



**FEBRUARY 27 - MARCH 1, 2022 | HILTON AUSTIN AIRPORT**

*Presented by the Texas Association of Secondary School Principals*

# MAKING Middle School Matter!



**From the Executive Director:  
Archie E. McAfee**

The middle grade years have sometimes been called the “Bermuda Triangle” of K-12 education. It’s a time where students sink or swim, and sail into choppy waters with few pedagogical stars by which to navigate. Scholars in the field have described the history of middle grades reform as marked by “continual tinkering and persistent dissatisfaction.” Former U. S. Department of Education Secretary Arne Duncan’s Remarks at the National Forum’s Annual Schools to Watch Conference, June 23, 2011.

As a former high school principal, I once worked with a school superintendent who said, “National Merit Scholars and prison inmates are both made in middle school.” From both statements we can understand the complexity and challenges of middle level education. Students enrolled in the middle school years are undergoing drastic hormonal differences and other changes brought on by physical growth. It is often said that middle grade years are a period of immense change and considerable turmoil. All of which can be overwhelming even to the most well-adjusted child.

Middle level education can be the most challenging of the years in K-12 education, yet it is a time in which educators can

make the greatest difference in the lives of their middle level students. Harnessing the power of change, both physically and mentally, in our students can lead to great accomplishments during the middle level years.

As you attend this Making Middle School Matter Symposium, we encourage you to seek out those teachers and principals who have been successful in developing the middle school model that ensures great success for all students. Your attendance at this conference indicates your desire to provide the best education possible for your students. We salute you for your efforts and encourage you to continue to strive for solutions to the challenges that you face in helping your students to find success in the middle level years.

Secretary Duncan concluded his remarks by stating, “The middle grades are clearly no longer the age of innocence—and the mission of middle grade school leaders and educators to create safe schools must take on new urgency. I hope that you will leave here today with a renewed sense of urgency—both to make the middle grades safe and to dramatically accelerate achievement for all young adolescents.”

The Motto of the Texas Association of Secondary School Principals illustrates our vision for student success, “Above All, Students First.”

## *Special Thanks*

**to Horace Mann for providing the Conference Bags and Gandy Ink for providing T-shirts**

# TASSP Making Middle School Matter Symposium

FEBRUARY 27 - MARCH 1, 2022 | HILTON AUSTIN AIRPORT HOTEL

Sunday, February 27, 2022

10:00 AM - 4:30 PM | REGISTRATION

MAKING  
Middle School  
Matter!

1:00 PM – 2:15 PM | OPENING GENERAL SESSION | BERGSTROM BALLROOM



• **JACK BERCKEMEYER: Deliberate Optimism - Reclaiming the Joy in Education**

This session is all about how teachers and school leaders can rekindle their individual and collective enthusiasm for a profession that has been progressively inundated with negativity. This is a fact-based, positive approach to “taking back the teaching profession.” Be prepared to learn, to laugh, and to leave with a renewed sense of purpose.

2:15 PM – 2:30 PM | BREAK

2:30 PM – 3:45 PM | BREAKOUT SESSIONS - SET 1

• **JACK BERCKEMEYER: 20 Things That Make a Great Classroom** .....Bergstrom A

This rapid-fire Session outlines 20 things that make a great classroom. Idea from management, organization, and design of the classroom will be shared. Information on what motivates students will also be shared. Who knows, you might figure out a new way to make some classroom changes. Fun and informative!

• **CHRISTY MURRAY: 10 Key Vocabulary Practices for Middle Schools** .....Bergstrom D

Vocabulary instruction matters, especially when students have significant knowledge gaps! This session will highlight the 10 key vocabulary practices all middle schools should use, as supported by high-quality research. Participants will learn specific vocabulary practices and receive tools they can incorporate into their instruction immediately. Appropriate for ELA, science, history, and even math.

• **DAVID WALDHERR: Do More With Less. A Vision For Middle School Accelerated Recovery** ..... Del Valle

Your schools and student programs need help with learning leaps and accelerated student learning but the amount of skills gaps might seem overwhelming. The Forgotten Middle Study says if students are not at level by the time they reach 9th grade for Career and College Readiness, they might never catch up. In 45-minutes you can re-establish data-driven instruction, teacher agency -- the connection between instruction and student impact, and students feeling like they belong in the classroom and want to accelerate their learning. This session will address how teachers can be certain of what students have learned, what they do not know, and how to get them to the next best level without added stress, overwhelming data and massive amounts of curriculum.

