

Betwixt & Between

Education for Young Adolescents
A Peer Reviewed Journal of Middle Level Research

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This Issue
From the Editor's
Desk

Suburban Middle
School Classroom
Teachers'
Perceptions of the
Effects of Students'
Depression and
Anxiety on School
Wellness

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.

Betwixt & Between

Education for Young Adolescents

A Peer Reviewed Journal of Middle Level Research

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Table of Contents

About the Cover Image..... 4

From the Editor’s Desk.....5

Suburban Middle School Classroom Teachers’ Perceptions of
the Effects of Students’ Depression and Anxiety on School
Wellness.....6

Organizational Memberships.....18

Call for Manuscripts.....19

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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 2020 edition of *Betwixt and Between: Education for Young Adolescents*, The Journal of the Pennsylvania Professors of Middle Level Education. For the last two spring terms, there has been a hiatus from seeing new editions of the journal. This reduction is due to reduced submission rates. It is an honor to be able to bring something good to the year 2020 with a new edition of the journal. It is my hope that as the dust from changing special education grade bands has settled, colleagues will renew their interest and time investment in the need for quality middle level research. I am once again so very happy to work with such talented and devoted individuals.

In old news, the option of testing and adding on a grades 5 and 6 certification has continued as an option here in Pennsylvania. PreK-4 certification providers are being asked that there be communication and/or advertising of the add-on to PreK-4 teachers. This 5th and 6th grade add on would make PreK-4 teachers more marketable to schools with K-5 or K-6 grade bands. However, this add on does not change the importance of the need for quality middle level educators who are PREPARED to teach in the middle grades, not just own a piece of paper that says they can.

Speaking of preparedness, Covid-19 has reshaped the way we are preparing educators of every grade band. As a result, our middle level future teachers are realizing the technology needed, the time to prepare that is needed, and the heart that is needed to serve as an educator today.

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Due to the implications of Covid-19, I am asking that you consider doing timely research such as case studies on your experience in the spring of 2020 and/or the 2020-2021 school year while teaching and reaching middle level students. This could include remote teaching, communicating with families, training for middle level educators, technology in your subject area, RTI in remote fashion, and more.

Sincerely,
Deana Mack Ph.D.

Suburban Middle School Classroom Teachers' Perceptions of the Effects of Students' Depression and Anxiety on School Wellness

Abstract

About The Author

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Our country is in crisis mode - news coverage is constantly covering violence occurring in our nation's schools. After a tragedy, when individuals are interviewed in the news, we rarely hear from the teachers. The main focus of this study was to explore practicing teachers' perceptions of mental health issues in the classroom from the viewpoint of one district in the suburbs of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. A qualitative design was utilized via a focus group with 11 classroom teachers. The results indicated that this group of teachers did not present a clear understanding of anxiety and/or depression. The participants identified four themes as contributing to mental health issues – technology, lack of coping skills, home-life, and lack of support. These themes were further explored, as well as the deficit thinking that was displayed by this group of teachers and the need for education of current and pre-service teachers regarding anxiety and depression.

Purpose of the Study

This study aimed to understand teachers' perspectives of students' who experience anxiety and depression and how it affects their overall wellness in the classroom setting. While we often read about children's mental health from the perspective of a counselor, therapist, or psychologist, we rarely hear from the educators who spend a great deal of time with their students.

Review of Literature:

Mental Health of Students

“People often expect teachers to assume not only academic roles, but also those of instructional model, disciplinarian, surrogate parent, social worker, and counselor” (Richardson & Shupe, 2003, p.10). While expected to promote and demonstrate academic growth in students, teachers are also dealing with the many issues that students bring into the classroom, such as abuse, economic hardships, family stressors, and special needs. More concerning however, is that teachers may not be fully prepared, knowledgeable, or educated on how to meet the mental health needs of students.

General anxiety disorder involves excessive worry that is difficult to control which can result in avoidance or distress as well as physiological symptoms such as sweating, restlessness, impaired concentration, muscle aches, and irritability that impairs an individual's ability to carry out day-to-day activities and responsibilities (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Beesdo, Knappe, & Pine, 2009; Cowen, Zax, Klein, Izzo, & Trost, 1965). Anxiety disorders affect 1 in 8 children, according to the 2015 Child Mind Institute Children's Mental Health Report. However, more concerning is the fact that approximately 80% of children with a diagnosable anxiety disorder are not receiving treatment (Anxiety and Depression Association of America, 2018).

