



Association for Middle Level Education
formerly National Middle School Association
39th Annual Conference for Middle Level Education
November 8–10, 2012

Call for Presentations

Middle grades educators from around the world gather at the Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE) Annual Conference. This is the conference for dialogue, learning, and exploration of topics critical to schools, agencies, and individuals dedicated to the education, development, and growth of young adolescents. AMLE has selected conference strands to reflect language of the fourth edition of *This We Believe*.

We are interested in sessions that speak to the various experiences and knowledge base of all middle grades educators. Sessions that provide direction and ideas to those new to the middle school are as important to this conference as are sessions geared to established middle level practitioners. We provide a range of sessions that include practical, hands-on sessions and theoretical, research-based presentations. Our goal is to offer a varied program selection where the professional middle level educator—teacher, principal, assistant principal, guidance counselor, central office administrator, community agency employee, and other youth worker—can find her or his niche.

Session Types

You may apply to present sessions that fit one of the three categories below:

Half-Day (3-hour) Workshops

Held before the opening of and throughout the conference, these sessions are half-day (3-hour) presentations on topics that are current, thought-provoking, and interactive. Workshop selection is highly competitive. Typically, between 20 and 30 half-day workshops are selected. Presenters are persons who possess exceptional qualifications. Applications for workshop presentations must be submitted by February 3, 2012. If accepted, this session will be listed as a ticketed event. **Please do not submit an application for more than one workshop.**

Concurrent sessions

These are 75-minute sessions dealing with a variety of current topics appropriate to middle level education. Innovative instructional methods, trends, and special programs are featured. Applications for concurrent sessions must be submitted by March 2, 2012. **Please do not submit an application for more than two concurrent sessions.**

In order to be more inclusive, AMLE reserves the right to combine similar concurrent sessions.

Roundtable discussions

A series of roundtable discussions will be held simultaneously. These sessions are highly interactive and are best for small group discussions on a topic of importance or to highlight research findings. Applications for a roundtable discussion must be submitted by March 2, 2012. **Please do not submit an application for more than two roundtable discussions.**

No more than a total of 5 applications may be submitted per person: 2 concurrents, 2 roundtables, and 1 workshop.

Application Review Process

Applications are read as part of a juried process by the Program Review Committee. Applicants will be notified of their proposal's status after the Program Review Committee's evaluation of all entries. Applicants must:

- Develop a proposal to represent the selected strand
- Make sure the proposal is relevant and significant to middle level education
- Clearly describe the goals and rationale for the proposed presentation
- Indicate the intended audience, e.g., beginning teachers, advanced teachers, administrators, professors, etc.
- Make sure the title reflects the content of the proposal
- Avoid pejorative references and discriminatory comments

The Program Review Committee chooses presenters from a broad spectrum of geographical, racial, ethnic, and professional groups. In addition to the guidelines listed, evaluations from previous AMLE annual presentations and the number of applications submitted per presenter are taken into consideration. Presenters are not guaranteed continuing slots on the program, even though past sessions may have been well received.

Proposals are also graded on 8 aspects relevant to this event and our expected audience. The session selection grading scales are provided for your reference.

Half-day workshop selections will be made by February 2012. Selections for the 75-minute concurrent sessions will be made by April 2012. The Program Review Committee's decision will be mailed to all primary/contact presenters after this date.

Presenters serve on a contributing basis and are required to register for the annual conference and pay the presenter rate. As contributors, presenters are **not** reimbursed for lodging, travel, audiovisual rental, or conference registration.

Presenters **must also agree to submit their session handouts no later than September 30, 2012** to be provided to all conference attendees in an electronic format.

Guidelines for completing the application

All information must be typewritten in the space provided on the application form. Handwritten abstracts and descriptions will not be accepted. The abstract/description page may be electronically reproduced. Additional room will be needed for the narrative portions of the application; attach typed sheets, as needed. **Do not attach supplemental materials.** The Program Review Committee will consider only the information from the application. **Presenters may not submit more than two concurrent session proposals and one of each other session type or include themselves as a co-presenter on more than two additional proposals (a total of five sessions).** Applications for workshops must be received by February 3, 2012, and applications for concurrent sessions and roundtable discussions must be received by March 2, 2012. You may complete this application online at www.amle.org or fax it to 614-895-4750 or mail a hard copy to the address below.

