Anywhere Middle School
1234 School Drive
Anywhere, EX 56789

January 1, 2014

School Improvement Assessment

Based on the Association for Middle Level Education's
This We Believe: Keys to Educating Young Adolescents

A component of the Association for Middle Level Education's School Improvement Process

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School Improvement Assessment

Based on The Association for Middle Level Education's
This We Believe: Keys to Educating Young Adolescents

Principal's Name	Example Principal
Principal's e-mail	exppal@amschools.org
School Phone	555-1234
School FAX	555-5678
Grades in School	6-8, K-8, 7-12, etc.
School Enrollment	1400
Number of staff	100
Number taking assessment	78
Assessment Dates	Two week window
School Improvement Coach	AMLE Consultant

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School Improvement Assessment

Based on The Association for Middle Level Education's
This We Believe: Keys to Educating Young Adolescents

The Association for Middle Level Education would like to thank you for participating in the assessment portion of your school improvement initiatives. The results will help you as you move forward to implement targeted professional learning that will result in increased academic achievement for your students and faculty.

As you know, this assessment is based on the 16 characteristics of effective middle schools as delineated in *This We Believe: Keys to Educating Young Adolescents*. The report also provides a brief explanation of how to interpret the data contained in the report.

AMLE provides school improvement coaches along with long-term professional learning designed to propel a school forward based on the results of this assessment. The school improvement coach assigned to your school will help you interpret this report and work with you to establish goals for school improvement. Please feel free to contact your assigned school improvement coach for further help.

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School Improvement Assessment

Anywhere Middle School
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Overview

The purpose of this report is to assist the staff and administrators of the school in the interpretation of the results of the survey they completed based on the 16 characteristics of *This We Believe* (*TWB*). The process of review will assist them as they prepare to lead the building through the process of middle grades improvement.

After each area of the assessment results, the specific characteristics and exemplars are identified so school leaders will know what to prioritize for further study. Note that in the recommendation section of each exemplar, the consultant recommends questions from the Study Guide of *This We Believe* for small learning committees to jigsaw, discuss, and formulate recommendations for the school's improvement plan.

By following the recommendations in each area, the school's leadership team can focus its efforts on those components of the school's programs that need to be examined with the purpose of improving the learning and teaching environment for students and teachers.

Summary of Survey Statistics

The three areas of the assessment contain 16 characteristics with a total of 120 exemplars in three areas. Area 1, Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment, has 5 characteristics with 43 exemplars. Area 2, Leadership and Organization, has 5 characteristics with 37 exemplars. Area 3, Culture and Community, has 6 characteristics and 40 exemplars. The AMLE School Improvement Assessment was completed in December 2013. The range of the grand mean scores for the 3 areas of the survey had a high of 5.43 to a low of 4.35 level of implementation on a 7-point Lykert scale for the 120 exemplars of the 16 characteristics in *This We Believe*. The Grand Mean (GM) scores for each of the three areas were; Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment (5.43); Leadership and Organization (5.20); and Culture and Community (4.35) --indicating that the teachers and middle school administrators rate the implementation of the 16 characteristics of *This We Believe* at a moderate to high level.

It is important to note that of the 120 exemplars of all three areas of the assessment, 47 or 39.2%, of the exemplars had a standard deviation *above* 1.20, and 73 or 60.8% of the exemplars had a Standard Deviation *below* 1.20. The percentages of this assessment indicate that responders had a low level of variance, or low level of disagreement, on the implementation level of the majority of the exemplars. A standard deviation of 1.20 or higher on an exemplar indicates that responders are not in agreement on the level of implementation of a particular exemplar of the 16 characteristics. A standard deviation of 1.20 or lower for an exemplar indicates the responders are in agreement on the level of implementation of that particular exemplar. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment had a standard deviation (SD) of 1.03, Leadership and Organization had a SD of 1.31, and Culture and Community had a SD of 1.25. The consultant suggests that attention be focused on the identified exemplars in the report that are above an SD of 1.20. The middle grades teachers and school administrators should continue to work collaboratively to develop a common vision to focus each school's efforts on strategies and staff development to improve the implementation of exemplars over the next two years. The consultant

