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 and Organization**
— 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.