



# Power Lines



Florida League of Middle Schools  
December 2014

Florida League of Middle Schools

www.flms.org

## HAPPY HOLIDAYS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR



The FLMS board hopes you are off to a great start this year, and that your first semester has been successful for you and your students. In this edition of the newsletter, you will have find engaging classroom activities and some helpful tips to keep your momentum going. If you or a team member has a classroom strategy that you would like to share, please submit them to [flms.newsletter@gmail.com](mailto:flms.newsletter@gmail.com). This newsletter is for you to share with us your innovative classrooms, so feel free to send us in your “best of the best.”

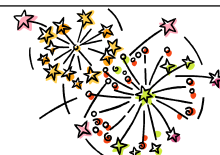
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We are excited to announce that one of the keynote speakers from Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE) conference in Nashville, Kim Campbell, will be key noting our conference this summer. In addition to being a national speaker, Kim is a middle level teacher, dean of students, and author of *SOAR: A Handbook for Closing the Achievement Gap* and *If You Can't Manage Them, You Can't Teach Them*. If you love Jack Berckemeyer, then you are in for a real treat. We are introducing a new feature to the state conference with the addition of a Friday afternoon Pre-Conference session. This session will focus on how to best work with minority boys in the classroom. The conversation will be led by Dr. Shannon Vincent, principal at The Opportunity Center, an alternative school in the Pascagoula, Mississippi District. Her dissertation focused on African American Male Students at the Middle School Level and Disciplinary Related Infractions.

We hope you pencil us in on your calendar. We are looking forward to seeing you in June. More information will follow in the March Powerlines. Have a great second semester.

SAVE THE DATE  
FLMS ANNUAL SUMMER CONFERENCE  
JUNE 12-13



THEME: MIDDLE SCHOOLS: PROMOTING CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY  
LEADERS AND LEARNERS SALUTING THE RED, WHITE AND BLUE

# FLMS Membership Registration Form

## Why Join?

- ☉ Support middle level education throughout the state of Florida
- ☉ Have access to great resources and professional development
- ☉ Attend state and regional conferences
- ☉ Join now to have your membership extended through June 2015!

**Please make checks payable to:  
Florida League of Middle Schools**

Please send check and registration form to:

Sandy Wallace

c/o FLMS

981 Saltwater Circle

St. Augustine, FL 32080

Questions? Email us at [FLMiddleSchools@gmail.com](mailto:FLMiddleSchools@gmail.com)



Type of Registration:

\_\_\_\_\_ Individual \$25

\_\_\_\_\_ School \$15

Name:	
School:	
Street Address:	
City:	
State & Zip Code:	
County:	
Phone:	
Email:	

## Rules and Procedures with Pizazz

Ruchelle L. Owens has been a middle school teacher of language arts and adolescent literature for eleven years. She is a published writer who earned her Bachelor's Degree in English and her Master's Degree in English Education, both from the University of South Florida, where she is currently working towards her Doctorate in English Education.

Spend just a week in middle school and you quickly figure out they are one of the toughest crowds you will ever face. They laugh when you least expect it, stare at you blankly after your best joke, and silently dare you to keep them entertained. When you add classroom management and rules and procedures from the first week of school into the mix, it is enough to drive anyone crazy. Students hear edicts on rules throughout the first week of school and it's important for teachers to provide students with positive things they can do (Wormeli, 2011).

Going over the rules and procedures is crucial for classroom management. Because there is an increase in student misconduct at the middle level (Eccles et al., 1993; Smetana & Bitz, 1996), it is necessary to establish these norms early on to mitigate an uphill battle later on. So how do you do this and not turn off your adolescent audience? I found something that has worked successfully for me. It's a PowerPoint; not just any PowerPoint, mind you. Each slide has a different rules or procedure outlines, but more than that, it has a moveable Graphics Interchange Format (.gif) picture with it. A .gif is an image that allows for animations (Miller, 2014).

I find them online (mostly from the website Tumblr) and keep a large file of potential ones for future use. I try to use current pictures that students

may relate to: celebrities, athletes, TV shows, etc. For example, for the school rule of making parent contact for a student's third behavioral offense, there is a picture of one of the main characters from "The Vampire Diaries" crying hysterically. Typically, my .gifs represent humorous, over-the-top emotions that might reflect those of the students, parents, or teacher. Another example is the procedure to always have paper in class. The accompanying .gif is from "The Big Bang Theory," an extremely popular show. One of the characters throws a pile of papers in the air and they all fly around his head as they land, one comically resting on his shoulder. "Firm and fair enforcement of the rules with a dash of humor will work better than rigid requirements for compliance" (Nucci, 2006). The point is made and the kids appreciate seeing the pictures. They get a giggle out of most of them, and they stay engaged, wondering what picture will appear next. They are still receiving all the rules and procedures necessary to be successful in my classroom, but it doesn't come off as me dictating everything they cannot do or must do. It is unexpected and their engagement is high.

