

# The Conference Insider

AMLE | 2013  
CONFERENCE FOR MIDDLE LEVEL EDUCATION

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THRIVE

# MAKING THE LEAP

Two teachers use technology to redefine the concept of “Classroom”

## Laura Hillukka

As **Jennifer Wykle** and **Katie Gohl** finished presenting, the words “The future belongs to the curious. The ones who are not afraid to try it, explore it, poke at it, question it, and turn it inside out” was displayed in the front of the room. Wykle and Gohl encouraged teachers to change classrooms to drive kids to learn by making them curious through integrating technology.

Gohl and Wykle are technology integration specialists and teachers in the Buffalo-Hanover-Montrose school district in Minnesota. As they moved further into the presentation, they admitted that they had to perform a giant leap of faith in order to integrate technology into their classrooms.

At one point, they projected an image of a goldfish leaping from a smaller fish bowl into a larger one.

“This picture is a metaphor for our own journey,” Gohl said. “Am I going to land where I want to be?”

As Gohl and Wykle taught about changing classrooms, they told about three rules that they learned from watching a TED Talk by a chemistry teacher.

- Curiosity comes first.
- Embrace the mess that comes with trial and error
- Practice reflection



Wykle and Gohl used this image in their presentation to illustrate the leap of faith they had to take with integrating technology in their classrooms.

*“Am I going to land where I want to be?”*

A key point that Wykle and Gohl hit on was the statement, “When things don’t turn out as planned, stay focused!” They use that statement to teach that even if things don’t go as planned. They said that you need to stick to it and keep on going, because it will be worth it in the long run.

*“I love the excitement. I love all the wisdom and experience. It’s invigorating!”*

Jennifer Grems  
Honolulu, Hawaii

## Show students you care with sticky tags

### Ariana Liljedahl

### Emma Janzen

“Like my mother used to say, ‘you can’t wipe off a kiss’. The same goes for a kind word. You can’t get rid of it.”

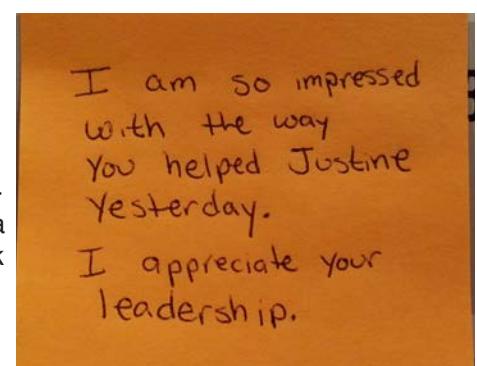
The first Foundational Belief for effective educators, according to **Sara Kearns**, the National Director for the Center for Teacher Effectiveness, is that students have to know that their teacher cares.

In her session, she outlined ways teachers could have an authoritative presence, model a calm reaction to conflict, and positive management.

“Practice is permanent,” Kearns said. “The one weakness we have consistently seen has been the lack of classroom management. We have stellar teachers out there, but they can’t

### STICKY TAG RULES

1. On a sticky note, write a short, kind note for a student that focuses on something you’ve noticed.
2. Leave the note in a place the student will notice. This could be in a book, on a worksheet, or on their desk as you walk around the classroom.
3. The note is about the student, not the teacher. After you drop the note, walk away without drawing attention to yourself.



Sticky tags help students know that you care, so that they care what you know.

get their message across, because the kids don’t know how to behave in the classroom. Things have changed so much that even many of our veteran teachers don’t know how to engage

kids with the strategies that can help them learn.

One strategy that Kearns outlined that teachers can put into practice right away was the use of Sticky Tags.

*"I like the networking with teachers from all over the states and the world."*

Amy Horton  
Johnson City, Tennessee



## Helping writers “get it”

A sixth grade English teacher went from skeptic to believer while using FastForWord to engage writers



Beth Rogowsky said her writing curriculum was transformed by FastForWord.

### Peter Deneen

“I always struggled teaching writing. Some students got it, and their compositions were a joy to read, and then there were those kids that didn’t get it,” said Beth Rogowsky. “I thought ‘If only I had them at birth,’ because we all know that they model what they hear.”

When people think of a writing program, they usually don’t think of computer games. Beth Rogowsky was one of those people. When her school bought a program called “Fast ForWord”, which is a computer based learning program, Beth wasn’t on board.

“I had judgements,” says Rogowsky. “I was not convinced that a computer could replace a teacher.”

Even though Rogowsky didn’t like the idea right away, the sixth grade English teacher had to use it. As soon as she started using it, she fell in love with it.

“It really engages the kids,” Rogowsky said, “and it makes them want to learn.”

