INTransition

Journal of the New York State Middle School Association

NYSMSA Mission/Vision/Goals/Beliefs

Revised and Adopted July 2009

NYSMSA Mission: The New York State Middle School Association (NYSMSA) represents those who serve the educational needs of all young adolescents in New York State. We are committed to creating, promoting, and supporting effective middle-level programs that are academically rigorous and developmentally appropriate.

NYSMSA Vision: NYSMSA acts on our belief that all young adolescents are entitled to academically rich and developmentally responsive programs. Toward this end, we work collaboratively within the educational community to make high-performing middle-level programs the norm in New York State through full implementation of the *Regents Policy Statement on Middle-Level Education*, the Education Department's *Essential Elements of Standards-Focused Middle-Level Schools and Programs*, and research-based best practices.

NYSMSA Goals: Advocacy • Service • Collaboration

NYSMSA Beliefs: NYSMSA's beliefs are listed below. Taking into consideration current research and available resources, these beliefs are viewed through the lens of the NYS *Essential Elements of Standards-Focused Middle-Level Schools and Programs* and the *Regents Policy Statement on Middle-Level Education*, and will assist the Association in supporting the improvement of instruction for middle-level students in New York State.

ADVOCACY

NYSMSA believes that we must provide leadership and coordination in advocating for the following in **all** schools that serve middle-level students:

- a philosophy and mission that reflect the intellectual and developmental needs and characteristics of young adolescents (youth 10-14 years of age);
- an educational program that is comprehensive, challenging, purposeful, integrated, relevant, and standards-based;
- an organization and structure that support both academic excellence and personal development;
- classroom instruction appropriate to the needs and characteristics of young adolescents provided by skilled and knowledgeable teachers;
- strong educational leadership and a building administration that encourage, facilitate, and sustain involvement, participation, and partnerships;
- a network of academic and personal support available for all students;
- professional learning and staff development for all staff that are ongoing, planned, purposeful, and collaboratively developed.

SERVICE

NYSMSA believes that we must provide leadership and coordination to:

- be the primary source of information, resources, and expertise on young adolescents and their schooling in New York State;
- provide a variety of resources (publications, models of best practices, professional development, etc.) in support of appropriate programs for young adolescents;
- offer support to schools, at all levels of performance, in refining and strengthening their middle-level programs;
- provide member services to public and non-public urban, suburban, and rural schools;
- engage regional directors who provide, assist, and support regional and state activities;
- support the ongoing importance of Office of Middle-Level Education Program in SED.
- develop and disseminate position papers that provide guidance on appropriate programmatic, curricular, instructional, and assessment issues;
- recognize and honor outstanding middle-level schools, programs, and individuals and groups.

COLLABORATION

NYSMSA believes that we must provide leadership and coordination for:

- implement a collaborative relationship with the State Education Department and others who impact the lives of young adolescents;
- work with other associations in sponsoring professional development activities;
- develop and expand cooperative ventures and relationships with corporations and businesses;
- create networks of educators, parents, and others involved in the lives of young adolescents;
- serve on the boards of supportive organizations;
- engage in continuous planning through participation and shared decision-making;
- influence the quality and content of pre-service and in-service education for prospective and practicing middle-level educators;
- work with constituent groups to identify effective models for programmatic, curricular, instructional, and assessment issues.

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Calling ALL New York State Middle Schools

The editors of *In Transition*, the publication of the New York State Middle School Association, are looking for contributions from middle school students all across New York State. We are looking specifically for original student artwork to adorn our cover (three publications per year).

If one of your student's artwork is selected, it will be featured on the cover of *In Transition* and both the teacher and student will receive complimentary copies of the publication.

Sub-topics/themes can include but are not limited to: What we like to do; What we do not like to do; A typical day; Our friends; A special moment for us; A social issue I would like to say something about…; This is how I see myself in ten years; A feeling that we have much of the time is…; People we look up to.

Guidelines for two-dimensional art work:
Media: All paint and drawing media except pastel and charcoal (unless sealed with a fixative), mixed media and collage

Art work categories: Painting, Drawing, Cartoons, Collage, Photography, and Computer Graphics

Size: No larger than 18x24 inches

Originality: Images taken from another source must be altered or combined in some way to show the creative thinking of the artist.

A written statement (preferably a WORD document), no longer than one page, to explain the content of the work and what the artist did in the image to communicate the idea to the viewer; for example: use of color, details, size, placement on the page, composition, exaggeration, etc.

Deadline is **June 15, 2013**.

Prepare CD with label info on image name band: Artist Name, School, Grade, Title, Art Teacher. Please include same info on written statement. Mail to: Olivia Sutton, O.W. Winch MS, 99 Hudson Street, South Glens Falls NY 12803. Alternatively, email images and statements to Olivia Sutton at middlelevelart@gmail.com

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All electronic images submitted and selected will become the property of the New York State Middle School Association. Please copy and complete this form and send it to Olivia Sutton with your CD.

Print Artist's Name_____ Grade _____

School _____Title of Piece_____

Student's Signature_____ Date _____

Teacher's Signature_____ Date _____

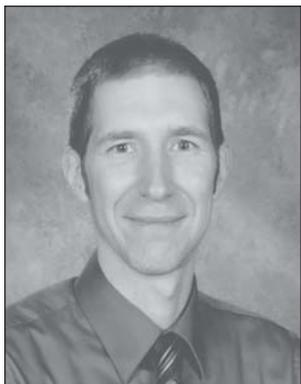*Mailing and Contact Information*
Art Teacher_____Home E-mail Address_____

School_____

School Mailing Address_____

City/State/Zip_____

From the Editors' Desks
Matthew Conrick & Olivia Sutton

Matthew Conrick & Olivia Sutton

"So how are you?"

"How's it going?"

"How have you been?"

Never did I think such types of questions would turn out to be such loaded ones. When these questions are posed to me, I find my brain scanning for the appropriate, not-too-time-consuming, not-too-doom-and-gloom-response. I have to consider my audience greatly — more than ever, really — when I conjure up my response.

How am I?

As I write this editorial the New Year's preparation is in full swing — which in my case amounts to where to go out for dinner on New Year's Eve and how I'm going to stay up until midnight. I've never been one for New Year's resolutions. My view is that individuals can set a goal at any point in the year. New Year's is just simply a reminder that one needs to set these goals in order to become a better person, a better friend, a better parent, or a better educator.

I'm really using the start of this New Year as a checkpoint with where I am professionally. Reflecting on my role as an educator… *How am I? How is it going? How have I been so far this school year?*

My not-too-time-consuming response would be that I'm surviving. Reflecting on what we have accomplished this year, I feel that my grade level team and content area teams are weathering the chaotic storm of public education in New York State. Hours upon hours have been spent professionally on how to address the ELA Common Core Standards and how our original curriculum worked and in some cases needed modifications. Speaking for our grade level, we have been attempting to raise expectations for the students and for ourselves. This has been met with both challenges and successes along the way. I do feel that most students and educators are rising to the challenge with regard to the Common Core Standards and APPR. Many times, though, after sitting through a meeting or teaching a lesson, I'm left the nagging question, "Is what I'm doing enough?"

It is imperative that our students have our support, not only academically but emotionally as well. In middle-level education, my fear is that with all of these new academic pressures and expectations, the social and emotional awareness of our students could go by the wayside. This would be the demise of middle-level education. Even on the most professionally

unstable and chaotic days, we as the educators might be the most stable adult contacts many of our students have. Personally speaking, I find myself constantly taking a step back, reorganizing and redirecting my energies, focusing my attention back to the needs of the students, and balanced with my own professional goals and objectives as their teacher. All of my energy cannot be devoured solely by the academic demands being placed on my students and myself. It's a fine line to maintain that "educator equilibrium" these days.

In this issue of *In Transition* we have included some articles that focus on the history and the importance of middle-level education. This issue's *Research at a Glance* column by Jeff Craig explores the history of middle-level education in New York State. He specifically looks at the history and evolution of middle schools in New York, including the fact that the first-ever "labeled" middle school was right here in New York State! It is a thorough piece of writing, looking at how middle level came to be and how middle schools continue to evolve today, both statewide and on a national level. We have also included an article by Peter DeWitt entitled *When Good Teachers Quit*, which first appeared on his blog for *Education Week*. In his article, Dr. DeWitt reminds us that we all know what "real education" looks like. It is my goal for 2013 to remind myself, along with my colleagues, that we know what good education is — it is a balance between the social, emotional, and academic needs for our students *and* for ourselves. Ultimately a year from now, it would be nice *not* to have to rack my brain for a response for the simple questions *How are you? How is it going?*

We hope that the New Year brings many accomplished goals your way, balancing all of those challenges we face in education, specifically at the middle level. In this issue you will see our first-ever call for lesson submissions, focusing on the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards in classrooms throughout New York State. Please consider taking a moment to look at the submission form. We here at *In Transition* know the importance of collaboration and networking. It is our goal to be on the forefront of providing *the* network for middle-level educators with regard to one of the biggest shifts in education and its impact on effective classroom instruction: the Common Core Learning Standards.

—Olivia Sutton

We've Moved!

NYSMSA has a new mailing address. Please make note of it for all future correspondence.

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Unchanged:
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office@nysmsa.org

Common Core in the Classroom

The editors of *In Transition*, the publication for The New York State Middle School Association, are looking for contributions from middle school educators all across New York State. We are looking specifically for concrete, Common Core-driven lessons and/or activities that you have used successfully in your classroom.

If your Common Core lesson is selected, it will be featured in an upcoming issue of *In Transition* and you will receive complementary copies of the publication.

Guidelines for submissions are as follows:

1. **Length:** One to two paragraph description/overview of the lesson. Be sure to include how this lesson and/or activity is linked to a unit of study (i.e. your grade level curriculum map). Also include any specific grouping and also any types of assessment (formative/summative) that this lesson incorporates.

2. **Demographics:** Include grade level, content area and any other special considerations for the lesson.

3. **Common Core Standards:** Please list the Common Core Standards that this lesson addresses.

4. **Sample(s):** Please include either a sample of a task or assessment that goes along with the activity and/or a student sample.

5. **A written statement/contact information:** Please include contact information including your name(s), school, grade level and a contact email where you are willing to receive follow up emails from educators who are seeking additional information regarding your lesson.

❋❋❋

1. **Submit** your Common Core Standards-driven lesson to the *In Transition* editors at **editor@nymsa.org**

2. **Sign the following release:** All lessons submitted and selected will become the property of the New York State Middle School Association. You will be notified if your lesson is selected. That lesson then becomes the property of the NYSMSA and will be used for a future publication of *In Transition*.

_____
(Teacher's Signature)   (Date)

A few thoughts from the President…
Stephen Parker Zielinski

Stephen Parker Zielinski

It's hard to be a middle-level advocate these days.

Some would say that the overwhelming issues of the times in public education — terrible economics, standardized testing, public vs. private structure, national curriculum, global competition, the list goes on of course — are too big to be ignored and relegate the middle-level discussion to an unaffordable luxury. But for me, and for the colleagues I know and work with, a reasonable response to the lawmakers is: Have you spent any time recently with an American pre-teenager?

As recently as ten years ago, we in New York felt that we were getting some traction in the quest for effective middle schools. The research seemed to be reaching the practitioner, and the message seemed to be landing home. Setting a pre-adolescent on the road to success was both doable AND vital; we knew that the work was significantly different from an elementary or a high school approach, and we knew that the ten-to-fourteen-year-old brain was prime for a particular brand of educational program. We were excited about helping schools learn that dropouts are not "born" in high school; they originate when students finally realize that the lack of success they experience in school is not going to

change, and the same old cycle of failure is doomed to keep repeating until someone pulls the plug. The moment typically happens around 7th and 8th grade.

To make a difference, educational programs for these students need to meet them where they are. Success breeds success, and it all starts with *relationships*. As the emerging teenagers figure out who they are and how they fit in, they need to be surrounded by people who consistently and compassionately encourage healthy choices. The foundation for academic success, far from elusive at this age as some would have you believe, is a simultaneous building of core knowledge and skill along with a deliberate connecting to prior knowledge and outside experiences. For a school that also takes a proactive and caring approach to peer-to-peer and student-to-adult interactions, and ensures that each student in the building is given personal and academic support, the progress is a beautiful thing to watch. You undoubtedly have your favorite version of the Marley-Scrooge scene in *A Christmas Carol* mostly memorized ("mankind was my business!!") — that's essentially the idea. It's truly important, and in fact, nothing is more important.

If you are firmly planted in this fertile middle school ground, you are able to see that the all-consuming reform of NYS education is still only the ENVIRONMENT for our work, and not the work itself. Specifically:

1. Our economic woes in the state are real, and they are having a major impact on our personnel (and even our fiscal solvency as districts), but they don't have anything to do

with the day-to-day interactions we have with students. Believe me, we all know that it's harder to make a middle school program work when our structures are decimated, but in every case, the important job is to continue doing what we CAN do to align our school with the mission. Nothing trumps the student-to-teacher connection.