Depression is a mood disorder characterized by extreme, frequent, and intense feelings of sadness and hopelessness that can present with negative emotional and physiological symptoms such as a loss of interest, tiredness, loss of appetite, and trouble sleeping that impact an individual's ability to cope and partake in daily activities such as school performance (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Erford, Erford, Lattanzi, Weller, Schein, Wolf & Peacock, 2011; Greenberg, Domitrovich, & Bumbarger, 2001). More than 1 in 20 school aged students have a diagnosis of anxiety or depression and approximately 60% of children with diagnosable depression are not receiving any type of treatment (National Institute of Mental Health, 2016; Anxiety and Depression Association of America, 2018).

There is a strong and undeniable link between anxiety and depression. A three year longitudinal study, conducted by Cole, Peeke, Martin, Truglio, and Seroczynski, found that high levels of

anxiety symptoms at one point in time during an individual's life predicted high levels of depressive symptoms at subsequent points in time in that individual's life (1998). They found that anxiety typically gives rise to depression and increases the likelihood of developing depression in the future (Cole, Peeke, Martin, Truglio, & Seroczynski, 1998). Furthermore, Brady and Kendall (1992) found that approximately 70% of children identified as anxious or depressed have comorbid anxiety and depressive disorders.

Stigma

"Stigma against mental illness is probably as old as the civilization itself" (Wig, 1997).

Having a mental illness can present a stigma in our society. This stigma can be traced back as far as The Bible, in which individuals with assumed mental illnesses were ostracized, as it was believed that their mental illness was attributed to sin. According to Wig (1997), as time has progressed, "the public attitude has hardened and has become more irrational against all types of mental disorders" (p.187). When an individual is diagnosed with cancer, people feel sympathy for that person, but when a person receives a diagnosis of a mental illness, it is perceived as something strange, mysterious, and perhaps dangerous, due to the individual's behavior sometimes being unpredictable.

Because the public may have a stigma towards mental illness, it can cause an individual suffering from anxiety and depression to self-stigmatize. During the adolescent years, students are very concerned with how they are perceived by others. Students may fear being judged negatively by adults and especially by their own peers. This fear of judgement may cause individuals to not express how they are truly feeling, which can cause greater damage to one's mental health.

Mental Health & Implications on Public Education

Prevalence of Mental Health Issues

Students are exhibiting more and more mental health needs in the classroom. While teachers are able to form relationships with students, they may not know what to do when a student is showing signs of suffering from anxiety or depression. Askell-Williams and Lawson (2013) conducted a study and concluded that teachers are becoming "more aware of the need to consider the individual social and emotional characteristics of students," but discovered that approximately 50% of the participants did not feel that they had a high degree of knowledge or confidence for positively promoting students' mental health (p.137). Reinke, Stormont, Herman, Puri, and Goel (2011) suggested a need for more extensive research in the field of teacher preparedness after completing a survey with 292 teachers from 5 school districts. They found that 75% of teachers reported working with students that have mental health issues, but only 34% of teachers felt that they had the skills necessary to support students with mental health needs in their classroom (Reinke, Stormont, Herman, Puri, & Goel, 2011).

School Life

Mental illness can affect every aspect of a student's life – from academic to social. Underlying mental health issues can present difficulty obtaining passing grades and earning credits as well as

contribute to behavior issues with peers and adults. Andrews and Wilding (2004) found that students experiencing symptoms of depression and anxiety did not perform as well on end-of-year exams when compared to their peers who were not showing signs of anxiety or depression. Mental illness can contribute towards risk-taking behaviors, use of drugs and/or alcohol, poor sleeping habits, poor eating habits, difficulty concentrating, and problems with motivation which all ultimately effect a student's school life (National Alliance on Mental Illness, 2016).

