

TAMS TIDBITS

NEWSLETTER FOR THE TENNESSEE ASSOCIATION OF MIDDLE SCHOOLS

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Karns Middle School Hosts Fall Drive-In Conference

*By Michelle K. Kornberger
Editor*

Karns Middle School in Knoxville, TN hosted this year's Fall Drive-In Conference. Over one hundred educators attended this year's theme, "R U Ready 2 Get Pumped UP About Middle School?" Educators were treated to a motivational pep talk from Patsy Neal, executive director of the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame located in Knoxville, TN. During her session, Neal reflected on memories of teachers that made an impact on her during her school years. One of the best lessons, she said, was to "lose the same way you win." Neal continued to inspire educators to provide "valuable life lessons to be instituted in children." Some of the values Neal spoke of are to work hard, practice, little things make a difference, have goals and to be thankful.

Educators were also treated to the Karns Middle School Ensemble performing a melody of songs including "Stand by Me" and "Side by Side".



Karns Middle School Ensemble performs for educators at the Fall Drive-In Conference.

Look What's Coming Up!

March 5, 2005

Spring Drive-In Conference
White Station Middle
Memphis TN

June 13-15, 2005

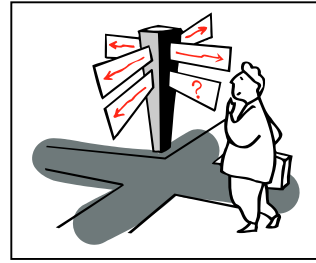
Annual State Conference
Nashville, TN (See Insert!)

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**Look inside for information on
upcoming events!**

Dear Annie.... Thoughts and Help for First Year Teachers



Dear Annie,

I have a question that may seem a little strange. I teach my lesson, but how can I be sure the students learn and understand what I've taught them? Do you have any suggestions that would help me?

-Baffled in Bolivar

Dear Baffled,

Your question is not strange at all. Think about dividing your lesson into "chunks", then teach, allow students to practice, then assess. This should be a cycle throughout your lesson...teach, practice, assess...teach, practice, assess. By assess, I don't mean for you to give them a quiz...There are many ways to assess students...by observation, checklists, reflective stems, peer review, summarizing, graphic organizers, stop and tell a partner, and response boards.

In addition, the closure portion of your lesson can also serve as an indicator of learning. My favorite closure activity is "Ticket Out the Door". Students are asked to "do one more" if you are teaching a skill such as map reading, division of decimals, etc. If your lesson is concept oriented, students may be asked 2-3 short questions to determine if they truly understand the material.

Thank you for your question. Teachers always benefit from determining immediately whether or not students are learning. Don't wait until the end of the period...assess often and thoroughly at critical points throughout your lesson.

Good luck,

Annie

Do YOU have a question for our Annie? Send your question for Dear Annie to neroa@mcsk12.net. Annie is Dr. Ann Nero and is a staff development coordinator with Memphis City Schools.

Work Smarter Not Harder Websites

By Carole Welch

Teaching is a wonderful but stressful profession. More is expected from us every year. We have to find ways to cope with our increasing responsibilities. The following websites have an abundance of resources that should help you work smarter not harder. Some general teacher-related websites that are most helpful are

- **Marco Polo** (<http://www.marcopolo-education.org/index.aspx>), which covers economics, mathematics, The humanities, reading and language arts, science, and geography,

- **Kathy Schrock's Guide for Educators** (<http://school.discovery.com/schrockguide/assess.html>),

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Book Notes With Kim

Most of the time, I write about fiction - mainly because that's what I like to read. I love stories and characters and plots. (I think it's the leftover English teacher in me.) When I became a librarian, I'll admit it was a bit of a surprise to learn that our middle school students, especially boys, want to read non-fiction most of the time. Since "monitor and adjust" is a watchword, I quickly adapted to non-fiction. One of the things I discovered was the Orbis Pictus Award - given each year by the National Council of Teachers of English to recognize excellence in the writing of nonfiction for children. In November, I was able to attend this year's announcement of the Orbis Pictus Award winner and the honor books. While many of the books that made the list were aimed at primary or intermediate students, there were some standouts that you and your middle school students will enjoy.

