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Teaching in a Global Era: Editorial Remarks

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Teaching in a Global Era: Editorial Remarks

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While the call for this issue of the *Middle Grades Review* was open, the collective message across these articles is a powerful reminder of the global community and deeply interconnected times in which we live. In their opening essay, “Young Citizens of the World Unite! A Case for the Model United Nations in Middle School Classrooms,” Pettit, Albert, Walker and Rychly argue for a social studies curriculum that moves away from rote factual learning of history and toward a curriculum that addresses the authentic global issues of today’s society. In so doing, these authors highlight the nuances of inquiry learning and active participation through the Junior Model United Nations (JMUN) program while addressing the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies Standards.

Kang and Kim also focus on the global nature of today’s classrooms as they investigate Korean middle school students’ experiences in studying abroad in the United States. Given the purpose of the study was to understand Korean students’ school adjustment-related experiences, Kang and Kim collected data through student interviews and observations in the school setting. Their findings and recommendations provide an excellent road map for administrators, counselors and teachers to address the specific developmental social and academic needs that students from other countries may face when studying in the United States at the middle grades level.

Hsu, Van Dyke and Smith continue this focus on student learning in a global context in their mixed methods study entitled, “The Effect of Varied Gender Groupings on Argumentation Skills Among Middle School Students in Different Cultures.” Using student-generated data, Hsu, Van Dyke and Smith compared female students’ argumentation skills in mixed and same gender groupings as they presented arguments about different types of alternative energy (wind, solar, hydropower, etc.) in middle school science classrooms in the United States and Taiwan. Their findings suggest that communication styles and modes of

understanding information by students of different gender groupings and of different cultures can affect the collaborative argumentation process. They found that using a graph-oriented, computer-assisted application (GOCAA) to support the collaborative argumentation process has the potential to develop argumentation skills as compared to text only information.

Turning toward disciplinary literacy skills in the context of a social studies classroom, Bailey and McMillan present a case study of a teacher who implemented disciplinary literacy skills (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008) in “*Our History Clips: Collaborating for the Common Good.*” *Our History Clips* is an instructional strategy that allows students to explore historical events through designing graphical and video images and annotating those images through written or audio narration. Bailey and McMillan contend that the process of developing *Our History Clips* in a middle grades social studies classroom create an engaged “civic community” in which students collaborated while they integrated a variety of disciplinary literacy skills as they deepened their understandings of key social studies concepts.

Finally, in “Opening the Classroom Door: A Survey of Middle Grades Teachers Who Mentor Preservice Teachers—Lessons from Clinical Partnerships and Implications for Practice,” Turner and Greene examine through survey data cooperating teacher perceptions of their responsibilities as they mentor preservice middle grades teachers. As they note, there is a dearth of research on the best practices for mentor teachers as they work with preservice teachers in what maybe their most influential period of teacher education (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education [NCATE], 2010; O’Brian, Stoner, Appel, & House, 2007). Turner and Greene focus on the roles of cooperating teachers who mentor preservice teachers during their first field experiences in a teacher education program. Their research highlights the roles of professional responsibility, satisfaction, and

relationship in preparing new teachers to work with early adolescents in these global and interconnected times.

As we face unprecedented global challenges, each of these articles helps us make sense of how we come together— through the teaching of the social studies, within and across cultures, and in the preparation of teachers— to ensure that young adolescents thrive in responsive learning communities.

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