• **SEAN CAIN: Grades in the Post-Closure School: Out With the Old, In the Effective** ..... Bergstrom B

Let's be honest, grades weren't working pre-pandemic. They are even less effective now. Learn how to modify campus grading procedures to significantly increase student effort, dramatically improve overall student performance, make life easier for teachers, and make more parents happy, all while adhering to the typical district's grading policies. If you think this is too good to be true, then you can't miss this session. Aligned with The Fundamental 5

• **JOHN FESSENDEN: Accountability for Leaders: Looking Ahead**..... Bergstrom C

After a 2-year respite, accountability returns this year. In this session we will explore what the system will look like for the 2021-22 school year, focusing especially on the role Academic Growth can play in determining the rating of a middle school campus. We will also take a brief look at the 2022-23 school year – which will include significant changes to both assessment (the introduction of the STAAR 2.0 online assessment) and accountability (the re-design of the system).

3:45 PM – 4:00 PM | BREAK

4:00 PM – 5:15 PM | BREAKOUT SESSIONS - SET 2 (REPEAT OF SET 1)

## Monday, February 28, 2022

8:00 AM - 4:00 PM | REGISTRATION OPEN

8:00 AM - 4:00 PM | EXHIBITS OPEN

8:00 AM - 8:45 AM | CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST

9:00 AM – 10:15 AM | MORNING GENERAL SESSION | BERGSTROM BALLROOM



• **JUSTIN RICHARDSON: Leadership Jazz**

What an incredible time to be a leader! It's like we're all jazz musicians! The foundation of jazz music is an artful mix of rhythm and improvisation. Can you relate? Just when you find your rhythm, it's time to improv! Familiar and unpredictable at the same time. Leadership jazz requires a soulful purpose, confidence in those around you, and trust in yourself. Whether this year feels like a tangled mess of musical notes or a timeless masterpiece – just keep leading.

10:15 AM – 10:30 AM | BREAK / VISIT EXHIBITS

10:30 AM – 11:45 AM | BREAKOUT SESSIONS - SET 3

• **JUSTIN RICHARDSON: play and Debate: Encouraging Discourse Among Students .....Bergstrom A**

Leverage low prep, high impact strategies to create relationships among student that encourage discourse. Leave this session ready to support teachers with tools they can use immediately in class to increase rigor and engagement.

• **DR. TRICIA TSANG: Stealth SEL and The Fundamental 5..... Bergstrom B**

Teachers have too much to accomplish in the time allotted. Cover content, deliver high quality instruction, maintain hygiene protocols, and meet student EMOTIONAL HEALTH NEEDS... in 45 minutes. Impossible! Or is it? Join Dr. Tsang to learn how to manage a classroom and implement a body of FUNDAMENTAL practice that double and triple dips every action. Aligned with The Fundamental 5”

• **DR. PHILIP CAPIN: Moving the Needle with Struggling Readers in the Middle School Grades ..... Bergstrom C**

To be successful, secondary struggling readers require high-quality instruction in every class, every day. In this presentation, Dr. Phil Capin will discuss instructional practices that can be used across instructional classes to maximize learning for secondary struggling readers, as well as the key elements to teach during intensive interventions for secondary struggling readers.

• **JEFF BUTLER: People Are Different- So What? How Do We Work Together?.....Bergstrom D**

Never before in the past 100 years has there been as much division in the media that influences the working world. However, regardless of the division, political, cultural, vaccination stance, socioeconomic, things still need to get done at work. So the question is, how do we put aside our differences in the workplace when the outside world is polarizing issues? In this program, Jeff Butler will dissect what it takes to unify a team to help them reach their productivity potential but also operate in an agile way to stay relevant with the exponentially changing working world. This program is not about singing ‘Kumbaya’ with coworkers, but a detailed look at what the top leaders do to help their team’s move past differences and focus on what needs to be done.

• **RICK WORMELI: Insights and Tools for Constructive Conversations on Race, Bias, Sexual Orientation, CRT, Religious Differences, and Other Difficult Topics..... Del Valle**

It is uncomfortable to talk about race, sexual gender/orientation, religions other than our own, divisive politics, and other “third rail” topics with colleagues, let alone students, in many schools. Our constructive and legal response to these issues in schools, however, must be clear, compassionate and immediate. Students are desperate for adult models of how to navigate difficult interactions successfully, so join us for a frank and insightful look at how to conduct helpful conversations on racism, bias, intolerance, divisive politics, the LGBTQA community, and more. We’ll explore how intended and unintended racism and other prejudices manifest in our schools and how we can begin the journey to a thoughtful, effective response to these challenges. Stimulus materials and strategies for facilitating similar discussions at local schools are provided.