This year's winner was *An American Plague: The True and Terrifying Story of the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1793* by Jim Murphy (Clarion Books). This is the fourth award for Murphy's book, which also was a National Book Award Finalist, a Newbery Honor Book, and the winner of the Sibert Award. With primary sources, illustrations, and vivid prose, Murphy makes this episode from our history come alive. One of the honor books was *In Defense of Liberty: The Story of America's Bill of Rights* by Russell Freedman (Holiday House). As each amendment is explained, Freedman examines it in an historical context and in the light of contemporary applications. The final chapter highlights additional amendments as relating to the rights of citizens. From the list of recommended books, look for *Getting Away with Murder: The True Story of the Emmett Till Case* by Chris Crowe (Phyllis Fogelman Books). This is a companion to Crowe's 2003 novel, *Mississippi Trial, 1955*. My students have given both books positive reviews. Another recommended book is *Jack: the Early Years of John F. Kennedy* by Ilene Cooper (Dutton Children's Books).

My adult recommendation these days is *King of the Mild Frontier: An Ill-Advised Autobiography* by Chris Crutcher (Greenwillow Books). Although Crutcher usually writes for teens, I think you have to have lived through your own adolescence to "get" his tale of growing up in Idaho. It's not a book for middle school students, but my husband and I both enjoyed it. And because I just can't quit without mentioning a novel, you're going to want to read *The Outcasts of 19 Schuyler Place* by two-time Newbery Medal winner E. L. Konigsburg (Atheneum). It's a tribute to the importance of individuality, and it's full of humor and courage. I think we'll see this on the short list for awards during 2005.

And speaking of 2005, I wish you a serene second semester. (Is such a thing possible in middle school?) Read lots of books, and if you discover something wonderful, let me know.

Kim Ford
kimlhs66@aol.com

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• **Sites for Teachers** (<http://sitesforteachers.com/index.html>), which is a link to hundreds of education websites,

• **Scholastic** (<http://www.scholastic.com/>), which has resources for teachers, students, parents, librarians, and administrators, and

• **Teacher's Corner** (<http://www.theteacherscorner.net/index.htm>), which has many tips to help make your job more manageable.

There are almost limitless resources for teachers in the above websites, including unit and lesson plans, teaching tools, rubrics, graphic organizers, brain boosters, puzzle makers, magazine articles, book reviews, clip art ideas, and teaching strategies.

Several other websites are helpful in more specific ways. The **National Middle School Association** (<http://www.nmsa.org/>) has many resources for middle level educators, including access to the Middle School Journal and links to other middle school resources and publications.

Excel in the Classroom (<http://www.leesummit.k12.mo.us/its/excel.htm>) has tutorials, examples of spreadsheets, timelines, and pictographs utilizing Excel. **Online Scoring Guide** has ready-made rubrics and tools to help you develop your own rubrics

(<http://www.leesummit.k12.mo.us/its/scoringuides.htm>). **Operation Respect: Don't Laugh At Me** (<http://www.dontlaugh.org/>) is an excellent site focusing on Character Education and social and emotional learning.

I hope that these websites are beneficial to you. If you wish to check out some other sites on my homepage, go to

<http://avery4.memphischools.k12.tn.us/lt/hp.nsf/PreviewHomePages/welchcj>.

Carole Welch, Library Media Specialist, A. Maceo Walker Middle School, Memphis City Schools

Consider a Dual Membership

Do you want the most from your membership dollars? Then you should consider the **TAMS/NMSA Dual Membership** option. Consider this cost comparison:

<u>Through December 31, 2004</u>		<u>Beginning January 1, 2005</u>	
Individual TAMS Dues	\$20	Individual TAMS Dues	\$20
Individual NMSA Dues	<u>\$59</u>	Individual NMSA Dues	<u>\$65</u>
TOTAL	\$79		\$85

TAMS/NMSA Dual Membership through December 31, 2005: \$70

There are very few national professional organizations that have membership fees of less than \$70. If you add the state affiliate dues, often the total price will approach \$100 or more.

With the **TAMS/NMSA Dual Membership**, you will receive both memberships for the bargain price of \$70. If you activate your dual membership in December, you will be able to renew in December 2005 for the same bargain price of \$70. Go to

<http://www.tams.net/NMSA.pdf> to access the **TAMS/NMSA Dual Membership** form. NMSA manages the program and you may use your credit card.