Not only did Rogowsky like using it, but so did the students. However, she stresses that students can’t do the program all by themselves.

“The teacher needs to be there. It is a challenging program.” Rogowsky said. “Just like someone going to the gym; they need a trainer.”

## Highlights from the exhibition hall



Josie Peterson

Geo Education performed on-the-spot interviews with teachers. Geo Education facilitates real world problems into each subject in school. For example, instead of doing plain math problems with fictional characters and problems, National Geographic’s Geo-Education takes real world things, like the nations debt and different things student may have read or heard about on the news, and works them into the curriculum.

“With Geo-Education curriculum, students will be more engaged while learning about the planet that they will someday inherit,” said Geo-Education saleswoman Kim Hulse.

### Emma Janzen

The Etiquette Factory teaches life skills to children. Three-minute videos teach different life skills, like manners. In the videos, teenagers perform the wrong way to respond to certain situations, then the right way,” said Monica Irvine.

“Music Theatre International’ cuts down Broadway shows, and writes them into 30-60 minute musicals,” said Cindy Ripley. “They send you all the tools you need; like the scripts, instructions for the backgrounds and costumes, and lyrics to the songs. Then you can set up your own musical to perform.” This program spreads shows to a younger audience.

Rock In Prevention gives students CD’s that have different music recorded on them. The students then, after the song has finished, discuss it in small groups on what they think it means. All answers that the children give are correct, and there are no wrong answers. “It teaches kids important life skills and how to prevent bullying and drug use,” said Pat McManus, the president of the company.

# SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL



Participants at the "Shake Rattle and Roll" session get up and move together to learn how to better engage students with motion.

## Can you keep the attention of your students for more than a minute?

### Josie Peterson

Kim Campbell's mission is to show teachers how to motivate students, and keep them interested and engaged with curriculum. Considering students usually remember 50% of everything they see and hear, Campbell is showing teacher how to make sure that the other 50% sticks.

With many different hands-on activities to help students learn and commit knowledge to long-term memory. Campbell had teachers get in groups of two and talk about teaching methods before playing laughter-filled games that involved drawing, acting out, and walking around the room starting conversations with other teachers.

Everyone in the room was constantly laughing and moving around. Campbell had a funny, yet knowledge-filled presentation, modeling different ways to learn, and make sure students enjoy

themselves while staying behaved and keeping the class calm.

When Campbell started teaching, she started out by teaching how she herself learned most easily, which is hands-on. Campbell presented multiple ways to teach the students with games and activities to keep their attention.

**One of the many ways to teach a student without losing their attention is a game called "Loop".** In the game, students get notecards with a word and a definition on it. The words do not match the definition, so students have to listen to the definitions being said, and if it describes their word, they jump up, yell the word, then say their definition. The first word is always "loop" and the last definition describes the word loop, so teachers can keep the game going for a while. The goal of the game is to finish all the words in the shortest amount of time.



# LGBT

## The best thing for adults to do is to be there for the students when they need them

### Madeline Bollingmo

Teens are constantly affected and influenced by society. In the matter of sexuality, they are often afraid to be honest about themselves. According to Norma Bailey, with homophobia and heterosexism so common in today's society, lesbian and gay teens constantly fear their sexuality.

Bailey's presentation gave teachers a perspective on the experiences and needs of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender youth in middle level schools. She said that **homophobia is active bigotry concerning lesbian and gay people, and heterosexism is an unconscious bias against lesbian and gay people.** People often don't realize they're being heterosexist. It's much like making a sexist or racist joke in the way that people instantly deny the fact that it may be sexist or racist. This often occurs in school districts, especially in middle and high schools.

Usually, a school's health or social studies curriculum does

not include lesbian or gay families or relationships. This can be detrimental to teens' knowledge and perception of lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender people, causing them to outcast or "shun" LGBT peers.

Stressors that affect LGBT youth include social isolation, misunderstanding, lack of information, and harassment & violence. Due to these stressors, many teens experience poor school performance, homelessness (parents often kick the teen out for being "wrong", "bad", or "unclean"), and depression. The stressors aren't just on LGBT teens; many straight teens experience peer pressure to avoid being friends with LGBT peers.

There are things that teachers, counselors, and even other students can do to help LGBT peers. Bailey said that **the best thing for adults to do is to be there for the students when they need them**, and inform themselves about lesbian and gay teens. Students can help by being friends with lesbian and gay teens, and by starting gay-straight alliances through their schools.

# BE SAFE, FEEL SAFE

Madeline Bollingmo

Schools today have more advanced and complicated security measures, but are kids really safer?

