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## What Research Says about... The National Project on Common Planning Time

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*National Middle Grades  
Research Program*

*What Research Says about...*

# **The National Project on Common Planning Time**

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**Presented by:**

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# Topics of Discussion

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- Introduce AERA and the MLER SIG
- Overview of the CPT Project
- Group activity
- National middle-grades database
- CPT Project: Phase II



# AERA and the MLER SIG

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## AERA

- American Educational Research Association
- National organization of educational researchers
- Comprised of sub-organizations including divisions and special interest groups (SIGs)

## MLER SIG

- Middle Level Education Research SIG
- Largest group of middle-level education researchers in US



# Overview of the CPT Project

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- MLER SIG's strategic plan called for, among other things, a national research project
  - Collaboration; train researchers; nat'l database
- Project Steering Committee was formed in 2006
  - Several planning meetings were held
- Project was launched in Nov 2007 with first training session at NMSA (Houston)



# Project Goals

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- 1) Create a national middle-grades database
- 2) Design & conduct longitudinal national research studies
- 3) Expand research knowledge on CPT
- 4) Provide professional development to researchers and practitioners
- 5) Disseminate research findings
- 6) Contribute to training of new generation of education researchers



# Why Study CPT?

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- CPT is a critical component of MG concept  
Handout: *Key Research Findings*
- Quantitative research has demonstrated positive effects of CPT on teacher practices and student outcomes
  - When teachers have high levels of CPT, schools report better student outcomes
- What is not known: “What do teachers do during their CPT that brings about these positive changes in student outcomes.”

# Project Research Questions

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- 1) What are teachers' understandings of CPT?  
(e.g., purpose, goals, value)
- 2) How do teachers use their CPT?
- 3) How are teachers professionally prepared to use CPT?
- 4) What are the perceived benefits of CPT?
- 5) What are the perceived barriers of CPT?

# Common Definitions

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## Common Planning Time and Individual Planning Time

- Often teachers have both types if they are engaged in teaming
- CPT is defined by Kellough & Kellough (2008) as “A regularly scheduled time during the school day when teachers who teach the same students meet for joint planning, parent conferences, material preparation, and student evaluation.”  
(p. 394)

# Common Definitions

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## Interdisciplinary Teams

- Interdisciplinary team is an organizational pattern of two or more teachers representing different core curriculum areas (math, science, language arts, social studies)
- Teams share same students, schedule, areas of the building, and the opportunity for teaching more than one subject (Kellough & Kellough, 2008)

# Project Parameters

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- Participant researchers required to attend a training prior to participation in project
- During training, reviewed & discussed...
  - Institutional Review Board (IRB) application
  - Sampling issues (sample of STW schools)
  - Linking data sources
  - Order of data collection

# Data Collection Protocols

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- ***Observation Protocol***
  - Observe CPT meeting
  - Description of observed behaviors
- ***Interview Protocol***
  - Interview teachers participating in CPT meeting
  - Use of scripted interview
  - Digital recordings & transcripts

# Project Benefits

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- Creation of large, national database
- Train next generation of educational researchers
- Potential to increase membership of SIG
- SIG publications and presentations based on research from national projects
- Potential to impact educational policy



# Group Activity

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- 1) How many of you have CPT in your school?
- 2) What do you do when you meet for CPT?
- 3) How many of you feel you had adequate preparation in your pre-service program in how to best use your CPT?
- 4) What do you see as the benefits of CPT?
- 5) What do you see as the barriers of CPT?



# National Middle Grades Database

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- MLER SIG's strategic plan called for development of a large, national database
  - Similar to NAEP or NELS (NCES)
- During Phase I, we trained ~60 researchers
- To date, researchers have submitted data for 18 schools in 11 states
- Participant researchers will have access to "national" database



# Preliminary Findings

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## Sample

- 9 states (GA, HI, IL, KY, MD, MS, NY, OH, OR)
- 11 schools consisting of 24 teams

## Team Demographics

- 8 sixth grade teams, 8 seventh grade teams, 7 eighth grade teams, 1 cross-grade team (6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup>)
- Average number of teachers/team is 6 (range: 3 to 12)
- Average number of students/team is 122 (range: 50 to 256)
- Average length of CPT meeting is 48 minutes (range: 30 to 90 mins)



# Preliminary Findings

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## CPT Activities

- Most common team activity is discussing students.
- Two-thirds of all teams spent time on curriculum and instruction.
- Very few teams spent time discussing parents (6 teams) or professional development (4 teams).

Activity	Avg. Mins
Student	20
Curriculum and instruction	11
Business	7
Engaging in other behaviors	7
Assessment	3
Parent	1
Professional development	1



# Preliminary Findings

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## Other Findings

- 8 of 24 teams spent significantly less time in their CPT meeting than they were allotted. Primarily due to the meeting not starting on time or teachers arriving late to the meeting
- Several teams were quite large. 5 teams had more than 7 teachers and an average of 157 students.
  - Larger teams tend to spend more time discussing students (avg = 25 mins) than smaller teams (avg = 18 mins)
- Smaller teams had an average of 113 students
  - Smaller teams tended to spend more time on curriculum and instruction (avg= 12 mins) than larger teams (avg = 8 mins)

# Preliminary Findings

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## Research Symposium

- Conducted CPT Project symposium at 2009 AERA Conference
- 3 groups of researchers (KY, HI, & MS) presented preliminary findings

# Preliminary Findings (KY)

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- 1) All core teachers in grades 6-8 expressed positive effects of CPT on student academic performance, instruction, and faculty morale.
- 2) CPT allowed teachers to readily meet needs of their students.
- 3) Teachers reported higher level of morale & cohesiveness, unified system of support for students, and more open and sustained communication.
- 4) Instruction improved due to sharing of ideas among teachers related to teaching methods and assessment strategies.
- 5) CPT was successful because of collegial, supportive climate fostered by the school administration.
- 6) Sufficient staff development, financial resources, and scheduling priorities contributed to success of CPT.
- 7) Success of CPT was also related to a clearly defined purpose and expectations regarding how CPT would be utilized.



# Preliminary Findings (HI)

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- 1) CPT facilitates both teacher and student learning and well-being.
- 2) Teacher knowledge of CPT varies greatly and professional development would allow for more effective and efficient functioning of CPT.
- 3) Teachers have adapted the way they use CPT since NCLB, planning fewer interdisciplinary units and developing more lessons to promote reading and math achievement.

# Preliminary Findings (MS)

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Barriers to CPT include:

- 1) lack of teacher buy-in;
- 2) off-task behaviors on the part of CPT members;
- 3) lack of time;
- 4) the lack of leadership on the CPT team and in the school, including...
  - not having someone in charge of agenda and regulating norms to govern the meetings
  - not having clear administrative expectations communicated to teachers.



# Dissemination of Findings

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- Annual MLER SIG symposium at AERA
- NMSA Annual Conference
- Forthcoming volume of the *Handbook of Research in Middle Level Education*
- *Middle School Journal* and other journals
- Possibility of an NMSA Research Summary

# CPT Project: Phase II Teacher Survey

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- Phase II will consist of collecting survey data from teachers on interdisciplinary teams
- Questions will focus on aspects of CPT:
  - information about team and teachers
  - topics of discussion during CPT
  - frequency & quality of team practices
- Ability to link Phase I and Phase II data
- Conducted 1<sup>st</sup> training at 2009 NMSA conference



# Additional Information

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For additional information about the CPT Project or the MLER SIG, please visit the our website at:

<http://www.rmle.pdx.edu/>



# Contact Information

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