

Betwixt & Between

Education for Young Adolescents

A Peer Reviewed Journal of Middle Level Research



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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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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 2022 edition of *Betwixt and Between: Education for Young Adolescents*, The Journal of the Pennsylvania Professors of Middle Level Education. I have had the honor to work on a grant recently for PATTAN along with other professors in higher education across Pennsylvania. The goal of the work was to create modules that will help prepare modules to help future and current teachers in decreasing drop out rates. The creation of the materials for the Pathways 2 Graduation materials allowed for collaboration amongst institutions. The goal was to focus on middle school because waiting until high school to focus on the importance of decreasing problematic behavior, increasing academic performance, and increasing attendance is way too late. We all know the importance of the middle grades, and I encourage you to find ways to share the influential practices, stories, and collaboration that you are doing in the field.

May the 2022-2023 school year be a time where we can bring middle level teacher preparation and middle level educators to a place where their importance can be highlighted and recognized.

Sincerely,
Deana Mack Ph.D.

To see resources created by PATTAN, please see www.pattan.net for more information.

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Geography and Middle Level Curriculum

Abstract

In an increasingly connected world, issues--and opportunities--gather layers of nuance and require creative, collaborative, interdisciplinary solutions. Geography, interdisciplinary in nature, enriches middle level curriculum and equips students to engage with real-world problems by connecting the disciplines, providing tools for understanding and analyzing global situations, training students to think interconnectedly, and capitalizing on young adolescent curiosity and ingenuity. Yet a paradigm shift – from seeing it as a

separate subject to considering it as the hub connecting all other disciplines – is required for geography to be effective in curriculum.

Geography and Middle Level Curriculum

As a middle-school student, I always thought of geography as any other subject, separate and distinct from all the others, standing alone in its own silo of information. It was not until college that this perspective cracked. While many teachers and professors through my years of school encouraged interdisciplinary approaches, it was in my geography class during my junior year of college that I began to truly see connections among the disciplines and how they work together to solve world issues. I had always seen geography as the study of the physical characteristics of the world, boundaries of nation-states, or population statistics. But it includes so much more; geography asks the *why*. Why have circumstances and people collided in the way they did? And how do the interactions of past events help us understand the world we live in today? In the process of asking these questions, geography pulls on all the disciplines for answers. Interdisciplinary in nature, geography enriches middle level curriculum by helping students see connections among the subjects, equipping them to engage real-world issues, and uniquely capitalizes on young adolescent development.

Geography offers our students a unique platform for engaging global situations by bringing all the disciplines together. We need math, language arts, science, and history to understand our world and to provide solutions to the complex problems of today's world. Concerns related to climate change require knowledge of earth sciences as well as math and history. International politics require an understanding of cultural dynamics, religious perspectives, economic relationships, and so much more. As my geography professor, Dr. J. T. Nesbitt, helped me understand, our world's problems are interdisciplinary and therefore require interdisciplinary solutions. We need people who understand the nuances of our world and are able to think flexibly, creatively, and inter-disciplinarily to find sustainable solutions. Geography helps students engage with these by leading them not to look at just the bare facts, but to also consider how these interact with each other. As students explore solutions from a geographical perspective, they pull on all the disciplines from math and science to history and language. Geography is a hub connecting all the other disciplines.

Due to its interdisciplinary nature, geography enriches middle level education by equipping students to engage with current issues. It raises awareness of problems and opportunities around them and trains them to think interconnectedly. This awareness is the first step towards engagement and ultimately change. As students become aware of situations, they draw on background information from across the disciplines to understand and address current political, economic, and cultural issues. This process strengthens their ability to see nuance and make connections among topics.

Geography also capitalizes on young adolescent development in two ways. One, it brings all the disciplines together, connecting textbook knowledge with real-world scenarios. This utilizes their developing ability to engage in more critical thinking. Two, young adolescents care deeply about justice. Yet, making fair judgements requires a deep understanding of the dynamics playing on the situation. Geography provides students with background information to situations. This enables them to synthesize information and engage in critical thinking. Plus, there is nothing like a sticky world issue to captivate young adolescents. Curious by nature, caring deeply about justice, and trying to find their way and make a place in their rapidly expanding world, real-world scenarios capture these students.

For geography education to be effective in our schools as an integrative discipline, we need a paradigm shift. Instead of viewing it as a separate subject, we need to view it as a platform for engaging all other subjects. Perhaps geography is more than just a discipline--maybe It is also partly a mindset. It is about the way in which we think about the world. It is thinking connectedly, collaboratively. It is thinking about the why, who, and how behind the what.

