

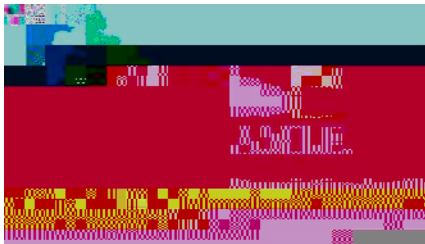
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Produced in the United States of America.

AMLE Mission Statement

The Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE) is dedicated to improving the educational experiences of young adolescents by providing vision, knowledge, and resources to all who serve them in order to develop healthy, productive, and ethical citizens.



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Introduction

The initiative to reorganize American public education from a two-tier to a three-tier system is now more than 100 years old. The movement to establish separately organized middle level schools began with the first junior high schools, which were established in the early 1900s and continues today with the number of middle level schools now exceeding 15,000. Throughout the history of these two middle level school organizations, there have been numerous accomplishments to celebrate. However, lingering questions remain about the failure of many middle level schools to authentically implement programs and practices that have been advocated in the literature (Dickinson, 2001; George, 2009a, 2009b; Lounsbury, 2009; McEwin & Greene, 2010). Interest in the status of recommended programs and practices in middle level schools has resulted in a series of national linked surveys that began in 1968 (Alexander). These surveys are identified later in this report.

The two national surveys that are the subject of this report continue the legacy of the earlier studies by examining the current status of the implementation of recommended middle level programs and practices in the nation's public middle schools. Results from these studies, which were conducted in 2009, are presented in this report. Comparisons are made with data from earlier surveys so that trends can be identified and explored. Recommendations based on analysis of the data from the 2009 national studies are also provided in Section IV.

Middle Level Schools Emerge and Grow

The Junior High School Movement

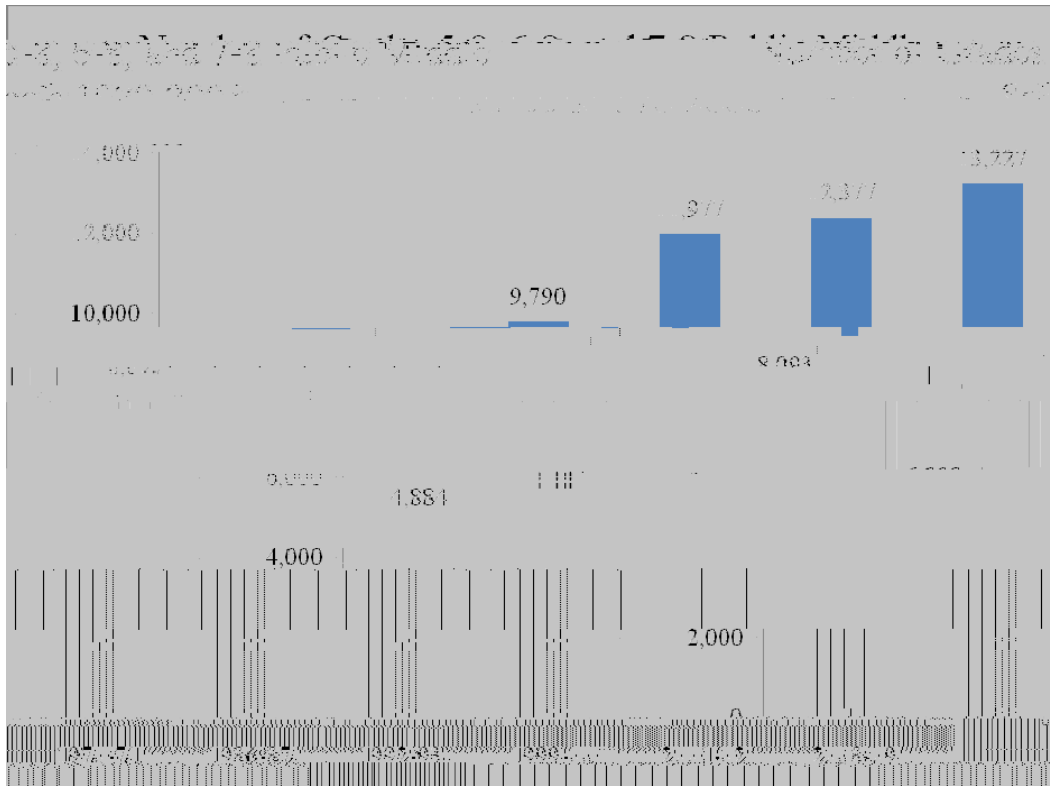
It is widely accepted by middle level scholars that the first junior high schools were established in 1909 in Columbus, Ohio, and in 1910 in Berkley, California. This then-radical idea of establishing a new level of education for the schooling of young adolescents gained widespread acceptance, and the

number of junior high schools reached more than 7,000 by the 1970s (Melton, 1984; Van Til, Vars, & Lounsbury, 1961). However, since the middle school movement began in the late 1960s, the number of junior high schools has continued to decrease each year with fewer than 400 remaining by 2008 (personal communication, K. Roberts, December 28, 2008).