Because I am visual, I print copies of all the slides (usually six per page) and have handouts made for all of my students to keep. I have them make notes on things I verbally elaborate on, which keeps them focused and able to move. Getting it autographed by a parent is one of their first homework assignments. I also print salient slides on a full page each and create a rules and procedures collage on my classroom wall. This makes it easier to point and remind them of something, allowing for quicker redirection. I will also review

the entire PowerPoint at least two more times throughout the year. Because there is humor infused in the delivery, I can take a couple days going over every rule and procedure students may face in my classroom. It doesn't feel tedious going through so many slides because of the pictures that accompany. My expectations are clear and high. Students report behaving more prosocially if they perceive teachers have high expectations (Wentzel, 2003).

Middle school students may easily get bored and frustrated with the mandates, especially at the beginning of the year, when the school and every class is giving them. By using a more interactive, relevant, and teen-friendly approach, I can still equip my students without either of us feeling overwhelmed by the process.

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## Tips for Teachers - December

### **Invent a December Holiday**

After sharing and learning about the holiday traditions your students enjoy during winter, invite them to research how holidays are celebrated around the world. Then, have the class create its own special holiday by brainstorming their favorite symbols, dress, colors, foods, and traditions.

### **A Dickensian Christmas**

Students do a research project on the period, its customs, crafts, and gifts, which culminates in a Victorian tea hosted by the class.

### **New Twist on "The Twelve Days of Christmas"**

Ranell Cox, a teacher in Ponte Vedra, Florida, challenges her class to develop a new theme and lyrics for the familiar carol "The Twelve Days of Christmas." She reports: "You can change it to fit almost anything, even different holidays around the world." One of her favorite adaptations is "The Twelve Days of Florida," which begins and ends with a particularly catchy line: "On the first day of Christmas, my true love gave to me, a coconut in a palm tree!"

### **Produce a Holiday-Themed Reader's Theater Production**

Try an impromptu reader's theater production of *The Baker's Dozen: A Saint Nicholas Tale* by Aaron Shepard. The Baker's Dozen works well because the script is straightforward and takes no more than ten minutes to perform.

*Many of these ideas were adapted from articles in Instructor magazine, published by Scholastic, or from postings to Scholastic's Winning Ideas message board about "Celebrating Holidays."*

## **More Tips for Teachers -**

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 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.

## TECHNOLOGY TOP TEN

Terry Golden, Florida Virtual School

Every day there are countless, innovative websites for our students to utilize to help them with their class work. As a mom and a teacher, I have many favorites that will assist students and teachers in the classroom. Try some of these out and have some fun! It took much deliberation, but here is a list of the top ten this month:

1. **ClassTools.net:** Facebook and SMS Generator- What if Benjamin Franklin sent text messages to George Washington? Well, if the kids use this website they can do that and even make Facebook profiles for famous people.
2. **Grom Social:** A Social Network made by Kids for Kids. It is a safe, educational, fun, and highly interactive digital social networking platform for kids ages 5-16. It is monitored 24 hours a day 7 days a week.
3. **Brainscape:** Flashcards on Steroids. This site uses Confidence-Based Repetition and can be used on your phone empowering and authenticating your students' learning with digital portfolios is a decision that you won't regret. My kids also use **Quizlet** since it is connected to FaceBook. **Quizlet** is a free website providing learning tools for students. All of the material is user-generated.
4. **Readwritethink-Trading Cards:** Create Trading Cards for Historical and Fictional People, Places, and Events. Kids love this!
5. Flippity.net: Make Google Spreadsheet into a Quiz Show. Make any lesson into a game!
6. **Ted Talks** especially TED Ed Lessons Worth Sharing. Teachers and Students can use these engaging videos to create customized lessons. Kids love YouTube videos and these are YouTube Videos but better.
7. **Khan Academy:** Watch...practice...and learn almost anything—for free! This site has videos covering everything from arithmetic to physics, finance, history, and more.
8. **Plickers:** Take the pulse of the class, play a game, or even take attendance with this fun system.
9. **Evernote, Three Ring, Kidblog, and Google:** These sites can be used for Digital Student Portfolios. When teachers empower and authenticate their students' learning with digital portfolios it is a decision that they won't regret.
10. **A+ Spelling Test-**"If you want your kid to be a better speller, then download this app now!" The kids and parents that use this app swear it increases academic achievement and the assist students with their test scores.



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