

A Message from the MIDDLE

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President's Message

Our council hopes that everyone is enjoying their school year. I have taught middle school for the last 25 years and it is always an exciting time of year; there's nowhere else that I would rather be. Young adolescents never cease to amaze me with their energy, creativity, spirit and love for life.

Every year we are proud to have our membership grow. We have just surpassed 500 people, with the hope of reaching over a 1000 in the near future. If you know of anyone who could benefit from being a member of our council, please pass on our contact information.

We are continually looking for new ways to support middle years teachers and for

feedback from you to help us out. We are committed to making sure that you, as members, receive as much as possible from your membership in the Middle Years Council. Please let me know if you have any ideas to make your years in the middle better by contacting me at jeremy.spink@rdpsd.ab.ca.

We hope that you love being part of our council and that you have a great year "in the middle." Hopefully I will see you in Banff in April.

Jeremy Spink
MYC president 2017/18



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Messages for MLAs

The Middle Years Council (MYC) encourages its members to seek support for resources that meet the social, emotional and educational needs of middle years' students and provide appropriate classroom support.

If you have a story about unmet needs in your inclusive middle years' classroom, we encourage you to share it in your spheres of influence, including through a message or visit to your MLA. Send your stories (about one paragraph in length) to MYC newsletter editor **Emma Holota** at holota.emma@gmail.com for inclusion in our newsletter or on the website. Together we can raise awareness of the needs of students in the middle!

AMLE Affiliation



The Middle Years Council of the Alberta Teachers' Association is affiliated with the Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE), which is the international organization for middle years educators. The AMLE website has a variety of resources and information for middle years education (<http://www.amle.org/>). They have a free membership option so you can access some materials without the full membership, but with the professional membership, you have full access to all resources as well as discounts on books, resources and conference registrations.

AMLE Conference

This fall, I had the privilege of attending the annual American Middle Level Education Conference in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The calibre of speakers was tremendous and it was the best conference that I have attended to date.

Student Learning Goals

At the roundtable discussions at the Symposium on Middle Level Teacher Education, James Nagle spoke about all students having a personalized learning plan.

The students identify their interests, challenges and strengths. They address their goals and their proficiencies and identify content that they believe they need to improve. The learning plan is then shared with parents so they can understand their children's goals. Nagle suggested that this learning plan be reviewed and revised three to four times in a school year. During the revision process, they can revise their goals or add new ones. A key element to the success of this plan is that all assignments are rubric based, and students are marked on their proficiencies. The idea of students being responsible for setting their own educational goals is very appealing to me. The following is a link to help teachers get started with building student learning plans: <http://blog.edmentum.com/10-steps-creating-personalized-learning-plans-students>.

Charles Beaman— Extraordinary Speaker

Another speaker that I very much enjoyed listening to was Charles Beaman. One of the first statements he made was that all children want to learn—they may just not want to learn what you are teaching right now. He spoke about how important it is that students know you care about them. He said we need to call students by name in positive ways; make eye contact; make them feel special; and, especially, don't attack their dignity. Beaman identified that respect is very different from dignity. Dignity is the state or quality of being worthy of honour or respect, whereas respect is a feeling of deep admiration for someone or something elicited by their abilities, qualities or achievements.

Beaman stated that there are two kinds of teachers: balcony teachers who pull their students to higher levels and basement teachers who suck their students down through negative interaction. He followed

this statement with a question, “How do you rate?”

Beaman continued by saying that many teachers are focussing on things that don’t contribute to student learning including homework, retention and teachers’ verbal abilities. The things that do contribute are, in order of importance, response to intervention, class discussions, feedback, teacher/student relationships, teaching strategies and classroom management.

Another important observation Beaman made is that failure to do the work is not a discipline problem; it is a motivational problem. We need to create a climate in which all students thrive. We need to be life touchers!

*Emma Holota
Regional representative
Northeast*



Websites for other outstanding speakers

The following are websites for other outstanding speakers at the AMLE conference. Some have valuable information for educating middle years students.

- **Grace Dearborn**
<http://www.consciousteaching.com/>
- **Kim Campbell**
<http://www.motivatingthemiddle.org/>
- **Rosalind Wiseman and Charlie Kuhn**
<http://culturesofdignity.com/>
- **Rick Wormelli**
<http://www.rickwormeli.com/>
- **Marlena Gross-Taylor**
<https://www.marlenagrosstaylor.com/>
- **Debbie Silver**
<http://www.debbiesilver.com/>

You are Game Changers!

It was an absolute honour to join the likes of some amazing middle school teachers (read game changers) during the annual Middle Years Council conference held in Banff this year. We talked relationships, connection, being “crazy” about the kids and the families we work with and, most importantly, how to not go “crazy” when you are so busy being crazy about everyone else. We talked about the importance of not “setting yourself on fire to keep other people warm.” Usually we are in this business because we are good at “fixing” or solving problems; however, when it comes to relationships, our power is in holding the panic of the kids and fellow staff we work with; often there is no “fix.” As my girlfriend, Brene Brown, reminds us,

“rarely does a response make something better. What makes something better is connection.” Don’t ever forget your power—lighting up and connection are often all you need to help others answer the most important question on the planet that each of us asks: “Am I worth it?” It was one powerful group who gathered in Banff, and there’s a boatload of students who will benefit from their “crazy.” Big love to all of you. I was so inspired. Hang in there team. You’ve got this!

