

# Betwixt & Between

Education for Young Adolescents

*A Peer Reviewed Journal of Middle Level Research*

ISSN 2333-0813

Volume 8 Issue 1

Spring/Summer 2024



## Beyond the Elevator Speech

The Pennsylvania Professors of Middle Level Education and Pennsylvania Association for Middle Level Education have partnered to support a peer reviewed journal focused on research in the field of middle level education. Betwixt and Between is the result of this joint venture. We are pleased to welcome you to our learning community and encourage you to submit an article in the future. In the meantime, we hope to elevate your understanding of middle level students, schools, and the issues they face in these challenging times.

—The Betwixt and Between Editorial Board.

### Highlights From This

#### Issue:

Table of Contents: p. 3

From the Editor's  
Desk p. 5

Research Articles: N/A

#### Articles & Editorials:

Switching Hats:  
Professionalizing  
Teacher Candidates  
Using Book Talks  
p.6

Schools to Watch p.17

#### Membership

Information: p. 19

# *Betwixt & Between*

## Education for Young Adolescents

*A Peer Reviewed Journal of Middle Level Research*

Betwixt and Between: Education for Young Adolescents (ISSN-2333-0813) is the official journal of the Pennsylvania Association for Middle Level Education and the Pennsylvania Professors of Middle Level Education, P.O. Box 312 State College, PA 16801. It is published electronically twice each year in spring and fall, one volume per year in PDF format. The current issue can be found online at [http://www.papomle.org/On-Line\\_Journal.html](http://www.papomle.org/On-Line_Journal.html).

### **Advertising**

Inquiries should be addressed to:

Deana Mack, Geneva College, 3200 College Avenue, McKee Hall, Beaver Falls, PA 15010; [dmmack@geneva.edu](mailto:dmmack@geneva.edu).

### **Call for Manuscripts**

A Call for Manuscripts can be found in each issue and online at [http://www.papomle.org/On-Line\\_Journal.html](http://www.papomle.org/On-Line_Journal.html).

### **Copyright and Sharing**

Authorization to photocopy articles for internal (school building) or personal use of Association members is granted by the Pennsylvania Association for Middle Level Education (PAMLE) and the Pennsylvania Professors of Middle Level Education (PA-POMLE) provided that the copies recognize the organizations, provide a link to the organizations, provide a citation that reference the journal title on the first page of each photocopied article in this format:

Betwixt and Between is a publication of Pennsylvania Association for Middle Level Education (<http://www.pamle.org>) and the Pennsylvania Professors of Middle Level Education (<http://www.pomle.org>).

Permission has been granted for members of the Pennsylvania Association for Middle Level Education and the Pennsylvania Professors of Middle Level Education to maintain a copy for personal use or for use within a school building. All other uses are prohibited.

### **Link Requests**

If you want to link to a Betwixt and Between article, permission will be granted as long as it is not used in a marketing or sales brochure, or to raise funds, and as long as full credit is given in this format:

Betwixt and Between is a publication of Pennsylvania Association for Middle Level Education (<http://www.pamle.org>) and the Pennsylvania Professors of Middle Level Education (<http://www.pomle.org>).

Permission has been granted for members of the Pennsylvania Association for Middle Level Education and the Pennsylvania Professors of Middle Level Education to maintain a copy for personal use or for use within a school building. All other uses are prohibited.

### **Other Requests**

Special requests, such as for non-members, general distribution, resale, advertising, and promotional purposes or for creating new works, should be directed to Betwixt and Between: Education for Young Adolescents, c/o Journal Services, 312 State College, PA 16801, or via email to Deana Mack ([dmmack@geneva.edu](mailto:dmmack@geneva.edu)).

### **Environmental Impact**

The Journal is created electronically to reduce the use of paper. Please consider the environment before printing.