Incidences of school violence are increasing, and concerned parents are pressing the schools to increase security. The larger the gathering of people, the more chance there is of a violent incident, and schools are no different.

According to Juan Rodriguez, students and teachers need to be able to "react properly, or they may become a casualty." Rodriguez said that schools need to pay attention to the vulnerable points within them and create an emergency response plan

that involves both faculty and students. An Emergency Response plan can help to insure the safety of the students and staff, and guarantee that everyone knows what to do in the event of an emergency. Staff also need to have an extensive list of ways to communicate during an emergency, such as social media (texting, etc.), two-way radios, and an all-school intercom. The focus shouldn't just be on the students; teachers need to ask themselves, "Who's taking care of me?"

Drills can be uncomfortable for many people, but they are essential. Drills are a vital part of an Emergency Response Plan, and garner practice & experience for both students and staff. It's always important to keep the students and staff informed about emergency procedures.

Another part of security is tending to the needs of students. Unmet social-emotional and/or mental health needs

can create safety hazards within schools. Teachers and parents need to look for warning signs, including social withdrawal, frequent anger over minor incidents, and attacks directed towards other people consistently over time.

*Teachers need to ask themselves,  
"Who's taking care  
of me?"*

*"I love the excitement. I love all the wisdom and experience. It's invigorating!"*

Jennifer Grems  
Honolulu, Hawaii

## SPREAD THE WORD TO END THE WORD

Hundreds join Special Olympians in a pledge to end discrimination

Laura Hillukka

Hundreds of people rose in order to take the R-Pledge - the promise to never use "retard" in casual conversation. The smiles of the fourteen people up on the stage, all part of Special Olympics Project UNIFY, seemed to spread completely across their faces.

Several people spoke about intellectual disabilities, fourteen young teens performed a skit, all teaching about how people with disabilities are treated unequally and should be treated equally.

As part of the skit that was performed, the teens invited everyone in the audience to take the R-Pledge. Almost as a single motion, everyone in the audience rose and pledged in unison to stand up and take action to "spread the word to end the word."



## On the cover



Peter Deneen

The AMLE conference sent out a challenge to middle schools in the surrounding area to create their interpretation of the conference theme "Thrive". There were four schools that met that challenge, they were Dakota Meadows Middle School, FAIR School, Levi P. Dodge Middle School, and North Branch Area Middle School.

The students painted separate squares, which they then patched together to create a large mural of different colors and patterns.

# **SONG & DANCE**

Members of the Northfield Middle School Honor Choir perform songs and dances from various musicals for AMLE Convention attendees.



Photo by Peter Deneen

## **IN THE MOMENT**

The Fridley Middle School Drumming Ensemble performs. They were one of several student groups to perform on Thursday.



Photo by Peter Deneen



# TOGETHER

Special Olympics project UNIFY members join together at center stage to take a bow at the end of the general session. The group's main message was urging the crowd to accept and appreciate intellectually disabled people.

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*"My favorite parts are the exhibition and impact on learning, because we were given resources for teachers to use in classrooms."*

Lydia Jones

Preservice Teacher from North Carolina

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## DECORATE WITH WORDS

Help students with focused vocab instruction

Laura Hillukka

Cover your walls with words. Fun words, words that have interesting meanings, weird words, words of all sorts.

Nancy Akhavan taught her audience that PowerPoints and charts that teach vocab were not very effective. She said the students might copy down the words and the definitions, but the minute the PowerPoint is turned off, the knowledge is gone.

Instead, Akhavan suggested that **the walls in a classroom should be covered with posters of words**. Students tend to look around the room often, and instead of looking at blank walls, they could be learning words like "delectable" or "onomatopoeia". That way, the classroom could be decorated, and the students will be learning words, even if it was mindless learning.



## A WAKE UP CALL FOR SCHOOLS

Sam Westrum

Patricia Anne Duncan Parrish's, a perspective on how American public schools can improve was full of facts, her clearly stated opinion. She believes in the importance of making sure that all of students stick through school.

Parrish's main focus was on high school dropouts and how important it is to see to it that they stay in school and are surrounded by teachers that include students idea of qualities that they have found necessary to fit their learning needs.

The top 5 things that students want in their learning environment are quality leadership, high expectations, data analysis, communication, safe, and well organized. Students value real world application, relevance, choice, innovation, caring respectful teachers, and interactive technology.

"I try to improve every day. No matter what," said Parrish.