2. Teacher and principal evaluation systems matter to the adults, but they don't matter to kids. I would never minimize the fundamental concerns we public educators have about APPR, but it's a shame that so much of our professional development time these days is about the logistics of an evaluation system for the adults. We've lost a lot of time learning about how to be effective in the classroom or collaborating on best practice.

3. The Common Core Learning Standards is in the curriculum category, which does not necessarily speak to instruction and assessment. We will still always need to meet students where they are developmentally and in terms of readiness if we are to be effective. A national curriculum is an interesting and possibly valuable proposition, but it will never turn an ineffective teacher into an effective one, and it is doomed to fail in the middle grades unless it is implemented with proven middle-level methods. Ultimately, we are charged with improving ELA and math skills with a laser-like focus, and that's always going to be a big job. Most of us believe that a strong middle-level exploratory curriculum in science, technology, history, geography, civics, foreign language, physical education, health, and the arts enhances success with all 21st century skills. High quality, developmentally appropriate instruction is the vehicle to success.

4. Standardized tests, in all their forms, are in the assessment category, and are just one measure of learning. There has been so much good work done in the last decade on formative assessment and progress monitoring; we should care primarily about students meeting appropriate learning goals. It's harder than ever to trust what we probably all know is the truth: good work in the classroom, well supported with professional oversight, leads to the best result on all measuring tools. We should pay more attention to the work and less attention to the tool — unless the tool provides useful feedback to the mission.

Big governmental-style entities work with different pressures than those on the ground. We are surrounded by examples of statewide and national discussions that begin to stray from the obvious fundamental truths that won't change regardless of what happens with policy. In the case of middle-level education, all the policy in the world won't change what a student needs to succeed: caring adults operating a developmentally sound program that keeps the student first.

Let's not forget it!

Research at a Glance

Jeff Craig, NYSMSA Director of Research and Technology

The purpose of this feature of In Transition *is to provide a succinct research reference for middle-level practitioners. Topics will reflect timely issues and best practices. To suggest a topic for a future* Research at a Glance*, send your suggestion to* craig@nysmsa.org. *As always, you can find dozens of resources about the* Essential Elements *at the Middle Level Essentials section of* nysmsa.org.

This month's extended column is an excerpt from my (as of yet) unfinished dissertation in which I am exploring the relationship between Essential Element implementation and student achievement. While I hope to share that research with you in the future, this selection from the literature review explains the history of the middle-level construct in New York State.

A History of Middle-Level Education in New York State

Introduction

For as long as public education has been a widespread phenomenon in the United States there have been different views about how to organize schools and programs for students who are nine to fourteen years of age. Elementary grades have been organized such that students spend most of their day together in one classroom. High schools have been organized into discreet periods of time for different subjects, with students moving from one subject to the next. Over the past century, schools for nine to fourteen year-olds have looked sometimes like elementary schools, sometimes like high schools, and sometimes

like a hybrid of the two, depending on which approach was in favor.

Historical Organization of Middle-Level Education

As the population of the United States shifted from thinly settled agrarian areas to towns and cities, the organization of public schools evolved. Early schools were small, and differentiated grade patterns were not common (George & Alexander, 1993). As population centers grew, so did the schools located in them. Grammar schools, finishing schools, academies, and high schools emerged. According to Alexander and George, as schools became increasingly organized, an 8-4 structure (elementary school consisting of eight years and high school of four) predominated.

It wasn't until the beginning of the 20th century that the idea of a separate school for seventh and eighth graders began to take root. The first separate schools for students aged nine to fourteen began in 1909–1910 in Columbus, Ohio, and Berkeley, California (Clark & Clark, 1993). Soon after these schools were established, the idea of separate schools quickly spread in the more densely populated areas of the country. There were 2,000 such schools by 1925 and 10,000 by 1947 (Hansen & Hern, 1971, as cited in Clark & Clark). Another way to look at this rapid growth is to consider that 80% of students were educated in an 8-4 (or 7-4) structure in 1920; just forty years later, 20% of students experienced the 8-4 structure (George & Alexander, 1993). Accompanying this growth was the widespread development of textbooks and other

resources as well as the inevitable development of laws and regulations (Clark & Clark, 1993).

During this period of growth, many districts moved grades seven to nine into buildings separate from the elementary and high schools, thus creating a 6-3-3 structure (George & Alexander, 1993). A driving force in this reorganization was overcrowding at both the elementary and high school levels (George & Alexander, 1993). Another reason for creating these "junior high schools" was to emphasize the needs of early adolescents (Clark & Clark, 1993).

Clark and Clark report that the "'Seven Cardinal Principles' broadened the scope of educational aims beyond subject mastery to include citizenship, vocation, family membership, and leisure activities" (p. 449). John Lounsbury credits junior high schools with several significant contributions: the expansion of the curriculum beyond the core subjects to include foreign languages, laboratory science, industrial arts, and home economics; the incorporation of guidance and counseling functions; extracurricular opportunities and school-sponsored clubs; and deliberate attention to socialization (1992). The junior high model had become common by the 1920s and was meeting a variety of student-centered goals. Yet, as the century progressed, concerns over the junior high school configuration began to emerge. Departmentalization into an organizational structure based on different subjects, as in high schools, started to become the primary organizational characteristic of the junior highs, and some educators were beginning to question whether this was appropriate for early adolescents (Clark & Clark, 1993). In 1954 the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) released an influential publication that was critical of junior high schools' organization and insensitivity to student needs:

This [junior high school] type of organization provides too abrupt a change from the self-contained classroom of the elementary school, too little relationship between the subjects and interests and needs of young adolescents, and too little time for any teacher to carry out the varied type of program needed by young adolescents. (George & Alexander, 1993, p. 26)

The criticisms were amplified in ASCD's 1961 publication *The Junior High School We Need*. The report also indicated how improvements to schools could be undertaken under the direction of professional leadership and with the help of communities who care about their local junior high schools (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1961).

In an analysis of the decline of junior high schools as an organizational option, Lounsbury identified the qualities of junior high schools that led to the dissatisfaction with the model and resulting calls for change: too great a similarity to high schools; a lack of specific policy and regulation directing its programs; overwhelming departmentalization; poor facilities; and inadequately prepared teachers (1992). Clark and Clark identified widespread tracking in ability groups, which accompanied departmentalization, as a reason for concern with the junior high school model (1993). For these reasons, and perhaps because society, too, was changing, the beginning of the 1960s heralded another shift in the structures and patterns for the education of early adolescents.

By the mid-1960s, concerns about the junior high school model had become commonplace, and there was a growing consensus that junior high schools were not fulfilling their promise for young adolescents (Clark & Clark, 1993). In fact, an entire issue of a 1965 *Educational Leadership* was themed with the title "Junior High School: Transition in

Chaos?" The issue was filled with articles about junior high school structures, unfulfilled promises, and the characteristics and needs of young adolescents. It was also in 1965, just before publication of the *Educational Leadership* issue, that William Alexander gave a speech in which he referred to a new model for schools: middle school (Rozenweig, 1997).

Following is one of the first descriptions of the school organization now labeled middle school (Alexander & Williams, 1965):

- A real middle school should be designed to serve the needs of older children, preadolescents, and early adolescents;
- A middle school organization should make the reality of the long-held ideal of individualized instruction;
- A middle school program should give high priority to the intellectual components of the curriculum;
- A middle school program should place primary emphasis on skills of continued learning;
- A middle school should provide a rich program of exploratory experiences;
- A program of health and physical education should be designed especially for boys and girls in the middle school years;
- An emphasis on values should underlie all aspects of a middle school program; and
- The organization of a middle school should facilitate most effective use of the special characteristics and interests of the teaching staff (pp. 219–221).

In 1966 Donald Eichhorn published *The Middle School*, which is also credited as one of the groundbreaking descriptions of middle schools (Clark & Clark, 1993). At the same time that these milestone publications were gaining acceptance, middle schools and middle-level programs were popping up all over the country, from New York to California and from Illinois to Florida (George & Alexander, 1993). According to George and Alexander, rapid growth followed; by the end of the 1960s there were more than 2,000 middle-level schools throughout the country.

While some of these school reorganizations were driven by the developmental needs of students and unsuccessful junior high programs, other reasons contributed to the explosion of 6-8 and 5-8 school grade organizations. Overcrowding at both the elementary and high school was eased by the creation of more middle schools (George & Alexander, 1993). Also, as southern schools were reorganized to achieve desegregation, middle schools were frequently included in court-ordered desegregation plans (George & Alexander, 1993).

Expansion of middle-level schools and programs continued, and by 1971 nearly one-quarter of all schools with a seventh grade were organized in either a 6-7-8 or a 5-6-7-8 configuration (Valentine & Goodman, 2005). According to Valentine and Goodman, this trend of expansion continued until more than two-thirds of middle-level schools were configured in this way. As the 6-7-8 configuration became more prevalent, the 7-8-9 configuration began to disappear (George & Alexander, 1993).

In 1975 ASCD replaced its 1961 *The Junior High We Need* publication with a new publication that reflected both the trends in school organization and the then-current thinking about how schools should be programmatically oriented. The publication was entitled *The Middle School We Need*. It is interesting to note that the 1975 document identified a problem that would persist until this day, that is, that schools were changing their name from junior high to middle school without significantly updating their practices to reflect the current best thinking about middle-level practices.

At approximately the same time, the National Middle School Association was formed as an outgrowth of a regional middle-level association (National Middle School Association, 1988). The fact that such an organization, dedicated to the middle-level, was thriving is evidence of the spread of middle-level patterns and practices across the nation. State level associations dedicated to middle-level education formed in many states; now there are at least forty-three states that have their own middle-level organization (National Middle School Association, 2011). The specific role of the New York State Middle School Association will be discussed later.

The number of middle-level schools and programs continued to grow through the end of the century at an unprecedented pace. George and Shewey observed that "as the 21st century looms on the horizon, the middle school movement remains the largest and most comprehensive effort at organizational and curricular change in the history of American public schooling" (1994, p. 3).

This period of rapid growth was punctuated by several significant publications, each either bringing attention to or raising an alarm about early adolescents in the United States and their education. In 1982 the National Middle School Association issued *This We Believe,* which described the characteristics of middle-level programs that were designed to meet the needs of early adolescents. This publication led to widespread dissemination of the authors' list of sixteen characteristics of effective middle schools (National Middle School Association, 1982).

Three years later, the National Association of Secondary School Principals entered the discussion with their publication, *A Consumer's Guide to Middle-level Education*. Like *This We Believe*, this document was supposed to provide the authoritative defini-

tion of excellence in middle-level programming (Middle Level Education Council of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1985). The programmatic, curricular, and organizational recommendations contained in this document echoed those of the Middle Level Education Council of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (1985) and helped establish a widely shared definition of a middle school.

The conversation about early adolescents' needs and their education expanded to wider, noneducation audiences with the Carnegie Foundation's *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century* (1989). This nationally publicized report introduced the general public to the issue of middle-level education. Carnegie followed this report with *Great Transitions: Preparing Adolescents for a New Century,* which broadened the conversation that *Turning Points* began, to include all adolescents, not just early adolescents (1996). Early adolescence was again identified as a "crucial turning point," and adolescents were thought to be in need of careful and deliberate education (1996). *Turning Points* was revisited and updated in 2000 to reflect work that had been done in middle-level education during the previous decade. *Turning Points 2000* relied more heavily on research, however limited it might have been, to support its recommendations.

Also at the close of the century, the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform mobilized to influence middle-level education and maintain progress toward goals of academic excellence, developmental responsiveness, social equity, and organization (National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform, 2011). The forum included representatives from many professional associations and funding from a variety of foundations (2011). They developed the Schools to Watch program, which both recognized good middle-level programs and disseminated information

about their principles of effective middle-level education; the first four middle schools were identified as "worth watching" in 2000. Nineteen states now have a state-based program that mirrors the national Schools to Watch program (2011).

The most recent, large-scale reform effort for middle-level education came from the National Association of Secondary School Principals in 2006. Based on the widely utilized Breaking Ranks strategy of high schools, *Breaking Ranks in the Middle: Strategies for Leading Middle-level Reform,* was issued. It was advertised as "a field guide to school improvement" (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2006, p. v). The guide was distributed widely to all middle schools and all high schools in the country. A professional development component accompanied the release of the guide.

The dramatic expansion of middle schools and middle-level programs occurred primarily in the second half of the 21st century. The expansion was not without controversy, as is usually the case with any change or reform. A dramatic criticism of middle schools, based on declining achievement in a district in Maryland, received national attention when it appeared in *Education Week* (Bradley, 1998). Even the title of the article was designed to provoke emotion: "Muddle in the Middle." In that article Bradley connected declining academic achievement to a curriculum that was too broad and not deep enough for rigorous study. He reported that a group of parents was upset over the changes in the middle school that caused the decline in student achievement.

