Essential Attributes
AMLE affirms that an education for young adolescents must be:

**Responsive**
Using the distinctive nature and identities of young adolescents as the foundation upon which all decisions about school are made.

**Challenging**
Cultivating high expectations and advancing learning for every member of the school community.

**Empowering**
Facilitating environments in which students take responsibility for their own learning and contribute positively to the world around them.

**Equitable**
Providing socially just learning opportunities and environments for every student.

**Engaging**
Fostering a learning atmosphere that is relevant, participatory, and motivating for all learners.

Characteristics
Successful middle schools exhibit the following 18 characteristics:

**Culture and Community**
- Educators respect and value young adolescents.
- The school environment is welcoming, inclusive, and affirming for all.
- Every student’s academic and personal development is guided by an adult advocate.
- School safety is addressed proactively, justly, and thoughtfully.
- Comprehensive counseling and support services meet the needs of young adolescents.
- The school engages families as valued partners.
- The school collaborates with community and business partners.

**Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment**
- Educators are specifically prepared to teach young adolescents and possess a depth of understanding in the content areas they teach.
- Curriculum is challenging, exploratory, integrative, and diverse.
- Health, wellness, and social-emotional competence are supported in curricula, school-wide programs, and related policies.
- Instruction fosters learning that is active, purposeful, and democratic.
- Varied and ongoing assessments advance learning as well as measure it.

**Leadership andOrganization**
- A shared vision developed by all stakeholders guides every decision.
- Policies and practices are student-centered, unbiased, and fairly implemented.
- Leaders are committed to and knowledgeable about young adolescents, equitable practices, and educational research.
- Leaders demonstrate courage and collaboration.
- Professional learning for all staff is relevant, long term, and job embedded.
- Organizational structures foster purposeful learning and meaningful relationships.