*"My favorite part was probably the free stuff and talking to people and getting new stuff for the classroom.*

Elizabeth O'Malley  
Jordan, Minnesota

## STORIES FROM AN iPAD PILOT PROGRAM

Students respond with enthusiasm at Ridgeview Charter Middle School



### Ariana Liljedahl

The Ridgeview Charter Middle School was selected as a pilot to try out some iPads. Their immediate answer was yes. They were able to get over 150 iPads, but for only half of their eighth grade; it was a hard decision because then the other half wouldn't be able to do the same thing. So they came up with protocols, such as a technology day for those who did not get the iPads.

Another small problem was that the partners, like Apple or Gaggle, wanted the teachers out of school for one day so they could learn about the iPads. So the administration compromised that they could train in their own time, in their own level of acceptance and receptance.

Some of the things the teachers did with the students were projects. "Our trainer from Apple, Karen Seimears, developed a "roadtrip" to help me

introduce and teach how to use Numbers." Said Anita Jackson, an eighth grade teacher. "[The students] planned a roadtrip with a set amount of money, and they had to track gas costs, food costs, an mileage." Numbers is an app they used on the iPads.

Before they started the projects, the students learned how to be a good digital citizen and to be wary of their digital footprint.

The students were also wondering when they could bring them home. "We first deployed the iPads 10 days before the students, because some teachers have not had an iPad before, and let them mess around on them. Soon they were all asking for more programs.

The teachers and students had so much fun with the iPads, starting the second half of the semester, the rest of the eighth graders will be getting their iPads.

## YO, LITTLE BROTHER

How to interact and engage with young black males in the classroom

### Josie Peterson

"You gotta love 'em to teach 'em," Jeffrey Jackson says during his presentation on how to communicate and engage with young, African American, males. Jackson loves kid. He not only works with kids, but has published two books on how to survive if you are a young African American males.

Jackson lives in Philadelphia, and helps students all across the globe. Throughout his presentation he did interactives with teachers to teach special pieces of information. One of the key points of his presentation was to be non-judgemental. Don't be the problem in their life.



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*"I think the fun was meeting other people and getting ideas from all over the world."*

Missy Weisser

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## **Understanding the gifted underachiever**

Madeline Bollingmo

### **Gifted students are good at "schmoozing".**

Parents are also constantly telling their gifted children, "No, you're not [depressed, suffering from anxiety, etc.]." The parents are essential to a gifted child's development, but they can also be a gifted child's biggest roadblock.

"By definition, gifted kids are students who perform significantly above what is expected for their age," says Dr. Susan Rakow, PhD. Contrary to popular belief, giftedness goes beyond childhood and into adulthood. The superior cognitive abilities of gifted children carry over into their everyday lives.

Many gifted children have what is commonly known as a Dabrowski's Overexcitability, which can include emotional or physical sensitivity, extreme psychomotor (hyperactivity), and intellectual overreactions. These can contribute to giftedness, but are not always a factor.

A common problem within the growth of gifted kids is asynchronistic development, which is when the intellectual abilities of the child are far more advanced than their physical or behavioral abilities. This leads into the possibility of misdiagnosis prior to when the child is discovered to be gifted. Oftentimes, the child is believed to be bipolar, depressed, and/or have ADD/ADHD, but they're actually just gifted.

### **Perfectionism is one of the main problems within gifted kids.**

Gifted kids often strive for perfection, even when perfection cannot be attained. This can cause the student to be overworked and completely obsessed with perfection. Parents can help with this by letting the child have some free time after their work is completed; and if the work cannot be completed in one day, piece the work into sections and give short breaks in between. "You can lay down on your bed & listen to your iPod for an hour, and the entire western world will not crumble," says Dr. Rakow.

There is a lot of pressure on gifted kids to be perfect, but sometimes, the adverse can happen when a gifted child is pressured. Grades can slip over the added stress, and sometimes, bullies can block the road to success. Parent, teacher, and counselor support is imperative in the development of a gifted child, and important to ensure proper growth of gifted children.



*"The best thing, I think, is educators getting together to share ideas."*



*"The is a very well-organized and very well-attended event, and it has been very busy. I am happy with the conversations I have had with teachers."*

Linda Mikottis  
Educational Consultant



*"Teachers: Act like you want to be there."*

Summer Lyons  
Eighth Grader

# IT'S JAZZY

The Hopkins Junior Jazz Band performs for an audience at the AMLE convention.



Photo by Sam Westrum

*My sister played and wanted me to join, and I thought it was cool.*

Mark Bremer  
Hopkins Junior Jazz Band



Photo by Peter Deneen

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THE INSIDER

# LEAVING A **LEGACY**



Featured speaker Brad Meltzer asks,  
“How will you be remembered?”

## Lena Preugschas

Brad Meltzer got the AMLE convention off to a great start this morning with his entertaining speech on Heroes.

Meltzer said his personal favorite super hero is Superman.

