

Editorial Remarks

Making Middle Grades Education Relevant, Resilient, and Robust

James F. Nagle, Saint Michael's College
Penny A. Bishop, University of Maine

This summer issue of *Middle Grades Review* offers readers an essay calling for future research in middle level practice, three research articles from the field, and a practitioner perspective that uses the community as a resource for learning.

In his essay Virtue argues the most significant conditions facing middle level education for the near future are that middle grades education must be “relevant, resilient, and robust.” Virtue sees middle level education as interdisciplinary and contends each of the three imperatives can provide guidance for researchers and practitioners to move forward to achieve more effective educational outcomes for young adolescents.

McDonnell and Crivac describe a summer program that responded to the effects of the recent pandemic on young adolescents. The exploration took place as a co-curricular activity in a four-week summer scholars program and involved nine students, five boys and four girls. The project investigated reconnection - between students, students and teachers, and with crickets - yes crickets. To enhance collaboration and communication in a post COVID world, McDonnell and Crivac thoughtfully document how rising sixth-graders become cricket explorers who observe the habits and behaviors of the crickets in their care. The students develop a deeper understanding of the ways in which crickets collaborate and communicate, and from these observations draw connections to how they too can connect with each other.

In their action research project, Dobesh and Vu examine the impact of integrating hands-on laboratory experimentation on data analysis and interpretation for the ACT exam in a science middle school class. This investigation compares skills in data analysis and interpretation of

eighth-grade students with the treatment group completing experiments to gather data and the control group only analyzing the data. The treatment group completed scientific experiments during their daily lessons, along with collecting and analyzing data from those experiments. In contrast, the control groups only analyzed the data. Both groups took the science ACT exam and the results indicated no significant difference in mean test scores between the two groups. The authors discuss the pros and cons of having students engaged in hands-on activities.

In the third research article of the issue, Ozturk, Miller, McLeod, and Dickerson explore young adolescent girls' perspectives on trustworthy adults, including the traits that make a person trustworthy. In so doing, the authors hope to understand how youth-adult relationships can strengthen adolescent girls' self esteem and confidence. Early adolescence is a time marked by change, made all the more turbulent in a pandemic era. Research suggests that young adolescent girls are at higher levels of risk (Stallard et al., 2013). With constant access to social media, youth are navigating increased social pressures and feeling increasingly isolated, anxious, and depressed (Keles et al., 2020). They are also entering a world with increased political division, climate disasters, and decreases in public safety from events like mass shootings (Coronese et al., 2019; Follman et al., 2022). As adolescent girls navigate these challenges, Ozturk and colleagues explore how more meaningful youth-adult connections may mitigate the social impacts of a post COVID pandemic.

Finally, in the issue's practitioner perspective, Scanfeld, James, and Dotoli present a middle school unit promoting social emotional learning through the preparation for a day-long

excursion. The authors describe a project-based initiative that uses the urban setting as a resource. Students are tasked with planning, facilitating, and implementing a day-long visit to New York City that includes food from two different cultures, a visit to one landmark, an exploration of one institution of learning (museum, cultural center, university), and time in at least two of the five boroughs, all on a limited budget. This practitioner perspective showcases the social and emotional competencies students develop as they navigate the complexities of this project. It also offers practical guidance to schools for successfully adopting this community based unit.

years): Onset and short-term continuation in a community sample. *BMC Psychiatry*, 13(1), 1-14.
<https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-244x-13-328>

References

- Keles, B., McCrae, N., & Grealish, A. (2020). A systematic review: The influence of social media on depression, anxiety and psychological distress in adolescents. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 25(1), 79-93.
<https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1080/02673843.2019.1590851>
- Follman, M. Aronsen, G., & Pan, D. (2022). U.S. mass shootings, 1982-2022: Data from Mother Jones' investigation. *Mother Jones*.
<https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/12/mass-shootings-mother-jones-full-data/>
- Coronese, M., Lamperti, F., Keller, K., Chiaromonte, F., & Roventini, A. (2019). Evidence for sharp increase in the economic damages of extreme natural disasters. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 116(43), 21450-21455.
- Stallard, P., Spears, M., Montgomery, A. A., Phillips, R., & Sayal, K. (2013). Self-harm in young adolescents (12-16