Questions about the effectiveness of middle schools emerged nationally with the 2000 release of the results of the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS-RR), which categorized the science and mathematics achievement of eighth

graders in the United States as subpar (Erb, 2001). Erb commented that newspaper headlines across the country put a negative spin on results indicating that American students scored above the middle of the pack internationally. As a result of the negative portrayal of these results, middle schools were blamed for a lack of achievement in math and science. No study was done of the actual practices and programs in middle schools; nor was there any mention that implementation of middle school goals was incredibly inconsistent from school to school. All middle-level programs were painted with the same brush. Erb cautioned that, despite incomplete implementation of middle-level practices across the nation, "a powerful momentum is growing in this country to dismantle middle schools even before they have been widely implemented" (p. 4).

Soon after the TIMMS-RR study was making headlines, a widely read article in the *Middle School Journal*, "Reinventing the Middle School," compounded concerns by identifying six factors that had led to the incomplete implementation of middle-level components (Dickinson & Butler, 2001). The authors suggested that many schools changed their name to middle school, but did not change the practices within the school. They gave six reasons for what they labeled as "arrested development" of the middle-level movement:

1. An incremental improvement model that led to few changes being implemented slowly;

2. The lack of changes in teacher preparation programs and certification paths;

3. A focus on organization and structure of schools to the detriment of a focus on curricula and standards;

4. A leadership failure on the part of the National Middle School Association;

5. The lack of research to identify the positive impact of the middle-level model; and

6. Failure to implement the entire middle-level model as a whole rather than individual components.

Unless these issues were addressed, en masse criticism would continue according to Dickinson and Butler.

Just a month later, the arrested development of middle schools was addressed in a monograph entitled "The Misdirection of Middle School Reform" (Bandlow, 2001). The paper argued that too much time was spent in middle schools on social/emotional issues and not enough attention was paid to academic issues. Bandlow added to the "growing body of critics" (p. 69) with his own criticism of the middle school model. He did not suggest that the middle school model be abandoned wholesale; rather he argued that academic achievement, particularly in math and science, must receive a greater emphasis than social and emotional support.

A large study funded by the Rand Corporation was released in 2004. This comprehensive study attempted to settle the question of the effectiveness of middle school reform:

> The reputation of U.S. middle schools today leaves in doubt whether these schools serve teens well. Middle schools have been called the Bermuda Triangle of education and have been blamed for increases in behavior problems, teen alienation, disengagement from school, and low achievement (p. xv).

The study identified measures showing that, in addition to low math and science test scores, middle school students were doing poorly on other state and national assessments (Juvonen, et al., 2004). The study also cited persistent achievement gaps, although there might have been some modest achievement increases and modest closing of the gaps. According to these authors, the effectiveness of middle-level programs and interventions depends on how those elements fit with the overall culture of the school and the depth of implementation of such programs as flexible scheduling, advisory programs, and interdisciplinary team teaching (Juvonen, et al.).

In 2005 two critiques garnered national attention. First, *Time* magazine asked the question: "Is Middle School Bad for Kids?" Like the headlines of the reports and position papers detailed above, the very title of this article implied that middle schools are, indeed, bad for kids. The article reiterated what the other studies say about the achievement shortcomings of middle schools and added anecdotal fuel to the fire. The article asked: "How did middle schools, which were ushered in with such fanfare 25 years ago, fall into such disrepute?" (p. 3). A frequent response to inadequate achievement is a call for K–8 schools and an abandonment of the doomed 6-8 or 5-8 middle-level configuration. The article concluded that a knee-jerk response might be foolhardy — that what goes on in school is what really matters. A knee-jerk reaction of abandoning middle-level ideas might be just as hasty a reform as was the move away from junior high schools some twenty-five years ago.

The other report of 2005, again with a loaded title, appeared a month after the *Time* article. In this instance, the title "Mayhem in the Middle" evoked images of chaotic and unproductive middle school environments with early adolescents running amok. This report claimed that "academic achievement plummets between the fourth and eighth grades" (p. i). This opening statement set the tone for a monograph that is highly critical of middle schools and suggested that a thorough reform of middle-level education is warranted (Yecke, 2005). In this article, data were used to illustrate the academic failure of middle schools, and the same questioning of grade configuration was recycled. More so than other critical reports, however, Yecke's report did not concede that incomplete or imperfect

implementation of the middle school model might be a partial explanation for the less-than-desired achievement results. Yecke stated that "middle schoolism must end" (p. iv).

Where did that leave the middle-level reform agenda? Is the history of middle-level education coming to an end? This question is being asked on a national level. What is the story in New York State? The following examination of middle-level reform in New York State will identify both parallels and departures from the national story line.

Middle-Level History/Organization in New York State

The maturation of the middle-level movement in New York State parallels the evolution of middle-level education nationally. In fact, the 1965 speech referenced earlier in this chapter, in which William Alexander first used the "middle school" label, occurred at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York (Rozenweig, 1997). As enrollments increased in many New York schools during the 1960s, districts elected to increase capacity from the middle with middle-level schools, just as they did in pockets across the country.

For example, Jamesville-DeWitt Middle School, located in a suburb of Syracuse, constructed a school in 1968 that was designed to reflect middle-level programmatic and organization premises (P. Smith, personal communication, April 15, 2011). The school was built with school-within-a-school structures and was actually labeled as a middle school from its conception. Another early middle school in New York State, Alton U. Farnsworth Middle School located in Guilderland (a suburb of Albany), was deliberately built around a middle-level philosophy in 1970 (J. McGuire, personal communication, April 26, 2011).

Each of these schools was listed in the first edition of *The Exemplary Middle School*

(Alexander & George, 1981). That same volume described a pilot implementation of a middle-level approach that began in the fall of 1969 in Briarcliff, New York. Also mentioned were two other middle schools in New York: Ballston Spa Middle School and Hendrick Hudson School in Montrose (Alexander & George, 1981). These examples show that, prior to 1981, middle-level schools were being implemented in different locations in the state. Just as the pace of reorganization quickened nationally during the 1970s, the same occurred in New York State, as evidenced by a statewide survey in 1982 indicating that at least seventy-two districts had changed their grade-level pattern in recent years (New York State Education Department, 1983). Table 4 describes enrollment trends over several decades. Dramatic change is evident in both the 6-8 and 5-8 configurations.

In 1980 a professional association dedicated to middle-level education was formed: the New York State Middle School Association (Kane, 2001). The group held their first conference in 1981 in Albany, and their journal, *In Transition*, has been published continuously since 1984. Many of the leaders of the state association also provided leadership to the National Middle School Association (Kane, 2001).

The State Education Department of New York, "in response to requests from local school districts," actively demonstrated its support of middle-level education in New York with the publication in 1983 of the *Resource Monograph on Grade-Level Organization*. David Payton, a principal author of the publication, was tapped by the State Education Department soon after that to provide school districts with information about early adolescence and middle-level education (1984). The resulting publication, *Resource Monograph on Middle Level Students,* provided districts in New York State with a

Table 4

Grade-Level Reorganization in New York State.

Grade Span	81–82	91–92	01–02	02–03	03–04	04–05	23-Year Change (number and %)	
							Number	%
K/1–5	452	789	1,147	1172	1164	1220	+768	+170%
K/1–6	1,468	981	570	547	530	495	-973	-66%
K/1–8	71	60	106	106	103	113	+42	+59%
K/1–12					76	80	+4	—
5–8	50	87	99	98	110	115	+65	+130%
6–8	162	292	463	473	478	494	+332	+205%
6–9	34	30	13	11	16	15	-19	-56%
6–12	16	30	45	48	51	54	+38	+238%
7–8	120	93	75	73	72	73	-47	-39%
7–9	211	78	25	23	26	20	-191	-91%
7–12	227	224	156	146	131	133	-94	-41%
9–12	398	470	595	604	620	628	+230	+58%
10–12	109	36	21	16	15	16	-93	-85%

Note*: Adapted from New York State Middle School Association (2005).*

summary of reorganization trends, along with a summary of the research about middle-level students. While not providing regulatory instructions to school districts to adopt a middle-level philosophy, the publication did conclude that "it is critical for schools and school personnel to keep abreast of current developments related to the nature of adolescence and adolescents. Only in this way can they assure that each will receive an optimum learning experience" (p. 27).

Regulatory changes that followed redefined the requirements for grades seven and eight (Payton, 2004). "In an effort to inject additional rigor and purpose into the middle-grade program…the Board of Regents undertook a sweeping revision of [regulation]" (Payton, p. 4). The significance of this action by the Board of Regents, in addition to the obvious implications for program and requirements, is that the top level of educational leadership in the state clearly recognized the changing nature of the education of early-adolescents.

Even more significant than the regulatory changes was the issuance of the "Regents Policy Statement on Middle Level Education and Schools with Middle-Grades" (New York State Education Department, 1989). This document expressed in no uncertain terms the importance of an approach to middle-level education that is based on the needs and characteristics of ten to fourteen year-olds. In it, the Regents stated that "middle-level education is different from education in the elementary grades and the education in the high school," and "school should not simply impose an elementary or high school orientation and structure on middle-level students, but should look carefully at the needs of middle-level students and the organization of middle-level education" (New York State Education Department, 1989, p. 1). The policy statement recognized the needs of early-

adolescents and made a number of detailed recommendations for school programs and organization that could respond to those needs. The categories included in the document presaged most of those that would later become the primary organizing categories for the *Essential Elements of Standards-Focused Middle-level School and Programs*:

- The Transition from Childhood to Adolescence

- Philosophy and Mission

- Educational Program

- Organization and Structure

- Classroom Instruction

- Student Support

- Professional Training and Staff Development (New York State Education Department)

During the same year, the State Education Department was reorganized to include a department entitled Office of Elementary, Middle, Secondary, and Continuing Education. The fact that the State Education Department would reorganize in this way is further evidence that middle-level education was firmly rooted in New York State.

To accompany the reorganization in the State Education Department and to support middle-level efforts across the state, the Statewide Network of Middle Level Liaisons was created in 1989. This network was comprised of representatives from each of the BOCES and big cities in the state. It met twice each year, in Albany, to act as a link between the State Education Department and middle-level educators across the state. In later years, the liaisons defined their role with their mission statement: "As representatives of statewide middle-level education, our purpose is to advocate for middle-level needs, inform [the State Education Department] about middle-level issues, and collaborate with [the State Education Department] on

matters that impact Middle-level Education" (New York State Middle-level Liaisons Network, 2008). In the years following its formation, the network helped author the *Essential Elements of Standards-Focused Middle-level Schools and Programs* and the rubrics that accompanied those *Essential Elements*; network members assisted with research and participated in the *Essential Elements: Schools-to-Watch* school recognition program.

The recognition of the importance of middle-level education was not unique to middle-level educators. Later in the same year that the Regents Policy Statement was adopted, the New York State Council of Educational Associations (NYSCEA) published the monograph *Middle-level Education …The Challenge*. Representing thirty-seven statewide educational organizations and professional associations in New York, NYSCEA considered it important to support the Regents Policy Statement with position papers from a variety of disciplines, from mathematics to Latin to music to science (New York State Council of Educational Associations, 1989). The first chapter in the monograph consisted of a reprinting of the Regents Policy Statement; subsequent chapters were written by authors from the different educational associations. Uniting the discipline-specific perspectives was the shared belief that "middle-level education is different from education in the elementary grades and in the high school, because these students are experiencing a unique phase of life, the change from childhood to adolescence" (p. 1).

Early in the 1990s a series of publications by the New York State Education Department provided support and guidance to middle-level programs across the state. The two-volume *Promising Programs and Practices in Middle Level Education* was released, offering descriptions of practices in schools in New York State, along with contact information so that the schools could be asked for further

information (New York State Education Department, 1990, 1996a). These publications were organized into two general headings: School Structure and Organization, and Classroom Instruction. Each general heading was subdivided into seven areas, each addressing different components of middle-level programs and practices. The volumes also contained directories of schools that had been recognized nationally or at a state level so that they, too, could be contacted for further information about their programs and practices (New York State Education Department).

Another publication that was provided by the State Education Department recognized that middle-level implementation might look a little different in smaller rural districts than it does in larger suburban and urban districts. This document, *Implementing Middle Level Education in Small Rural Schools*, provided information about early adolescence, middle-level research, leadership, and advice for implementation in rural schools (New York State Education Department, 1995).

During the early 1990s, New York was one of 11 states that collaborated with the Carnegie Corporation in the identification of best practices in middle-level education (David Payton, personal communication, June 27, 2011). This collaboration explains the similarity between the national *Turning Points* publication from the Carnegie Corporation and the publications from the New York State Education Department.

As the importance of a strong mission and vision for middle-level schools and programs became evident, the New York State Education Department released a publication specifically intended to help schools identify their own middle-level mission and vision: *Developing a Mission Statement for a Middle Level School* (New York State Education Department, 1996b). It states:

without a clearly defined mission or purpose that has the support of the extended school community, middle-level schools will be without long-term direction, constantly reacting and responding to external pressures from various and often competing special interest groups. (New York State Education Department, p. 1)

This document provided step-by-step suggestions for crafting a mission statement for middle-level schools and programs. It included examples of mission statements from other middle-level schools in the state.

