviors.

CPS says that for every challenging behavior, there is a lagging skill or unsolved problem, and our Brownsburg East staff works hard to understand and address these underlying complexities for each student. For example, some of our newer students to Brownsburg have historically responded to our teachers in ways that have been perceived as disrespectful. As part of the problem solving process, we take the necessary time and attention to empathize with students and brainstorm with them to determine what skills might be missing. We have learned that often our new students haven't been explicitly taught ways to respond acceptable in our school environment. We then help the student to understand why this is a problem and invite the student to be part of the solution as they practice this new skill in various environments.

Restorative Discipline

Another key to building PBIS systems that work is the consistent and pervasive use of restorative discipline by all staff. Restorative discipline asks students to turn their wounds into wisdom. Instead of focusing on a contrived consequence for a rule that was broken, we focus on the harm that was caused, the natural outcomes of the student's decision, and how the situation can best be rectified for all.

In this approach, we ask students to consider not only the negative effects of their decision, but also some of the positive aspects. For example, imagine a student is in your office because he yelled at a teacher in the middle of class, halting instruction for a couple minutes. The student comes to you still angry or in fight-or-flight. Restorative discipline doesn't absolve him from consequences, but it also doesn't continue to reproach the already-escalated student. Instead, you take the time to help the student reflect on his behavior. Yes, he needs to understand that he shouldn't yell at an adult, especially in the middle of instruction. He also needs to see that he showed courage and was bold to speak up. How might he apply that courage in a proactive way to make a positive difference next time?

CPS and restorative discipline practices help the PBIS system reach our most at-risk students and help schools stop criminalizing student misbehaviors.

Talk with your staff and consider how your school might apply these best practices to overcome the obstacles students face and decriminalize misbehavior.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Cathy S Tooley, Owner
Tools for Success



"Engagement" is more than a vocabulary word!

Every teacher has heard the statement that their classrooms needs "to be more engaging." They have had more than one administrator ask them, "How were your students engaged in your lesson?" They have been in a pre- or post-observation meeting and been asked, "How will you engage your students in your lesson/topic/subject?" More often than not, "engagement" is not being achieved because of the *lack of understanding* of what is really meant by the word itself.

According to Webster, the definition of engagement is "the action of engaging or being engaged." But, what does that really MEAN in our classrooms? How can we demonstrate it? What does it look like? What does it sound like?

I think in order to define what engagement looks like we have to look at what engagement is not. Engagement is not compliance. Compliance is defined as "the action or fact of complying with a wish or a command/the state or fact of according with or meeting rules or standards." Whereas, in comparison, engagement is defined as "busy or occupied/the action of being engaged or being involved."

The biggest difference here is BUSY rather than compliant. It is being OCCUPIED rather than following a wish or a command.

There are so many ways to engage students; some of them include:

Physical Engagement

Physical engagement occurs when we move our students around. We get them out of their seats to do a 4-corners activity. We have them raise different color cards to help us check their understanding. We have them circulate for a gallery walk.

Social Engagement

Social engagement, simply put, gets kids talking. Research states that the most effective learning environments for students engage them in discussion or sharing activities every 5-8 minutes to help them process ideas. But these discussions don't have to take forever. Even a quick 20-second exchange can keep the energy up in your classroom and help your students comprehend and retain information, particularly from a rigorous text. It asks all students to socially engage–not just the ones raising their hands, having, in essence a one-on-one conversation with the teacher with 35 other onlookers.

Intellectual Engagement

Intellectual engagement happens when we put the onus on our students to create meaning from the questions or challenges we present within our discipline. It allows us to step out of the role of "Deliverer of Information," and into the role of "Facilitator."

Without intellectual engagement, physical and social engagement becomes play time and an opportunity for passive compliance. If your kids leave your classroom still talking about what you were all discussing in class, you know you've hit the sweet spot of intellectual engagement.

Engagement is seen when students...

- form arguments and support their claims with strong evidence or supporting details.
- lift individual white boards high into the air with answers to a higher-level question.
- analyze and synthesize complex ideas through speaking or writing.
- apply knowledge to new learning experiences in class, online, or outside.
- evaluate the validity or credibility of an idea or process.
- work in pairs or small groups to solve problems.
- collaborate online using 21st century tools.
- apply scientific principles and methods to authentic research.

