



# Power Lines



Florida League of Middle Schools  
January 2013

Florida League of Middle Schools

[www.flms.org](http://www.flms.org)

## From the Desk of the Executive Director

*Dr. Chet Sanders, Executive Director*

Any teacher or administrator, who is currently working in a Florida school district, has been experiencing an overemphasis on standardized testing and accountability imposed by our myopic politicians. The latest iteration includes the Value Added Model (VAM) to determine whether students made adequate growth, and then using these data to evaluate teachers and administrators.

The alert educator began to suspect a degree of “wackiness” when told that the 2011-12 appraisals would be delayed until the fall of 2012 waiting for VAM scores to be calculated. After the results were finally released by the State, the discord caused by the ill-conceived attempt to tie teacher evaluations to FCAT scores reached epic proportions. Hoping to quell the backlash, DOE pushed the restart button and made everyone highly effective and highly skeptical at the same time.

Considering the tremendous importance of educating Florida’s children, we need to avoid these kinds of annoying distractions and keep our attention and energy focused on the classroom. Your professional organization, the Florida League of Middle Schools, is an excellent vehicle to help teachers and administrators maintain an emphasis on best classroom practices.

This school year our FLMS regional directors, working with their local members, have hosted two fall conferences, one in Hillsborough County and one in St. Johns County. For a minimal registration fee, attendees enjoyed the incomparable Jack Berkmeier as the featured speaker and a variety of outstanding breakout sessions. These conferences offer professional growth opportunities for middle level educators to learn from each other and share best practices. These are the kinds of experiences that build morale and help to form professional teams within schools and across districts. Continuing in February a third regional conference is being planned by FLMS members to take place in Broward County.



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## FLORIDA LEAGUE OF MIDDLE SCHOOLS

### Membership Registration Form, Yearly from July 1 - June 30

Membership Type

Institutional/School Membership

\_\_\_\_\_ Individual      \$25.00

\_\_\_\_\_ Institutional/School      \$150.00  
(30 copies of POWER LINES sent quarterly.)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

County: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Please mail to: **Florida League of Middle Schools**

c/o Dr. Shirley Fox  
10811 Crescent Ln.  
Clermont, FL 34711

H (352) 241-9541  
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### What is the Florida League of Middle Schools?

The Florida League of Middle Schools was founded in 1972 by a group of individuals who were designing, teaching and working a new kind of school called a "middle school." The association is designed for individuals and institutions dedicated to the cause of quality middle level education for grades 5-9.

The League is the only professional educational organization in the state that opens its membership to interested individuals and professional educators, regardless of subject area of specialization, who focus on students in their early adolescent years (10 - 14 year olds). Quality middle level education is challenging, developmentally appropriate, and available to all students in a middle school.

The Florida League of Middle Schools is an affiliate of the National Middle School Association which has over 30,000 members in the 50 states and abroad.

Benefits of membership in FLMS are many. You will receive the quarterly newsletter with information on current trends and hot topics in middle level education. You will also enjoy the yearly FLMS journal with topical articles and original artwork. Additionally, you will be invited to attend the yearly state conference and have the opportunity to network with experienced middle level professionals.

### Mission of FLMS

The mission of the Florida League of Middle Schools is to improve education for middle grade students in the state of Florida. The mission of the League is accomplished by:

- acting as an advocate for middle grade students and education in Florida
- facilitating curriculum improvement and inservice education
- being a clearing house for middle level ideas, materials, and personnel
- coordinating statewide efforts in the School improvement Process in Florida
- securing support for middle level education from groups and agencies
- representing middle schools in public discussion of education issues
- establishing and supporting regional affiliates of the Florida League of Middle Schools

# Tips for Teachers - January and February

In January we celebrate New Year's Day, Martin L. King, Jr.'s Birthday, National Hobby Month, and Australia Day. In February we celebrate Freedom Day, Valentine's Day, Presidents' Day, and Black History Month. Provided below are several creative activities for teachers to use with their students during these months.