An increasingly connected world creates increasingly complex and inter-related problems--and opportunities. Geography, interdisciplinary in nature, equips students to solve these problems and seize the opportunities created. It uniquely capitalizes on young adolescent development by connecting the disciplines, training students to think connectedly, creatively, and collaboratively.

Fighting Fake News: Media Literacy Resources for Middle Level Educators

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Abstract

Today's middle school students are immersed in a digital world where digital media, real and fake, is a swipe or a click away. Unfortunately, research shows that our middle grade students have difficulty deciphering the messages they see, leading to the perpetuation of misinformation. The use of media literacy education can help middle level learners become savvy consumers of digital media and improve critical thinking around mediated messages. However, there is a lack of professional learning surrounding media literacy and teachers are left trying to figure out

how to find resources and training on their own. This paper will provide teacher-friendly media literacy resources appropriate for use in the middle level classroom.

Fighting Fake News: Media Literacy Resources for Middle Level Educators

Today's middle school age students are more connected to digital media than at any other time in history (Pew Research Center, 2018; Rideout & Robb, 2019). According to the Common Sense Media Census (Rideout & Robb, 2019), the increase in smartphone use among tweens and teens has steadily risen over the past several years; specifically, smartphone use for 8-to-12-year-olds increased 17% between 2015 and 2019, with the largest growth for twelve-year-old children. Furthermore, middle school age students on average spend almost five hours per day on entertainment screen media, not including time they use screens for school related purposes (Rideout & Robb, 2019). With this connectivity comes a steady stream of mediated messages, some authentic and some not, from social media sites, news outlets, and videos. Unfortunately, despite their connectedness, we know from research that tweens and teens have difficulty adequately evaluating mediated messages and content (McGrew et al., 2017; Steeves, 2014; Wineburg et al., 2016). In one study, for example, researchers found that 82% of middle schoolers believed that sponsored content was a real news story and not an advertisement (Wineburg et al., 2016). The good news is that formalized media literacy education can help youth navigate their mediated worlds (Kahne & Bowyer, 2017; Jeong et al., 2012; Martens, 2010; Wineburg et al., 2021). Media literacy education not only encourages critical thinking about mediated messages, but it can empower youth to be more effective and mindful communicators, media makers, and digital citizens.

Despite the need for and benefits of media literacy education, it has not been a priority. Very few states in the U.S. have laws regarding the teaching of media literacy in PK-12 schools

(Media Literacy Now, 2020) and teacher preparation standards and programs do little to address media literacy education (Mahmoudi et al., 2020; Meehan et al., 2015; Tiede et al., 2015).

Furthermore, when media literacy education is integrated into the school curriculum, it is not done so with uniformity (Culver & Redmond, 2019) and the lack of uniformity can create challenges for teachers as they try to integrate media literacy into their curriculum, including lack of relevant technology (Belova & Eilks, 2016; Hattani, 2019), lack of resources (Baker et al., 2022; Culver & Redmond, 2019; Belova & Eilks, 2016; Nettlefold & Williams, 2021), and the absence of professional development (Baker et al., 2022; Belova & Eilks, 2016; Culver & Redmond, 2019; Farmer, 2019; Hattani, 2019).

Until those in power address the issues surrounding media literacy education with the attention they warrant, educators who want to integrate media literacy into their classrooms are left finding training and resources on their own (Media Literacy Now, 2020). The section that follows hopes to make this task a bit easier by providing educators a list of appropriate media literacy resources for students in the middle grades as well as resources for professional learning in media literacy education.

Media Literacy Resources for Middle Level Learners (Grades 4-8)

The resources below have been developed specifically for students in the middle grades. With each resource, teachers will find lesson plans, assessment materials, and interactive components (i.e., games, activities) on a variety of media literacy topics from digital citizenship to news literacy. In addition to the resources in this section, educators can find additional media literacy resources in Table 1.

Checkology is a free virtual classroom for students in grades 6-12 that helps students master news literacy skills. Teachers can search lessons on a variety of topics and then assign students to those lessons using the dashboard feature. Lessons are anchored in instruction by journalists and media literacy experts and include built in formative assessment pieces. Educators can sign up for a free account here: <https://get.checkology.org/>.

Common Sense Media offers a complete digital citizenship curriculum for grades 4-8. Each grade level provides several lessons that focus on various categories (e.g., privacy, digital footprint, communication, news and media literacy). Each lesson provides objectives, vocabulary, and all lesson materials, including quizzes. Educators can find these resources here: <https://www.commonsense.org/education/digital-citizenship/curriculum>.

Digital Passport by Common Sense Media, intended for students in grades 3-5, provides six interactive games that teach digital citizenship skills. Each game can be shared via a Google classroom site and is accompanied by an educator's guide that provides a scope and sequence, objectives, and a lesson script and an assessment component. Educators can link to this resource here: <https://www.commonsense.org/education/digital-passport>.