Jody Carrington



MYC Conference 2017 Review

Last year, we had a great Middle Years conference! We would like to give you some highlights before bragging about our great conference to come in April 2018.

We would like to start off by thanking last year's conference committee members, Tom Stones, Chris McCullough, Tina Chadwick and Jeremy Spink, for all their hard work in organizing the amazing event!

Some highlights from last year were our location in Banff, the terrific food and loads of it in the hotel, and our star and host Jody Carrington, a registered clinical psychologist. This funny, real and caring woman touched the lives of all of us by connecting her clinical challenges with the classroom. She encouraged us to believe that we are all doing everything we can to make children successful.

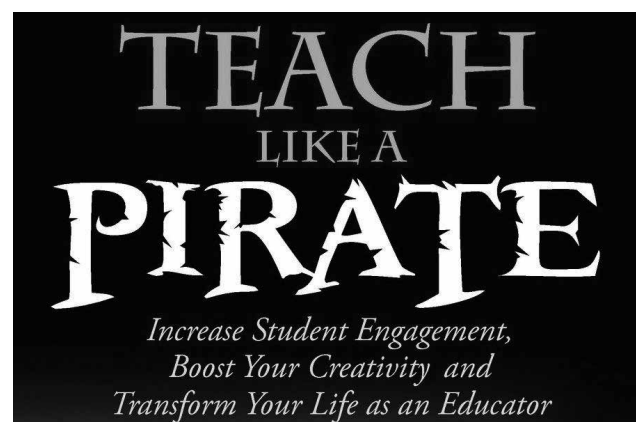
Last year's conference also kicked off on Thursday morning with two pre-conference school tours. School leaders led attendees through two very different schools settings, one a TLC program and the other an art-based program. The two schools were similar in the way they led students into learning and problem solving with real, everyday thinking. Differences between the schools included such things as student uniforms, how the audio libraries cater to student needs and interests, and the traditional ways that learning takes place in a TLC learning center. At the art-based school, we watched dancing, sword fights and a play that paid tribute to First Nations communities. A lot of powerful learning was taking place in both school settings. We were then served an outstanding meal, and the attendees left excited to share all

the interesting things they discovered at these very different schools.

Jody Carrington inspired us all with humour and fascinating anecdotes. She talked about how we will all fall down, but that we need to get back up and try again. We learn from mistakes and become triumphant. She was very uplifting and left everyone laughing and crying on a well-driven rollercoaster ride of emotions. She was truly inspirational and opened the conference in amazing style. There was a lot of positive feedback about the breakout sessions this year. The lineup was fantastic and included something for everyone. This is a tremendous feat, considering that the teachers who come to our conference represent the greatest number of students in the province from Grades 4 to 9.

This year our committee is working to bring you another great speaker: Dave Burgess, author of *Teach Like a Pirate*, will open our Middle Years conference in April 2018. We look forward to your registrations!

Tom Stones
MYC vice-president and codirector
Conference 2017



Top 10 reasons to attend the MYC conference in Banff, Alberta, April 26–28, 2018

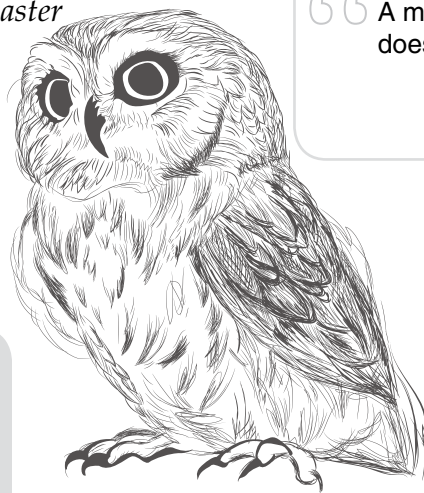
Tom Stones, Conference 2018 codirector

1. You might get to wear your pirate costume because...
2. ...our keynote speaker will be Dave Burgess, author of *Teach Like a Pirate*. Dave is an engaging, energetic speaker that you will not forget. Check out his website at daveburgess.com.
3. Great accommodations at Banff Park Lodge.
4. You will be one block off Banff Avenue.
5. An epic social event on Friday night.
6. Fantastic trade fair displaying resources, fundraising ideas and all kinds of free stuff.
7. Great food. Seriously, great food!!
8. Breakout sessions. Besides Dave's sessions you will have the opportunity to attend breakout sessions presented by educators from all over Alberta. Topics will cover many aspects of middle level education. If you are interested in presenting one of these sessions, please contact **Tom Stones** at tstones@cesd73.ca. You will receive a conference registration for sharing your expertise.
9. Did we mention it is in Banff?
10. An opportunity to meet and collaborate with middle years teachers from all over the province and beyond.