Engagement removes the teacher from the front of the room as the "sage on the stage" to being the "guide on the side." Engagement happens when we, as teachers, put the learning on the hands, the ears, the eyes and the minds of our students. Engagements happens when WE begin to know that, as teachers, it is our role to GUIDE our students. Together, we can make a difference, one lesson at a time. Try one of these new engagement strategies today. You will be amazed by the difference.

The Value of a Personal Learning Network (PLN)



We are fortunate to be educators in a time when it is easier than ever to create connections with experts, tap the "wisdom of crowds," and collaborate with others around the world. Ironically, some have found that they are more connected than ever with their own colleagues!! Yet, how do you begin to find these valuable connections? Some have dismissed Twitter as a great time waster, while others claim it is their most valuable resource. Even Facebook has yielded some worthy networks.

To assist with making worthwhile connections, we have added a link on our IMLEA Webpage under the top tab "Resources" called "Resources to Build Your PLN." It has been seeded with such things as:

- IMLEA Twitter List of Indiana Middle Level Member Schools
- IMLEA Facebook Page
- IMLEA diigo Resources

Some other active twitter chats include:

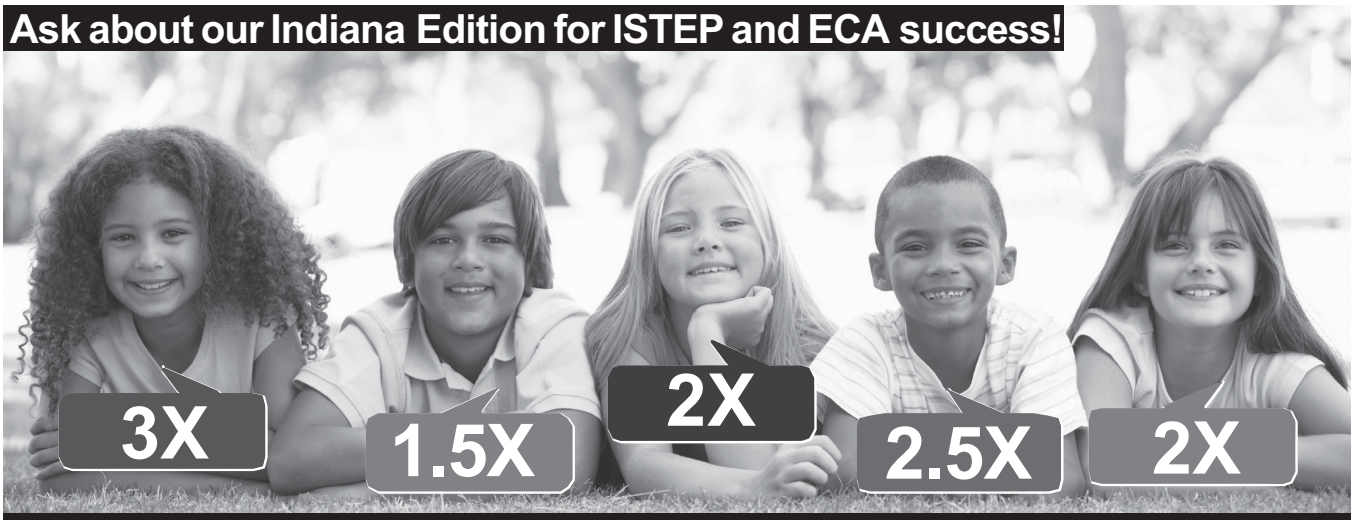
#INeLearn Indiana DOE Office of eLearning Chat, Thursdays, 9pm ET
#mschat Nationally-based chat for middle level educators Thursdays, 8 pm ET
#satchat Very active, international chat, 7:30 am ET Saturdays
#edchat Participants vote on the topic Tuesdays 7 pm ET (Archives available)
#tlap Teach LIke a Pirate Chat, Mondays, 9 pm ET
#bfc530 International chat, 5:30 am ET Monday-Friday

Do you have a useful PLN? What connections have worked for you? Please share with us, and we will add those links to our IMLEA webpage.