In 1997 a program was introduced that provided a mechanism for peer review and feedback to middle-level programs. The New York State Middle-level Review Program involved teams of practicing middle-level educators, who visited and examined a school's middle-level program and then provided feedback (New York State Education Department, 1997). The effort was a collaborative venture between the State Education Department, the Middle-level Liaisons Network, and the New York State Middle School Association. It was not a formal accreditation program; rather it provided a protocol that schools could follow in carrying out a structured review of their program, and in making school improvement efforts.

At the same time the review program was initiated, a comprehensive professional development curriculum for middle-level educators was introduced (New York State Middle School Association, 1997). Teams of educators from both the Middle-level Liaisons and the New York State Middle School Association developed standards and performance indicators for a comprehensive, six-day curriculum for professional development intended to provide middle-level educators with a firm background regarding the characteristics of early adolescents and the qualities of effective middle-level schools and pro-

grams. In the years that followed, Middle-level Academies using that curriculum were conducted in different regions across the state. The New York State Middle School Association organized and sponsored the academies; the faculty for them came from the ranks of both the New York State Middle School Association and the Middle-level Liaisons.

The dramatic increase in the number of middle-level schools during the 1990s can be attributed to the considerable support, encouragement, and guidance described in this section. It is clear that the State Education Department, Middle-level Liaisons, and Middle School Association were working in complementary and coordinated ways to encourage research and best-practice-based programs for early adolescents across the state. These same groups, working together in 2000, prepared the ultimate testament for middle-level education in New York: *Essential Elements of Standards-Focused Middle-level Schools and Programs* (New York State Middle School Association, 2003). The *Essential Elements* picked up where the 1989 Regents Policy Statement left off, providing a set of seven defining characteristics of middle-level programs (note the similarity to the categories included in the 1989 Regents Policy Statement):

1. A philosophy and mission that reflect the intellectual and developmental needs and characteristics of young adolescents (youth ten to fourteen years of age).

2. An educational program that is comprehensive, challenging, purposeful, integrated, relevant, and standards-based.

3. An organization and structure that support both academic excellence and personal development.

4. Classroom instruction appropriate to the needs and characteristics of young adolescents provided by skilled and knowledgeable teachers.

5. Strong educational leadership and a building administration that encourage, facilitate, and sustain involvement, participation, and partnerships.

6. A network of academic and personal support available for all students.

7. Professional learning and staff development for all staff that are ongoing, planned, purposeful, and collaboratively developed (New York State Education Department, 2003).

Each of the seven *Essential Elements* is accompanied by a specific list of characteristics. Together they provide a detailed blueprint for schools that reflects research and best practices. Eventually, the *Essential Elements* were codified in the commissioner's regulations: "Districts shall ensure that the middle-level program is aligned with the Regents policy statement on middle-level education and the State Education Department's *Essential Elements* of standards-focused middle-level schools and programs" (New York State Education Department, 2010a). The *Essential Elements* also reflects national descriptions of good middle-level education.

A pair of research studies was conducted to examine the relationship between the *Essential Elements* and student achievement (Payton & Zseller, 2000; Payton, 2001). These studies, discussed in the final section of this writing, identified a positive relationship between implementation of the *Essential Elements* and student achievement.

Since the release and codification of the *Essential Elements* occurred, a number of strategies and initiatives have been delivered to the middle-level education community to encourage and ensure the fidelity of implementation of the *Essential Elements*. A State-wide Network of Middle-level Education Support Schools was identified in 2003; other schools could turn to the network's partici-

pants for advice. The network also published rubrics, a detailed description of the *Essential Elements,* and scales of implementation that schools could use to examine their middle-level programs (New York State Middle School Association, 2004). A set of three protocols was prepared for schools and districts to follow in examining their middle-level program (New York State Middle School Association, 2006). These protocols walked educators through an awareness stage, an assessment stage, and a school improvement planning stage. As a result of following the protocols, schools would be well on their way toward faithful implementation of the *Essential Elements*.

New York worked with the Schools-to-Watch recognition program of the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reforms, aligning that national construct for middle-level education with the *Essential Elements*. The *Essential Elements* Schools-to-Watch program in New York State has recognized sixteen middle schools, based on evidence of *Essential Elements* implementation and student achievement records (New York State Middle School Association, 2011). Additionally, three schools have been identified as nearly meeting the criteria for recognition (New York State Middle School Association). While this program's obvious result is the recognition of schools, it operates as a mechanism for supporting and encouraging schools to implement the *Essential Elements*. Recognized schools regularly write and present about their experiences and, in fact, are obligated to share their experience and open their schools to visits. This program, with the many described here, has contributed to the expansion of middle-level education in New York State.

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Lea's Lessons
Lea Macdonald

The Importance of Formative Assessment for Young Adolescent Learners

"*From judging performance to guiding students to shaping instruction to informing learning, coming to grips with formative assessment is one insightful journey.*"

—Carol Ann Tomlinson

The nearly universal national adoption of the Common Core Standards is bringing formative assessment and its purposes back to the forefront. Formative assessment is crucial for responsive teaching and reflective learning. This article explores how to embrace this mandate in a way that has real, valuable impacts on student growth.

Formative assessment is an ongoing process that evokes evidence about student learning and provides feedback about learning to teachers and to students. Formative assessment involves far more than testing. It delivers information during the instructional process before the final, summative assessment. When teachers assess student learning for formative purposes, there is no grade on the paper. Rather, it serves as an indicator of where the student is on the continuum of novice to expert in their comprehension of the concepts they have learned in class.

Formative assessment is one of the most important aspects of a differentiated classroom. I believe that my students perform better on end-of-unit tests because I am checking their progress on an ongoing basis during each unit. Assessments that come at the end of a unit are less useful to a teacher than assessments that occur during a unit of study. When teachers study student work during the course of a unit of study, they have the opportunity to do many things to support or enrich student learning.

One of the most important aspects of formative assessment is feedback. Formative assessment, consisting of lots of feedback and opportunities to use that feedback, enhances performance and achievement. Teachers need to give clear, descriptive, criterion-based feedback to students:

- Where they are in the learning process
- How their response differed from that reflected in the desired learning goal
- How they can move forward

Students are partners in formative assessment and learning. Effective descriptive feedback identifies strengths, suggests areas for improvement, and determines a map a student can follow to close the learning gap between where they are now and where they need to be.

There are many other strategies in addition to feedback that teachers can use with their students. Pre-assessment is used to assess where a student is in relation to a concept, content, or skill before a unit of study begins. Many teachers use the KWL chart or pre-tests. One of my favorite strategies is an anticipation guide.

Anticipation Guide

In order to activate prior knowledge of a topic, the teacher creates an anticipation guide. It lists major concepts that are covered in the text as well as untrue, distracting state-

ments. Students are asked to read the statements and predict whether those statements are true or false. After reading the text, students verify their predictions. The activity is then followed by a class discussion to clarify key concepts.

Steps to Creating an Anticipation Guide
1. The teacher should identify the major concepts in the text. The students' prior knowledge and experiences should also be accounted for.

2. Create five to ten statements related to major concepts in the lesson. Some should be true and others should contain inaccurate or false information.

3. Present the anticipation guide. Ask students to mark *true* or *false* for each statement.

4. Have students get together in small groups to discuss their answers. Each group must come to a consensus on whether it thinks the statement is true or false. Students should be encouraged to justify their decisions. Have each group share its prediction for each statement. The teacher or students can ask a group to explain its reasoning.

5. Direct students to read the selection to find out if their predictions are accurate. They need highlighters or post-it notes to mark key concepts and supporting details. They should mark the correct answer in the second column of their anticipation guide.

6. Conduct a follow-up discussion to clarify key concepts in the lesson.

Exit Cards
Formative assessment is used throughout the unit to diagnose a student's understandings of key concepts, content and skills. This allows a teacher to know where students are before they get to an end of the unit test and provide ongoing support. One of my most successful process assessment strategies is the use of exit cards. This is an effective strategy to assess what students have learned in class on a daily basis. At the beginning or end of class, students write on note cards stating one important idea they learned, a question they have, or possibly make a connection to what they already know about the topic. This activity helps connect one day's learning to the next, and last night's homework to this morning's discussion. It can help students focus as they begin class, or it can reinforce learning just before they leave. It also gives the teacher a sense of what students do or don't understand.

Formative assessment is a worthwhile aspect of the differentiated classroom. It yields valuable information about students' learning. It is a shift from assessment as an evaluation tool *of* students to a guidance tool *for* students. Formative assessment is a means to continually gather evidence about learning so that actions can be adapted to meet learning needs, and so that students can be active participants with their teachers in understanding how their learning is progressing and how improvements can be made.

Middle Level Memo
Ross Burkhardt

Memo #1: Young Adolescents

Introductiion

Middle Level Memo offers a quote from *This We Believe in Action: Implementing Successful Middle Level Schools* (AMLE, 2012) intended to raise significant middle level education issues and pose important questions for middle level educators.

The Quote

Young Adolescents: "The most successful middle level teachers value teaching young adolescents and interact with them in other ways to maximize their learning and support their healthy development…One of the most important qualities middle level teachers bring to their classrooms is their commitment to the young adolescents they teach. Without this commitment there is little substantive progress for either party, and teaching and learning is reduced to a lifeless and mechanical act…Teachers, administrators and other middle level educators who are committed to working with young adolescents, however, breathe life and opportunity into their teaching and into the future of the youth with whom they work." (*TWBIA*, p. 7)

Reflection Questions

How would you respond to the following questions?

1. In what ways do you "value teaching young adolescents"?
2. Where else do you interact with young adolescents beyond the classroom?
3. What are some concrete examples of "the commitment [you] bring" to your classroom and the young adolescents therein?
4. What do you think the authors mean when they use the phrase "breathe life and opportunity into their teaching"?
5. What are the implications of this passage for those who work with young adolescents?

Next Steps

Consider doing the following:

a. Discuss this passage with a colleague.
b. Discuss this passage with your PLC.
c. Discuss this passage with your department.
d. Discuss this passage as a school faculty.
e. Revise this passage so it more closely resembles your own beliefs.

Resources

The following texts and websites may be helpful:

This We Believe: Keys to Educating Young Adolescents (2010). Association for Middle Level Education — www.amle.org

Turning Points 2000: Educating Adolescents in the 21st Century (2000). Carnegie Corporation — www.carnegie.org

Breaking Ranks in the Middle: Strategies for Leading Middle Level Reform (2006). National Association of Secondary School Principals — www.nassp.org

When a Teacher Quits
Peter DeWitt, Ed.D.

State education departments will implode under the weight of their own accountability.

In a recent post by Diane Ravitch, I read the following statement: "*I'm doing something I thought I would never do — something that will make me a statistic and a caricature of the times. Some will support me, some will shake their heads and smirk condescendingly — and others will try to convince me that I'm part of the problem. Perhaps they're right, but I don't think so. All I know is that I've hit a wall, and in order to preserve my sanity, my family, and the forward movement of our lives, I have no other choice.*"

And so begins the letter of resignation by Union County Public School (North Carolina) teacher Kris Nielsen. It's a sad commentary about public education today, but not one that comes as a surprise. After years of being pushed by regulations and prodded by accountability, educators are looking for other options in life. Our present system and the rules being guided by non-education policymakers are causing people to opt out of public education.

At a recent party someone introduced me as a public school principal. To the group of six people holding their red wine it became a time to ask me all the questions they wanted to ask about public education. They asked about testing and accountability. They asked about school funding for which I had many honest answers. I can't sit back and not give them an honest answer. It's probably why I don't get invited back to parties. Before one of the gentlemen left he looked at me and said, "*Don't worry. It will get better. We have

to do something because our kids aren't competing globally.*"

I wondered where he got his information. I wondered if he heard a 30-second sound bite and decided to use it in mixed company. He was on his way out, and I was looking to leave, so I just walked away. Fighting to be heard is something public educators have had to do a lot lately. I want to say, "*Don't believe the hype.*"

When a Teacher Quits

"*I refuse to be led by a top-down hierarchy that is completely detached from the classrooms for which it is supposed to be responsible.*

"*I will not spend another day under the expectations that I prepare every student for the increasing numbers of meaningless tests.*

"*I refuse to be an unpaid administrator of field tests that take advantage of children for the sake of profit.*

"*I will not spend another day wishing I had some time to plan my fantastic lessons because administration comes up with new and inventive ways to steal that time, under the guise of PLC meetings or whatever. I've seen successful PLC development. It doesn't look like this.*

"*I will not spend another day wondering what menial, administrative task I will hear that I forgot to do next. I'm far enough behind in my own work.*

"*I will not spend another day wondering how I can have classes that are full inclusion,*

and where 50% of my students have IEPs and yet I'm given no support.