## January

### NEW YEAR'S DAY

- Do we celebrate the end of the old year or the beginning of the new one? Defend your answer.
- Predict four resolutions you will make in the year 2017. (How old will you be?)
- Design a crossword puzzle using the names of college football teams and key players who participated in the bowl games on New Year's Day.
- Give examples of paraphernalia used to celebrate New Year's Eve.
- What color does New Year's Day represent to you? Explain.

### MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.'s BIRTHDAY

- Define civil rights in your own words and discuss with a partner or small group how civil rights are important to our way of life.
- What responsibilities do leaders have?
- Identify five positive things Martin Luther King, Jr. did for the people of the U.S.
- If you could have any leadership role, what would it be and why?
- Identify other people who have stood up for what they believed and made a difference.

### NATIONAL HOBBY MONTH

- Name at least eight games that use dice.
- Imagine your hobby has gained national attention; create a poster or brochure advertising the opening of a display of your hobby to the public.
- In what ways could you prove "practice makes perfect"?
- Stretch your imagination. Think of all the ways you could use your leisure time.
- Predict what life would be like without hobbies.

### AUSTRALIA DAY

- If you were describing your life to an Australian child, what would you tell him/her?
- Describe how it might feel to live in a kangaroo pouch. Can you

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imagine any human situations that are similar?

- Outback is the answer. What could the questions be?
- Complete this thought: Australia is...
- Design a collage with pictures that represent the Outback.

## **February**

### **FREEDOM DAY**

- Discuss with your classmates the struggles of one modern-day country as it attempts to gain freedom from oppressive rule; bring in newspaper articles depicting this struggle.
- If you had a freedom treasure chest, what would be inside? Why?
- What does it mean to “let freedom ring”?
- Does freedom feel more like a flag or a rainbow? A poem or a song? A parade or a ball game? New Year’s or the Fourth of July? Explain each choice.

### **VALENTINE’S DAY**

- If you could do whatever your heart desires, what would you do and why?
- Draw a picture illustrating the theme “Love Around the World.”
- With your teacher’s permission, bring in a Valentine’s Day treat to share with your class.
- Brainstorm as many possible Valentine’s Day gifts as you can.
- Write and illustrate a booklet entitled “Love Is a World...”

### **PRESIDENTS’ DAY**

- Imagine what would happen if our presidents had ten-year terms.
- In what ways would life be different if America had a king instead of a president?
- Design a Presidential election campaign poster with yourself as the person running for the office.
- Create a scavenger hunt puzzle that calls for the answers to trivia questions about past presidents.

### **BLACK HISTORY MONTH**

- If you could clone one famous black American past or present, who would it be and why?
- Create a time line noting each milestone black Americans have achieved.
- Respond to this statement: Learning history is easy; learning its lessons is almost impossible.
- Design a poster recruiting for participants to join in the 1964 Freedom March to Washington, D.C.

# MIDDLE SCHOOL MOVEMENT: Full Steam Ahead. A Look At The Region 5 Conference

*By Pete Megara, Assistant Principal of Barrington Middle School in Hillsborough County*

On Saturday, October 13, 2012 Region 5 of the Florida League of Middle Schools hosted a retreat at Burnett Middle School in Hillsborough County. The goal of the planning committee was to build FLMS membership and offer strategies to propel middle school educators “Full Steam Ahead” into the 2012-2013 school year. The retreat resulted in 143 new members and a positive boost for all of the middle school educators in attendance. As one participant wrote, “It gave me my ‘mojo’ back...I know I was meant to teach middle school and I was reminded that it is all about the kids!”

The keynote speaker, Jack Berckemeyer, kept participants in stitches as he utilized a comedic approach to point out significant attributes of middle school students. He won the hearts of all in attendance with humorous suggestions that drove home the importance of overcoming the social barriers between middle school educators and the students they teach. For example, to demonstrate the language differences between middle school students and their educators, Berckemeyer posed the question, “How many of you have been called a word and you didn’t know if it was appropriate or not?” Amidst roars of laughter, Berckemeyer stressed the importance for educators to learn and embrace the culture of today’s middle school students. A true friend of the FLMS, Jack also facilitated breakout sessions where he modeled teaching strategies specifically designed to spark interest and genuine learning within the adolescent.