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recommends that teachers and administrators commit to reading and reflecting on AMLE's foundational book, *This We Believe*, which details the 16 characteristics; the consultant also urges the faculty and staff to examine the exemplars as outlined in the consultant's recommendations in each of the three areas of the assessment in small learning communities (as mentioned above). This would be a crucial starting point this year as they begin to focus on designing the components of the School Improvement Plan for 2014–2015. It is imperative that the principals and teachers have a vision for the middle grades program as it exists in all three grade levels of the school –and involving the elementary and high schools in that work. This should be a collaborative effort, and include all stakeholders in the development process and programs. (See Data Interpretation, Standard Deviation on page 6).

Report by Areas

Specific characteristics and exemplars that were identified from each area for further study in the report and recommended activities for small learning communities will appear after each area of the report.

Clarification

The assessment statistics are a result of the staff and administrators who received and completed the survey, and their ratings on each of the 120 exemplars of the 16 characteristics as outlined in the AMLE book, *This We Believe*. The school improvement coach did not conduct school or classroom observations to substantiate or dispute the ratings of the teachers and administrators who completed the assessment. The sole task of the coach was to interpret the data that was generated from the total survey responses in terms of what research shows good middle level education practice to be. No attempt has been made to judge the interpretation or implementation of the middle level components of the school program, but rather to relate the perceptions of the administrators and teachers as conveyed by their responses to the survey questions.

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Interpretation of Data

To allow you to better understand data in the report, the categories for responses in the assessment are listed below:

Exemplary level of implementation		**Fully functioning level of implementation**		**Limited implementation**		**Little or no implementation**
7	6	5	4	3	2	1

Scores are reported as mean scores with standard deviations for each exemplar. The mean is reported with the standard deviation in order to provide a better understanding of the distribution of scores than can be established by considering only the mean. The following explanations will help you interpret the scores:

MEAN SCORE: The mean score represents the average score for the exemplar.

AREA MEAN SCORE: This is the average score given for each area and is computed as follows in this example:

#1 Characteristic mean score = 3.0 with 7 exemplars

#2 Characteristic mean score = 6.0 with 9 exemplars

#3 Characteristic mean score = 4.2 with 9 exemplars

#4 Characteristic mean score = 5.3 with 9 exemplars

#5 Characteristic mean score = 6.2 with 9 exemplars

Formula to compute area mean score:

$$\frac{7(3.0) + 9(6.0)+9(4.2)+9(5.3)+9(6.2)}{7+9+9+9+9}$$

Area mean score = 5.03

STANDARD DEVIATION: The standard deviation is a measure of the variability of the scores in relation to the mean of the group. In other words, a larger standard deviation indicates greater distribution between the individual scores and the mean of the scores. In this report, standard deviations above 1.2 are areas of concern because they indicate a wide disparity between teacher scores.

COLOR CODES IN REPORT: On data pages scores have been color coded to make them easier for your school to interpret:

Blue = 5.60 - 7.00 High level of implementation

Orange = 3.60 - 5.59 Moderate level of implementation

Red = 1.00 - 3.59 Little or no implementation

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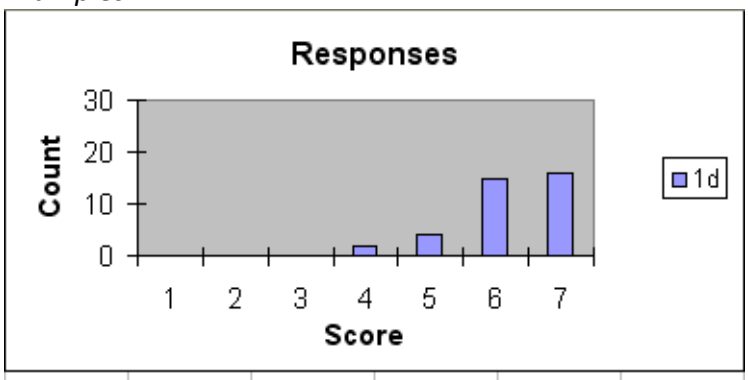
Interpretation of Data (continued)