According to Kevin Daly (2018), students who are experiencing anxiety and depression “do not feel connected to anything” and/or “do not feel like they belong.” Kevin Daly is the Director of Admissions of Southwood Psychiatric Hospital, which is a hospital in the suburbs of Pittsburgh that provides mental health care to children and adolescents. He explains that students “need to feel a part of something” and that anxiety and depression can impact a student’s ability to feel as though they are a part of the school community. According to The Jason Foundation, a non-profit affiliated with Southwood Psychiatric Hospital, located in the suburbs of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, suicide is the second leading cause of death for middle and high school age youth (12 – 18) (The Jason Foundation, 2018). The Jason Foundation (2018) goes on to explain that while one in ten youth suffer from mental illness serious enough to be impaired, fewer than 20% receive treatment. In ages 10 – 14, The Jason Foundation claims to have seen an alarming increase in suicides, stating that number of suicides for this group has “more than doubled since 2006, making it the second leading cause of death for that age group.”

Methodology

This study aims to explore what teachers are experiencing in their classrooms with regards to the mental health of students and more specifically related to:

- Issues teachers are seeing exhibited in their students pertaining to anxiety and depression;
- Potential factors that contribute to the anxiety and depression that students are experiencing;
- How anxiety and depression is impacting students’ school life.

Research Design

To explore these issues in depth, qualitative methodology was employed to understand if and why students are suffering from anxiety and depression and how it affects their overall school life. An interpretive paradigmatic approach was adopted for this study to examine the phenomenology of students’ mental health in relation to anxiety and depression. Data was collected using focus groups in able to provide a direct method of obtaining information from a wide range of individuals at the same time (Robinson, 1999).

Participants

Initially, a convenience sampling was utilized as participants were recruited from the researcher's place of employment. However, a purposeful sampling approach was then taken to ensure that participants met a certain criterion. Participants were chosen from current classroom teachers

who teach in an academic core content area such as reading, language arts, math, social studies, or science as they interact with students on a more rigorous or stressful academic level. Furthermore, to qualify for the focus groups, teachers must have had at least five years of teaching experience to ensure that they had experience in the field, were able to form ideas or assumptions based upon past experiences and had the ability to witness any changes in students over time.

The gender representation of the focus group was matched, as closely as possible, to the percentage of female/male teachers in the district where the research took place. This was to ensure that the focus group was representative of the district's make up. The 12 teachers who were willing and eligible to participate included 4 males and 8 females. As per the director of human resources for the school district in which the study was conducted, the makeup of the district is approximately 31.20% male teachers and 68.80% female teachers (Corazzi, 2018).

Setting

The focus group was conducted in a conference room at the high school in the district in which the study occurred. This school in which the teachers work in is located in the south hills region of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in a suburban location. This school employs approximately 40 teachers and educates approximately 800 students.

Data collection

Instruments

Teachers were provided with a survey to fill out to provide demographic information, to obtain information on the participant's teaching position and the years that he/she had taught in that position, and to allow participants to adopt a pseudonym. Interview questions were based off a pilot study that was conducted by the researcher during the Spring 2018 semester. An interview guide was utilized to guide the interviews and to structure the questions the teachers were asked. Data was collected via video and audio recording. Observational field notes were written during the focus group to make note of any issues or concerns that arose throughout the focus group as well as to document anecdotal notes regarding behaviors and body language, such as how many participants were nodding when another participant spoke. Upon the conclusion of the focus group, the audio file was transcribed, analyzed, and coded to determine emerging themes in the data via an open coding system.

Discussion

From the eleven teachers who were able to participate in the study, the four themes that emerged as contributing factors to students' mental health issues that teachers are experiencing in their classrooms included technology, lack of coping skills, home-life, and lack of support. Some themes, such as technology and home-life, saw overlap during the discussion. Additionally, subthemes or subcomponents emerged from the overall themes that were uncovered. For example, a lack of support was mentioned as a contributing factor to students' anxiety and depression, but the lack of support could mean administrative, financial, or programming.

Behaviors Witnessed

When asked about what teachers are experiencing in their classroom regarding students with anxiety and/or depression the teachers responded with a wide range of behaviors. Specific examples provided by the study participants included having students in their classroom that are threatening to kill themselves, students who are acting out disruptively, and encountering students who are angry and scared and unaware of how to process and act on their emotions. The two behaviors that were mentioned the most were screaming and crying. Additional behaviors that were mentioned by teachers were throwing objects, swearing, hiding in clothing, and growling:

“I’ve specifically evacuated my room twice due to a child in there throwing tantrums, banging his head off the table, throwing Chromebooks, throwing equipment during a lab.” (Mike)

Teachers also occasionally brought up students suffering from anxiety and depression who did not display outward behaviors. Rather, teachers discussed students who demonstrate avoidance behaviors, such as not wanting to get out of the car to come into the school, students who shut down and are unresponsive. Teachers also examined students who, when suffering from anxiety, cry silently or stop completing academic work or paying attention. Students with anxiety and depression were cited by teachers as giving up quickly, being tired in class, having little to no motivation to complete academic work and not being socially involved with peers.

