

# MIDLINES

## NELMS Newsletter

### Don't miss:

Virtual Job Alike discussion for  
ELA educators:  
Tues, Sept 12, 7-8 PM.

Virtual Job Alike discussion for  
Student Support Staff:  
Tues, Sept 26, 7-8 PM.

Register for all here:

<https://www.nelms.org/job-alike>

### Countdown to conference

Our Annual Conference in  
Springfield, MA is March 25-26,  
2024. 500 middle level  
educators attended last year...  
DON'T MISS OUT!

Call for presenters is [HERE!](#)

### Student Leadership Conferences

@Southern New Hampshire  
University, Thur, Oct 19

@AIC, Thur, Oct 26

Information coming soon.

**[JOIN NELMS HERE!](#)**



## Start right... with the Big 3!

As we drag ourselves out of our lounge chairs and return to our classrooms, we know that the first few weeks are the best chance for setting the tone with students. Yes, we all want to have tight routines and procedures, clear expectations, and rigorous learning environments. We also want to get to know our students and support them through any challenges that arise. But how do we want the classroom to *feel*? What *vibe* do we want students to expect? What *mood* will we set?

It's important that we set clear goals for the mood of our classroom. One effective way to accomplish this is to choose our Big 3. If someone asked your students to describe your classroom using 3 words, how do you hope they would respond? *These are your Big 3*. And as we create our classroom environment over the first 3-6 weeks, it's vital that we keep these 3 at the forefront of our thinking and planning.

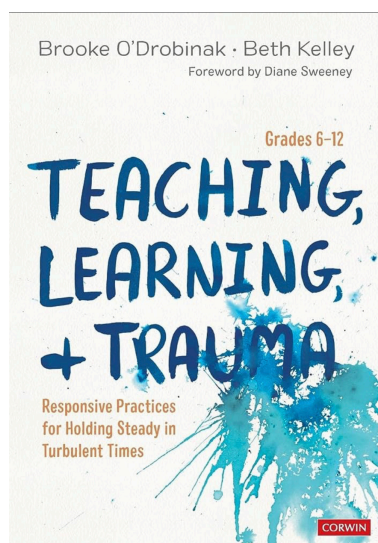
The successful middle school is **RESPONSIVE** by  
"Using the distinctive nature and identities of young  
adolescents as the foundation upon which all  
decisions about schools are made."

## Some cool quick hitters to check out!

Who we hang out with at work can make or break how we feel about the job. This short podcast will teach you how to nurture the right relationships for your mental health in school: [Find Your Marigolds](#)

Jennifer Gonzalez from the Cult of Pedagogy provides 12 simple ways to improve and reinvigorate the design of your classroom: [Classroom Design](#)

## A new favorite book



“Using a synergistic approach, this book unites data, theories, stories, and best practices from trauma-informed schools, psychology, and effective instructional design to dissolve obstacles caused by chronic stress and trauma.”

And it's focused on middle school!

Order [HERE](#) or [HERE](#)

Maybe you want your classroom to be fun, democratic, and energetic; then you must be sure to engage students in fun activities, often ask for their feedback/ideas, and you might need a second coffee after lunch. Maybe your Big 3 are supportive, honest, and structured; then you must connect with students individually, give them honest feedback, and maintain consistent expectations.

Whatever your Big 3, it's essential that we reflect upon our first few weeks and we ensure that these 3 truly are permeating the learning environment.

One last thing: don't make the mistake of announcing your Big 3 to the class. We communicate the Big 3 with our actions and with the learning environment we promote. No one is inspired by the person who talks about lofty goals rather than actually striving for them.

**As Maya Angelou said: “I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”**

Choose your Big 3 for the year. Ensure your opening weeks make these evident to students. And constantly reflect on your lessons and moments to ensure that the focus is consistent. Before you know it, your students will be able to tell you the Big 3 just by the way your classroom makes them **feel!**

**Introducing...** Timothy Allen, the new Assistant Executive Director of NELMS. He has big shoes to fill for the retired MaryJean Fawcett, but he has hit the ground running! Tim joins us with 19 years of teaching and leadership experience in both urban and suburban middle schools. He can be reached at [tallen@nelms.org](mailto:tallen@nelms.org). And you can send him ideas for our newsletter as well!

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