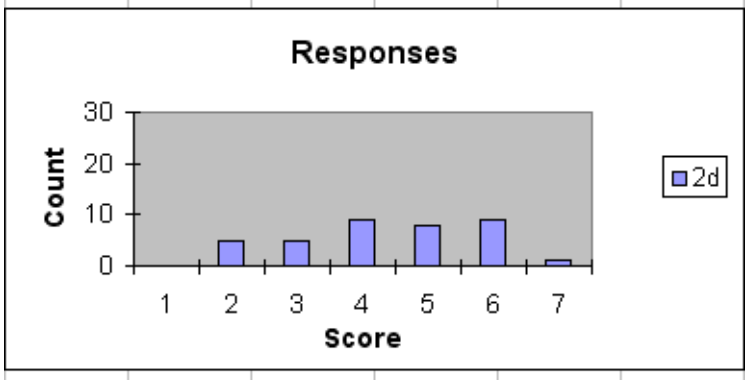
STANDARD DEVIATION: This is a statistical calculation over a set of data values that indicates how closely the values are grouped about their mean, or average, value. In survey data, like the School Improvement Assessment, a small standard deviation indicates there was a high agreement among those who took the assessment on the score for a particular exemplar. A larger standard deviation would indicate there was a greater spread of scores, or more disagreement between people. In general, you can expect at least half of the scores to be within one standard deviation above or below the mean scores.

Examples:



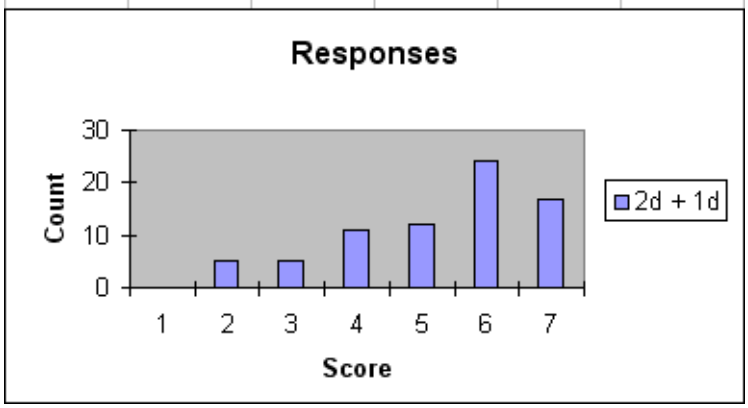
Responses: 37
Mean: 6.22
Standard Deviation: 0.85

In this example, the standard deviation is small indicating a good agreement between scores.



Responses: 37
Mean: 4.38
Standard Deviation: 1.42

Here, the standard deviation is larger, indicating more disagreement between scores.
.



Responses: 74
Mean: 5.30
Standard Deviation: 1.49

When the two sets are combined, the standard deviation is larger still because the two sets have a wider combined range of scores.

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Overview of Results by Area

Anywhere Middle School
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Mean scores are reported high to low

AREA	MEAN SCORE	STANDARD DEVIATION
Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment *Characteristic 1, 2, 3, 4, 5*	5.43	1.03
Culture and Community *Characteristic 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16*	5.20	1.31
Leadership and Organization *Characteristic 6, 7, 8, 9, 10*	4.35	1.25

Blue: High Level of Implementation, **Orange**: Moderate Implementation, **Red**: Little or No Implementation