### **All rights reserved.**

The ideas and opinions expressed in Betwixt and Between: Education for Young Adolescents do not necessarily reflect those of PAMLE or PA-POMLE or the Editors of Betwixt and Between: Education for Young Adolescents. Publication of an advertisement or other product mention in Betwixt and Between: Education for Young Adolescents should not be construed as an endorsement of the manufacturer's claims. The Associations do not assume any responsibility for any injury and/or damage to persons or property arising from or related to any use of any material contained in Betwixt and Between: Education for Young Adolescents.

ISSN: 2333-0813

Volume 8, Issue 1

Spring 2024

---

# *Table of Contents*

About the Cover Image..... 4

From the Editor's Desk

Dr. Deana Mack .....5

**Research Articles**.....(None for this edition)

## **Teacher Educators**

Switching Hats: Professionalizing Teacher Candidates Using Book Talks

Dr. Derek F. DiMatteo .....6

## **Teacher Candidates**

.....(None for this edition)

## **Schools to Watch Principals**

.....(None for this edition)

Call for Manuscripts.....10

Organizational Memberships.....13

© 2024 Pennsylvania Association of Middle Level Education

## *About Our Cover Image*

Joe Girard, a successful author, motivational speaker, and salesman, once said, “The elevator to success is out of order. You'll have to use the stairs... one step at a time.”

We hope that Mr. Girard is not correct. Just as elevator call buttons allow us to select a variety of locations and move between them with ease, we hope that *Betwixt* and *Between* will cover a variety of middle level



issues and elevate our collective ability to improve middle level education for all learners. It is our hope that becoming informed about current issues, engaging in research, and learning from others will help our middle level community move from novice to expert across many areas more quickly than going it alone. So, go ahead, take the elevator with us.

Thank you for joining us in our quest to lift up all middle level learners. We hope our journal will provide something new to enhance the professional development of each of our readers.

# *From the Editor's Desk*

*Deana Mack*

Letter from the editor:

Welcome to the 2024 edition of *Betwixt and Between: Education for Young Adolescents*, The Journal of the Pennsylvania Professors of Middle Level Education.

The middle grades are so very influential in education! In reflecting on this small edition, it is a hope that the journal will hear from more of those influential middle level educators, principals, student teachers, and even middle level students.

Has your school done something new for PBIS or student inclusion of students with special needs? We would love to hear about technology integration, parent involvement, how to build community, or about the joys of teaching grades 4-8. Our editorial board is looking to expand our journal to make a bigger impact in middle level education. We would like to hear more about recent successes, needs, realities, or ideas related to middle level education in grades 4-8. If you are a middle level teacher, teacher educator, researcher, teacher candidate, student, or principal, please check out our call for manuscripts.

Sincerely,  
Deana Mack Ph.D.

## EDITORIAL BOARD

Leighann Forbes, Ed. D.  
Gannon University

Deana Mack, Ph. D. Geneva  
College

Carol E. Haney-Watson, Ph. D  
Kutztown University of  
Pennsylvania

Whitney Wesley, Ed. D.  
Slippery Rock University of  
Pennsylvania

### *About The Author*

*Dr. Derek F.  
DiMatteo*

Gannon University

[dimatteo001@gannon.edu](mailto:dimatteo001@gannon.edu)

Derek F. DiMatteo, MA, MAT, PhD is Assistant Professor of English. Research and teaching interests include American literature and culture, YA literature, English teaching methods, education protest literature, and ecocriticism.

## *Switching Hats: Professionalizing Teacher*

### *Candidates Using Book Talks*

#### **Abstract**

Teacher candidates tend to be fearful—exhibiting “tension and anxiety”—when imagining themselves teaching books that might be controversial (Schmidt et al., 2007), a reaction that I encounter in the pre-service teachers in my course Literature for Young Adults. To help mitigate this fear and to get them to consciously practice the crucial mental transition from “self-as-student to self-as-teacher” (Garza et al., 2016), I assign a “Two-

Hats” book talk in which they give two different book talks on a single book: one for an audience of other young adults and one for an audience of teachers and librarians. This mediation lowered their trepidation and encouraged them to consider the potential benefits a given title might have for some of their future students, and ultimately helped them to build “professional capacity” and develop their “emergent identity” of self-as-teacher (Garza et al.).