"I will not spend another day in a district where my coworkers are both on autopilot and in survival mode. Misery loves company, but I will not be that company."

Schools are not just at risk of losing creativity, they are at risk of losing incredible teachers. Some are leaving because they are stressed and the final straw of accountability has caused them to leave the profession they worked so hard to get into. Others are leaving because of budget cuts and they lost their jobs. Students are losing great teachers all because of budgets, testing and accountability, which is very much our new reality.

Unfortunately, when teachers leave the profession we are one step closer to playing into the hands of people who clearly lack any educational know-how. They believe that education should be measured, boxed up, and neatly packaged under the title of student performance. They are not improving education. They are ruining it for our students.

It is sad for me when a teacher with promise sees this as the only way out. It is sad when I read that administrators may be a part of the problem and not the solution. I realize that this is a very powerful one-sided resignation, but there have been other blogs written by teachers who are leaving the profession and they note that their administrators are taking the path of least resistance. In a recent Teaching Now Blog, *Why Teacher's Quit: It's the Principal, Stupid*, Anthony Rebora states, "The quality of the relationship with their principal was a stronger predictor of the teachers' intent to remain in the profession than factors related to workloads, administrative duties, resource availability, or the frequency of professional-development opportunities."

Stand Up, Speak Out

There are other educators, including administrators, who are taking a different route. There are teachers and administrators who are not backing down. Don Sternberg, principal of Wantagh Elementary School in New York, wrote an outstanding letter about the state of education to his parents. Among the fantastic quotations he said, "One significant issue as we move into this new school year is that we will at times find it difficult, if not impossible, to teach authentic application of concepts and skills with an eye towards relevancy. What we will be teaching students is to be effective test takers, a skill that does not necessarily translate into critical thinking — a skill set that is necessary at the college level and beyond. This will inevitably conflict with authentic educational practice — true teaching."

Or Tony Sinanis, principal of National Blue Ribbon Award winning Cantiague Elementary School on Long Island, who wrote to N.Y. State Education Commissioner Dr. John King stating, "First of all, our children are feeling overwhelmed, stressed out, and they are starting to doubt their own abilities and it is only October. Why? Maybe it is because they are being subjected to numerous difficult tests and tasks as a result of the expectations of the Student Learning Objectives (SLO's) that have recently been put in place."

In The End

As a school principal I believe we should all speak out and hang around. Many state education departments cannot possibly keep up with the pace they have set for themselves. They will implode under the weight of their own accountability. For those of us who have been in education for a long time, we know what a real education looks like…and it should never be filled with an overabundance of standardized testing or a lack of creativity.

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Sternberg, D. One principal's letter to parents: The real impact of testing and APPR. (2012, September 4). *SAANYS*. Retrieved from http://www.saanys.org/viewarticle.asp?id=3452

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The Socratic Seminar, Technology, and the Common Core
Mary Howard

The Socratic Seminar is an instructional practice that promotes critical thinking, creativity, dialogue, curiosity, and collaboration. The concept of the Socratic Seminar is named after the classical Greek philosopher Socrates and is a form of inquiry based on asking and answering questions to stimulate critical thinking and to illuminate ideas. The main goal of this instructional approach is to allow students to form deep understandings and connections to text. The Socratic style of discourse lends itself quite well to establishing critical thinkers due to the fact that Socrates believed that enabling students to think for themselves was more important than filling their heads with knowledge.

> Enabling students to think for themselves is more important than filling their heads with knowledge.
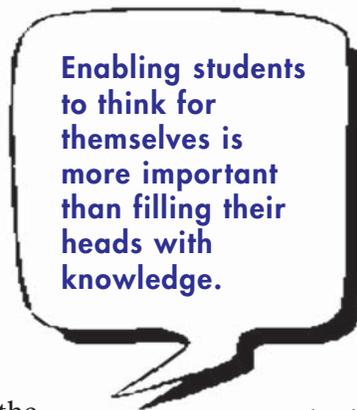
If you are unfamiliar with the Socratic Method of instruction, this approach essentially shifts the teacher's role from that of instructor to one of facilitator. It is this shift that allows students to take charge of the classroom and begin sharing their learning with one another instead of being more passive learners. Students involved in the Socratic method of discourse begin building on each other's ideas, citing evidence from text, and voicing an opinion on issues related to the text that they are reading. The seminar features cooperative dialogue rather than a debate structure, and participants work together to collectively deepen their understanding of text, themes, characters, author intent, and other critical components in literature.

With so much talk about the Common Core standards and truly increasing our students' argumentative powers and critical thinking skills, I decided to launch a Socratic Seminar style of instruction in my sixth grade classroom.

The Text

My approach began by engaging in a guided reading of a novel titled *I Can't Believe I Have To Do This* by Jan Alford. Text selection and engagement is critical to a successful Socratic Seminar. It is important to select a novel with enough depth to the characters and issues so that students can engage in critical discourse about the novel. Characters must face tough decisions and/or the novel must have an undercurrent of strong themes. Students must also be encouraged to bookmark or flag critical quotes or sections of the novel to utilize during the Socratic Discussion. Prior to holding the first seminar in our class, we spent five days engaged in a guided reading of our novel where we discussed story events and critical vocabulary associated with the readings.

The Questions

Students were given a Socratic Seminar "Prep Sheet" at the beginning of the week (Figures 1 and 2 on p.30). The sheet asked the students to do the following to prepare for Friday's seminar opportunity:

1. Briefly summarize the assigned reading
2. Identify three compelling quotes or statements from the reading

3. Develop one knowledge-based question. Students were provided 'stems' to assist them in developing these questions. The stems included:
   - Can you state, in your own words how…?
   - Can you describe…?
   - Can you summarize…?
4. Develop one *Application*-style question. Students were again provided 'stems' to encourage the development of this style of question. Application stems included:
   - Explain how…
   - Explain why…
   - Interpret the reasons…
   - Compare and contrast…
   - Connect and explain…
5. Develop one *Synthesis*-style question. The synthesis style of questions truly generated the deepest levels of discussion between the students. To answer these questions, students had to infer meaning, make predictions, and draw conclusions. The stems that they utilized included:
   - Imagine…
   - What would happen if…?
   - Hypothesize…
   - Theorize…
   - Speculate…
   - How is the text similar to the outside world…?

The Set Up

For the seminar, I arranged my room in a double horseshoe configuration and assigned five students to be "the inner circle." The inner circle students were slated to be the ones discussing and interacting with each

ELA 6   **Name:** _____
Date: _____   **Mod:** _____

Socratic Seminar Preparation Sheet Seminar Date:_____ Chpt(s): _____

Before you come to seminar you MUST read the assigned reading for the week to participate.
#1.: Summarize this section of the novel in NO MORE than 3 sentences.

#2.: Write down 3 lines, quotes, excerpts, or phrases that you found interesting, important or that just caught your attention.
P# _____   P# _____   P# _____

KNOWLEDGE BASED QUESTIONS
Knowledge means being able to show understanding by talking, writing, signing, drawing.
Please use the following stems in creating your Knowledge Questions:
Can you state, **in your own words** how…?   Can you **describe**…?   Can you **summarize**…?

Ex: Why did Dean's mother give him a journal for his birthday?

Figure 1. *Socratic Seminar Prep Sheet page 1 created by Mary Howard*

APPLICATION STYLE QUESTIONS
Appliction means that you have the ability to apply what you have learned.
Please use the following stems in creating your Application Questions:
Explain how…Explain why…Interpret the reasons…Compare and contrast…Connect and explain…

Ex: Interpret other reasons why mom provided Dean with a journal?

SYNTHESIS QUESTIONS
Synthesis demonstrates that you understand the story AND can build upon that knowledge.
Please use the following stems in creating your Synthesis Questions:
Imagine…   What would happen if…?   Hypothesize…   Theorize…   Speculate…
How is Text similar to Outside World…?

Ex: What would happen if Dean refused to write in the journal?

Figure 2. *Socratic Seminar Prep Sheet page 2 created by Mary Howard*

other. The outer circle of students was slated to observe, reflect, and provide a "backchannel."

The Discourse

To begin the seminar, I explained very clearly that the conversation was *THEIRS*. Relinquishing control, however, was extremely difficult. As a teacher, I am somewhat accustomed to directing the events that take place in class rather than allowing them to develop. Initially, it was truly awkward. Students nervously giggled and looked down at their papers, or they attempted to direct their comments to me rather than to their fellow students. I encouraged them to talk to each other and even forced myself not to make eye contact at one point. For a moment, no one seemed willing to emerge as a leader. Once the students realized that no one was coming to their rescue, the dialogue began.

Backchannel

The outer circle of students was not asked to placidly observe. It was important that they were also involved in the dialogue and engaged in the conversation that was taking place *without* verbally contributing. This group of students had two tasks. The first task was to reflect on the Socratic conversation by responding to the following prompts:

1. *Interesting insights provided by my fellow students…*

2. *Ideas or world connections I will take away from this seminar…*

3. *I am still trying to grasp the significance of…*

Each question was designed as a metacog-nitive strategy for the outer circle of students to reflect on their learning as a result of the conversations taking place in the inner circle.

In addition to the questions, I also distributed iPads to the outer circle of students and allowed them to connect on todaysmeet.com. There they posted thoughts, questions, comments, and even prompts to assist the inner

circle. This backchannel scrolled on the Smartboard throughout the seminar. Often, the inner circle of students would refer to the Today's Meet backchannel to direct their conversation.

Reflection/Assessment

Describe the relationship between dean and his mother
Sara Emma Libby at 13:19 PM 18 Jan 2013 via

Imagine if Deans mom hadn't given him a journal. how would he say what he needed to?
Bridget at 13:19 PM 18 Jan 2013 via

What do you think would've happened if dean was with Aaron and stach when they lit the firecrackers?
Nathan at 13:19 PM 18 Jan 2013 via

Do you think deans mom will check the journal to see if dean is doing it every week.
Austin at 13:19 PM 18 Jan 2013 via

Take a vote on who you think his favorite family member is
Josh at 13:20 PM 18 Jan 2013 via

Do you think he will still be friends with stach in the end?
Bridget at 13:21 PM 18 Jan 2013 via

Deans mom would get very mad at him if she ever found out Dean was with Stach and Aaron when they lit the firecrackers
Sara Emma Libby at 13:21 PM 18 Jan 2013 via

Who do u think his least favorite family member is

Figure 3: *Excerpt from Todays Meet backchannel dialog screen captured by Mary Howard*

As a summative assessment of the seminar, each student completed a Socratic Seminar Exit Slip where they exercised their argumentative writing skills by completing a one-paragraph reflection on the grade they deserved as a result of their participation in the seminar.

Without a doubt, I will continue to conduct Socratic Seminars in my classroom. Once the awkwardness ended, the dialogue went far beyond what I've ever experienced with this novel. Students shared events that related deeply to the characters, character's choices, character's experiences, and the

Socratic Seminar Exit Slip

After our Socratic Seminar, you are responsible for completing a one-paragraph reflection. This paragraph should show careful reflection and observation about your Socratic Seminar experience today in class.

Introductory Sentence

As a result of my participation in this Socratic Seminar, I feel I deserve a score of 5 points.

Three supporting pieces of evidence about your personal participation

I deserve this grade due to the fact that I provided an interesting quote from page #32 in the story, I Can't Believe I have to Do This, about Dean's experience with Aaron in school that helped him realize that Aaron was making bad choices. I also responded to Gaby when she asked a question about how Dean's relationship changed with his mother in Chapter #3. Finally, I was an active participant but also remained respectful with both my listening and response skills.

Concluding Sentence

It is for these reasons that I feel I have earned an exemplary score of 5 on today's seminar.

Figure 4. *Socratic Seminar Exit Slip created by Mary Howard*

underlying themes in the novel. They also extrapolated character traits and applied them to new situations.

The Standards Met

- **R1:** Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

- **R5:** Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and large portions of the text relate to each other and the whole.

- **SL1:** Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

- **SL6:** Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

- **L6:** Acquire and accurately use a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.

- **R2:** Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

- **W9:** Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

- **SL4:** Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

- **L:** Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

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As part of the **2013 33rd Annual NYSMSA Conference**, one-hour practitioners' workshops will be scheduled throughout the day on **Friday, October 25, 2013**. Individuals or groups are invited to submit a Call for Presenters application on any topic related to effective middle-level education. Apply via email, USPS, or fax to Monica Kwiatkowski, c/o Cuba-Rushford Middle School, 5476 Rte. 305N, Cuba NY 14727; kwiat@nysmsa.org; PH (585) 968-2650; FAX (585) 968-2651. Direct any questions to kwiat@nysmsa.org

Please note: All workshop presenters MUST be registered for the conference. Registration fees cannot be waived. **Application deadline is June 1, 2013.**

Name of primary presenter:_____

Position:_____ Phone:_____

Co-Presenter(s) if applicable:_____

_____

School/organization name:_____

School/organization address:_____

_____

Email addresses of all presenters: _____
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Attach an abstract for inclusion in the program. Please limit to 50 words or less.