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Results by Characteristics

Anywhere Middle School
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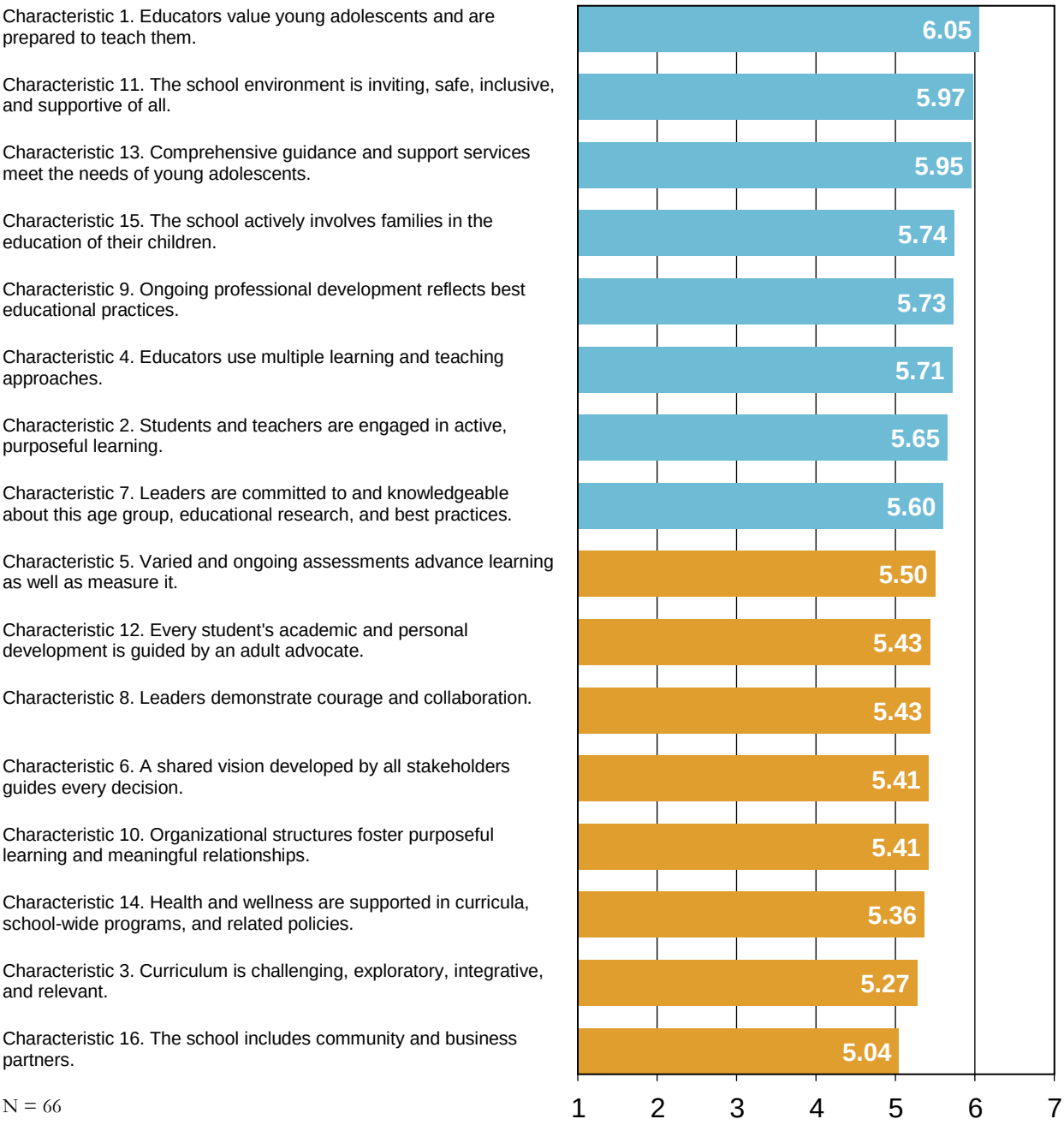
Scores are reported as mean scores for each characteristic, moving from highest to lowest score.