Participants were offered an array of additional breakout sessions with presenters from all different levels in middle school education who donated their time and valuable expertise to the worthy cause. There were sessions on a variety of technology topics including how to effectively utilize the Livescribe Pen, Edline, and SMART Board. In addition, sessions on Common Core, Quality Questioning, and the Brain/Body Connection offered opportunities for participants to take new strategies back to their middle school classrooms. An attendee of the session entitled Voracious Vocabulary wrote, “Amazing resources that the students will love and actually enjoy using!” A multitude of additional

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positive feedback regarding the usefulness of the sessions reinforces the belief that the Region 5 planning committee is on the right track.

The next stop for the Region 5 Middle School Train is a dinner social with keynote speaker Dr. Cheryl Ellerbrock on Monday, February 25 from 4:45-7:00 at Franklin Boys Preparatory Academy in Hillsborough County. Please contact Pete Megara at [peter.megara@sdhc.k12.fl.us](mailto:peter.megara@sdhc.k12.fl.us) for registration details.

## Navigating The Waters of Adolescence: A Look At The Region 3 Conference

*By Laura Hinds, Region 3 Director and FLMS Executive Board Member*

On Saturday, December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012, Region 3 of the Florida League of Middle Schools hosted a conference at Gamble Rogers Middle School in St. Augustine, Florida. The goal of the conference was to build FLMS membership and to offer helpful strategies and information regarding Common Core, curriculum best practices, and teacher evaluation. The conference offered a keynote speech by Jack Berckemeyer, eight concurrent sessions, lunch, and door prizes for attendees. FLMS gained 57 new members as a result of the conference.

The keynote speaker, Jack Berckemeyer, entertained attendees with his humorous insights into middle level education. He provided hands-on ideas with a few surprises. For example, teachers were laughing out loud as he talked about one method of gaining the attention of middle schoolers; Jack's method includes walking up to a white board while talking to it as if it were a middle school student. "Oh, whiteboard, you are so good to me; you listen to me," Jack said as he imitated his method with a hushed tone.

Attendees were offered eight breakout sessions on a variety of topics. Several sessions offered reading and writing strategies for teachers to take back to their classrooms. There were two sessions that focused on things teachers can do to meet Common Core State Standards. There were also sessions on the International Baccalaureate Program, developing STEM skills, and the Middle School 5-6 transition. The conference was also pleased to welcome Dr. Darby Delane, Lawson Brown, Dr. Paul George, and Teacher Candidates from the University of Florida who shared their experiences with preparing strong future middle school teachers.

## UPCOMING REGIONAL CONFERENCE : Region 7: Broward County

Come join us for a day in South Florida to learn, love, and laugh as a middle school educator. Our featured Keynote Speaker is Jack Berckemeyer who will make you LAUGH-OUT-LOUD.

Theme: Fusing Community and School: Innovation, Imagination, Collaboration  
When: Saturday, February 9, 2013 from 8:30am to 2:00pm  
Where: Westglades Middle School, 11000 Holmberg Road, Parkland 33076

## SAVE THE DATE: STATE CONFERENCE Saturday June 15, 2013

Once again, we will be meeting in the beautiful city of Sarasota to learn, share and reflect on middle level learning. This year's conference is a one-day event filled with exciting speakers and resources. The theme of this year's conference will be

**WHO MOVED THE CHEESE? Leaders and Learners Rising to the Challenge of Change**

More information will be forthcoming! Look forward to seeing you in Sarasota!



## MEET THE FLMS BOARD MEMBERS

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### POWERLINES Newsletter Ideas



Power Lines will be coming to you throughout the year to serve as a tool to use in your schools. We would love to have your input! If you are interested in submitting an article for publication, please contact Maureen Shankman at [shankmmb@gm.sbac.edu](mailto:shankmmb@gm.sbac.edu).