

Ideas that Work

 **8 ways to celebrate the magnificent middle**
By Patti Kinney & Dru Tomlin on March 5th, 2013 | [Comments\(3\)](#)

Adolescence is a critical time, and teachers and schools can help shine a light on just how vital and magnificent it can be. March is **National Middle Level Education Month**, and it's a great time to celebrate the joys and wonders of middle-level students (ages 10-15).

Consider these ways to celebrate the middle level in your school and classroom:

At the school house ...

- **Let your community experience the middle level.** Nothing reveals the life of a middle-school student like seeing it with one's own eyes. Set aside a day for parents, community members and other organizations to come in to your school, walk your hallways and see the great things happening in your classrooms.
- **Highlight middle-level service-learning.** Host a day and/or evening workshop for community members about how to grow service-learning opportunities that can benefit students and the community. Let students talk about the great community work they've already done. Invite specific business partners and community agencies and let the planning begin.
- **Showcase art in the middle level.** Hold an evening event that shines a light on the creative, magnificent work of middle-level students. Display their art and let the artists themselves talk about it. Let them lead workshops on particular art forms for parents and guests. Showcase your budding poets and musicians with poetry readings and concerts.

In the classroom ...

- **Get the middle level lead out in English/language arts.** Whether it's an informational, expository, narrative, persuasive or poetic piece, give your students the opportunity to write about their lives as middle-schoolers. What makes their lives both challenging and magnificent? Give students a voice and a choice — and then hear all about it! This would also be an outstanding chance for students to practice their oral presentation skills. **Check out these common core connections.**
- **Crunch the middle-level numbers in math.** Celebrate the middle level by having your students quantify their magnificent lives. How much time do they spend learning in school, playing sports, doing homework, reading, watching TV and posting on Facebook? Let them calculate their minutes, graph the results and discuss how math really shows their world. This would also be a great time for students to reflect on goal-setting and priorities — especially if their numbers need some adjustments. **Check out these common core connections.**
- **Examine the science of the middle level.** Science and physical education/health teachers can work together to help middle-school students understand how smart nutritional choices and exercise can make their lives even more magnificent. Have students keep a journal for one week in which they write about their healthy habits: eating, exercising, sleeping, etc. This can also be turned into an interdisciplinary project with math; students can count calories and fitness hours — and then let the graphing begin.

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Who We Are



- **Explore the world of the middle level in social studies.** Give students the chance to explore the magnificent lives of young adolescents around the globe by conducting research about middle-school students in other countries, collecting data and then comparing and contrasting their lives. What do young people deal with in other parts of the world? Let your students search continents and find themselves in the process!
- **Let middle-level creativity come out in music and art!** Whether through the brush, canvas, musical instrument or voice, let your middle-school students artistically express the magnificence of their lives. What would their lives look like through abstract art? What would their lives sound like through an original song? What famous art and music most resembles them? Have students work independently or collaboratively to create something that shows the world just how magnificent they are.

Join a variety of education groups — **National Association of Secondary School Principals, Association for Middle Level Education, The National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform** and **National Association of Elementary School Principals** — in celebrating the magnificent middle this month.

Tell us what you're doing to mark the occasion.

Patti Kinney is a veteran educator with 33 years in public education and has led the middle services for the National Association of Secondary School Principals since 2007. Patti has been a leader in middle-level education, serving on the Board of Directors and president for the Association for Middle Level Education and receiving many honors over the years.

Dru Tomlin began his career as an English teacher in Virginia, and in 1998 he started work in middle grades in Georgia, serving as a language arts, reading and social studies teacher, assistant principal, and principal. He is the director of Middle Level Services for AMLE.

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Helen Jackson · 2 days ago

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You are absolutely right about letting middle school students be creative and imaginative . Here is what some really great middle schoolers did with one of our Rhythm, Rhyme, Results language arts songs. (you may need to cut and paste the link)

Middle School Teacher Crystal Boyd of Hill County MS, Austin TX sent this to us yesterday:

"My students had so much fun doing this project. Some of them sang the songs a capella while others sang with the original track. This one is one of my favorites: <http://youtu.be/YiETmFpQsxc> "

You can find several YouTube vids by students using our music in very imaginative and memorable ways. Really increases their learning and engages both sides of the brain.

Thank you for this great article!

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farmergirl · 2 days ago

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I just substituted in a friend's 7th grade classroom and saw evidence of all those ways to CELEBRATE ongoing! There are great teachers out there that understand social-emotional learning as well as academics!!!

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mrsfenger 1p · 1 day ago

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So right: "Nothing reveals the life of a middle-school student like seeing it with one's own eyes." I love my job, but you really can't understand the energy in a middle school without experiencing it for yourself. Bringing in the community is a good way to help them see just what great kids we have.

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