N = 66

Scale: 7=Exemplary level of implementation, 5=Fully functioning level, 3=Limited implementation, 1=Little or no implementation

Blue: High Level of Implementation, **Orange**: Moderate Implementation, **Red**: Little or No Implementation

AMLE School Improvement Assessment

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AREA ONE

Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment
Characteristic 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

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AREA ONE

Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment
Summary Scores

Anywhere Middle School
Anywhere, EX

AREA	AREA MEAN SCORE	STANDARD DEVIATION
Area Mean Score for Area 1	**5.43**	**1.03**

Mean scores are reported high to low

CHARACTERISTIC	MEAN SCORE	STANDARD DEVIATION
Characteristic #1 *Educators value young adolescents and are prepared to teach them.*	**6.03**	**0.85**
Characteristic #4 *Educators use multiple learning and teaching approaches.*	**5.70**	**0.85**
Characteristic #2 *Students and teachers are engaged in active, purposeful learning.*	**5.62**	**1.00**
Characteristic #5 *Varied and ongoing assessments advance learning as well as measure it.*	**5.45**	**1.06**
Characteristic #3 *Curriculum is challenging, exploratory, integrative, and relevant.*	**5.23**	**1.24**

Blue: High Level of Implementation, **Orange**: Moderate Implementation, **Red**: Little or No Implementation

AMLE School Improvement Assessment

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AREA ONE

Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment
Highest Scoring Exemplars in Area One

Anywhere Middle School
Anywhere, EX

Mean scores are reported high to low

EXEMPLAR		MEAN SCORE	STANDARD DEVIATION
1d	SCHOOL STAFF enjoy being around and working with young adolescents.	6.35	0.71
1g	SCHOOL STAFF are positive role models for students.	6.24	0.75
1c	TEACHERS have a depth of knowledge in subjects they teach.	6.20	0.70
1e	SCHOOL STAFF respond positively to student diversity.	6.14	0.80
2h	STUDENTS use digital tools (e.g., computers, interactive boards, mp3 players) as a regular part of classroom instruction.	6.05	0.80

Blue: High Level of Implementation, **Orange**: Moderate Implementation, **Red**: Little or No Implementation

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AREA ONE

Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment
Lowest Scoring Exemplars in Area One

Anywhere Middle School
Anywhere, EX

Mean scores are reported low to high

EXEMPLAR		MEAN SCORE	STANDARD DEVIATION
3h	STUDENTS participate in a variety of exploratory courses (e.g., fine arts, applied arts, drama, consumer science).	4.35	1.72
5i	TEACHERS engage students in the assessment of their learning through the use of portfolio discussions.	4.74	1.53
3g	STUDENTS are involved in making choices about their learning (e.g., topics in units of study, learning activities, assessment options).	4.80	1.03
2d	TEACHERS and STUDENTS work together to develop learning activities.	4.90	1.21
5e	TEACHERS provide opportunities for students' peer-to-peer feedback.	5.04	0.93

Blue: High Level of Implementation, **Orange**: Moderate Implementation, **Red**: Little or No Implementation

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AREA ONE

Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment
Characteristic #1 Results

Anywhere Middle School
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	Mean Score/Standard Deviation for Characteristic #1	
Educators value young adolescents and are prepared to teach them.	**6.03**	**0.85**

Mean scores are reported high to low

EXEMPLAR		MEAN SCORE	STANDARD DEVIATION
1d	SCHOOL STAFF enjoy being around and working with young adolescents.	**6.34**	**0.72**
1g	SCHOOL STAFF are positive role models for students.	**6.24**	**0.75**
1c	TEACHERS have a depth of knowledge in subjects they teach.	**6.20**	**0.72**
1e	SCHOOL STAFF respond positively to student diversity.	**6.14**	**0.80**
1f	SCHOOL STAFF understand the impact of the current youth culture (e.g., technology, the arts, media) on the learning environment.	**5.87**	**0.84**
1a	TEACHERS are specifically prepared to teach young adolescents (e.g., middle grades coursework, certification, licensure).	**5.81**	**0.94**
1b	TEACHERS have a depth of knowledge of characteristics of young adolescents.	**5.63**	**0.89**

