

New York State Middle Level Education



2008 Summit Attendee Reflections

Last year, at the end of the August 2009 Middle Level Education Summit, we asked attendees to write a reflection of their experience attending the Summit. Overall, their comments were embarrassingly positive and supportive.

Upon reviewing each reflection again, we were very much impressed by the depth of understanding that so many of our colleagues had for the possibilities that are made available to everyone during the Summit and the level of positive energy that we now have ready to unleash across New York State.

It is truly amazing how so many individuals representing so many diverse organizations could each capture, in different ways, the essences of what had occurred over the two days of the Summit. Yet that is what happened with many in attendance and each person responding did so on the spur of the moment and in just a few paragraphs.

After reading the following thoughts, it should be easy to understand how, by working together, we can succeed at accomplishing just about anything.

WHY SHOULD YOUR ORGANIZATION BE REPRESENTED AT SUMMIT²?

Many of your colleagues from across the state answered that question eloquently at the end of last year's Middle Level Education Summit. Here's what they had to say:

I was impressed by the level of commitment participants made that were aimed at making middle level education a priority for each of their organizations - realizing that it will take all stakeholder groups to make that goal a reality.

Diane Ward, New York State School Boards Association

This has been a profound opportunity for heads of NYSCEA organizations to create a think tank on raising awareness of the Seven Essential Elements for middle level education.

As a representative for the arts, I was encouraged that members/officers of the New York State Association of Teachers of Art, the New York State School Music Association and the New York State Council of Administrators of Music Education were united. Since NCLB clearly stated that the visual and performing arts are core academic subjects, we are encouraged that we are included in the state-level conversations on excellence in education.

**Patricia Wheelhouse, President-Elect
New York State Council of Administrators of Music Education**

This has been an amazing experience. It is refreshing to be at a meeting where things are actually accomplished and we are not meeting just to have another meeting. I am so excited to get things moving to make a positive impact on teenagers. I am also so glad to have made some great connections here.

Ellen Gerard, New York Counseling Association

What an amazing show of support, by so many organizations, for the middle level child. The Summit has created a grand swell of excitement for the Essential Elements.

The entire Summit was well organized and planned. The ability to network with so many key stakeholders around a common goal was essential. The summit was a microcosm of what we ask all schools to do - work cooperatively to get a job done. Thank you!

Dr. Peter Faustino, New York Association of School Psychologists

Interesting to hear from many different organizations as to how important it is for ALL TEACHERS to be involved in common planning.

Susan Weber, NYS School Music Association

It was valuable to gather voices from various groups together. Awareness of the Seven Essential Elements was heightened. Networking opportunities were abundant. It was humbling to witness how NYSMSA reached out to colleagues for support.

**Cindy Lassande, NY Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
Jerry Rivera-Wilson, Julius Adams, New York State Association of Teacher Educators**

A great networking and collaborative experience. Positive parent involvement and active student engagement in learning is key to a successful middle school.

Tamalin Martin, Education Chairman, NYS Parent Teacher Association

Literacy is the foundation of learning across the grades and specifically at the middle level. This Summit stressed the need and the power of organizing and integrating the middle level grades around the Seven Essential Elements. The diversity of the representative groups proved to us all that working together will move needed change from theory to practice.

Janice Peters, New York State Reading Association

As a representative of the New York State Art Teachers Association, I wasn't quite sure what to expect when arriving at this Summit. I can truly say that the two days were an enlightening experience for me.

It was a wonderful experience to network with other people from so many diverse organizations and to hear their perspective on middle level education.

As a result of this summit I find that I can better understand that my role as not only an art teacher, but also as a middle level educator.

I look forward to bringing the information back to my individual school and the challenge of working on the implementation/awareness of the Seven Essential Elements into the middle school environment. I feel I've really learned how the Essential Elements are an integral part of creating a successful middle school.

I hope to continue working on the visual arts as being an important piece of the whole "team" process, and continue working on the importance of the arts in their relation to the Seven Essential Elements.

Finally, I am excited about disseminating much of what I have learned during this Summit and working with NYSATA in implementing actions about the Essential Elements.

Anne Rickard, New York State Art Teachers Association

When I came here, it seems to me that I really wouldn't be able to contribute. I knew I could listen and be prepared to give a report to my Association. After all, I work with graduate students - not exactly integral to middle level education. Well, I have often called myself the "Queen of mistakes" and here I am, wrong again. Being a quick study, though, I learned from my mistakes... and don't repeat them.