“Two kids created Superman. No one special. Just normal students.”

He also talked about heroes who don’t fly through the air and wear their underwear on the outside, such as a little girl named Alex who started a lemonade stand to raise money for kids with cancer, even as she was suffering from the disease herself. But he then proceeds to remind us that we can be heroes too.

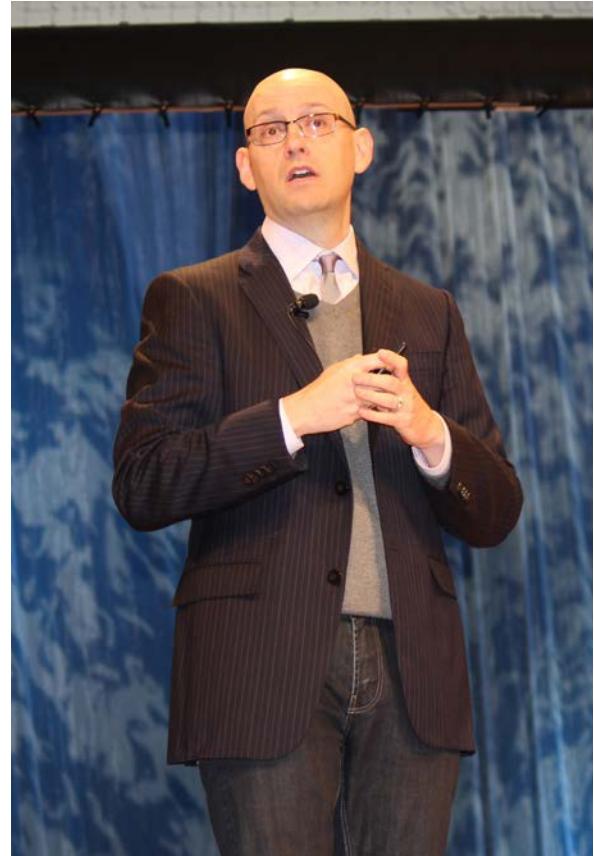
“You don’t have to start a million dollar lemonade stand,” he said. “You just have to help one person.”

Meltzer raised some interesting questions, such as “How you are going to be remembered,” and **“Who will remember your name?”** He talked about his teachers and how they were heroes to him, especially his ninth grade English teacher. Meltzer mentioned how all of the heroes seem to be rule-breakers, and how everyone leaves a legacy, especially teachers.

**“There are four kinds of legacies,”** he said. The kinds you leave on your families, the kind you leave on your friends, the kind you leave on your community, and the kind you leave on complete and total strangers.

Meltzer ended the rousing speech by talking about two picture books he is currently working on about heroes like Amelia Earhart and Abraham Lincoln. His hope is that they will make history come alive for children.

“I don’t want to write a book about rules,” he said, “but about heroes.”



Photos by Heidi Peterson and Sophia Nikula

*“I think [Meltzer’s message] is really empowering and reminded teachers why we do what we do, even when we get caught up in the day to day and the high expectations, and high demands.”*

Johnna Suihkonen  
Ely, Minnesota

# LAKE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Members of the Lake Middle School Jazz Ensemble perform songs for AMLE Convention attendees.



Photo by Sofa Nikula

*"The sessions have been extremely helpful. Lots of useful information!"*

Brenda P.  
Estherville, Iowa

## Kids have a voice, too

Seventh Grader Emily Kern receives ovation for her inspiring introduction



### Chloe Berg

Seventh grader Emily Kern from Buffalo, Minn., introduced Brad Meltzer with a powerful message for educators.

**"Everyone has the power to change the world,"** Kern said.

She hopes that teachers learned something from her speech.

"I hope they can remember that kids have a voice, too," Kern said, "and that kids can do things that adults can do."

Kern credits her speech teacher, Jan Heyerdahl, for her appearance at the conference.

"I owe it all to Heyerdahl. She is an amazing lady and I am very glad I got this opportunity through her."

She said she is thankful for the opportunity to address teachers.

"When would you get to speak at a national middle school conference? I don't think I'll ever get a chance to do something like that again. Who knows what might happen in the future?"

Photo by Katherine Rempel

## On the cover



Sofia Nikula

Doug Bradley director at Lake Middle School performs with his Jazz Ensemble.

Chris Bussmann helped to book the musical acts that were heard throughout the conference.

"We pushed a Google form out to thousands of educators across Minnesota, asking them to apply to perform," he said. "The response was overwhelming. We looked for a wide variety of experiences for conference attendees. **We have orchestras, a mariachi orchestra, vocal groups, jazz ensembles, an African drumming group, a show choir, a pretty wide variety for three days.**

"We've had a lot positive feedback about the quality and the positive experiences for the kids and the conference attendees."