Presentation

Abstract content must be clear and contain the three listed requirements. Presentations which contain negative references based on ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, or beliefs will not be considered. Please make sure the title reflects the content of the session.

Program book description

AMLE reserves the right to edit program book descriptions and titles for clarity and/or space limitations.

Deadlines

National Middle School Association must receive your completed application from this Call for Presentations by
Workshops – February 3, 2012
Concurrent Sessions – March 2, 2012
Roundtables – March 2, 2012
in order to be considered for acceptance.

How to submit your application to present

Online

Complete your application online at www.amle.org/annual/cfp

Fax

Fax your application to 614-895-4750

Mail

Mail your application to
Association for Middle Level Education
4151 Executive Parkway, Suite 300
Westerville, Ohio 43081

Appendix A

Conference Strands

21st Century Skills

Many skills are needed by students to be successful in the 21st Century. Today's students are "digital natives," technologically-savvy, confident, and wired. To meet the needs of middle school students and students of middle school education, teachers, faculty, staff, and administrators must integrate existing and new technologies. Current and emerging technologies provide a means for students to have an authentic voice, an authentic audience, and authentic assessments. Technology tools facilitate shared teaching and learning, professional development, and opportunities to empower and engage students in curriculum design. Technology does not stand alone, however. Its power rests in the ability of school leadership to develop a vision and provide the necessary professional development and support to assure the full deployment of technology as a tool for curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

To ensure 21st century readiness for every student, school must also ensure all students develop their critical thinking and problem solving skills while fostering creativity and innovation skills improving to meet new challenges.

This We Believe Connections

- Educators value young adolescents and are prepared to teach them
- Students and teachers are engaged in active, purposeful learning
- Educators use multiple learning and instructional approaches
- Leaders are committed to and knowledgeable about this age group, educational research, and evidence-based practices

Topics appropriate for this strand include:

- Technology tools for the classroom
- Planning for technology
- Technology tools for professional learning
- Social networking and collaboration tools
- Virtual classroom
- Student-directed learning
- Library and educational resources
- Communities of Practices and Learning Communities
- Teaching Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- Teaching Communication and Collaboration
- Teaching Creativity and Innovation

Active, Engaged Learning

Successful middle grades schools are characterized by the active engagement of students and teachers. The most successful learning strategies are ones that involve each student personally. As they develop the ability to hypothesize, organize information into useful and meaningful constructs, and grasp long-term cause and effect relationships, students demonstrate they are ready for and should play a major role in their own education. Successful middle grades practices purposefully empower young adolescents to assume this role, one that includes self-advocacy. Through planned opportunities for students to express their needs and preferences, middle grades educators open new pathways to facilitate differentiated instruction and authentic assessment. These, in turn, enhance and accelerate learning.

This We Believe Connections

Students and teachers are engaged in active, purposeful learning

Topics appropriate for this strand include—

- Student voice in developing and directing projects
- Student engagement
- Project-based learning
- Learning communities
- Problem solving
- Facilitating learning through technology
- Facilitating students as "big picture" thinkers
- Motivating students
- Authentic instruction

Assessment and Evaluation to Ensure Student Achievement

Both formative and summative assessments are important for a comprehensive assessment system within a school or district. Continuous, authentic, and appropriate assessment and evaluation provide information and evidence about a student's learning progress. Such information and data help students, teachers, and family members select immediate learning goals, evaluate growth, and plan teaching and learning strategies.

Formative assessments are embedded in instruction and provide guidance to both teachers and students on current student learning, identifying needed instructional modifications. Formative assessment strategies include a variety of both formal and informal procedures, such as journals, portfolios, demonstrations, checks for understanding, teacher-designed tests, self-assessment, peer assessment, descriptive feedback, and audio or video evidences of learning.