NOON – 1:15 PM | LUNCH ON YOUR OWN AND VISIT EXHIBITS

1:30 PM – 2:45 PM | BREAKOUT SESSIONS - SET 4 (REPEAT OF SET 3)

3:00 PM – 4:15 PM | AFTERNOON GENERAL SESSION | BERGSTROM BALLROOM



• **RICK WORMELI: What We Can Do When We are Brave Together**

FDR declared, “Courage is not the absence of fear, but the judgment that something else is more important than that fear.” In education, what do we judge as more important than our fear of rejection, being embarrassed, making mistakes, or the confusion that may come? Join us for a candid address that affirms and provokes listeners with compelling questions about contemporary practices and specific action steps to consider if having enough courage were not a factor. Liberating, affirming and pushing all of us closer to the kind of educator and leader we always wanted to be, we reveal the practices and policies that cultivate courage best. Radical to some, validating to others and steeped in modern pedagogy, we explore the specific, bold actions we can take today that lead to real student success. Leave timidity at the door and join us for an extraordinary presentation.

Tuesday, March 1, 2022

7:15 AM – 8:00 AM | CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST & REGISTRATION

8:15 AM – 9:00 AM | SCHOOLS TO WATCH DEMONSTRATIONS - SET 1

• COLLYVILLE MS - Dr. David Arencibia, Principal: Create High Levels of Engagement using Student Voice!.....Bergstrom A

In this session, we will discuss how we leverage Student Voice to maximize achievement on campus. Our students' voices are at the heart of everything we do and seen in all aspects of school life including the class and campus. Examples of Student Voice will be shared for teacher instruction, class activities, school culture, student clubs, organizations, community service projects, and so much more! After this session, you will leave with many ideas on how your students can help lead your school to engaging, fun, and high-achieving levels!

• BONDY MS - Roneka Lee, Principal: Healthy Competition in the Classroom ..... Bergstrom B

We believe that developing a sense of team, fostering collaboration, and providing opportunities for healthy competition is essential for the learning journeys of our junior high students. Our school's competitions promote community and help students maintain momentum towards their individual achievements on our personalized learning campus. In our presentation, we will discuss how we get creative and experiment with games and competitions at Bondy Intermediate in Pasadena, TX.

• SOUTH TX PREP ACADEMY - Ana Castro, Principal: Circle Forward: Using the Practice of Restorative Circles to Create Classroom and School Communities ..... Bergstrom C

Objective: Participants will be given an overview of South Texas ISD Preparatory Academy's use of restorative circles as an intentional practice in the process of growing and nurturing the larger school community—one classroom at a time. Join us in learning how, through intentional and research-based practices, students are given the tools to take ownership in building meaningful relationships with one another, foster healthy social and emotional growth, and create a rich and meaningful middle school experience.

• LANIER MS - Margaret Meadows, Principal: Making School Matter to Students in Poverty in a Pandemic ..... Bergstrom D

We know everyone is agonizing through this pandemic but our students in poverty are truly suffering with the stress on their families and school disruptions. Learn how we use our master schedule to find time to provide targeted instruction and meet the social and emotional needs of our students through leadership programs and special interest clubs within the school day.

• BL Gray MS - Juan Heredia, Principal: And The Child Shall Lead Them: The Class Sage (Moving the Needle via Leveraged Scholar Participation and Empowerment) ..... Del Valle

The B.L. Gray Jr. High School Class Sage started 7 years ago; originally a Kagan strategy, we adapted it to increase scholar engagement, language development and to polish students' soft skills; an ancillary benefit was increased focus on both content and language objectives written by teachers.

9:00 AM – 9:15 AM | BREAK

9:15 AM – 10:00 AM | SCHOOLS TO WATCH DEMONSTRATIONS - SET 2 (REPEAT OF SET 1)

10:00 AM – 10:15 AM | BREAK

10:15 AM – 11:30 AM | CLOSING GENERAL SESSION | BERGSTROM BALLROOM



• JEFF BUTLER: How Technology is Changing the World of Teaching and What Can We Do About It?