Blue: High Level of Implementation, **Orange**: Moderate Implementation, **Red**: Little or No Implementation

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AREA ONE

Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment
Characteristic #2 Results

Anywhere Middle School
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	Mean Score/Standard Deviation for Characteristic #2	
Students and teachers are engaged in active, purposeful learning.	**5.26**	**1.00**

Mean scores are reported high to low

EXEMPLAR		MEAN SCORE	STANDARD DEVIATION
2h	STUDENTS use digital tools (e.g., computers, interactive boards, mp3 players) as a regular part of classroom instruction.	**6.03**	**0.83**
2c	TEACHERS use various strategies to engage each student in active learning in the classroom (e.g., role-playing, presentations, simulations).	**5.90**	**0.73**
2b	TEACHERS create classrooms where students are the center of the learning process.	**5.85**	**0.84**
2g	STUDENTS are acquiring knowledge and skills to prepare them for success-- both now and in the future.	**5.81**	**0.84**
2a	TEACHERS design instructional strategies that are meaningful for each student.	**5.75**	**0.76**
2e	TEACHERS organize their classrooms physically to promote active learning (e.g., learning centers, small student groupings, student work displays).	**5.69**	**0.85**
2i	STUDENTS serve as learning resources for each other.	**5.50**	**0.91**
2f	STUDENTS are empowered to play a major role in their own education (e.g., express their learning needs and preferences, design learning experiences).	**5.10**	**1.23**
2d	TEACHERS and STUDENTS work together to develop learning activities.	**4.95**	**1.21**

Blue: High Level of Implementation, **Orange**: Moderate Implementation, **Red**: Little or No Implementation

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Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment
Characteristic #3 Results

Anywhere Middle School
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	Mean Score/Standard Deviation for Characteristic #3	
Curriculum is challenging, exploratory, integrative, and relevant.	**5.23**	**1.24**

Mean scores are reported high to low

EXEMPLAR		MEAN SCORE	STANDARD DEVIATION
3f	TEACHERS integrate innovation and technology into the curriculum.	**5.95**	**0.98**
3b	TEACHERS develop learning units that incorporate both teacher goals and student questions.	**5.55**	**1.00**
3c	TEACHERS develop learning tasks that challenge each student to achieve at high levels.	**5.53**	**0.93**
3a	TEACHERS ensure a challenging curriculum for each student.	**5.42**	**0.98**
3d	TEACHERS work in teacher teams to develop integrated or interdisciplinary units.	**5.34**	**1.42**
3i	STUDENTS gain the skills necessary for success in the 21st century (e.g., creativity, problem-solving, communication, technology).	**5.25**	**1.10**
3e	TEACHERS include opportunities for exploratory experiences within all areas of the school's curriculum.	**5.06**	**1.25**
3g	STUDENTS are involved in making choices about their learning (e.g., topics in units of study, learning activities, assessment options).	**4.83**	**1.20**
3h	STUDENTS participate in a variety of exploratory courses (e.g., fine arts, applied arts, drama, consumer science).	**4.35**	**1.70**

Blue: High Level of Implementation, **Orange**: Moderate Implementation, **Red**: Little or No Implementation

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Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment
Characteristic #4 Results

Anywhere Middle School
Anywhere, EX

	Mean Score/Standard Deviation for Characteristic #4	
Educators use multiple learning and teaching approaches.	**5.70**	**0.85**

Mean scores are reported high to low

EXEMPLAR		MEAN SCORE	STANDARD DEVIATION
4e	TEACHERS use a variety of instructional grouping strategies (e.g., working independently, working interdependently with partners, small groups).	**6.01**	**0.75**
4c	TEACHERS accommodate special needs students through appropriate inclusion in the classroom.	**5.93**	**0.94**
4i	TEACHERS consistently integrate student use of technology into their classroom instruction.	**5.81**	**0.95**
4h	TEACHERS use a variety of instructional materials and resources to engage students (e.g. manipulatives, primary source material, current events).	**5.73**	**0.85**
4d	TEACHERS engage students in classroom dialogue that furthers learning.	**5.76**	**0.75**
4f	TEACHERS integrate problem -solving, creativity, and critical thinking skills into classroom learning activities.	**5.65**	**0.89**
4b	TEACHERS differentiate their instructional approaches based upon student learning needs.	**5.54**	**0.99**
4g	TEACHERS change learning activities frequently within a class period to ensure continued student engagement.	**5.51**	**0.86**
4a	TEACHERS consider the personal and cultural experiences of students in developing learning activities.	**5.36**	**1.28**