Summative assessment serves to provide evaluative data for both levels of student learning and program

effectiveness. Successful schools help students and their families see how a student's performance corresponds with national or state standards and to clearly interpret the results.

This We Believe Connections

Varied and ongoing assessments advance learning as well as measure it.

Topics appropriate for this strand include—

- Balanced assessment systems – both formative and summative
- Connecting appropriate assessments with state standards
- Providing teachers with the skills to be effective assessors of student learning
- Authentic assessment methods and structures
- Student-led conferencing
- Communicating assessment results
- Performance-based assessments
- Student peer review
- Portfolios, rubrics, and performance assessments
- Questioning and constructive feedback strategies
- Response to Intervention (RTI)
- Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)
- Performance pay for teachers

Challenging and Relevant Curriculum

The rapid expansion of knowledge constitutes an ongoing challenge to cover subject matter, but middle level teachers and curriculum developers recognize that covering and learning are not synonymous. In developmentally responsive middle level schools, curriculum is designed to advance skills and knowledge and is clearly based on established standards – both content and performance. The curriculum of a successful middle level school must also be relevant, challenging, integrative, and exploratory. It embraces every planned aspect of a school educational program, including the “hidden curriculum,” of what students learn from the people with whom they come in contact and the structures in which they work. Curriculum is integrative when it helps students make sense of themselves and their life experiences, is coherent, helps students connect school experiences to their daily lives outside the school, and encourages them to reflect on the totality of their experiences.

Developing ‘global ready’ students, workers, and citizens is a national imperative. Helping students better understand the world, themselves, and others, preparing them to find their place in a highly competitive and interconnected world – is no longer an option. Middle grades students are eager and capable of understanding their world. Middle grades educators can lead the way – and give learning real world purpose.

This We Believe Connections

- Curriculum is challenging, exploratory, integrative, and relevant

Topics appropriate for this strand include—

- Standards-based curriculum
- Integrative and integrated curriculum
- Exploratory and elective classes and curriculum
- Subject-specific curriculum (e.g., math, art, music, science, language arts, social studies, health, physical education, foreign language)
- Social skills and character education
- Digital literacy
- Unified and applied arts
- Vertical alignment of the curriculum with high school and postsecondary
- Literacy across the curriculum
- Problem-based learning
- Technology across the curriculum
- Writing across the curriculum
- Science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) curriculum
- Environmental education & sustainability
- Common Core Standards
- Rigorous curriculum
- Cradle to Career initiative
- International Baccalaureate Programs (IB)
- Aligning curriculum to state standards
- Global ready competencies and skills: what they are, why they matter, and how can you teach them
- Foreign language learning in a global context: characteristics of a high quality program and best practices in the 21st century

Family and Community Involvement and Engagement

Developmentally responsive middle grades schools encourage and facilitate family involvement and engagement and seek appropriate partnerships with businesses, social service agencies, and other organizations whose purposes are consistent with the school's mission and help strengthen school programs, family practices, and student learning and development.

This We Believe Connections

- The school actively involves families in the education of their children
- The school includes community and business partners

Topics appropriate for this strand include—

- School and community partnerships to support students
- School and family relationships, involvement, and programs
- Guidance, family support, and social services

- Communicating with multi-generational households
- Communicating with non-traditional family units
- Environments that welcome families
- Parent liaisons
- Home visits
- Understanding cultural and language barriers
- Parent involvement's effect on student achievement

Principal Leadership

Courageous, collaborative middle level leaders are knowledgeable about the characteristics and needs of young adolescents. Courageous, collaborative leaders understand the theory and best practice of middle level education. They strive to educate colleagues, parents, policy makers, and community members. Courageous, collaborative leadership empowers people to make the difficult decisions addressing the education and well-being of each young adolescent.