# HOLLYWOOD CONNECTIONS

Use clips to engage students while helping them understand concepts

## Rachel Peterson

Michael Rhodes showed teachers how to use video clips from movies to help students remember important properties, understand the lesson, and learn something new.

Teachers can connect movie clips to something that their class is working on. A couple of examples he gave using a clip of *Lincoln* to show the transitive property of equality. In the clip, they talked about if two things equal the same thing, then the two things are equal as well.

Another clip that Rhodes showed was *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs* to teach both math and self esteem. The message is, "You are beautiful the way you are. You don't need to change your looks." In this clip, there was also a point when one of the characters talked about the properties of Jell-o. *Back to the Future* showed heat transferring energy for science. A couple of other movies that Rhodes showed were *A Christmas Story* and *Apollo 13*.

Rhodes said that teachers could show the class a video and ask why something in the movie happened or what they were talking about. In *Back to the Future*, teachers can ask, "Why did the kid fly back?" Teachers can break



Photo by Katherine Rempel Inset by Jayde Hoppe

it down and explain the lesson that they want to get across to the kids. The idea of this is to launch a discussion, not to go from one clip to another. The students need to have time to process the information and learn what teachers want them to learn.

Another thing to help the students feel more confident and connected is to have them watch it once, ask a question, have them watch it again, and try to get more hands up, that way you know that most of them know what they are talking about.

*A clip from Lincoln can show the transitive property of equality.*

*Back to the Future demonstrates heat transferring energy.*

## TAKE NOTICE, ACT NOW

Adolescent risk taking: An upcoming issue teachers should be aware of

## Lena Preugschas

Three undergraduates, Merissa Ann Scarr, Amanda Cloran, and Missy Weisser put on an outstanding presentation on risk-taking in adolescents. They touched on several aspects of the problem.

**Bullying** is a growing problem in the US. But there are things teachers can do to minimize the problem, such as lesson planning, rewarding the bully for good behavior, informing other staff, and monitoring high-risk children.

**Technology** is another important aspect of adolescent risk-taking.

"As we get further into the future, technology becomes more important," said Scarr. They explained how **sexting** and other negative behaviors have become much easier to access with smart phones and the ever-expanding internet.

*"Why not turn the tables and utilize technology?"*

To illustrate their point, they integrated technology seamlessly into their presentation, with websites such as Prezi and PollEv.com.

**NSSI** (Non-Suicidal Self-Injury), alcohol, drugs, and video games were

also subjects they touched down on, explaining how they are introduced when kids are bored, depressed, or curious. They said that teachers should set a good example for students and explain how they can leave lasting effects.

The group also spoke about **LGBTQ** students, meaning gay, lesbian, and bi-sexual kids. They stressed the importance of acceptance. "You may not agree with it, but you must accept them for who they are." They also recommended including lesbian or gay contributions to society throughout the curriculum.

# DRAGON HUNTERS

Members of the Field Community Middle School Chamber Orchestra perform "Dragon Hunters".



Photos by Sofia Nikula

## BERMUDA TO MINNEAPOLIS



Photo by Sofia Nikula



Photo by Chloe Berg

Derek Tully, an AMLE Trustee Board Member traveled from Bermuda to attend today's convention.

*"In Minneapolis, I've seen the Hilton Hotel and the convention center. The convention center is huge and caters to everything we need here. I'm really happy especially with our keynote speakers, the auditorium is great for that, the acoustics are great, the facilities are first class, you know -- that's all I've seen. And the airport."*

### Speed Session: **Read, Write, Act**

#### Lena Preugschas

One of the more interesting options at the AMLE conference is that of attending the Speed Sessions. Each session is for 20 minutes, and you rotate to three different sessions.

One of the sessions was about a classroom partnership that united reading, writing, and fitness.

**The four instructors had piloted a five day unit in which the students had worked on reading a book called Get Moving: All about Muscles.** Immediately after they proceeded to perform a twenty minute fitness station exercise. The program had its weaknesses, but the instructors seemed to think that the benefits outweighed them.



*"What's not to love about Minneapolis?"*

*Friendly people, everything is within walking distance, sky ways, and more."*

Tariq Akmal  
Washington

Photo by Chloe Berg

# MAKING WISHES **COME TRUE**

Josie Nelson performs for teachers hours after making a wish come true for a child with cancer

**Jayde Hoppe**

At the 2013 Annual AMLE convention, fourteen year-old Josie Nelson, a singer and guitarist, performed for members attending the conference. Hours before, she performed for a Make a Wish patient named Isabelle.