To register or for more information check out our website at ata-myc.com.

Words of Wisdom

collected by Jeremy Clevette, MYC webmaster



“It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge.

Albert Einstein

“You can teach a student a lesson for a day; but if you can teach students to learn by creating curiosity, they will continue the learning process as long as they live.

Clay P Bedford

“Never pass up an opportunity to use the bathroom.”

- All teachers

“A teacher is no longer just a teacher, but a tutor, therapist, guru, nurse practitioner, Dutch uncle, minister without portfolio and cop on the beat.

David McCullough Jr

“A mind is like a parachute. It doesn't work if it is not open.

Frank Zappa

“A teacher is one who helps others and influences lives forever.

Catherine Pulsifer

“I like a teacher who gives you something to take home to think about besides homework.

Lily Tomlin

“All teachers teach history to those who will make history.

Greg Henry Quinn

A Day in the Life of a Middle School Teacher

"Today is going to be a great day. No, really, today is going to be a GREAT DAY! I am the teacher. I am mature and wise and funny. They love me. They have bizarre ways of showing it, but they love me." This is how the day starts for a middle years teacher—giving yourself a little pep talk.

Then, once you arrive in the building, it hits you! That wall of hormones that only a middle years teacher can understand. You can either embrace it, or it will take you down! The morning is usually relatively calm as the adolescent brain is still basically sleeping. As the teacher, you relish in this hour or two where you feel as the though you have total control of your classroom. The students are quiet—minimally engaged, but quiet—and you count this as a win! Soon there will be a break and that will trigger their minds to wake up. Opportunity for them to socialize will ignite their spirits!

Lunch will roll around and you will quickly nourish your own body, while simultaneously halting food fights, patrolling the hallway, offering counselling services, policing personal devices and, if you're lucky, taking a second to use the washroom.



By afternoon they are fully awake, and you will continue the good fight to fill their minds with knowledge and align their moral compasses, all while putting on an Oscarworthy teaching performance, hoping that it is slightly more engaging than whatever is popping up on their phones or other devices. Occasionally you catch a glimpse of a smile or a snicker, and you will relish in that moment when you genuinely believe their emotional response is the result of your amazing lesson or your witty commentary, but who really knows?

Eventually your mind and body will tire, and just as you're about to give up and take a break (to sit at your desk staring blankly at your computer screen), it will happen, that magical moment when a student raises their hand. They need you! They need your help! You rush over. With any luck they will actually require your assistance, but more often than not they just want to go to the washroom. Oh well, you win some, you lose some. As the day draws to a close, you will muster what tiny bit of energy you have left to make a sarcastic comment or mutter a funny joke. The three students who actually get it and laugh will forever hold a special place in your heart.

When that the final bell rings and the same two students stay back to help you clean the room, or when a handful of them poke their heads in to genuinely say, "Have a great night, see you tomorrow," suddenly it will all be worth it. You *are* mature and wise and funny. They *love* you! Tomorrow, you will be back to do it all over again!

Abby Stillwell
Regional representative Northwest



Middle Years Conference 2018

TEACH LIKE A PIRATE



School Tours: Various Calgary Middle Schools (April 26)

Date: April 26-28, 2018

Location: Banff Park Lodge

Friday Night Social: 9 Second Ride

We are asking for breakout session presenters; please see the website.



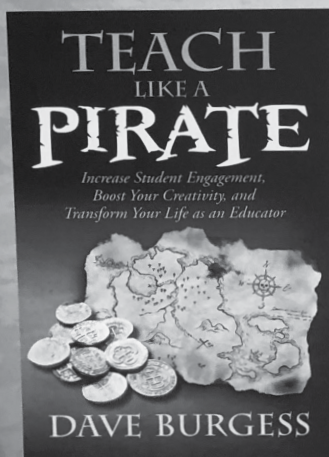
Banff Park Lodge



KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Dave Burgess

Scott Hebert



Early Bird Rate

February 28, 2018 (See website for rates)

**Please register @
www.ata-myc.com**



The Alberta
Teachers' Association

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For a full listing of the MYC executive council go to www.ata-myc.com.



Facebook page

Please visit, like and follow our Facebook page to find out the latest information about our conference. The page is called the Middle Years Council of the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA).

THE MIDDLE YEARS COUNCIL WANTS YOU!!!



EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTORS

Join the Executive

We are always looking for volunteers from all over the province who would like to join the executive and promote middle years education. The executive meets five times a year; two meetings are via video conference and one is held at the annual conference in April. Please contact **Jeremy Spink at jeremy.spink@rdpsd.ab.ca** if you are interested in joining the executive.

Request for links, games, lessons or cool activities

Do you have any website links, games, lessons or cool activities that you would like to share with other middle school teachers? Send them to **Emma Holota at holota.emma@gmail.com**. We will include them in upcoming issues of our newsletter.

**The MYC website is
WWW.ATA-MYC.COM.
Add it to your favourites.**

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