This We Believe Connections

- A shared vision developed by all stakeholders guides every decision
- Leaders are committed to and knowledgeable about this age group, educational research, and best practices
- Leaders demonstrate courage and collaboration

Topics appropriate for this strand include—

- Aligning all aspects of a middle school culture to student and adult learning
- Developing and communicating a shared vision
- Establishing collaborative leadership
- Using data to inform decision-making
- Advocating for young adolescents and middle school practice
- Building capacity within the school or district
- Developing teachers as leaders
- Hiring and growing of middle level teachers
- Sustaining school intervention models
- Reflective practice
- 21st Century principal leadership

Research and Best Practices

There is a vital need for research to support the tenets of *This We Believe: Successful Schools for Young Adolescents*. Each year the conference features current research related to the education of young adolescents. It is AMLE's intention that this research assists middle grades practitioners and policymakers in adopting, advocating for, and implementing sound educational practices. The presentations featured in this strand include research studies that have employed quantitative, qualitative, mixed methodologies, and action research. Of particular interest are presentations that involve large-

scale, longitudinal studies; mixed methodologies; experimental studies; and studies that examine in an integrated fashion more than one of the middle school reform components or practices.

This We Believe Connections

- Leaders are committed to and knowledgeable about this age group, educational research, and best practices
- Ongoing professional learning reflects best educational practices

Topics appropriate for this strand include research focused on:

- Middle grades students
- Middle level education practices
- Effective school structures
- Evaluating and identifying research-based interventions that are rigorous
- Evidence-based decision making

Safe, Healthy, and Supportive Learning Communities

A successful school for young adolescents is an inviting, supportive, and safe community that encourages learning. Interactions among staff members and between students reflect democracy and fairness. Teachers, staff, and students learn and put into practice the skills of direct feedback, healthy and appropriate confrontation, positive risk taking, and personal and collaborative goal setting. An emphasis on health, wellness, and safety permeates the entire school. Like young adolescents, the climate of developmentally responsive middle level schools requires constant nurturing.

This We Believe Connections

- The school environment is inviting, safe, inclusive, and supportive of all
- Comprehensive guidance and support services meet the needs of every young adolescent
- Health and wellness are supported in curricula, school-wide programs, and related policies

Topics appropriate for this strand include—

- Developing and nurturing the learning community
- Prevention programs and services
- Healthy, supportive school climate
- Nutrition policies and programs
- Bullying prevention
- Gang prevention
- Improving teacher working conditions

Structures that Support Student Learning

Teams are the heart of the high performing school. Effective teams lead to improved student achievement, increased parental contacts, and enhanced school climate and student attitudes. Successful schools for young adolescents also evidence flexibility in scheduling, grouping, and staffing.

This We Believe Connections

Organization structures foster purposeful learning and meaningful relationships

Topics appropriate for this strand include—

- Teams and teaming
- Flexible school schedules and structures
- Alternate student grouping (e.g., looping, multi-age grouping)
- Alternate school structures (e.g., single gender classrooms, uniforms, etc.)
- School-within-a-school
- Funding structures and sources
- Transitions
- Classroom management techniques
- Dealing with anti-social behavior
- Outcome-based education
- Equitable access to learning
- School Assistance Teams (SAT)
- Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)
- Extended learning time models

Teacher Quality

Effective middle level educators understand the developmental uniqueness of this age group and are thoroughly knowledgeable about their students, the content they teach, and effective instruction and assessment strategies. Educators need specific preparation before they enter middle level classrooms and continuous professional development as they pursue their careers. In addition, schools and school districts have the prime responsibility for providing ongoing professional development focused on identified school and student needs.