“The avoidance of school or class, in general, the shutting down and just literally looking almost as if they’re in a complete fog. They don’t even realize you’re still in the room or there’s others in the room and you could be teaching away and you could be like – and they are just comatose. It’s frightening.” (Katelynn)

Contributing Factors

There were four factors identified by teachers as contributors to students’ anxiety and depression including technology, lack of coping skills, home-life, and lack of support. While technology was the first factor that teachers mentioned, technology and home-life were the two main themes that were continually brought up by the teachers or that teachers returned to during discussions.

When asked about the most significant challenges facing students today, participants felt as though students are engaged in too much screen time on their phones or iPads and that this has contributed to anxiety and depression. They also discussed the consequences of social media in the lives of students. One participant further explored the influence of technology in students’ lives and how students are unable to escape the constant pressure of social media:

“...social media follows them [students]. They can’t ever separate themselves from all the teenage angst and problems and he-said/she-said. It’s constant. It’s 24/7 and some parents don’t take their phones from them when they go in their room at night. So they are literally up all night long.” (Doone)

Participants felt that students having their every thought and action being monitored by social media is placing a huge stress on the students and causing them anxiety and depression. They felt that social pressures stemming from technology are causing issues in school.

The home-life of the student was the second biggest issue that was discussed when determining the most significant challenges that students are facing today. All but one of the participants attributed student issues to a tumultuous home-life and having little or no parent support. The home-life issues that were discussed covered a wide range of parenting behaviors – from parents that are completely disengaged in their student’s education to parents who are too overly involved in their student’s life. Focus group participants also spoke of students who have parents in jail and/or are addicted to drugs and are being raised by grandparents or other family members. The group discussed parents who are unwilling or unable to see that their student is suffering from emotional distress. The teachers felt that some parents do not want to acknowledge that something is atypical with their child or that they do not want to have their child labeled or stigmatized.

In contrast to the uninvolved parents is the parents that were perceived by the focus group participants as being too overly involved. One participant felt that some parents are keeping their children in too many after school activities and that students are overtasked:

“They have so many activities after school and then we give them homework on top of that, which doesn’t get done because they have so many activities after school. And the parents just shuttle them from one place to another. I think they don’t have time to just decompress and be a kid and just play, and not have to be constantly doing something all the time.” (Katie Sue)

Students not having the ability to cope with the ups and downs of daily life was another issue that was raised as a contributor to anxiety and depression. The focus group participants brought up the issue of students showing a deficit in the area of coping skills approximately ten times throughout the session. It seemed that, no matter what the cause of anxiety and depression, teachers do not feel that students are adequately prepared to deal with uncomfortable or negative feelings

Finally, an overall feeling of a lack of support and resources was mentioned many times throughout the focus group. This discussion on lacking support was seen through different lenses or subthemes, such as a lack of administrative support, a lack of support regarding teacher training, a lack of programming that supports students with emotional and social needs, a lack of consequences for students, a lack of financial support, and a lack of psychological support. Teachers seemed to think that they were pressured to deal with any issues or problems on their own. A lack of communication between administration and teachers seemed to be a theme that emerged:

“When you do send them to the office or wherever, half the time we don’t even know what happens.” (Tiffany)

Teachers had a great need and desire to keep the lines of communication open between administrators and themselves so that all parties involved with a student were knowledgeable about what was going on with a particular student

A lack of funding support was a subtheme that re-emerged throughout the focus group session. A lack of funding then led the teachers to discuss a lack of appropriate or supportive programming

for students. All the teachers felt as though students only had “one track” to choose from educationally when displaying emotional needs. As this school has no Emotional Support classroom, students who are identified with emotional needs typically get placed on a learning support teacher’s roster. All of the teachers agreed that there was a need for more options for students to receive help during the school day. The teachers discussed that, presently, the only options for a student exhibiting mental health distress are to go to the office or to the guidance counselor and at times, no one was available in the main office or guidance office to assist students.