#### **Switching Hats: Professionalizing Teacher Candidates Using Book Talks**

I’m always looking for activities that can serve multiple purposes in my teacher preparation courses. One such assignment is the Two-Hats Book Talk activity. I dub it “two hats” because this assignment consists of two presentations on a single book aimed at two different audiences. The first book talk (wearing the student hat) is aimed at fellow students while the second book talk (wearing the educator hat) is aimed at fellow teachers and librarians. By creating two versions of their book talk, my

---

pre-service teachers consciously practice the crucial mental transition from “self-as-student to self-as-teacher” (Garza et al., 2016).

In the assignment instructions, I set the first presentation as occurring in a classroom or online space (e.g. #BookTok) for an audience of fellow students; the second presentation is set at an in-service workshop or activity-share within their department and thus for an audience of teachers or librarians. Each talk is limited to 3 minutes, for a total of 6 minutes. Presenters can use any materials they want, including PowerPoint, Prezzi, or handouts. Both talks are given on the same day, with a brief pause between them. This format emphasizes the need to differentiate the presentations for the two different audiences.

The purpose of the student-audience book talk is to guide their classmates (i.e. other young adult readers) to quality literature and get them excited about reading. They must introduce the book and explain why it is a compelling read without spoiling it. They need to find something that they like about the book and build the talk around that (this is a useful strategy to use as teachers, too, if tasked with trying to get students excited to read a whole-class novel that you personally don’t care for). My directions for this book talk are based on the six criteria outlined by Batchelor and Cassidy (2019): show energy and enthusiasm, provide a spoiler-free summary, read a representative passage, make text connections (i.e. state the book’s relevance), flow in a conversational yet organized way, and stick your timing.

In contrast, the educator-audience book talk’s purpose is to guide librarians and teachers in selecting quality YA literature for their library shelves or independent reading lists. This talk needs to not only introduce the book but also make a clear argument for why the audience should (or perhaps should not) select this title for their shelves. My directions stipulate that these talks should begin with their recommendation and end by reiterating it. In between, they are to support their recommendation with evidence based on their evaluation of the book along three broad criteria: pleasure, quality, and appropriateness. Pleasure has to do with whether young adults enjoy reading the book or find its themes

interesting. Quality has to do with the book's prose, authenticity of voice, elements of fiction, reviews, and awards won. Appropriateness is about fit for the teaching context and student population, educational value, level of topics and language, and potential objections. For each criterion, they are to provide concrete examples from the text, and ideally to also reference scholarship on adolescent development (e.g. Lathan & Gross, 2014).

Teacher candidates tend to be fearful—exhibiting “tension and anxiety”—when imagining themselves teaching books that might be controversial (Schmidt et al., 2007), a reaction that I encounter in the pre-service teachers in my course Literature for Young Adults. Fear of controversy is not unique to pre-service teachers (Davies, 2023; Kimmel & Hartsfield, 2019), and there can be very real repercussions for falling afoul of overzealous morality police when unprepared and unsupported by one's administration (Natanson, 2023). Just because we need to proceed with caution does not mean we should shy away from making available books such as *Bridge to Terabithia* and *New Kid*. To lower feelings of avoidance in my students, I emphasize that this book talk is not about whether the audience should add the title to their curriculum to teach it; just whether that title would be a good addition to the bookshelves because it might serve some students' needs. I also assigned and discussed with them readings about the benefits of providing students with so-called controversial books (such as Alexie, 2011 and Ivey & Johnston, 2018). While this mediation did not entirely remove their trepidation, it did help free them to more openly consider the potential benefits a given title might have for some of their future students, and ultimately helps them to build “professional capacity” and to develop their “emergent identity” of self-as-teacher (Garza et al.).