This We Believe Connections

- Educators value young adolescents and are prepared to teach them
- Ongoing professional development reflects best educational practices

Topics appropriate for this strand include—

- Job-embedded professional development
- Professional learning tools and methods
- Standards for professional learning
- Induction, coaching, and mentoring methods
- Undergraduate and graduate teacher preparation
- Professional learning schools
- Field experiences and student teaching
- Professional learning communities
- Teaming and collaboration
- Teacher incentive programs
- Teacher evaluation
- Teacher leadership

Teaching and Learning for Student Success

Successful middle schools are characterized by the active engagement of students and teachers designed to meet the needs of all learners. Effective middle school classrooms are student centered. Developmentally responsive middle schools are characterized by “hands-joined” activities that have been developed jointly by teachers and students working together. Students are active in making curriculum and instruction decisions, and teachers are active participants in the learning activities, as opposed to simply being observers of students at work. Collaboration of this kind reflects the kind of meaningful student-teacher relationship that gives rise to the creation of varied and engaging activities, opportunities for reflective thinking, and mastering important concepts.

This We Believe Connections

Educators use multiple learning and teaching approaches

Topics appropriate for this strand include—

- Applied, project-based learning
- Cooperative learning
- Student motivation and classroom management
- Differentiated instruction
- Brain-based teaching and learning
- Creating a college-going culture and a culture of high expectations
- Inclusion strategies
- Working with special needs students
- Closing the achievement gap
- Student-led IEPs

Understanding Our Students and Ourselves

Middle level educators are advocates for all young adolescents. They enjoy being in their presence and understand the dynamics of the ever-changing youth culture. They are sensitive to individual differences and respond positively to the natural diversity present in the middle level classrooms. Educators serve their students well when they model inclusive, collaborative, and team-oriented approaches to learning. Educators benefit their students further when they take steps to understand themselves as learners and members of the learning community.

This We Believe Connections

- Educators value young adolescents and are prepared to teach them
- Leaders are committed to and knowledgeable about this age group, educational research, and best practices
- Every student’s academic and personal development is guided by an adult advocate

Topics appropriate for this strand include—

- The young adolescent learner
- Cultural, social, and economic impacts upon students and schools

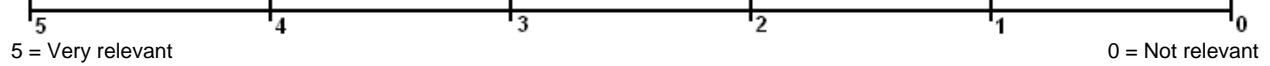
- The diverse school community
- Effects of personal culture in the school and classroom
- Adolescent development
- Supporting limited English proficient students and families
- Closing the achievement gap: reversing underachievement by focusing on high intellectual performance
- Student advocacy across the school
- Advisory programs, services, and curriculum
- Equity and access to educational opportunities
- Teaching learning disabled students in the “general education” classroom
- Cultural competency for staff
- Understanding poverty and its effect on student learning

Appendix B

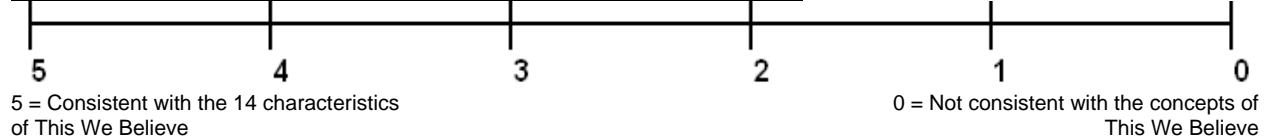
Session Selection Grading

Each dimension graded on a Likert scale of 0-5

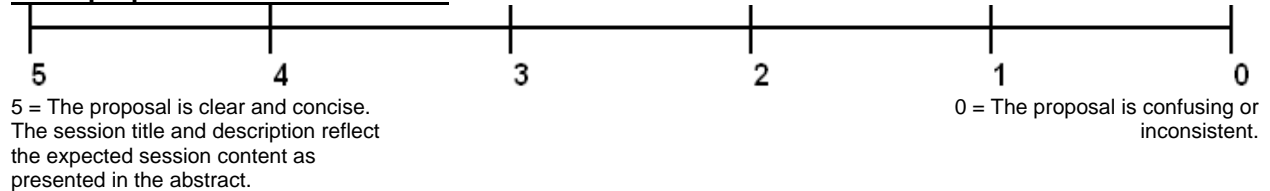
Is content important/relevant to middle level education?