Specifically designed for students in grades 4-8, *TeachInCtrl* offers lessons on digital citizenship. Each detailed lesson provides a series of objectives as well as a detailed description of how to deliver the lesson and all the needed materials and links. All lessons are aligned to standards. Lessons can be found here: <https://teachinctrl.org>.

Professional Learning in Media Literacy Education

Research has found that teachers who have media literacy training are more likely to incorporate media literacy in their classes (McNelly & Harvey, 2019). One of the obstacles

facing teachers, however, is a lack of medial literacy training and professional development provided by school districts (Baker et al., 2022; Belova & Eilks, 2016; Culver & Redmond, 2019; Hattani, 2019; Nettlefold & Williams, 2022). Teachers often have no choice but to learn about media literacy on their own. In fact, a report by NAMLE revealed that 74% of educators reported that their media literacy training was “self-taught” (Culver & Redmond, 2019). In an effort to minimize the challenges that teachers face and help them acquire the information they need, KQED, The Center for Media Literacy, and Common Sense Media offer free training in media literacy.

KQED Media Academy for Educators provides four free instructor-led modules around digital media literacy for PK-12 educators (video production; podcasting and audio production, analyzing and evaluating media, and graphic and interactive media). Each self-paced course runs between 3 to 6 weeks and contains lessons, videos, and activities. Course instructors provide guidance and feedback. At the successful conclusion of the courses, educators earn micro-credentials that can lead to a PBS Educator Certificate by KQED. Educators can find additional information and sign up for the courses here: <https://teach.kqed.org/media-academy-for-educators>.

For teachers who don't have time for full blown courses on media literacy, *The Center for Media Literacy* has created a free 90-minute asynchronous module, *Media Literacy: From Theory to Practice to Implementation*, which provides an introduction to the concepts of media literacy. Educators can find the course here: <https://www.medialit.org/courses>. Using a similar format, *Common Sense Media*, offers a free 60-minute interactive training opportunity on digital citizenship, found here: <https://www.commonsense.org/education/training/teaching-digital-citizenship>. To use this platform, educators need to sign-in using Google or an email address.

Conclusion

The idea of media literacy education is not new. What has changed is the barrage of information, misinformation, and disinformation that our students can access from anywhere at any time. Navigating a media landscape that is littered with techniques designed to dupe and manipulate the user requires students to be critical consumers of media literacy. The resources herein provide a starting point to help teachers bring media literacy education into the classroom to assist students in becoming critical consumers of media.

Table 1. Additional Media Literacy Education Resources

<i>BrainPop Digital Citizenship</i>	Digital citizenship lesson plans and extension activities https://www.brainpop.com/digitalcitizenship/
<i>Center for Media Literacy</i>	Monthly newsletters and media literacy curriculum across a range of subjects http://www.medialit.org/
<i>Digital Resource Center</i>	Lesson plan resources across a variety of grade levels https://digitalresource.center/get-lessons
<i>Media Education Lab</i>	Resources including videos, quizzes, curriculum https://www.mediaeducationlab.com/
<i>Media Literacy Now</i>	A clearinghouse of resources about media literacy and links to lesson plans by grade level https://medialiteracynow.org/
<i>Media Smarts</i>	Links to educational games, research, and resources and lesson plans for teachers http://mediasmarts.ca/
<i>NAMLE</i>	Resources including media literacy lesson plans for educators, videos, and articles

	http://namle.net/
<i>NewseumED</i>	Links to lessons, artifacts, videos, and training about digital and media literacy https://newseumed.org/classes-training?grades=Educator
<i>News Literacy Project</i>	Resources include professional development, lesson plans, posters, quizzes, infographics https://newslit.org/educators/
<i>PBS Learning Media</i>	A variety of videos on technological literacy and how to use technology in a responsible manner https://wqed.pbslearningmedia.org/subjects/engineering--technology/technological-literacy/digital-citizenship/
<i>Project Look Smart</i>	Free media literacy classroom materials spanning PK-college https://www.projectlooksharp.org/our-offerings.php

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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 the 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, 2023

Publication date: Spring 2023

Manuscript Submission Guidelines:

We are seeking the following Submissions for 2023: Research Articles, Schools to Watch Principals, Middle Level Teachers, Middle Level Teacher Candidates, Middle School Students, and Middle Level Teachers)

Please visit: <https://papomle.org/online-journal> for specific “Call to Manuscripts” details.

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
 - 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 reserves the right to edit articles accepted for publication.

Review:

- Manuscripts are peer reviewed in the order they are received.
- Manuscripts must be received by January 8th 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.

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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 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 \$309. 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>