Blue: High Level of Implementation, **Orange**: Moderate Implementation, **Red**: Little or No Implementation

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Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment
Characteristic #5 Results

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	Mean Score/Standard Deviation for Characteristic #5	
Varied and ongoing assessments advance learning as well as measure it.	**5.45**	**1.06**

Mean scores are reported high to low

EXEMPLAR		MEAN SCORE	STANDARD DEVIATION
5c	TEACHERS balance the use of both formative and summative assessments within their classrooms.	**5.87**	**0.90**
5d	TEACHERS use rubrics to communicate criteria for student success.	**5.83**	**0.95**
5h	TEACHERS engage students in the assessment of their learning through the use of student-led conferences.	**5.73**	**1.45**
5a	TEACHERS gather evidence of student learning to adapt their instruction.	**5.65**	**0.85**
5g	TEACHERS provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways.	**5.52**	**0.95**
5b	TEACHERS use the most appropriate assessments (e.g., portfolios, demonstrations, questioning) to measure student learning.	**5.47**	**0.98**
5f	TEACHERS provide descriptive feedback to students to help them move to the next step in learning.	**5.43**	**1.01**
5e	TEACHERS provide opportunities for students' peer-to-peer feedback.	**5.05**	**0.93**
5i	TEACHERS engage students in the assessment of their learning through the use of portfolio discussions.	**4.77**	**1.56**

Blue: High Level of Implementation, **Orange**: Moderate Implementation, **Red**: Little or No Implementation

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AREA ONE

Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment Report

Anywhere Middle School
Anywhere, EX

Commendations

Based on the high mean score (MS) and low standard deviations (SD) of exemplars of characteristics in Area 1 (Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment) of the survey, the following exemplars are identified for commendation:

The teachers at Anywhere Middle School are to be commended for their overall academic and curriculum work with students. The instructional staff enjoy being around and working with young adolescents (1d, MS=6.37, SD=.873) and consider themselves to be positive role models for students (1g, MS=6.26, SD=.77) who also possess a depth of knowledge in subjects they teach (1c, MS=6.21, SD=.73). School staff also report that they respond positively to student diversity (1e, MS=6.16, SD=.81). Finally, students use digital tools as a regular part of classroom instruction (2h, MS=6.08, SD=.86).

Data Analysis and Recommendations

The following exemplars of Area 1 characteristics need to be examined in small learning communities or communities of practice because of lower mean scores and relatively higher standard deviation scores. It is recommended that these exemplars be included in the school's efforts to create a school improvement plan or strategic plan with its teachers and staff.

Characteristic 3: "Curriculum is challenging, exploratory, integrative, and relevant."

- **Exemplar 3h (MS=4.37, SD=1.73): Students participate in a variety of exploratory courses (e.g. fine arts, applied arts, drama, consumer science).**
- **Exemplar 3g (MS=4.84, SD=1.10): Students are involved in making choices about their learning, such as self-selecting topics in units of study, learning activities, and assessment options.**

- **Recommendations:** Teachers and staff are urged to cooperatively read pages 22-24 of *This We Believe*, to answer the focusing questions on page 7 of the Study Guide, and then discuss those answers together. The moderate MS for the two exemplars indicates that they are implemented at a moderate level in the school, but there are varying opinions about them, as well. Exemplar 3h focuses on the necessity of exploratory courses for young adolescents in their learning lives. These courses allow students to explore various curricula beyond the traditional content areas, so they can begin to discover and expand upon their interests. The