Does the content reflect the characteristic of *This We Believe*?



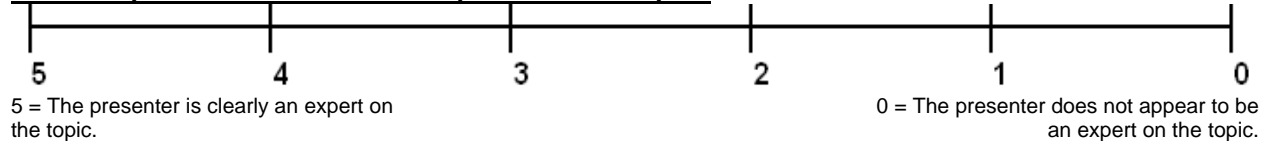
Is the proposal clear and concise?



Are learning objectives clear, relevant, and realistic?



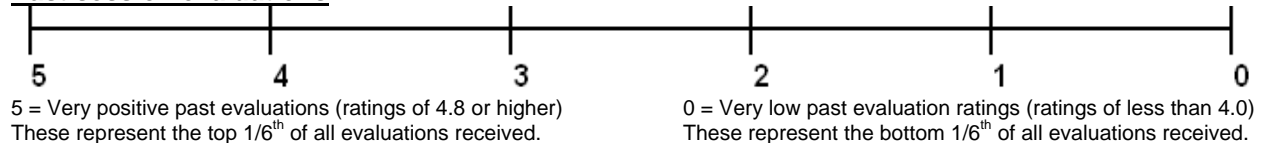
Does the presenter demonstrate expertise in the topic?



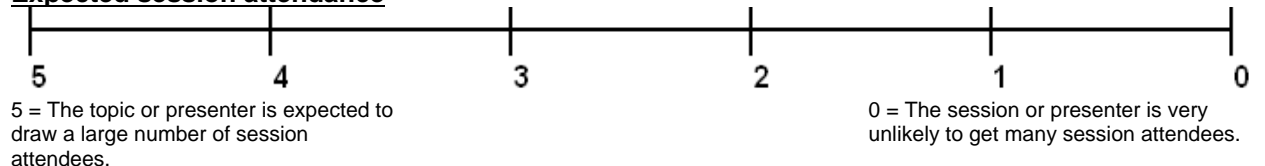
Is innovative/new information being presented?



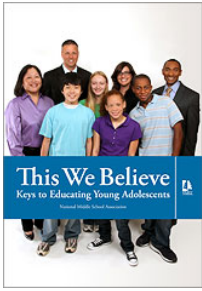
Past session evaluations



Expected session attendance



Appendix C



This We Believe: Keys to Educating Young Adolescents Summary of Essential Attributes and Characteristics

AMLE's position paper, *This We Believe: Keys to Educating Young Adolescents* (2010), has an overarching framework of four essential attributes that connect with the 16 characteristics of successful middle grades schools.

Essential Attributes

An education for young adolescents must be

Developmentally responsive

Using the distinctive nature of young adolescents as the foundation upon which all decisions about school organization, policies, curriculum, instruction, and assessment are made.

Challenging

Ensuring that every student learns and every member of the learning community is held to high expectations.

Empowering

Providing all students with the knowledge and skills they need to take responsibility for their lives, to address life's challenges, to function successfully at all levels of society, and to be creators of knowledge.

Equitable

Advocating for and ensuring every student's right to learn and providing appropriately challenging and relevant learning opportunities for every student.

Characteristics of Successful Schools for Young Adolescents

This We Believe: Keys to Educating Young Adolescents (2010), organizes the 16 research-based characteristics of effective middle grades education into three areas as follows:

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

Educators value young adolescents and are prepared to teach them. (Value Young Adolescents)

Effective middle grades educators make a conscious choice to work with young adolescents and advocate for them. They understand the developmental uniqueness of this age group, the appropriate curriculum, effective learning and assessment strategies, and their importance as models.