Have you ever wondered why it's so hard to put down your phone when you are trying to focus on something? Well, there are hidden psychological effects that technology is having on our brains where current day studies show that smartphone users are developing serious problems. These impacts can range from how we learn to how we can relate to one another.

However, on the opposite of the technology coin, there are irrefutably positive changes that technology bringing into the world. Never before have educators have been positioned where they can impact more lives, more effectively, but in a more challenging state. So how do educators negate these challenges? In this program, Jeff Butler, will be looking at the impacts of technology as well as what can educators do to ensure that they are leveraging the digital world to its fullest potential.

11:45 AM – 12:30 PM | WORKING LUNCH

11:45 AM – 5:00 PM | NEW RE-DESIGNATED SCHOOLS TO WATCH TRAINING | BERGSTROM BALLROOM

Thank You for attending!

## About the Speakers



### • JACK BERCKEMEYER

A nationally-recognized presenter, author, and humorist, Jack Berckemeyer, began his career as a middle school teacher in Denver, Colorado. After two years of teaching he was named as an outstanding educator at his school, and shortly thereafter he was identified as one of the outstanding educators in the district. In 2003, he received the Outstanding Alumni Award from the Falcon School District. Jack brings his energy, humor, and expertise to all staff development as he helps teachers and administrators remember why this job makes a difference. Jack has presented in conference and school district settings both nationally and internationally. Jack served as a judge for the Disney American Teacher Awards and served on the selection committee for the USA TODAY All-Teacher Team.

Jack was also the Assistant Executive Director for the National Middle School Association for 13 years and is the author of *Managing the Madness - A Practical Guide to Middle Grades Classrooms*. He is also the co-author of *H.E.L.P. for Teachers*. His most recent publications are *Taming of the Team - How Great Teams Work Together* and *Deliberate Optimism - Reclaiming the Joy in Education*, co-authored with Dr. Debbie Silver and Judith Baenen. Jack is the owner of the Nuts and Bolts Symposiums, a highly acclaimed, never boring conference that focuses on practical.



### • JEFF BUTLER

Jeff Butler is an author and workplace strategist who explores human behavior within the working world. His experience spans over 40 industries in 4 continents on how different cultures and employees interact with each other. He studies common threads of behavior in industries such as IT professionals, underground utility workers, police officers to clothing retail chains. In addition, companies like Google, Amazon, John Deere, and Coldwell Banker. As a researcher and practitioner, he also runs a consulting company and a tech company, TrinityFix where he is able to test his ideas in different workplace environments. His ideas have made it to TEDx twice, appeared in dozens of media outlets including two books on human behavior: *The Authentic Workplace* and *The Key To The New You*. Currently, he lives in Dallas, Texas as an out of place Californian.



### • SEAN CAIN

Sean Cain spent the formative years of his career working in difficult instructional settings. Recognized for the success of both his students and the systems he designed and implemented, he quickly moved up through the instructional leadership ranks. This culminated in his last public education position as State Director of Innovative School Redesign (Texas). Currently, Cain serves as the Chief Idea Officer for Lead Your School (LYS), a confederation of successful school leaders dedicated to improving student, campus, and district performance. A passionate speaker, Cain is a sought-after national presenter and trains educators in schools and districts across the county. The primary foci of Cain's current research and fieldwork are making complex problem.



### • DR. PHILIP CAPIN

DR. Philip Capin is a research assistant professor for the Department of Special Education and a researcher for the Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk at the University of Texas at Austin. Dr. Capin's research focuses on improving reading instruction and assessment for children, including those with or at risk for reading disabilities. He currently serves as a Co-Principal Investigator for three large-scale funded projects: (1) an Education Development Research Center funded by the Institutes for Education Sciences (IES) that aims to improve opportunities and outcomes for English learners (ELs), (2) the Texas Learning Disabilities Research Center project funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) examining learning disabilities identification and remediation students with reading disabilities, and (3) an IES grant focused on developing an intervention that simultaneously enhances children's reading and growth mindset. Based on his research, Dr. Capin has published over 25 peer-reviewed articles. Prior to receiving his Ph.D. in Special Education from the University of Texas at Austin in 2018, he was a special education teacher and a credentialed school administrator.



### • JOHN FESSENDEN

John Fessenden supports school districts and educational leaders in the areas assessment, accountability, and data analysis. He has extensive experience at the state, regional and local level, having worked with TEA, ESC 13, Del Valle ISD, and the East Williamson County Co-op (where he served as Director of Special Education). Prior to working at TEA, John taught in Waco ISD and Seguin ISD. Although no longer practicing law, John also has experience as both a corporate lawyer and a school law lawyer. He also taught School Law for Masters-level graduate students at Texas State University from 2003 through 2010.