"I just played for her and her class, fifth graders, and I played about six songs for them and then talked about her wish for Make a Wish," she said.

While Isabelle was in the hospital she watched Nelson's YouTube videos and listened to a lot of Taylor Swift music. Nelson had the opportunity today to let Isabelle know that she would make her wish a reality: She would get to meet Taylor Swift.

Music has always been a part of Nelson's life.

"I always loved singing and then I started taking guitar lessons in third grade and after that I started singing along and writing my own songs," Nelson said. "My first really big performance was at the state fair, at the grandstand when I was ten, and since then I have been doing bigger performances."

She enjoys performing and jumped at the chance to give back.

"I just love music so much, I just want to be able to share it with people who are able to listen." Her stages may differ but she puts the same energy into all of her performances, "I play at the nursing homes in town, and some churches, and some brunches too."

A year ago, Josie's teacher asked her to perform at the AMLE convention in Minneapolis. She enjoyed being at the conference and meeting teachers and staff who were helping out with running the convention itself.

"It was a lot of fun. I was really honored to be asked to play there and hope to be asked again," Nelson said.



Photo by Chloe Berg



Let Her Go by Passenger (Cover by Josie Nelson)



## CONNECTIONS

AMLE Conference participants regularly said that their favorite thing about the convention was a chance to connect with other educators from around the world.



Photo by Heidi Peterson

# READ NATURALLY

A simple solution with incredible results in reading comprehension

## Jayde Hoppe

Carol Ann Kane teaches using the Reading Naturally program. She says that the program helps kids who are struggling with reading, both in and out of the classroom which

Kane has used the program in her classroom for 17 years. The purpose of her presentation at the AMLE Annual Convention was to bring awareness to this reading assistance program that can be used to raise student reading comprehension at all levels of school.

"Unfortunately many students aren't read to and do not read much themselves," Kane said. "And so I was working with students who needed reading enforcement and reading intervention."

After looking for many different styles of intervention, she found Read Naturally, a research-based company from St. Paul, Minnesota. The program works by having a recording read along with the student, which helps with overall comprehension of the text.

"My students made wonderful progress," Kane said, "and they were very motivated to do the intervention."

"[There have been] great improvements, not just some, but many, many students have had improvements," Kane said.

Reading Naturally has improved and changed over the years, according to Kane, including a web-based version which is accessible by the students out of school, allowing them to continue reading and practicing at home.



## SEE THE WORLD

CHANGE YOUR PERSPECTIVE

Jeff Abbott wants teachers to discover the purpose & rewards of traveling with students

## Katherine Rempel

"What are you going to do in life that's going to make the world a better place?" asked Jeff Abbott. Abbott is an advanced English teacher from Arizona. From his house, he can see the mountains all around and if he was at home right now, it would be eighty degrees. "[It's] the greatest state in all the union."

Abbott presented about student travel. And by travel, he means out of state and by the east coast. Why?

"To understand what it means to be American," he said. "[You can] see people in different ways."

Traveling can help a student who doesn't know what they're doing with their life to see all the different places and experience something new.

"They don't need [to travel], but it makes their life richer."

Going back on Arizona, it's very different than Minnesota. If the leaves fall off there, they don't grow back. Their seasons are different, they have riverbeds, not rivers, and he calls it "the greatest state in the union." Arizona is definitely not the same as Minnesota, so when a student travels there, they're getting a different perspective.

"If life isn't fun," Abott says, "what's it worth living for?"

*"If life isn't fun,  
what's it worth living for?"*



*"I love to teach kids, because every day is something different. I like their curiosity about life. They're not jaded or anything like that."*

Melissa O'Neal  
Milaca, Minnesota  
Photo by Chloe Berg

# BOYS & GIRLS LEARN DIFFERENTLY

## Sofia Nikula

"Boys and girls learn differently." If there was anything that presenter Angela White wanted you to take away from her presentation, it was just that. She concentrated on helping kids through relating with them.

"The two most powerful words we can say to a middle level student in struggle is "me too," she said. "If we can't say it, we should find someone who can."

She's realized the different struggles middle school students go through, and she believes that adults can help.

"When I taught them for the first time," said White. "I began to understand the difficulties that they go through in that year group. For me it was impossible to believe that year group because there's so many things that caring adults can help you with."

White also spoke about netiquette and teaching youth about conversation on the web.

"Everybody sees you; it's not private," she said. "What you put out there, people see. So if you are going to engage in a conversation, you have to make sure it's a true reflection of you. You can't just get away with saying something mean. If I say something, it disappears and it's gone, but if I type it, and it's said in a conversation on the internet, it's there forever."