Susie Highley
IMLEA Director of Operations



Ask about our Indiana Edition for ISTEP and ECA success!



Want to dramatically increase student Lexile® reading gains?

We've got your number. Only one online learning tool meets all students precisely where they are and accelerates them to where they need to be. Only one provides 100% nonfiction content. Only one has been dramatically increasing student reading gains for more than 16 years. **Only Achieve3000®.**

To learn more, please contact: Diane Baldessari
317-460-1442 or diane.baldessari@achieve3000.com

ACHIEVE3000®
www.achieve3000.com

PATINS: Supporting Indiana's Educators

PATINS supports Indiana's K-12 public educators in universally designing an inclusive environment for all students through the use of Assistive Technology (AT), Accessible Educational Materials (AEM), Professional Development & Technical Support at no cost to the school.

Multiple training specialists are available for professional development and technical assistance through in-person training, webinars, and consultations for your district, school, or even your classroom. Each specialist has been assigned specific areas of expert study. This means that they are required to stay up-to-date on the latest technologies, strategies, and implementation regarding their specialty areas in order to serve Indiana's public educators effectively. Specialties range from Google & Apple Accessibility & Integration to Specific Learning Disabilities to Orthopedic Access, Augmentative & Alternative Communication, and more.

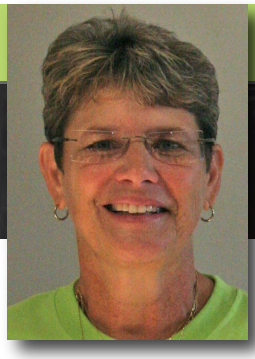
PATINS also serves you through the Indiana Center for Accessible Materials (ICAM). This service provides guidance on the implementation of accessible materials in curriculum delivery. The ICAM team works closely with the Indiana Educational Resource Center (IERC) to provide a full range of specialized formats including NIMAS files, Braille, large print, ePubs, accessible PDFs, and more for your students with a documented print disability.

Plus, the PATINS AT Lending Library allows you to trial low to high tech assistive technologies with your students without financial risk. You can borrow technology from iOS apps to high dollar communication devices for any student. No IEP is needed.

Not sure what you want to try or how we can help? PATINS is here to support you every step of the way. Tell us what barriers you are finding in your classroom from engagement to negative behaviors to physical or cognitive disabilities, and we will offer you ideas, strategies, and technologies to try with your students.

For more information about the PATINS Project, please visit *www.patinsproject.com/*.





generationOn Schools — real-world learning through service

Joan Belschwender
Director
generationOn Indiana

When asked, "What is Philanthropy?" most students reply that it is giving money. It is important for them to know that TIME and TALENT are assets that can be given to help others and are just as important as treasure. Learning to Give lessons on philanthropy help to illustrate this concept to all students regardless of age and prior knowledge.

Learning to Give has a variety of lessons that are ready for implementation. TeachOne is an initiative on the Learning to Give website. There are four TeachOne initiatives throughout the calendar year that highlight four featured lesson plans for each initiative: Back to School; GivingTuesday; Martin Luther King Jr. Day; Earth Day. LTG makes it easy to infuse giving and community into your plans. Each one-session lesson is followed with a simple and powerful service project and reflection. These lessons spark meaningful discussions and service that center on giving, sharing, and caring. TeachOne in the classroom or building on GivingTuesday, November 28. Each lesson was written by an Indiana educator and can be adapted for any grade level. The lessons can be found at *www.learningtogive.org/teachone*. Below are two that are featured for TeachOne #GivingTuesday:

Giving Tuesday - Lesson: Students define philanthropy and discuss the joy of giving, as well as various ways to give through nonprofits in the community. They learn how Giving Tuesday uses the power of social media to encourage others to combine efforts and make a big difference. Project: Students explore their giving passion and use communication as an instrument of change during GivingTuesday.

Impact of Giving - Lesson: Students investigate local and global hunger issues, and learn about nonprofits in the community. Students examine root causes and effects, and learn about the Sustainable Development Goals and giving. Project: Students organize an event, such as a volunteer fair or game-a-thon to raise awareness of the issue.