It has become clear to me that every level of education is connected to EVERY OTHER level of education. To deny that the counseling interns can't benefit from being knowledgeable about middle level education and the Seven Essential Elements is to deny them a valuable piece of information for them to apply in their counseling roles. In essence, it would create another one of those famous "gaps."

This whole experience has been an eye-opening, energizing experience. I look forward to sharing information and looking toward change in counselor education.

Bette Ewing, New York Counseling Association

This middle-level summit has been very well executed and what a great idea to invite all the New York State organization leaders who can now become "stakeholders" in this important effort! Many of us follow research and best practices, but did not have a consolidated "Seven Essential Elements" document to refer to-or even knew of its existence! This information not only has to be disseminated, but we have to get more schools on board! Our global standings are falling in the US and it's this sort of education that is going to foster creativity, challenge all students to meet success and help our country compete in the global workplace! We all now have to carry this fueled synergy forward and upward!!

Cindy Wells, President, New York State Reading Association

I must say that this was a positive experience for me. What a genial group of professionals. Thank you for including our organization in the summit. School nurses take care of middle school students. Academic success is our mission, too!!

A healthy child is a better learner! School nurses should be attending student support team meetings. We can be part of the solution for middle school success. The obesity epidemic, the lack of physical activity and the need for nutrition education are on the front burner for me as well as promoting a healthy body image during the roller coaster ride of “puberty.” I love this age group!-and I did not prefer this age group in previous years. I love the “energy” that middle school kids bring to the school setting.

Suzanne Smith, New York State's Association of School Nurses

It was great to meet and learn from so many people from various organizations/associations and know we were all here for one commonality - What's best for our kids! Essential Elements are awesome!

Thank you for such a rewording experience and one I will be talking about for many days to come. Great Schools-to-Watch stories! Active not passive learning!

Wow!! Let's spread the word... and videos soon!!

Debbie Dermady, Vice President, New York State Reading Association

The Middle Level Summit helped to bring awareness of the Essential Elements and how they should be implemented for all middle-level students in New York State. We reviewed the proven results in the research behind using the Essential Elements. Our goal is to make sure schools are aware of the Essential Elements and the benefits to their students in implementing the Essential Elements.

The Middle-Level Summit provided us the opportunity to network with educators and professional organizations to develop concrete ideas on providing awareness and implementation of the Essential Elements.

It was a fabulous learning experience!

Susan Braue, Pearson Prentice Hall

My experience at this Summit has been very positive! Though FCS has incorporated the Essential Elements into the New York State Home and Career Skills curriculum document, I am sure not all professionals in the field have full knowledge. I mean to change that! Through our network capabilities- FACSE teachers will know and share Essential Element with their schools and professors.

In addition, the opportunity to network with other organizations has been exciting, informing and a pleasure! I hope opportunities similar to this will continue - thanks to NYSMSA for bringing us together. Thank you! This was wonderful! This I believe will change education in New York State.

Dodi (Doreen) Cechnicki, NYSAFCSE

The Summit was a wonderful learning experience for me. It really opened my eyes to the organizational structure and goals of the middle school. In addition, it gave me the opportunity to reflect on how our organization can be an active participant in ensuring/assisting in the success of middle school students. I

look forward to sharing what I have learned with the business teachers Association of New York State's Board and our members. We are excited to have the opportunity to work with NYSMSA.

Daina M. Rossi, Region 4 Director, Business Teachers Association of New York State

This conference has made me aware of the sincere passion and carrying that is the underpinning of the Middle Level Education Community. I not only had the opportunity to reflect on the various issues, realities, and regulations, but also to experience an excitement and enthusiasm for the potential benefits of the Essential Elements and their integration into art education practice.

Pat Barbanell, New York State Art Teachers Association

Prior to the New York State Middle-Level Summit I did not have a working knowledge of the Essential Elements and I was the NYSCSS Middle School Chairperson for many years. After attending the Summit I feel strongly about the alignment process related to the Essential Elements and would like to promote them within my organization.

Tom Potts, New York State Council for Social Studies

Selection of speakers was excellent. The information was substantive and each presenter provided different information.

The handouts are also excellent. Having the research and scholarly materials is very useful for institutional grant funding requests/applications to support furthering best practices of middle level programs.

The workshop keeps different constituents abreast of New York State Educational trends and helps museum educators develop programs to support programs in the middle level grades.

Mary E. Mix, Rockwell Museum of Western Art

The Summit could serve as a model for other states and state affiliates to infuse the characteristics of successful schools for young adolescents that research has shown are essential. Collaboration across a wide range of stakeholders is critical to help ensure that all schools that serve young adolescents are truly providing the Essential Elements that lead to success for all.

Al Summers, National Middle School Association