A discussion arose as to how well teachers are prepared to handle these issues as they are facing in the classroom. Every participant in the focus group felt that teachers are not prepared to handle the wide variety of needs that are presented by the students who come into their classrooms. They questioned how novice teachers, especially those without a special education background, are equipped to deal with anxiety and depression as exhibited by students. As the teachers discussed novice teachers, they then turned the focus towards themselves and discussed how even, after 30 years of teaching, they do not feel as though they know how to handle students who are experiencing emotional distress. The teachers discussed that these issues in the classroom cause them anxiety as well and concern that they have not been trained as mental health professionals.

School Life

When asked how students’ anxiety and depression affects students’ school lives, focus group participants felt that academics become unimportant. They felt that “academics take a back seat” and that the school environment becomes all about “survival” for the student. Academics become unimportant and are perceived as being placed “on the back burner” because it is more important to find help and support for the student. Mary stated, “we’ve got to get this kid in a better place before I’m concerned if they can add or subtract.”

Key Findings

Key findings in this study comprised of four factors identified by teachers as contributing to students’ anxiety and depression. The four main contributing factors identified by the teachers in this study were technology, lack of coping skills, home-life, and lack of support. Another major key finding was the need for more supports and resources. Every teacher that participated in the focus group listed some sort of support or resource that they perceived as lacking and that they felt would support students with anxiety and depression. Support could take the form as administrative support, via increased communication or financial support, via the establishment of wellness curriculums or emotional support classrooms. A main key finding is that these teachers feel very unprepared to deal with all the issues that students are bringing into the classroom. Many of the teachers expressed a deep desire for further training to aid them with these issues.

However, one of the biggest and most glaring key findings in this study was the fact that the teachers involved in the focus group did not seem to demonstrate a clear understanding of anxiety and/or depression. The teachers in this study tended to attribute symptoms of anxiety

and/or depression as the factors that cause anxiety and/or depression. At no point in time did any of the teachers attribute anxiety and/or depression to biological causes, such as a chemical imbalance or a hereditary condition. The teachers in this study demonstrated a huge deficit in their thoughts on anxiety and depression, which shows the need for education and programming for these teachers.

Implications of the Results

The results of this study are in line with the existing literature. This study demonstrates that teachers are dealing with greater issues than just teaching basic addition or multiplication facts. The results of this study suggest that there are many issues facing teachers on a daily basis that they are not feeling fully equipped to handle. Helping students cope with traumatic events, such as teachers who are attempting to assist students with suicidal ideation, places the teacher into the role as a social worker and/or counselor. For many of the teachers participating in this focus group, they must wear a variety of hats that they do not feel appropriately prepared or competent to wear.

The teachers in this study listed many environmental causes to anxiety and depression yet neglected to discuss any genetic, chemical, or biological causes. It is arguable as to whether the teachers involved in the study had a real understanding of mental health, diagnosis criteria, and causes. For example, participants perceived a lack of coping skills as leading to anxiety and/or depression, rather than resulting from anxiety and/or depression. This demonstrates the need for teachers to have a deeper understanding of mental illness. Thus, one of the more concerning findings from the study was the bleak picture that the teachers in this study have of students with anxiety and/or depression. The teachers in this study tended to externalize the problem to the administrative level and seemed to believe that nothing would truly improve. There was a great deal of blame placed on others by the teachers in this study, seemingly removing their own responsibility for addressing these issues in class. The teachers in this study seemed to have no aspiration towards success for working with students with anxiety and/or depression, which brings about a self-fulfilling prophecy. The teachers who participated in the focus group displayed a great deal of deficit thinking, which is worrisome as it can lead to stereotyping of students. With a picture painted by the teachers in this study containing this much deficit, a self-fulfilling prophecy may begin to unfold as teachers begin to label their students and then believe their futures to be determined by these attributes, which can be very dangerous. All the contributing factors discussed by the teachers are likely present in the lives of every school student. It is possible that all students spend too much time on technology, they all lack coping skills, they all have home-lives that have issues, and they all attend districts that cut services to save money. However, it is important to note that not all students develop anxiety and/or depression. This focus group study highlighted how little is understood about anxiety and depression as clinical diagnoses. The factors listed by the teachers may intensify the experiences of anxiety and/or depression, but they are not necessary or sufficient conditions. Even though the teachers in this focus group failed to produce anything meaningful regarding the contributing factors to anxiety and/or depression, they did shed light on the fact that they are in need of education in the area

of mental health, especially causes and symptoms, and this starts at the college level, when pre-service teachers are receiving their education.