## References

Alexie, Sherman. (2011, June 9). Why the best kids books are written in blood. *The Wall Street Journal*, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/BL-SEB-65604>.



- Batchelor, K. E. and Cassidy, R. (2019). The lost art of the book talk: What students want. *The Reading Teacher*, 73(2): 230–234.
- Davies, D. (2023, June 22). *Facing book bans and restrictions on lessons, teachers are scared and self-censoring*. NPR. <https://www.npr.org/2023/06/22/1183701813/facing-book-bans-and-restrictions-on-lessons-teachers-are-scared-and-self-censor>.
- Garza, R., Werner, P. & Wendler, L. (2016). Transitioning from student to professional: Preservice teachers' perceptions. *New Waves Educational Research & Development*, 19(2): 19–35.
- Ivey, G. & Johnston, P. (2018). Engaging disturbing books. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 62(2): 143–150.
- Kimmel, S. & Harsfield, D. (2019). “It was . . . the word ‘scrotum’ on the first page”: Educators’ perspectives of controversial literature. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 70(4): 335–346.
- Latham, D. & Gross, M. (2014). Young adult development. *Young adult resources today: Connecting teens with books, music, games, movies, and more*. Rowman & Littlefield. pp. 13–30.
- Natanson, H. (2023, May 18). School librarians face a new penalty in the banned-book wars: Prison. *The Washington Post*, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2023/05/18/school-librarians-jailed-banned-books/>.
- Schmidt, R., Armstrong, L. & Everett, T. (2007). Teacher resistance to critical conversation: Exploring why teachers avoid difficult topics in their classrooms. *The NERA Journal*, 43(2): 49–55.

---

## CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

### *Betwixt and Between: Education for Young Adolescents* *The Journal of the Pennsylvania Professors of Middle* *Level Education*

**Submit work to be shared across the state and beyond the on-line journal in  
“Betwixt and Between: Education for Young Adolescents.”**

**Deadline for submissions: January 19, 2025**

**Publication date: Spring/Summer 2025**

#### **Manuscript Submission Guidelines:**

**We are seeking submissions for manuscripts in the following  
categories for Middle Level Education:**

- 1. Research Articles from Professors, Researchers, Teachers, etc.**
- 2. Articles/Editorials:**
  - a. Schools to Watch – Principals**
  - b. Voices from the field:**
    - **Middle Level Teachers**
    - **Middle Level Teacher Candidates**
    - **Middle School Students**
    - **Middle Level Teacher Educators**

Please visit: <https://papomle.org/online-journal> for specific  
“Call to Manuscripts” details for your submission category,  
submission requirements, and next steps.

### General Content:

**Between and Betwixt: Education for Young Adolescents** is an open access peer-reviewed journal promoting research in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania regarding theories and best practices in the education and development of young adolescents. This journal provides for the sharing of formal and informal research related to the improvement of middle level education. Some issues may be thematic as determined by the editors in response to topics of timely interest. Submitted manuscripts should be responsive to this purpose and reflect research or analyses that inform practices in these areas. Submissions are accepted from any source but submissions from teachers/professors/researchers working in Pennsylvania will be given priority in the acceptance and publication process.

### Content for special edition/Option for those currently in the field of middle level education:

**Between and Betwixt** is also interested in receiving editorials, professional experiences, action research, reflective item, etc. from those who are currently placed in the middle level grades. If you are teaching a middle level grade, student teaching a middle level grade, a principal of a middle level grade, or supervising a student teacher in a middle level grade, this option is for you.

### Format

All submissions must be prepared using word processing software and saved in Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx) or rich text format (RTF). Manuscripts must comply with the guidelines in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, current edition. Double space all text, including quotations and references, use 1 inch margins for top and bottom, and use 1.25 inch right and left margins. All text should be Times New Roman 11-point font. Complete references should be placed at the end of the manuscript, using the “hanging indent” function. Additional article publication formatting details are listed on the PA-POMLE and PAMLE web sites.