Check the ONE *Essential Elements of Standards-Focused Middle-Level Schools and Programs* that your presentation most directly addresses (for *Essential Elements* details, go to nysmsa.org).

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Technology Requirements: Presentions **must** be web based or flash drive. If Internet access is required, presenters will use axdistrict-issued computers and will provide the web address the presenter requires. Please check all that apply and any special notes here:

( ) Digital / LCD projector   ( ) SmartBoard   ( ) Promethean Board   ( ) Speakers
( ) Internet (list websites here): _____
( ) Other:_____

Focus Area: Please check any that apply or note your focus area:_____

( ) Common Core	( ) RTI	( ) Guidance	( ) Advisory	( ) STEM
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Tools for Thoughtful Assessment: Making the Shifts that Lead to Higher Achievement
Harvey F. Silver, Ed.D.

Today's educators recognize that the word *assessment* means something very different today than it did just a few years ago. Assessment no longer means "assigning and grading student work." Instead, assessment has come to mean something larger, something much more central to teaching and learning. Assessment is an ongoing process that involves gathering information about student learning, using that information to make meaningful instructional decisions, and inviting students to take greater responsibility for monitoring and improving learning.

Assessment experts Jan Chappuis, Rick Stiggins, Steve Chappuis, and Judith Arter (2011) call this new approach to classroom assessment *assessment for learning*. As its name implies, assessment for learning calls on teachers to work with students to advance — rather than simply evaluate — student learning. To advance student learning through assessment, Chappuis and her team recommend teaching students to ask and seek answers to three basic questions:

- Where am I going? (What learning target am I aiming to achieve?)

- Where am I now? (What is my current level of understanding or proficiency?)

- What can I do to close the gap? (How can I use feedback, self-assessment, and learning opportunities to reach my targets?)

What I have always liked about these three questions is that they remind us that classroom assessment is a continuous and collaborative journey. But in working with teachers across the country, we have found that imple-menting such an approach requires teachers to break old habits — habits that are not always easy to change.

In our research and work in schools, we have identified five assessment habits that badly need breaking, or five key assessment shifts that teachers need to make to raise student achievement.

Shift 1: From a teacher-directed process…to a process in which students play an active role

Shift 2: From a focus on facts and memorization…to a focus on 21ˢᵗ century skills and the Common Core

Shift 3: From assessment as evaluation…to assessment as a means of advancing teaching and learning

Shift 4: From one size fits all…to differentiated assessment

Shift 5: From assessment at the end of the line…to assessment throughout the instructional process.

Nearly every teacher we speak with agrees that these shifts are critical; yet many also confess that they have not yet made them. Why? One reason is a lack of good instructional resources that enable teachers to turn general principles into actual classroom practice. As Rick Stiggins (in an interview with Sparks, 1999) puts it: "Teachers are not being given the tools they need to help students succeed, and classroom assessment tools are at the head of the list of what teachers need."

It was precisely this lack of tools that inspired us to write *Tools for Thoughtful*

Assessment: Classroom-Ready Techniques for Improving Teaching and Learning (Boutz, Silver, Jackson, & Perini, 2012). In the remainder of this article, I'll highlight two of the five shifts above and demonstrate how well-designed tools help teachers turn good ideas about classroom assessment into classroom practice that works.

Let's start with Shift 1, the shift from teacher-directed assessment to a process that invites students in. Sounds good, right? So how do we make it happen? Well, for starters, we make sure the learning targets we're asking students to asking students to work toward are clear. But we have found that writing learning targets on the board is not enough. Students need to be given the opportunity to figure out what those targets mean, to actively process what the targets are asking them to do. So how do we accomplish this level of student involvement? Backwards Learning is one way. Backwards Learning is a tool that teaches students how to analyze tasks and their cognitive demands. The tool is typically used at the beginning of the learning sequence. The teacher introduces the culminating task or assessment that students will be asked to complete by the end of the unit or learning sequence. But rather than simply previewing the task with students, teachers who use Backwards Learning invite students to get active: it becomes the students' responsibility to make sure they clearly understand the task and identify what kinds of knowledge and skills they'll need to develop to complete the task at a high level. Many teachers ask students to develop a plan of action as well. For example, Figure 1 shows how an eighth-grade student analyzed and planned for a culminating assessment task from a unit on three-dimensional shapes, surface area, and volume.

Of course, students typically don't just assume full responsibility for analyzing tasks and develop thorough plans because their

teachers ask them to. Getting students from here to there takes effort. So…

- Before using the tool, discuss the difference between knowing goals (goals that involve acquiring declarative information) and doing goals (goals related to mastering skills or procedures). Use concrete examples to help students understand the difference.

- Model the kinds of questions students should ask themselves when developing action plans. For example:
  ° Where will I look for information?
  ° Who can help me?
  ° What techniques or learning strategies will I try?

- Complete a Backwards Learning organizer as a class before asking students to try one on their own.

Tools for Thoughtful Assessment includes a host of tools that, like Backwards Learning, get students actively involved in the assessment process. What's more, we've designed the tools to help teachers involve students throughout the entire teaching and learning sequence.

- At the *beginning of the learning sequence*, teachers can use tools like Backwards Learning or Student Generated Assessment Criteria, which engages students in analyzing upcoming tasks and developing the criteria by which their work will be assessed.

- *During the learning sequence*, a tool like Stop-Slow-Go allows students direct input on the pace of instruction based on regular monitoring of their own learning.

- At the *end of the learning sequence*, teachers can use tools like Test Feedback. Test Feedback empowers students to offer their feedback on the tests they take, reflect on their performance, and consider ways to improve in the future.

Backwards Learning Organizer

Name: *Leela*   **Date:** *October 22*

ASSESSMENT TASK: At the end of this lesson or unit, what will I be asked to do or create?

Design a monument for the 3-D figures section of a new math garden that includes one of every kind of figure mentioned in the task: triangular prism, rectangular prism, triangular pyramid, rectangular pyramid, cylinder, and cone. I will need to calculate the volume of my monument and also how many bases, faces, edges, and vertices it has. I'll also have to explain my design concept using at least ten vocabulary words.

KNOWING GOALS	**DOING GOALS**
What will I need to know and understand?	What will I need to be able to do?

KNOWING GOALS
What will I need to know and understand?

- *what a 3-D figure is and what each of the six kinds of figures looks like*
- *the volume formulas for those six figures*
- *what bases, faces, edges, and vertices are*
- *the meanings of the key vocabulary terms*
- *how people go about designing monuments and whether there are guidelines I should follow when designing mine*

DOING GOALS
What will I need to be able to do?

- *Sketch the different kinds of 3-D figures*
- *Calculate the volume of each figure and combine the volumes to get a total volume*
- *Count bases, faces, edges, and vertices*
- *Describe and justify my design in writing using at least ten terms from the unit*

ACTION PLAN: What is my plan for completing this task successfully? What steps will I take?

- *I will read and summarize the key points from my text, especially the volume formulas for these figures.*
- *I will look up the definitions of the unit vocabulary words in my textbook's glossary and in my teacher's math dictionary. I will record the definitions in my math notebook using words and diagrams.*
- *I will get ideas for my design by looking for pictures of outdoor monuments online or in the library.*
- *I will use the problems at the end of the chapter to practice calculating the volumes of these figures I may practice with my friend Gillian.*
- *I will ask my teacher for help if I can't figure something out myself.*
- *I will participate and make notes during classroom lessons and activities.*
- *I will review the list of criteria before submitting my work to make sure I've included everything.*

=> Where will I look for information?
=> How can I develop these skills/behaviors?
=> Who can help me?
=> What learning or study strategies will I try?

Figure 1: Backwards Learning
Adapted from *Tools for Thoughtful Assessment* Supplemental Resources. ©2012 Silver Strong & Associates

Now, let's turn our attention to another shift, namely the shift from one-size-fits all assessment to differentiated assessment. While many teachers have committed themselves to differentiated instruction, far fewer have made this same level of commitment to differentiated assessment. We believe that differentiated assessment is just as important as differentiated instruction. By designing assessment tasks that speak to all learners, we can motivate more students, encourage students to express their unique personalities, increase the depth of student learning, and help all students learn to assess their strengths and weaknesses as learners.

To get a sense of how differentiated assessment yields these benefits, imagine this: You're in seventh grade, and you've just spent a few days learning about plate tectonics in earth science. What do you expect the final assessment task to look like? Are you feeling motivated, engaged, challenged to show what a good thinker you are? Or do you imagine a test or quiz with nothing more than a series of matching and short-answer questions?

Now imagine that your end-of-section assessment looked like Figure 2:

Mastery *"The Dirty Dozen"*	Interpersonal *"Who Cares?"*
Below are twelve critical vocabulary terms we learned in this section. Define each term *in your own words*. 1. Tectonic plates 7. Crust 2. Subduction 8. Hot spot 3. Mid-ocean ridge 9. Mantle 4. Divergent boundary 10. Inner core 5. Convergent boundary 11. Outer core 6. Transform boundary 12. Continental drift	Why should people care about plate tectonics? How is the movement of the earth's plates relevant to people around the world?
Understanding *"Make Your Case"*	Self-Expressive *"A Glimpse into the Future"*
Imagine you have a friend who doesn't believe in the existence of continental drift. What evidence can you present to convince your friend that continental drift is real?	It's five million years in the future. Based on what you have learned in this section, what will the world map look like if the earth's plates continue to drift? What changes can you forsee? Explain the reasoning behind your predictions.

Figure 2: Task Rotation

How is this end-of-unit assessment different from a traditional quiz or test? First, it's asking students to think about what they've learned in four different ways. The Mastery task requires students to remember and define the critical terms in their own words. The Understanding task asks students to develop an argument. The Self-Expressive task encourages students to make informed predictions, while the Interpersonal task helps students connect their learning to the world beyond the classroom. This means that different styles of learners are getting at least some of what they want *and* also being challenged to think outside their comfort zones. It also means that students are interacting with their learning in a far deeper way than any traditional test could hope to elicit.

Through this increased depth comes greater self-awareness ***and*** higher achievement. Self-awareness comes as teachers help students reflect on their performance and preference:

- What kind of thinking did each task require? How did you go about responding to each task?
- Which task was your favorite? Which was your least favorite?
- What did you learn about yourself as a thinker?
- What advice would you give yourself the next time we use Task Rotation?

Higher achievement comes as students learn to think and operate in all four learning styles. The proof? Robert Sternberg's (2006) research, which shows that asking students to engage with content and demonstrate their learning using a variety of thinking styles leads to significant increases in academic

achievement. Sternberg concludes that a multi-style approach "enables students to capitalize on their strengths and to correct or compensate for their weaknesses, encoding material in a variety of interesting ways" (33-34).

In light of the widespread adoption of the Common Core, some educators have asked if there is time to pay this much attention to assessment when there are new and more rigorous standards to address. They wonder, Is thoughtful assessment a luxury, a "nice thing" to get to if time allows? My first response is to show these concerned educators how the tools in *Tools for Thoughtful Assessment* directly address Common Core State Standards. But the better response is really this one: If we want our students to read more rigorous texts, produce more powerful writing, create engaging multimedia presentations, develop sophisticated mathematical practices, and, in general, develop the skills and habits needed for success in the Common Core, then we'll need to redouble our commitment to assessment for learning. To reach the lofty goals of college and career readiness for all students, we'll need to create clear learning targets derived from our standards and teach students how to understand those targets. We'll need to use pre-assessment before instruction begins to find out what students know and how they think. We'll need to use formative assessment throughout the instructional process to monitor and advance student learning. We'll need to teach students how to become quality-control managers who can assess their own work and figure out how to make it better. We'll need to design high-quality assessment tasks that assess diverse forms of higher-order thinking. And to do all of this well, we'll need a trusty set of tools.

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The Evolution of the Modern Middle School Philosophy and Model: Know Before You Cut
Jamie Cruikshank

During our current era of fiscal conservancy, I have heard repeated cries for assistance from middle schools across our state. In an effort to save money, teachers and programming have been reduced; this seems to be especially true in the high needs and average needs rural districts. However, my concern comes as school boards grapple with decisions regarding middle schools. Many believe that a junior high model would be more economically responsive to our current funding dilemma. I caution those who fall into this belief. Reductions in staffing and programming hurt, but it is necessary as we conform to the budgetary process before us.

From my experience, most reductions affect groups of students. However, the elimination of the middle school philosophy from a district will have farther reaching consequences, affecting a generation of children. To understand this, it's important to look at how the middle school philosophy developed and the research conducted which support this model.

1910—1955: Junior High School Movement

During this period of expanding public education, many children left school at the end of 8th grade. There were Junior High Regents exams and the High School was considered a "next step" for some, but not all.

1955—1965: Modern Junior High

In the mid-1950's we entered into the Modern Junior High Era. It was at this time when the middle-grades mirrored the existing high school model of public education. This model was called into question by *The Crisis in the Classroom* by Elliot Silberman in 1961. In this, Silberman stated that the junior high was, "the wasteland of the American school system." This first "epiphany" spawned Tanner's Research on Adolescent Development in the early 1960's with major research projects after that.