She spoke out about teaching kids things adults simply expect youth to know.

"We have not taken the time to teach these students this, so why do we expect them to know how to do it? Why do we expect them to be perfect only when we've given them no chance to fail, and no chance to learn what is the



Photo by Sofia Nikula

etiquette?" Her wish is that people would learn more about the different ways students learn and that we reach out to teach them in their unique way.

## CHASKA MIDDLE SCHOOL: RHYTHM SECTION



## Chloe Berg

The Rhythm Section band from Chaska played at the AMLE convention.

"It's fun for the kids, [that's why we do it]," said band director Mr. Songer.

The band meets every week, and has been practicing since last year, to get into the convention.

"This is a group that meets every Thursday morning for twenty minutes, it's volunteer," said Songer. "[Rhythm Section] started ten years ago I wanted to help kids who wanted to learn more about

improvising."

The band had to audition to get into the convention.

"We filled out an application and submitted a recording, that was in back winter," Songer said. "And we were chosen to be in the convention a month after that by the people who look through all the applications and recordings."

Beyond the convention, they have different gigs and performances also.

"We do everything from playing jazz, pop, rock, they're the house band for our

town show, they're the backing band for our group called the Rock Chorus, which is like a glee type group and they do jazz festivals, and they play a coffee shop gig."

The band has become a backbone for Chaska's music program.

"It's grown into many other things, they're the house band for the talent show, and also does a lot of other events in the year for the school," Songer said. "So it's become an all star band, whenever we need a band to perform, it's the first group I consider."

# EARTH: THE APPLE OF THE SOLAR SYSTEM

## Interdisciplinary activities for global citizenship

Rachel Peterson

The teachers that were here did some activities that could be used in classrooms. One of which was with an apple. The apple represents earth. They cut it into four pieces. 3/4 of the apple represents water. 1/4 is land. They cut the land in half. This 1/8 of the land represents land that is uninhabitable and non-arable. The other 1/8 represents livable land but not necessarily farmable. Cut this into four pieces. 3 of these 1/32 pieces represent habitable but non-arable land. The 1/32 represents arable land. The peel of this 1/32 is topsoil. Then there were some discussion questions that could follow this activity like: What are things humans do to arable land that makes it more vulnerable to erosion? How many people can the Earth feed with its existing croplands? What conclusions can we draw about the relationship between growing population and a shrinking amount of land capable of growing food for those people? How can we preserve farmland?

This activity can be used to show the students what the earth is actually like. What a small amount of land there is and how much of that is farmable. Because there isn't a lot of space people are starting to build up. Some greenhouses are starting to build up as well. They raise food on shelves or on different floors.

There was another activity that was called mining for chocolate. This used a cookie as a model for the ground. The



Photo by Katherine Rempel

chocolate as the minerals. A question that teachers can ask is: what are some attributes we need to consider if we want the cookie to be a realistic model? In real life you cannot pick up the earth, so in the activity teachers can make it a rule to put the cookie down somewhere and not pick it up again.

What are some issues about mining on the earth that are represented by the mined cookie?

Teachers can also have the student buy all the "land" and the tools. After the mining is done they can sell the "minerals" then they can calculate their profit.

## IMPROVE VOCABULARY: USE THE GOLDILOCKS RULE

Heidi Peterson

Carol Ann Kane did a presentation on vocabulary. Keen had five goals for the presentation. The goals were: to **understand differences in early vocabulary development, to recognize how vocabulary impacts comprehension, to understand incidental and intentional vocabulary learning, to experience research-supported strategies, and to learn how to implement the strategies.**

One of Kane's slides showed the quantity and quality of words heard per hour the average child in each

category would hear. The quantity of words heard for a child in upper SES is 2,153 words, while the quantity of words heard for a child in lower SES is only 616.

Kane had some examples of word webs in her presentation packet, along with other tools.

The Goldilocks Rule, one of her slides for the presentation, had three tiers. Tier-one words was too easy, which was basic words like the, and, daddy, and food. Tier-two words was just right, which were words that occur frequently like balcony, murmur, and splendid. Tier-three words was too difficult,

low frequency words like anthracite, mycelium, and shoal.

The common core state standards, as shown in her presentation, are: determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words or phrases, demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships and nuances in word meanings, and acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level.



Photo by Heidi Peterson



# DRIVE

*"It's important for everyone who comes here to realize that you are the reason we are here, and you are worth the fight. So, as things get tough, we need to continue to speak up and be advocates and give middle school students the best education they deserve, and let the world know that these kids are the future."*

Holly Thornton  
AMLE Board of Trustees

Photo by Chloe Berg