To develop leaders of tomorrow with a heart for giving, be sure that you are registered at *www.generationOn.org* Registering will connect you with generationOn Indiana and generate information for the mini grant application for teachers and schools. Philanthropy lessons are FREE to schools at *www.learningtogive.org*. For more information, contact Joan Belschwender, Director, generationOn IN, at *generationOn@iasp.org*. For free professional development for your region, corporation, or school, contact Beth Smith, generationOn School consultant, *bethsmithgenonin@iasp.org*

generationOn Schools

Become a generationOn School! Educate, Equip, and Empower students with 21st Century knowledge and skills through real-world problem-solving and service opportunities. FREE service and service-learning resources, individual and school registration, online service-learning tracker available at *https://www.generationon.org/for-classrooms-and-schools*

generationOn Indiana is a grant funded program facilitated by IASP and IMLEA to assist educators in Indiana with the FREE resources on the generationOn and LTG websites and awards educators $250 mini-grants to support service-learning

generationOn Service Clubs

Provide kids and teens with the tools and resources to implement service projects and share their successes. Club members take the lead with the adult advisor supporting the club by providing information and supervision.
https://www.generationon.org/page/clubs

Learning to Give (LTG)

Philanthropy Education Resources Teach Giving and Civic Engagement through Academics. Over 1,700 K-12 teacher created lesson plans to inspire and equip students who use their hearts and minds to impact their world. *www.learningtogive.org*

In the "Middle" of Giving Through Service-Learning



Beth Smith
generationOn IN
School Consultant

A new school year is underway and the enthusiasm is palpable. As an educator, I always struggled with how to keep that enthusiasm alive and ongoing throughout the school year. I found that involving students with service-learning and philanthropy education that is tied to content standards had multiple benefits for them, the school, and the community. Some of those benefits are:

- Students model charitable beliefs, attitudes and behaviors
- Builds ownership and "Why Serve?" of service-learning
- Gives a deeper purpose for learning – students recognize talents and skills to "make a difference"
- Increases student motivation to attend school
- Improves school culture
- Community sees youth as an asset rather than a liability
- Broadens perspectives or career opportunities
- Develops critical thinking and leadership

When presented with this list of benefits, my question is not "why" incorporate service-learning and philanthropy education into the school, but "why not?" Michelle Schultz at Lebanon Middle School incorporated a service-learning project for the entire 8th grade team of 270 students. The students chose a project of interest that would meet specific needs in their community. They researched the project and the philanthropic tenets associated with it, planned the implementation, carried out the service, demonstrated their service to the community, and evaluated the project's effectiveness.

Some of the projects were:



Animal Welfare – the students volunteered at the local humane society shelter where they cleaned and painted the facility. They also assisted with the development of a new brochure for the adopted animals.



Are You a River Keeper? Students participated in water quality testing at the Hot Pond in Lebanon. They worked with the parks department to clean the surrounding park as well.



Bridging the Gap – Signature HealthCARE at Parkwood – Students helped with various jobs and activities at the local nursing home. They played games with the residents, assisted with their physical therapy, and installed a garden to beautify the grounds.

Hope for the English Teachers: Read and Write Every Day

English Class. Never before in the history of middle school have two words simultaneously evoked more fear and loathing. Though we read, write, and discuss in our day to day lives, often there is something about the dreaded E-word that sends our students (and sometimes parents, educators, and even administrators!) running for the hills. Is it the cold sweat we feel when someone utters the words, "infinitive phrase?" Is it the anxiety that builds when surely—surely the teacher is about to call on us to explain the symbolism present in the falling action? Is it the dread of having to study, learn, and forget yet another list of random, disconnected vocabulary words? Is it something more? Can English class be something more?

With an ever evolving set of standards, assessments, and accountability measures at state and national levels, it is more crucial than ever that teachers of all content areas work together to establish and maintain a laser-like focus on a narrowed, core set of critical standards that guide their curriculum. Translation: **English teachers need to focus on reading and writing. Every day. All year long. Year after year.**

Sounds simple, right? Almost too simple. If we only focus on our reading and writing standards, that means there are whole host of other, non-critical standards we are abandoning: grammar, vocabulary, speaking and listening, and media literacy. Are we making the claim that these areas of the English curriculum are not important and thus should be ignored?