Students and teachers are engaged in active, purposeful learning. (Active Learning)

Instructional practices place students at the center of the learning process. As they develop the ability to hypothesize, to organize information into useful and meaningful constructs, and to grasp long-term cause and effect relationships, students are ready and able to play a major role in their own learning and education.

Curriculum is challenging, exploratory, integrative, and relevant. (Challenging Curriculum)

Curriculum embraces every planned aspect of a school's educational program. An effective middle level curriculum is distinguished by learning activities that appeal to young adolescents, is exploratory and challenging, and incorporates student-generated questions and concerns.

Educators use multiple learning and teaching approaches. (Multiple Learning Approaches)

Teaching and learning approaches should accommodate the diverse skills, abilities, and prior knowledge of young adolescents, cultivate multiple intelligences, draw upon students' individual learning styles, and utilize digital tools. When learning experiences capitalize on students' cultural, experiential, and personal backgrounds, new concepts are built on knowledge students already possess.

Varied and ongoing assessments advance learning as well as measure it. (Varied Assessments)

Continuous, authentic, and appropriate assessment measures, including both formative and summative ones, provide evidence about every student's learning progress. Such information helps students, teachers, and family members select immediate learning goals and plan further education.

Leadership and Organization

A shared vision developed by all stakeholders guides every decision. (Shared Vision)

When a shared vision and mission statement become operational, middle level educators pursue appropriate practices in developing a challenging academic program; they develop criteria to guide decisions and a process to make needed changes.

Leaders are committed to and knowledgeable about this age group, educational research, and best practices. (Committed Leaders)

Courageous, collaborative middle level leaders understand young adolescents, the society in which they live, and the theory of middle level education. Such leaders understand the nuances of teaming, student advocacy, exploration, and assessment as components of a larger middle level program.

Leaders demonstrate courage and collaboration. (Courageous & Collaborative Leaders)

Leaders understand that successful schools committed to the long-term implementation of the middle school concept must be collaborative enterprises. The principal, working collaboratively with a leadership team, focuses on building a learning community that involves all teachers and places top priority on the education and healthy development of every student, teacher, and staff member.

Ongoing professional development reflects best educational practices. (Professional Development)

Professional development is a continuing activity in middle level schools where teachers take advantage of every opportunity to work with colleagues to improve the learning experiences for their students.

Organizational structures foster purposeful learning and meaningful relationships. (Organizational Structures)

The ways schools organize teachers and group and schedule students have a significant impact on the learning environment. Interdisciplinary teams, common planning time, block scheduling, and elimination of tracking are related conditions that contribute to improved achievement.

Culture and Community

The school environment is inviting, safe, inclusive, and supportive of all. (School Environment)

A successful school for young adolescents is an inviting, supportive, and safe place, a joyful community that promotes in-depth learning and enhances students' physical and emotional well-being.

Every student's academic and personal development is guided by an adult advocate. (Adult Advocate)

Academic success and personal growth increase markedly when young adolescents' affective needs are met. Each student must have one adult to support that student's academic and personal development.

Comprehensive guidance and support services meet the needs of young adolescents. (Guidance Services)

Both teachers and specialized professionals are readily available to offer the assistance many students need in negotiating their lives in and out of school.

Health and wellness are supported in curricula, school-wide programs, and related policies. (Health & Wellness)

Abundant opportunities are available for students to develop and maintain healthy minds and bodies and to understand their personal growth through health-related programs, policies, and curricula.

The school actively involves families in the education of their children. (Family Involvement)

Schools and families must work together to provide the best possible learning for every young adolescent. Schools take the initiative in involving and educating families.

The school includes community and business partners. (Community & Business)

Genuine community involvement is a fundamental component of successful schools for young adolescents. Such schools seek appropriate partnerships with businesses, social service agencies, and other organizations whose purposes are consistent with the school's mission.



Association for Middle Level Education
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More information about the four essential attributes and 16 characteristics can be found in This We Believe: Keys to Educating Young Adolescents, published by the Association for Middle Level Education, 2010, available at www.amle.org/store