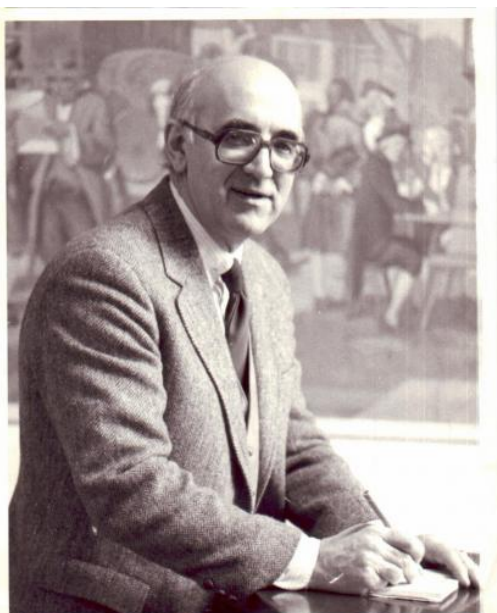

A Tribute to Claude Mazzocco

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Claude Mazzocco, principal at Nichols Middle School in Evanston, Illinois (1967-1982), served as the first President of AIMS. Claude provided the critical leadership and direction that has resulted in AIMS becoming the largest state middle school organization in the country. His contribution to middle level education reached beyond his own school by serving as a role model for many new middle school principals and regularly presenting with his teachers at state level AIMS conferences as well as National Middle School Conferences. In fact, Claude's reach extended to the worldwide community of educators when he hosted a visit to his school by the Minister of Education from Sydney, Australia. While observing an art class, Claude called one young man aside and quietly said to him, "I saw you outside the school last night after the school board meeting. Our school neighborhood is not particularly safe late at night and we want you to be here with us everyday. Would you do me a favor and not play in the streets after dark?" He gave the boy a big hug and the boy hugged him back, assuring Mr. Mazzocco that he would consider his request. It was a simple and kind gesture of a caring principal, but the Minister of Education was astounded. "You let that boy hug you... and you hugged him. That would never happen in our schools." Claude looked at him and replied, "Our job is to let these kids know we care so that they will want to come to school and learn. We touch their lives in so many ways."

While Claude passed away on April 25th, 2007 in Lake Forest, Illinois, his legacy to middle level education continues in all of the educators and students he inspired. Claude was a true pioneer in middle level education and his legacy helps us all remember to do what is best for kids.

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