Yes and no. The Indiana Department of Education provides blueprints for educators that identify which standards are *critical* (should make up 50-75% of instructional time), *important* (should make up 25-50% of instructional time), and *additional* (should make up only 5-10% of instructional time). When we correlate the blueprints to E/LA standards, certain focus areas remain: fiction, nonfiction, and writing. Yes, within vocabulary there is one critical standard—vocabulary in context—but this skill must be taught within reading lessons, so still we are talking about a narrowed curriculum that centers on reading and writing.

In Brownsburg Community School Corp., teachers and students have designed curriculum that unapologetically "cuts the fluff." Secondary English teachers, 6-12, have created units that center on teaching fiction, nonfiction, and writing together in a cohesive approach. The district has utilized the 6+1 Writing methods of Kristina Smekens for the past seven years, and recently the Secondary English and Social Studies Departments have begun to focus on the high leverage approach of close reading difficult texts to increase reading comprehension and analysis. These focal areas have combined to produce dramatic results for students.

In 2015, Brownsburg students were ranked 4th in the state of Indiana in terms of achievement on the ISTEP test. In 2016, one year after implementing a narrowed, focused approach to a standards-based curriculum, they jumped up to 1st. Then, in 2017, they did it again; they were ranked 1st in the state for students passing the E/LA portion of ISTEP for a second year in a row.

But, does a ranking really matter in the grand scheme of things?

Again, we would argue yes and no. The goal of all educators in Brownsburg is captured in one of our simplistic mantras: Just Get Better. English teachers spend their year building incredible relationships with their students, learning their students' strengths and weaknesses, and then crafting highly effective lessons that target the critical reading and writing standards and skills that their students need. Teachers and students track progress, goal set, conference, reflect, and grow. The focus is about each individual student's success—and this is also the crucial element that creates the overall success for our student population as a whole. This focus on individual students married with a narrowed, viable curriculum wields tremendous learning power. Undoubtedly the students are reaping the benefits of such focus, but that's only half of the story.

The heart of what drives our adult learning happens every Wednesday afternoon after students have left for the day. Teachers gather together in their media centers across the district and work together to determine what their next steps are—as a collective group—to continue to reach their students. We, like many districts, call these groups our Professional Learning Communities—or PLCs. In Brownsburg, these PLCs determine what needs to be taught, how it will be assessed, what will happen if students are confused and what will happen when students excel.

Every week, like clockwork, our teachers meet in small, content-area teams to answer the questions mentioned above. This is sacred time reserved for teacher collaboration. Teachers receive feedback from administrators after each meeting and are asked to continuously reflect on their instructional practices. This constant cycle of "Just Get Better" is lived not only by our students, but by our teachers as well. Teachers look forward to Wednesdays and getting the chance to learn from the PLC members. They seek out this time as a chance to share ideas, problem-solve, and game plan. Is the process perfect? No, but then again—we don't aim for perfection. There's a saying, "Best is good; better is best," and this is perfectly applicable to the type of growth mindset developed (and developing) in our district.

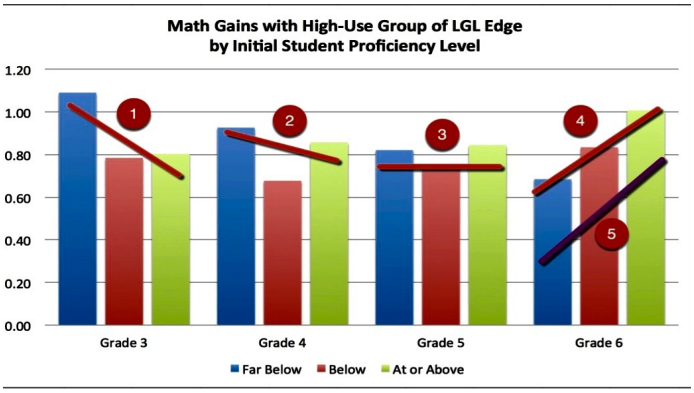
I will admit, we have amazing students and amazing parents. The vast majority of our students come to school wanting to learn, each and every day. But I would argue that the vast majority of students anywhere come to school truly wanting to learn. Yes, there are life obstacles that hinder the ease of learning for some students, and we absolutely have these needs here in Brownsburg. Studies continually show that poverty is the number one determining factor for whether or not a student will be successful in school. Though there are many districts in our state that are more directly impacted by poverty, Brownsburg is not the wealthiest suburb of Indianapolis. In 2017, the poverty

Continued on facing page

Data Supports that Middle School Math Requires a Unique Approach!