1965—1985: Period of Episodic Change

The Cornell Junior High Conference of 1963 stated that effective junior highs needed to have a well-articulated grades 5-8 curriculum, a defined transitional program, strong academics, opportunities for exploration, as well as a study of "values." It further stated that the junior high model was not equipped to address these needs.

At this point, the *Modern Junior High Era* began to decline. Many communities began planning the concept of the middle school during this era. Construction projects during this period included middle schools that didn't physically look like the public schools they everyone was used to. Most schools developed a layout that was team or "house"-oriented. It was also not by accident that these new schools were built away from the high school instead of added on to existing buildings.

1985—1995: Developing the Middle School Philosophy

The late 80's saw many developments, all leading to middle-level recommendations. These recommendations came as a result of

districts creating middle schools, but not implementing the middle-level philosophy. The first was the Carnegie Association's *Turning Points* in 1989. This stated, "A volatile mismatch exists between the organization and curriculum of middle grade schools and the intellectual and emotional needs of young adolescents." It continued to say that the middle-level was the last best chance for an at-risk student to succeed. (If you can't catch them in middle school, then you aren't going to catch them.) Also in 1989, the National Middle School Association published *This We Believe*. This was a basis for current recommendations. Our New York State Regents, for the first time in 1989, produced a policy statement that said, "…what is provided in the elementary or high school grades is not necessarily appropriate for children in the middle grades." These statements from the 80's incorporated the need for Leadership, Middle-Level Organization, Teachers & Instruction for Young Adolescents, and care for the Developmental Needs of Young Adolescents.

The physical configuration of instruction during and after the 1980's changed dramatically, but the changing the paradigm of instruction changed slowly. However, the few schools that adopted the middle school philosophy found success.

1995—2005: Modern Middle School Model

In 1993, the National Middle School Association said, "Currently, few middle grades schools have implemented many of the practices recommended for the education of early adolescents, and even fewer have implemented them well." In October 2000, Education Week said that the middle level was the "weak link" and "incomplete." Through this frustration, additional research was conducted and resulted in the NMSA's *This We Believe and Now We Must Act* and *Turning Points 2000.* This is what compelled SED to create the *Essential Elements of Standards-Focused Middle Level Schools and Programs*.

Complimenting the *Essential Elements of Standards-Focused Middle Level Schools and Programs*, the "National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades" formed and developed the Schools to Watch program. This program was developed through identifying characteristics that are evident in all high-performing middle schools. Once established, a School to Watch is considered to be a model of replicable practices with a well-defined implementation of the *Essential Elements of Standards-Focused Middle-Level Schools and Programs*.

MIDDLE SCHOOL
THE EVOLUTION
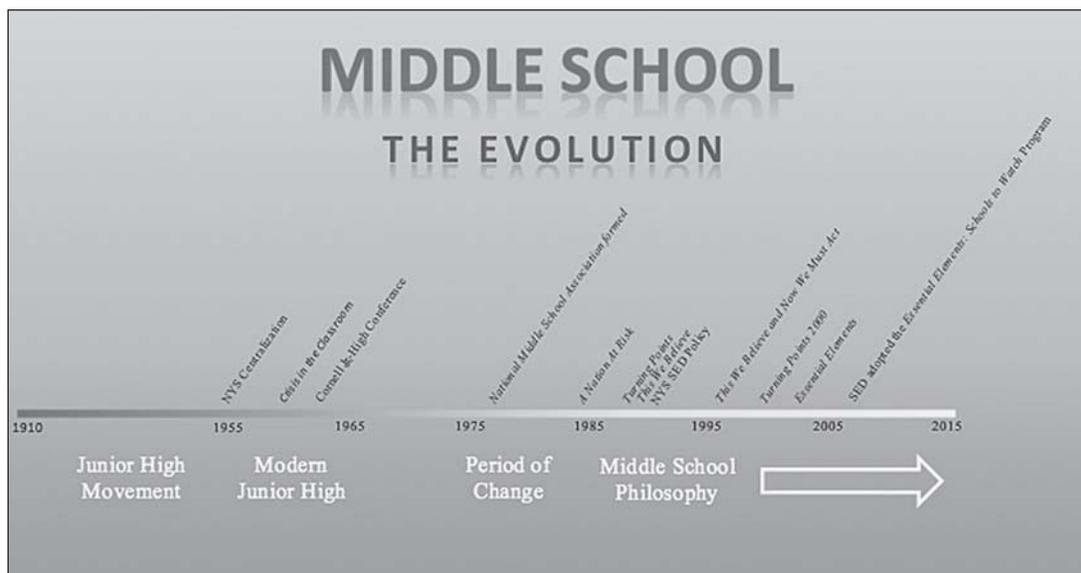
Evidence of Success at the Middle Level

In looking at what makes middle school different, the evidence was clear:

The research of Early Adolescence development was staggering. At no time during a human's life, other than infancy, do we develop (change) more physically, psychologically, socially, and cognitively, than during the age of ten to fourteen.

The organization of schools serving this age-group needed specific care, including Interdisciplinary Teams, Flexible Schedules, Flexible Groupings, Comprehensive Guidance Services, Exploratory Experiences, and an Articulated and Integrated Curriculum.

Teaming needed common planning time. Through a survey produced by the NMSA, they found that 57% of middle schools have teams…but 90% of middle schools identified as "exemplary" included teaming.

The relationship between interdisciplinary curriculum and academic achievement is clearly defined by these research studies:
• Brazee & Capelluti, 1995
• Clark and Clark, 1992
• St. Clair & Hough, 1992
• Vars, 1987
• "The Eight Year Study" – Aiken, 1942

Middle School Philosophy vs. Junior High Model

In looking at the specific models of educating students ages ten to fourteen, there are many studies that compare academic achievement between middle schools and junior highs. In each study, the results were the same. Academic achievement levels were higher in middle schools than in junior highs. Here is a list of studies done on this topic:

University of Florida, 1987
The Bradley Study, 1988
National Longitudinal Study, 1988

Maine SED, 1991
Clark and Clark, 1992
University of Michigan, 1993
California SED, 1994
Keefe, et. al, 1994
George & Shewey, 1994
Felner, et. al 1997
New York, 2001

These were not small studies. To expand…

• The Maine Study, 1991, looked at 15,000 8th graders in 220 schools and based their results on The Maine Educational Assessment.

• The National Longitudinal Study, 1988 (and recertified by Lee & Smith, 1993), studied a sub-sample of 8,845 8th graders in 1,035 middle schools (who had implemented the recommendations from Turning Points) of a 25,000 student study.

• The California Study, 1994, looked at 600 schools and approximately 425,000 students over a five year period.

• Felner, 1997, was a longitudinal study of 1500 students in comparison with 900 students (across 5 states) who attended schools that had implemented Turning Points. This was the first study to suggest that the implementation of the philosophy was directly correlated to the academic success.

• The New York Study, 2001, corroborated Felner's research: a study of low and high performing schools rated on the performance of assessments concluded that the level of implementation directly affected results.

There have also been many studies which suggest that effective schools serving children ages ten to fourteen have specific factors present: the stronger the total program, the higher the academic success. This has been called the *Multiplication Factor*. Researchers have concluded that the combined benefit of

using multiple program components enhances the effectiveness of individual practices.

- _Multiplication Factors_: Heterogeneous Groups, Strong Transitions, Appropriate Instruction, Comprehensive Guidance, Advisory, & Teams

  The Studies
  MacIver & Epstein, 1991
  Van Zandt & Totten, 1994
  George & Shewey, 1994
  Felner, 1997
  New York, 2001

In Summation

Connor & Irvin, 1989, found that 74% of nationally recognized middle schools implemented six to ten of the essential elements of a true middle school as compared to 47% of randomly selected schools. Further, "Effective middle schools reflect a higher degree of 'Middle Schoolness.'"

Essentially, an effective middle-level program leads to student success. As school boards continue to grapple with increasingly difficult fiscal demands, they need to be aware of the _Middle School Philosophy_ and the detrimental effects that will occur if this successful model is undermined. Cutting the components which allow middle schools to be successful is more than a simple reduction — it's a destruction of an entire philosophy of education.

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Integrated Math Position Paper
Nassau & Suffolk County Principals' Associations

Commissioner King,

The following is a position paper from middle school administrators in regard to the Integrated Algebra Regents and the grade 8 state assessment.

This past year, educators have been inundated with mandates and expectations that surpass any quantity and quality of educational reform in recent decades. With Common Core State Standards (CCSS), College and Career Readiness, Response to Intervention (RTI), Dignity for all Students Act (DASA), the new Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) guidelines, revised state assessments, budget limitations, staff reductions, and unrealistic timelines, it is only reasonable that some implementation challenges will have to be overcome.

As educational leaders, we are passionate about facilitating the best educational opportunities for the students in our care while incorporating the legal requirements set forth by the State Education Department. Some of the greatest challenges we face at our community level include mandates that were developed at the state and federal level, with the absence of local contribution.

On Long Island, the principals in both Nassau and Suffolk Counties have had regular dialogue on the many challenges and struggles associated with the vast elements of the previously mentioned educational reforms. The discussions often end in frustration, disappointment, and an overall sense of lack of purpose.

However, being the dedicated administrators we are, we are seeking to lead by example and be part of the solution rather than part of the problem. Therefore, we have begun to harness our energy and itemize the mandates of which we believe we can offer suggestions; doing this would create the greatest benefit for students and teachers with the least amount of revision in order to have a most effective outcome.

One of our first suggestions is in reference to the state assessments. The Integrated Algebra Regents that may be administered in the middle school setting is a specific area that must be addressed.

More and more middle schools are offering various Regents exams in order to enrich curriculum, increase rigor, and meet CCSS and its calls for college and career readiness. There is a clear range of offerings; some middle schools offer no Regents courses at all while some middle schools offer double accelerated Regents exam prep courses in grade 6. Currently, local school districts have the option to offer the courses that best meet their respective community's needs. Middle schools that offer the Integrated Algebra Regents Exam in order to enrich curriculum place the students and staff in great jeopardy for different reasons. The students are required to complete both the grade 8 math assessments and the Regents exam. The anxiety and stress of this dual curriculum is an

unreasonable expectation and greatly depreciates the proactive approach. According to the new APPR regulations, the teachers are held accountable for the grade 8 math results, regardless of the outcomes on the more rigorous Regents exam. There are many teachers achieving outstanding Regents results, yet being penalized for the grade 8 math scores.

The solution to this problem is simple. Schools offering the Regents courses, should require students to take only the state assessment (i.e. Regents) for the course and curriculum they are being taught. Teachers should be held accountable for the results according to the afore mentioned assessments as well.

A model to follow already exists in grade 8 science. As you know, when this course is offered in grade 8, students do not take the science assessment, but the Regents exam. Additionally, the teachers of

these courses are rated on the results of the Regents exam. This is responsible, appropriate, and ethical. The application of this model to the Integrated Algebra Regents, and subsequently any other Regents offering, is our collective position.

We are confident and trust this position will be supported by you in the current 2012-2013 school year so students and staff can stop being penalized for proven academic growth.

We look forward to your timely response.

Respectfully,
The Nassau and Suffolk County Principals' Associations

Membership and Publication Information

In Transition is a benefit of both individual and building membership in the New York State Middle School Association. Annual membership dues are $50 for individual membership and $150 for building membership. Memberships are on an "anniversary date" basis. For any changes in membership information, please contact the NYSMSA office by e-mail (office@nysmsa.org) or phone/fax (716-282-6511).

Individual and Building Membership applications can be downloaded from our website: www.nysmsa.org. Additionally, new membership applications paid via credit card can be completed online.

NYSMSA gives permission to its membership to reprint any portion of this publication.

New York State's Essential Elements:
Schools-to-Watch Recognition Program (2013-14)
(Ninth Cohort)

Do you believe your middle-level school is a model for others? If so, please consider completing the application for the ninth cohort of schools in New York State's Essential Elements: Schools-to-Watch Recognition Program.

New York State is seeking to identify a scadre of diverse, high-performing model middle-level schools that will constitute the ninth cohort of schools selected for inclusion in New York State's Essential Elements: Schools-to-Watch Recognition Program. These schools must be academically excellent, developmentally appropriate, socially equitable, and organized to ensure continuous improvement. They — along with already identified EE:STW schools — will serve as exemplars for the implementation of the *Regents Policy Statement on Middle-Level Education* and the State Education Department's *Essential Elements of Standards-Focused Middle-Level Schools and Programs*.

Schools eligible to participate in New York's EE: STW Recognition Program must have **at least TWO of the following grades**: grade six, grade seven, grade eight. Applicant schools may not be classified as having any of the following accountability status Phase/Category designations: Improvement/Focused, Improvement/Comprehensive, Corrective Action, Restructuring, School Under Registration Review (SURR), Persistently Low Achieving (PLA).