### Submission Guidelines

1. Manuscripts must be submitted electronically via the instructions on the PA-POMLE website at <https://papomle.org/online-journal> and select your type of manuscript and follow the requirements as stated.
2. All submissions, regardless of type, must include three separate files saved in Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx) or rich text format (RTF) as follows:
  - **Cover Page** – Include the information listed below in a separate file
    - Manuscript Title
    - Thematic Topic (if appropriate)
    - Submission Date
    - Author’s Name
    - Author’s Institutional Affiliation and Address
    - Author’s E-mail Address
    - Author’s Complete Mailing Address
    - Biographical Information (not to exceed 30 words per author)

- **Abstract** – In a separate file describe the major elements of the manuscript in 100-150 words. Do not include your name or any other identifying information in the abstract.
  - **Manuscript** – In a separate file include the manuscript, references, and supporting charts, table, figures, and illustrations as defined above.
    - Do not include the author(s) name(s).
    - Manuscripts should be no more than 15 pages of narrative (excluding references, tables, and appendices), using the latest APA style, and double-spaced on one side of 8-1/2 by 11-inch paper with justified margins.
    - Pages should be numbered consecutively including the bibliography, but the author's name should not appear on the manuscript itself.
    - Charts or illustrative material will be accepted if space permits. Such materials must be camera-ready. Photographs will usually not be used unless they are black and white and of high quality.
3. The editor and/or editorial board members reserve the right to edit articles accepted for publication.

#### Review:

- Manuscripts are peer reviewed in the order they are received.
- Manuscripts must be received on/by January 19<sup>th</sup> for consideration for the spring issue.
- It is the policy of B&B not to return manuscripts. Authors will be notified of the receipt of the manuscript. After an initial review by the editors, those manuscripts that meet the specifications will be sent to peer reviewers. Authors will be notified if the manuscript is judged to be not appropriate for review. Following peer review (blind review by 2 peers) and editorial board member's review, the author(s) will be notified as to the status of the manuscript. The journal editors reserve the right to make editorial changes in the manuscript.
- Authors are expected to take full responsibility for the accuracy of the content in their articles, including references, quotations, tables, and figures.
- Authors of manuscripts accepted for publication are expected to make a presentation about their article at the next PA-POMLE or PAMLE conference.
- Any views or opinions presented within the manuscripts are solely those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the views of the editorial board.
- There is no remuneration for articles accepted for publication. There is no fee for the review of the manuscript.
- Currently, approximately 30% of articles are accepted on their first submission. Approximately 50% of articles are accepted on a provisional basis, meaning that they will be reconsidered once suggested revisions have been attempted.

---

# Organization Membership

Members of each organization receive notification when new issues of *Betwixt and Between* are released. Don't miss an issue! Join the PAMLE and the PA-POMLE professional organizations today.

## **Pennsylvania Association for Middle Level Education**

The mission of the Pennsylvania affiliate of the Association for Middle Level Education is to promote best practices in the schools and classrooms of our Commonwealth.

Membership provides an opportunity to meet like-minded educators, to keep up on the latest middle level practices, and, most importantly, be confident about providing the best education possible for students.

Regional chapters of PAMLE exist throughout the state providing access to local expertise at your fingertips. Membership rates range between \$20 and \$384. To learn more, please visit our website.

<http://www.pamle.org>

## **Pennsylvania Professors of Middle Level Education**

The Pennsylvania chapter of the Professors of Middle Level Education provides a professional network that contributes to the development of an expanded research base, disseminates best-practices, and enhances the preparation of future middle level educators.

Chapter meetings are held three times per year in various locations throughout the state. The annual membership dues of \$100 provide access to this network for all faculty members within a middle level teacher preparation program. Please take a moment and learn more about our association online. <http://www.papomle.org>

Our journal is available at the following link: <https://papomle.org/online-journal>