

A black and white photograph of four hands, two from the left and two from the right, holding a ring of water. The water is captured in a circular arc, forming a ring that frames the text. The hands are positioned as if they are supporting the water ring from below and the sides. The background is plain white.

TeamWork

Setting the Standard for Collaborative Teaching,
Grades 5-9

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Setting the Standard
for Collaborative Teaching,
Grades 5–9

Monique D. Wild
Amanda S. Mayeaux
Kathryn P. Edmonds

Foreword by Jack C. Berckemeyer



Stenhouse Publishers
Portland, Maine



National Middle School Association
Westerville, Ohio

Stenhouse Publishers
www.stenhouse.com

National Middle School Association
www.nmsa.org

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All of the people, events, and conversations described in the book are real. However, we changed a few of the students' names and details to protect their privacy.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Wild, Monique D.

Teamwork : setting the standard for collaborative teaching, grades 5-9 /
Monique D. Wild, Amanda S. Mayeaux, Kathryn P. Edmonds.
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-57110-711-4 (alk. paper)

1. Team learning approach in education. I. Mayeaux, Amanda S. II. Edmonds, Kathryn P. III. Title.

LB1032.W54 2008

371.14'8--dc22

2007040718

Cover, interior design, and typesetting by Designboy Creative Group

Manufactured in the United States of America on acid-free, recycled paper
14 13 12 11 10 09 08 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



To our students—past, present, and future

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You've learned the things you need
To pass that test and many more—
I'm certain you'll succeed.
We've taught you that the earth is round,
That red and white make pink,
And something else that matters more—
We've taught you how to think.

~Hooray for Diffendooper Day!
by Dr. Seuss, Jack Prelutsky, and Lane Smith



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Foreword

For several years I was fortunate to serve as a judge for the Disney American Teacher Awards. I can still remember the countless hours I spent reading applications. Every once in a while I'd come across one that stood out from the field of incredible teachers. This was how I discovered the amazing work that Monique Wild, Amanda Mayeaux, and Kathryn Edmonds were doing in Louisiana. They went on to win the Disney award in 2006, becoming the first team to earn the national "Teacher of the Year" designation.

I am honored to write the foreword to their first book. These teachers show how important it is to be a great team. They paint a visual wonderland of their classrooms where they demonstrate how teachers can truly make a difference in the lives of young adolescents. I so admire the dedication and commitment that each of these outstanding educators has shown for her school and her students.

What a great journey these middle-level educators have taken. As many of you are aware, teaming often feels like the topsy-turvy whirl of the wild teacup ride at Disney's theme parks. Sometimes the experience is like a trip to Space Mountain. You move into the dark, your head spins, and you reach a peak only to be jolted back down as the ride hits new twists and curves.

These authors have lived through that turbulence and hold nothing back in their descriptions. They have earned the right to brag a little about their many successes. But what resonates most is their honesty in sharing the struggles, conflicts, and disagreements that helped them grow and endure.

Wild, Mayeaux, and Edmonds also share a critical lesson regarding the realities of the No Child Left Behind Act. In an age of accountability, these teachers embrace the constant changes and respond with innovation. They work together to plan interdisciplinary units that are motivating to young adolescents but still tied to state standards. Never once do they use the challenge of standards to settle for mediocre lessons. This is an important life lesson for all middle-level educators.

Administrators also should note how these teachers use their team time effectively. They divide and conquer tasks for efficiency while holding each other accountable for results. The teammates share sound strategies for establishing policies and procedures and involving others in their work. I encourage you to review their record of success in building relationships and communicating with parents.

Whether you are an experienced teacher or new to the field, you will be inspired by how this team puts the principles of National Middle School Association's *This We Believe* (2003) into action. Every team in the middle grades should adopt their approach. As you will soon discover, these teammates are devoted to their students and have significant knowledge to share about young adolescents and their healthy academic, emotional, and social development.

Because these three teachers are so accomplished, their ideas and suggestions may seem overwhelming to those who are just starting. Keep in mind that the authors developed these best practices over time. By their own admission, they were not an overnight sensation. My advice is to select several of the strategies they offer, implement and refine them, and keep adding layers over time. Focus on continual improvement, not immediate perfection. Follow their path and you may discover that your own team's dreams will come true.

Jack C. Berckemeyer

Assistant Executive Director, National Middle School Association

Acknowledgments

We would like to acknowledge the 2006 Disney American Teacher Awards selection committee, led by Terry Wick, for giving us the opportunity to share our passion for teaching with educators around the world. Furthermore, we'd like to thank the Disney Corporation for recognizing excellence in teaching for more than seventeen years. We are also grateful to our fellow Disney teacher honorees for their continued inspiration and motivation.

We are especially indebted to Doug Walker, Susan Jordan, and Cathy Meredith for trusting us enough to let us teach; to the Ascension Parish school system for creating a culture that continuously strives to meet students' needs in an ever-changing world; and to the teachers at Dutchtown Middle School for the unbelievable opportunity to teach the Challenge program with their support. Erin Babin, Katie Sheffield, Debbie Vicknair, Larry Chambless, Angie Gaudin, Rebecca Acosta, Christine Wood, Becky Petite, and Pat Mouton all were part of our team at some point and taught us to love kids without limits. Our appreciation would not be complete without acknowledging our students' parents, who have supported our crazy ideas during the past seven years.

We feel blessed by the presence of Holly Holland, who saw three weeping women accept an award and envisioned the potential that became this book. Her guidance, honesty, and directness made a difficult process quite an enjoyable experience.

We approached writing this book as a team, but we also would like to express our gratitude individually.

Monique: I am thankful for the support of my husband and two children, who contributed to this book by cooking meals, completing household chores, and tolerating the glow of the computer screen on family movie nights. You make life a joyous adventure every day. I would also like to thank my parents and grandparents for making learning an enjoyable experience. It is because of them that I continue to seek knowledge and share it with others.

Amanda: To my husband, who is the quiet giant in my life, slaying all of my fears and pushing on to forgotten dreams uttered in youth, I love you beyond words. To our daughters, you are strong women in the making, and we are so proud of you. Thank you for sharing your mommy with others. To my parents, who took me around the world and created a fearless woman, thank you. To my support group—Vanessa, my in-laws, and my sister—thank you for the hours and hours of babysitting that allowed the book to be born.

Finally, to Jesus Christ, my Light and my Salvation, may I always be what you willed me to be.

Kathryn: Thank you to my husband and best friend, the one person who has enough strength to love me, support me, encourage me, and still have the energy to make me laugh. Thanks to my parents, grandparents, and family for giving me roots, wings, and the wisdom to know when to stay grounded and when to soar. Thank you to my fabulous friends for the number of times you stood by me, stood behind me, and lifted me up. How could I be so lucky? To Jesus Christ, from whom all my blessings have come.