Limitations

As this was a study for dissertation purposes, there were many limitations. One of the most glaring limitations was the size and demographic composition of the sample. All the participants in the study identified their race as Caucasian, which greatly limits the racial representation of the participants as well as the perspectives and viewpoints that were shared. However, this racial make-up was representative of the teachers in the building.

The focus group model also seemed to be a limitation to this study. The discussion of what the teachers said, specifically relating to contributing factors for anxiety and depression, was laden with deficit thinking. The focus group model seemed to further exacerbate the issues as the teachers began to feed off of one another to recreate the type of negative banter that often occurs in teacher lunchrooms. An interview model may have been more successful for this study, so that teachers were alone and able to form their own opinions.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future research should be conducted in many different areas. First, it would be beneficial to conduct individual interviews with teachers so that they are able to think of their own responses without the negativity of other teachers influencing their thinking. Second, the benefits of different types of staff trainings should be investigated. Some of the participants in this study did not feel they had the tools necessary or were adequately prepared to be able to help students experiencing mental health issues. Exploring the effectiveness and benefits of mental health trainings for teachers should be done in the future. Additional suggestions for future research include exploring different educational programs for students. One study participant felt that parents needed to be better educated as to the services that can be provided by a school district and how they can go about securing the help and services available to them.

As this study was conducted with teachers who have been teaching for at least five years, it would be advantageous to gain perspectives from first-year teachers. Obtaining first-year teachers' perspectives regarding what they are experiencing in their classroom and how prepared they felt to deal with students' anxiety and depression would aid in shaping future teacher preparation programs. Lastly, conducting research with students who have been diagnosed by a professional with anxiety and/or depression would lend a different perspective. It would be interesting to see what these students view as strengths and weaknesses of their school's programs.

Conclusion

This focus group uncovered many issues that these teachers are experiencing on a daily basis. Many themes emerged regarding teachers' perspectives on what contributes to students' anxiety and depression. Home-life and technology were the two most occurring themes, while a lack of support and resources also surfaced throughout the focus group. While there is no "magic wand," or one quick and effective way to remedy this problem, there are small steps that can be

taken to begin to walk in the right direction. The biggest key issue that was raised in this focus group was that this group of teachers did not demonstrate a clear understanding of anxiety and/or depression. This shows a need for greater education and information sharing so that teachers are not perpetuating stereotypes and stigmatizing students.

The main conclusion of this study is that students are, indeed, suffering from anxiety and depression and there is, without a doubt, more that everyone – teachers, parents, and administrators – need to be doing to adequately support these students. First, we need to start with educating preservice teachers so that they have a clear understanding of mental illness – its causes, symptoms, treatments, and effective classroom interventions. Colleges, universities, and school administrators need to make sure that pre-service teachers, especially those teaching at the middle and secondary levels, feel prepared, confident, and able to identify and help students who are experiencing mental health difficulties.

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

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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.

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CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

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

Middle level educators are cordially invited to submit work to be shared across the state and beyond in the soon-to-be launched on-line journal, Betwixt and Between: Education for Young Adolescents.

Gather your ideas and submit them to the Editor, Deana Mack (dmmack@geneva.edu).

Deadline for submissions: January 8, 2021

Publication date: Spring 2021

Manuscript Submission Guidelines (including a new special edition option)

General Content:

Betwixt and Between: 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:

Betwixt and Between 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 special edition option is for you. *Please note there is a special interest in responses to teaching under the conditions and changes Covid-19 has presented to our schools.

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 email attachment to Deana Mack (dmmack@geneva.edu), Editor.
2. Submissions must include three separate files saved in Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx) or rich text format (RTF) as follows:

Submission:

- **Cover Page** – Include the information listed below in a separate file
 - Manuscript Title
 - Thematic Topic (if appropriate)
 - Submission Date

- Author's Name
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 - **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 reserves the right to edit articles accepted for publication.

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- Manuscripts are peer reviewed in the order they are received.
- Manuscripts must be received by January 6th 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 editor 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.
- 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.