Richard Capone, CEO
Let's Go Learn, Inc.



Having worked with many school districts across the country, we know that the new focus of the year is student math achievement. Thus, Indiana is not alone. Less than optimal math achievement is the new norm. In district data meetings from New Jersey to Texas to California, everyone is struggling with trying to improve their math programs and scores. Unfortunately, the solution for middle schools is complicated.

If you look at the graph, you will see a unique phenomenon. We looked at data from 3750 students in an urban, diverse, low socioeconomic district. We broke the students into groups according to their math performance level at the beginning of the year. The blue bars are students who are starting over one year below grade level. These would be the Far Below students on the ILEARN. The red is for students within a year below. The green represents students at or above grade level.

Next, these students received over 13 hours of intervention with our LGL Math Edge, a personalized online math program. Students were assigned 60 lessons based on their unique needs. We included in the 3750 sample only students with consistent use of the program. This averaged to about 0.5 to 0.75 hours of use per week, which is considered a modest amount.

The results demonstrated that students with a modest amount of intervention (albeit personalized intervention) were able to close the gap if they started behind at the beginning of the year. The blue bar gains were much greater for grades 3 and 4. In grade 5, gains were about equal.

But here was the surprise! By grade 6 and above, intervention gains were equal among all groups. So while the 6th graders were making gains with the intervention, they were never closing the gap. Moreover, their classroom (non-intervention) gains were less (purple line). So far-below students were only learning a fraction of what the students who started the year at or above grade level were learning from classroom instruction.

Here is what the district math supervisors and I concluded. By 6th grade, most math programs, which follow a packed pacing guide, are teaching a math curriculum that is well beyond the basics. Students need solid foundational skills to continue to learn 6th grade mathematics and above. If students are far behind, they are not catching up enough to benefit from classroom instruction. Therefore, they are treading water. Annually paced interventions will help, but not quickly enough. Therefore, middle school math programs need to consider the following:

1. Front-loaded math interventions at the start of the year. Consider two periods of math in the fall for at-risk students.
2. Logistically, math teachers need to adopt a model of four days of group learning and one day of flexible groups, or a similar model.
3. PLC planning needs to be improved so that grade-level teachers really collaborate, identify curricular gaps, and come up with actionable plans.
4. Adoption of a modern conceptually based curriculum is a given. On-going PD is required for math teachers.

We have put together a white paper on best practices for implementing middle school math reform. If you would like to download the full report, visit us at:

www.letsgolearn.com/trials/msmath/

Continued from facing page:

rate within our district was 23.5%. In 2011, the first year we implemented PLCs, our poverty rate was 20.3%. The striking statistic is that while our poverty rate increased, student achievement on ISTEP increased as well. When you have a focused, viable curriculum that teaches critical reading and writing standards—students will grow. When you have a focused, viable professional development plan via PLCs—your teachers will grow.

Student and teacher growth plus a narrowed, focused curriculum equals success. Even English teachers can figure out this equation.

Still, the reality remains that many students come to our classes each year anxiously awaiting the hidden tortures of English class. What they continue to find is that in Brownsburg, year after year, we keep the focus. We read engaging fiction and nonfiction texts, we write in response to these texts, and we dive deep into rigorous discussion and lessons that address the most critical standards that the students need to access. When you break apart a text with the students, and model the thinking behind the ideas, the students thrive. They get hooked. They share their thoughts, and eventually…they start to (dare I say it?) ENJOY English class. There is hope. We promise.

Carrie Rosebrock
English Dept Head
Brownsburg East MS

The Indiana Middle Level
Education Association

11025 E. 25th Street
Indianapolis, IN 46229



The Indiana Middle Level Education Association