Eligible schools and districts interested in being considered for the ninth cohort of New York's Essential Elements: Schools-to-Watch Recognition Program should view and download the application announcement and related information at the New York State Middle School Association's website (www.nysmsa.org) and follow the directions to complete the school on-line school self-assessment and the formal application for the ninth cohort of the EE:STW Recognition Program. **Note that completed applications must be submitted by Friday, July 19, 2013.**

Anyone with questions should feel free to contact either:

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Associate, Middle-Level Education   **OR**   EE: STW State Co-Director
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OR

Contact the New York State Middle School Association directly at NYSMSA@aol.com

Farnsworth MS

School Characteristics and Replicable Practices

Academic Excellence

- Lessons are expanded and enriched in all disciplines through project based learning and interdisciplinary study.

- Curriculum mapping is utilized building-wide and available for viewing by all teachers to help facilitate consistency within grade level/subject matter and vertical articulation, as well as providing information for cross curricular opportunities.

- Team meetings explore ways to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of ALL students in their program. Behavior plans are also developed to assist in supporting students with social-emotional/behavior needs. Teams look at ways to use team time to foster caring and acceptance within their small community of learners.

- Skills learned in one subject area are reinforced and built upon in others as teachers share the development of literacy, numeracy and citizenship across the board.

- Professional Learning Communities are an integral part of our school environment helping to educate and improve our knowledge as professionals.

- At the sixth grade level, a section of reading is taught every other day using a co-teaching model with both core teachers and a reading teacher.

- The 7th and 8th grades utilize a 4 core teacher model with a flexible block schedule. There are many opportunities for integration in the academic areas, as well as support for reading and writing across the curriculum.

- Teams meet daily to plan instruction and talk about student needs.

- An activity period is provided at the end of the school day three days a week to provide support for all students in every area.

- Special education services are located in each House as students are integrated into teams.

School Statistics — Farnsworth MS

Community: Large Suburban
Enrollment: 1,239
Grade Levels: 6-8
School Schedule: Flexible Block

Student Demographics

48%	Male
52%	Female
2%	Hispanic/Latino
82%	White
0%	American Indian/Alaskan Native
4%	African American
0%	Filipino
8%	Asian/Pacific Islander
16%	Students with Disabilities
6%	Free/Red. Lunch/Econ. Disadvantaged
3%	English Language Learners

2009 AYP: ELA 189; Math 194
2010 AYP: ELA 189; Math 194
2011 AYP: ELA 169; Math 180

- Additional time is set aside periodically for team teachers and special education staff associated with the team to collaborate regarding student progress, co-teaching and program development.

- The district employs a Data Coordinator who analyzes student achievement and helps to inform our instruction.

Developmental Responsiveness

- Students are placed on a team in one of 3 Houses. Each House contains grades 6, 7 and 8, with a House Principal, Counselor, and one of 3 Social Workers who follow the students through their 3 years at the middle school.

- The district provided extensive learning/training opportunities for staff helping to foster their understanding of the continuum of developmental characteristics of middle level students, as well as teaching strategies that maximize the potential of every student.

- Our master schedule is designed to maximize student-teacher contact time, as well as provide opportunities for professional collaboration.

- The flexible block schedule provides teacher teams the opportunity to regroup students as well as rearrange the core schedule to best meet the needs of the students.

- Within the classroom setting as well as beyond, lessons are purposefully designed to be engaging and relevant and group work is highly encouraged as students learn to work cooperatively with one another. In cooperative learning atmosphere students have created "flash mobs" seen on You Tube, entered contents on the US Constitution sponsored by CNN, and participated in Future Cites competition.

- Beyond the classroom students continue to receive a taste of real life applications of their work through participation in our TV studio and a myriad of clubs and after school activities.

- Our school counselors and social workers play a key role in the daily lives of our students providing groups and individual counseling services.

- Development of strong character and a commitment to community is woven into everyday life with many service learning activities available in which our students can participate. We have our own Butterfly House and Organic Garden programs that are open the surrounding community. We also have a partnership with the Albany Pine Bush where our students help maintain the eco system in order to sustain the rare Karner Blue Butterfly. Additionally our students regularly participate at a local soup kitchen as well as the Ronald McDonald House.

- As we foster a working relationship with parents and we have a variety of events that bring parents/families into the school. One such event that is a perennial favorite and highly successful in establishing and maintaining connections with parents is our American Education Week celebration. For three days parents are invited to spend a day at school with their child. Additionally, parents serve on our building level shared-decision making team that is charged with the task of continuous school improvement. We also have a very active PTA, which supports a number of important activities and initiatives.

Social Equity

- FMS maintains a heterogeneous mixing of students across all teams and houses.

- The structure of the building establishes a proactive environment where each student is known by several adults throughout their middle school years.

- Throughout the year, teacher teams meet on a weekly basis with the house principal, school counselor, and social worker to discuss student needs. Parent conferences take place throughout the course of the school year.

- We have an Instructional Study Team that meets to help make recommendations and provide supports to struggling students.

- Our student government program allows students to have a voice in the functioning of the school as they participate in our shared-decision making team (Building Cabinet) and meet with the building principal throughout the school year.

- We offer a variety of programs and support services for our special needs students. The majority of these programs integrate students into mainstreamed classes in a co-teaching model.

- We house a BOCES Deaf and Hard of Hearing program at all grade levels. These students are mainstreamed into our academic programs.

- One full time enrichment teacher coordinates with classroom teachers to enhance the curriculum and to provide additional activities for students interested in enrichment opportunities.

- The building maintains three computer labs that are available to all students. A TA supervises the labs, maintaining the lab calendar and assisting students and teachers.

- Throughout the year we offer a variety of events to celebrate the accomplishments of our students, as well as the cultural diversity of our student body.

Organizational Support

- Curriculum mapping is a standard-based initiative that assists each teacher across every subject area in providing a comprehensive curriculum for all students that has common and individual assessments, which measures student understanding and progress.

- Teachers have the opportunity to participate in professional learning communities on a daily basis.

- A critical focus for the Farnsworth learning community has been and continues to be literacy. A variety of activities have taken place involving the entire building wide as well as by department, teams and grade level.

- Staff members are encouraged to use their expertise to develop and initiate learning opportunities for the staff. Our Superintendent's Conference Days frequently feature our staff as presenters. These opportunities are well received and highly effective.

- To help our newest staff members transition to our building, we offer an orientation program as well as a peer mentoring program.

- The FMS leadership team is comprised of the Building Principal, House Principals, and Instructional Administrators 6-8 and/or K-12. There is also a District level leadership team that includes the above mentioned administrators, as well as a Principals leadership team. All teams meet at least once a month with a focus on academic improvement.

- FMS has two transition committees, one for the incoming 6th graders and the other for our outgoing 8th graders. Each committee is made up of administrators and teachers from all three levels, elementary, middle and high school. Multiple programs are offered to help students and parents transition both in and out of the middle school.

- There is a district wide NCLB team as well as many other teams of professionals that meet regularly to help support teachers around emerging state and federal initiatives.

- The Building Principal, House Principals, and Instructional Administrators all evaluate teachers and provide supportive feedback and ongoing/daily support to staff.

Contact Information

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Designated 2012
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Principal Mary Summermatter
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Website www.guilderlandschools.org
District Guilderland CSD
County Albany County

Longwood JHS

School Characteristics and Replicable Practices

Academic Excellence

- Accelerated Math and Science Program
- NJHS Membership constitutes 13% of the population
- 2011-12 PD Workshops on Academic Rigor
- 2010-Present Workshops/Emphasis on Differentiated Instruction
- 2011-12 CCLS Alignment Project
- Team Model
- Benchmark Exams
- Interdisciplinary Instruction Workshops
- Academically Focused Co-Curricular Activities
- Learning Center (Learning Specialists in a Pull-Out Model)
- Portable Computer Labs
- Uniform Grading Parameters
- Word-of-the Week/Math Problem of the Week
- S.I.M. (Strategic Instructional Model) Strategies
- Student of the Month Awards

School Statistics — Longwood JHS
(Source: Power School, BEDS Report, NYStart)

Community: Suburban/Residential
Enrollment: 1,356
Grade Levels: 7 & 8
School Schedule: 9 Period Team Model

Student Demographics
- 53%   Male
- 47%   Female
- 18%   Hispanic/Latino
- 54%   White
- 7%   American Indian/Alaskan Native
- 21%   African American
- 0%   Filipino
- 0%   Asian/Pacific Islander
- 16%   Students with Disabilities
- 38%   Free/Red. Lunch/Econ. Disadvantaged
- 1%   English Learners

2008 AYP: ELA 190; Math 184
2009 AYP: ELA 191; Math 180
2010 AYP: ELA 166; Math 147

- Library Media Center/Video Conferencing Equipment
- LongwoodTeachers.com (online resource)
- Principal's Breakfast

Developmental Responsiveness
- Career Day
- P.A.C.T. Program
- Case Conferences PRN
- Instructional Support Team
- Award-Winning Mentoring Program
- Student Advisories
- Counselors/MHP's Attached to Teams
- Health and FCS Curriculum emphasizes Decision-Making/Personal Development
- Jump Rope for Heart Project
- Intramural Sports Program
- The Academic Challenge Bowl
- Family Fun Night
- School Musical
- Peer Tutoring
- Shared Decision-making Team
- School Socials
- Interscholastic Sports Program
- HIV Peer Educators
- PTSA Fund Raising Activities

Social Equity
- 2010-11 Shanti Fund Peace Day Award-Winning Initiatives
- Anti-Bullying Survey/Workshops/Assembly (Ryan's Story)
- Character Education: Thought for the Day
- Advisories
- Helping Hands Project
- Clothes Closet Community Resource
- Peer Leaders Activities
- Principal's Newsletters
- District Homeless Liaison
- Co-Curricular Activities (30+)
- Performing Music Program
- Diversity Day
- ELL Specialist
- Student Government
- Consistently Enforced Code of Conduct

- Longwood Day
- Food Drives
- Awards Nights (Grades 7 and 8)

Organizational Support
- Mental Health Team
- Common Planning
- Team Meetings
- Smart Board Technology Resources
- Mentoring Program through the LI Mentoring Partnership
- Administrative Team Assigned to Domains
- Faculty Meeting PD Featuring Staff Presentations
- Dept. Chair Meetings (Shared Leadership Model)
- Common Planning Meetings/Team Meetings
- Lesson Plans Reviewed Weekly
- Math Mentor Program for Teachers
- Inclusion Teachers Assigned to Departments
- Staff Relations Committee (meets monthly)
- Instructional Technology Support and Training
- Tech Mentors

Contact Information
Longwood Junior High School
Designated 2012
198 Longwood Road • Middle Island NY 11953 •
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County Suffolk County

Author Index

Submission of Articles

In Transition accepts manuscripts for publication consideration. It is produced by NYSMSA and is dedicated to those teachers, counselors, administrators, parents, and others serving the needs of students aged 10–15.

In Transition is a juried publication; all manuscripts are reviewed and approved for publication by a panel of members from the NYSMSA Board of Directors. All selected articles become the property of NYSMSA.

Manuscripts describing successful programs, effective projects, exemplary teaching techniques, unique team concepts, action research, and promising practices are welcome. We are particularly interested in articles on implementing the Common Core Standards, APPR, 21st Century Skills, teaming, interdisciplinary instruction, authentic assessment, flexible scheduling, integrating technology into instructional programs, and application of the *Essential Elements*. Ideas submitted should have universal appeal or be applicable to all middle schools and middle-level programs across New York State. In other words: *How could your success or experience be replicated or have an impact on other middle-level programs across New York?*

Submit To: All documents must be submitted to editor@nysmsa.org as e-mail attachments.

Please note: Only e-mail submissions will be considered.

Deadlines: To be considered for publication, manuscripts must be received by July 20 for the fall issue, December 15 for the winter issue, and March 15 for the spring issue.

Format Guidelines

Length: 400–2,000 words (2–8 pages)

Quality: All submitted articles must be of high-quality professional writing. Please make sure that all articles have been checked for editing errors, flow of content, and general organization. All references should come with correctly written citations. Articles that do not meet criteria for professional writing standards will be sent back to the author(s) for revisions.

Format: MS Word, double spaced, Times New Roman 12, 1-inch margins. Citations of referenced works should follow current APA standards.

Illustrations: Any illustrations (clip art, drawings, tables, charts, photographs, etc.) contained in a manuscript must also be submitted as separate JPEG files that are suitable for printing (300 dpi). Photographs must include captions indentifying subjects (e.g., eighth grade students; specific names are not required), activity, and source or photographer. All illustrations become the property of NYSMSA.

Cover Page Each article submitted must include a cover page with the following information (bolded items will be included in the publication as contact information)**:** Title; **Author**; **Position**; **School** and/or Home **Address** (please indicate which); School and/or Home Telephone Number (please indicate which); **E-Mail Address**; and (optional) a brief synopsis of the content of the manuscript.

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