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courses also help students make connections to the traditional content areas; for instance, students realize that math is a part of Band and Family And Consumer Science. Because students start building their college and career readiness in the middle level, it is essential that exploratory courses be a part of that foundation. Exemplar 3g speaks to the value of giving students frequent opportunities to make choices about their learning. This is a vital facet to monitor if student achievement and interest are going to continue to grow throughout the middle school years. It is strongly suggested that the grade level teams meet to discuss and plan how they will include student choice going forward. This is especially crucial in the area of formative and summative assessment; students should be given the chance to show their mastery of curriculum standards in alternative ways –yet the teams need to be clear about how they are going to measure those divergent efforts. Creating common rubrics or letting students create their own rubrics can be beneficial. According to *This We Believe*, middle school students "deserve opportunities to ascertain their special interests and aptitudes, to engage in activities that will broaden their views of the world and of themselves" (p. 20). This includes allowing students to have choice and voice in their learning.

Characteristic 2: "Students and teachers are engaged in active, purposeful learning."

- **Exemplar 2d (MS=4.97, SD=1.20) Teachers and students work together to develop learning activities.**

- **Recommendations:** Teachers and staff are urged to cooperatively read pages 16-17 of *This We Believe* and answer questions on the bottom of p. 5 and top of p. 6 of the Study Guide, and then discuss those answers together. The MS for the exemplar indicates a moderate level of implementation. While still at 1.20, the SD for this exemplar conveys that there is a bit of variance among the staff about it. To address this exemplar, two actions are suggested. First, it is imperative that teachers work together in collaborative communities of practice and that they feel open to planning, sharing, questioning, and asking with their colleagues. Common planning time should be used for that work, and it is strongly suggested that administrators either attend those meetings or ask for meeting minutes to document the work. Second, for students to be engaged in learning they also have to take an active part. If students are not included in the planning, they will take a more passive role in learning. This is where teachers can "hook" students and motivate them to participate in their own learning. This can begin by administering motivational and interest assessments as well as goal-setting inventories, so both the teachers and the student can more effectively understand what they want to learn and how they want to learn it. As is stated in *This We Believe*, "Developmentally responsive middle grades educators take the concept of hands-on activities further by promoting what might be termed "hands-joined" activities, ones that teachers and students work together in developing" (p. 16).

Characteristic 5: "Varied and ongoing assessments advance learning as well as measure it.

- **Exemplar 5i (MS=4.77, SD=1.56): Teachers engage students in the assessment of their learning through the use of portfolio discussions.**

- **Exemplar 5e (MS=5.06, SD=.94): Teachers provide opportunities for students' peer-to-peer feedback.**

- **Recommendations:** Teachers and staff are encouraged to cooperatively read pages 24-26 of This We Believe, to answer the focusing questions on pages 7-8 of the Study Guide, and then discuss those answers together. The moderate MS for these exemplars indicates that they are

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implemented at a moderate level in the school whereas the relatively high standard deviation score for 5i communicates a good deal of variance among the respondents. Thus, there is a need to review the literature on the use of use of peer-to-peer feedback, student portfolios and student-led conferences. Teachers should be encouraged to add these instructional strategies to those they are currently using as part of their student assessment process. All middle school students have the cognitive skills to support each other in their academic efforts and to lead conferences with teachers and their parents in addition to producing portfolios of their work. Talking with a peer about a learning artifact/product and discussing work with their parents/guardians gives students an opportunity to collaborate and to assess progress in their assignments over the course of the school year. This practice provides students with the opportunity to reflect on their learning and to expand and extend that learning. In addition, it empowers students, raises self-efficacy, and adds a new system of support for all learners in the classroom. Similarly, student-led conferences take the burden off the teacher in parent conferences and place it on the student, providing him or her with an opportunity to present his or her progress. As stated in *This We Believe,* "The goal is to help students discover and understand their own strengths, weaknesses, interests and aptitudes" (p. 26).

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