## About The Speakers



### • CHRISTY MURRAY

Christy Murray serves as the director of the Middle School Matters Institute, co-principal investigator of the MSM-PREP research study, and has over 15 years of experience leading and managing educational research and technical assistance projects. From 2013 to 2017, Murray served as the principal investigator and project director of Middle School Matters, an education reform initiative founded by the George W. Bush Institute and implemented at MCPER. The initiative focused on identifying evidence-based practices deemed essential for success in the middle grades, supporting middle schools as they implemented these practices, and developing and disseminating resources that translated research to practice. From 2005 to 2012, Murray served as the deputy director of the Center on Instruction's Special Education and Response to Intervention Strand. During this time, she provided technical assistance to Regional Comprehensive Centers and state departments of education, as well as developed products, publications, and PD materials. Prior to joining MCPER, Murray was an elementary classroom teacher specializing in reading and science instruction.



### • JUSTIN RICHARDSON

Bringing years of district leadership experience, Justin Richardson, M.Ed., is passionate about engaging, challenging, and supporting educators to create something new and amazing! He believes our purpose as educators is to bring out the greatness in others. As the Chief Learning Officer for lead4ward, Justin provides direction on learning initiatives with a creative and innovative approach. His vast understanding of the learning process provides a platform for the lead4ward team to support leaders and teachers in what's best for students.

Prior to joining lead4ward, Justin served as Executive Director of Curriculum and Professional Development for Canyon ISD. In this role, he developed and led the implementation of Professional Learning Communities, curriculum alignment, assessment and data analysis processes, and intervention systems. He led Canyon ISD in the implementation of digital learning, Google Apps for Education, and development of an award-winning induction program for new teachers and mentors. In addition, Justin has served on the TEA state assessment item review committee, SBOE mathematics review committee, and many more.



### • DR. TRICIA TSANG

Dr. Tricia Tsang is a public education advocate who has served as an academic achievement specialist, assistant principal, director of instruction, and principal. The teams of educators that Tsang has led at both the elementary and secondary levels have both improved student outcomes and been recognized for exceptional performance. Dr. Tsang currently works full time with Lead Your School (LYS), coaching districts and schools, using her experience in both curriculum and instruction and leadership to transform teacher practice and increase student performance.



### • DAVID WALDHERR

Dr. Waldherr, first generation college student, enrolling only because of a scholarship, founded Cambridge in 1990 with the mission of helping all students, regardless of income level or previous achievement, build college readiness skills, increase test scores, and gain college admission and scholarships. Having spoken at hundreds of national and regional conferences, Dr. Waldherr is widely known for his commitment and expertise in providing quality test prep to all students. Cambridge materials are used by more than 2,000 schools, served over 7,000,000 students and through its Grant Award Program has given away over \$8,000,000 to deserving youth programs.



### • RICK WORMELI

One of the first Nationally Board Certified teachers in America, Rick brings innovation, energy, validity and high standards to both his presentations and his instructional practice, which include 39 years teaching math, science, English, physical education, health, and history, as well as coaching teachers and principals. Rick's work has been reported in numerous media, including ABC's Good Morning America, Hardball with Chris Matthews, National Geographic and Good Housekeeping magazines, What Matters Most: Teaching for the 21st Century, and the Washington Post. He is a columnist for AMLE Magazine and a frequent contributor to ASCD's Education Leadership magazine. He is the author of the award-winning book *Meet Me in the Middle* as well as the best-selling books *Day One and Beyond*, *Fair Isn't Always Equal: Assessment and Grading in the Differentiated Classroom* (Second Edition), *Differentiation: From Planning to Practice* and *Metaphors & Analogies: Power Tools for Teaching any Subject*, all five from Stenhouse Publishers, as well as *Summarization in any Subject: 60 Innovative and Tech-Infused Strategies for Deeper Student Learning* published by ASCD. His book, *The Collected Writings (So Far) of Rick Wormeli: Crazy Good Stuff I Learned about Teaching Along the Way*, is collection of his published articles, guest blogs and more through 2013. His classroom practice is a showcase for ASCD's best-selling series, *At Work in the Differentiated Classroom*.

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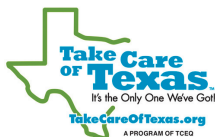
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