Junior high schools were touted as designed specifically to serve the developmental and academic needs of young adolescents. As is well documented in the literature, however, there were many other factors in addition to serving this developmental age group that stimulated the wide acceptance and rapid growth of junior high schools (e.g., economy of time issues, high drop-out rates, commission reports) (Gruhn & Douglass, 1956; Koos, 1927; Lounsbury, 1992, in press). Although a major goal of junior high schools was to provide programs uniquely designed to meet the needs of young adolescents, a comprehensive specialized middle level knowledge base needed to fully sustain this goal was largely absent. As a result, most junior high schools patterned themselves after the senior high school model by adopting practices such as a strong

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support for separately organized schools for young adolescents. Other positive results include the reduction of dropouts, the advancement of the concept of exploration, a stronger focus on student guidance, and an increased emphasis on the implications of the individual differences of young adolescents (Melton, 1984).

The Middle School Movement

Junior high schools have been largely replaced by middle schools that include a variety of grade organizations (Alexander, Williams, Compton, Hines, Prescott, & Kealy, 1969; Clark & Clark, 1994; George, 2009a; Lounsbury, 1992).

Approximately ninety percent of these middle schools contain grades 5-8, 6-8, or 7-8, with grades 6-8 schools being the dominant organizational plan. There is no doubt about the continuing popularity of

Despite the increasing numbers of middle schools, persistent questions remain about whether the majority of these schools have authentically implemented the developmentally responsive and effective programs and practices that have been so widely recommended (Dickinson, 2001; Lounsbury, 2009; National Middle School Association, 2010b). Part of this concern arises from the results of several major surveys of middle school programs and practices that have been conducted over the last four decades. One of the authors of this report has been involved in three of the last four national surveys that are part of a linked series of studies. These studies

were conducted in 1968 (Alexander), in 1988 (Alexander & McEwin, 1989), and in 1993 and 2001 (McEwin, Dickinson and Jenkins, 1996, 2003). These surveys will be referred to as the 1968, 1988, and 2001 studies throughout this report. Other key surveys that are not linked to this series have also been conducted during this time period. These include, but are not limited to, surveys by Brooks and Edwards (1978), Cawelti (1988), Compton (1976), Epstein and Mac Iver (1990), George, (2008-2009), George and Shewey (1994), and Valentine, Clark, Hackmann, and Petzko (2002).

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Results from the Survey of Randomly Selected Middle Schools

Design of the Study

This section presents selected results from a national random sample of 827 public middle schools. These schools will be referred to as the throughout this report. The survey instrument used included some items that were part of one or more of four earlier studies (Alexander, 1968; Alexander & McEwin, 1989; McEwin, Dickinson, & Jenkins, 1996, 2003). Modifications were made on some questionnaire items and new items were added that addressed topics like technology and global education. A 20% random stratified sample (2,783) of public middle schools that included grades 5-8, 6-8, or 7-8 (13,918 schools) was selected. The return rate for the survey was 30%.

Grades 5-8, 6-8, and 7-8 schools were selected because these grade organizations represent the large majority (89%) of all separately organized public middle level schools in the nation. Principals of those schools were sent electronic surveys with requests to provide data about their schools. They were also asked to express their opinions on selected middle level topics. In this section, data from this study are reported and results are compared with similar data from one or more of the four earlier surveys to help identify trends that have occurred over time.

Grade Organization, Community Types, and Free and Reduced Lunch Rates

The grade organization patterns of the responding schools closely mirrored those of all middle schools in the country. Eleven percent of the middle schools were grades 5-8 schools, 67% were grades 6-8 schools, and the remaining 21% included grades 7-8. Forty-three percent of schools were located in rural communities, 18% in urban settings, and 39% in suburban areas. These percentages closely approximated results from the 2001 study when 41%

of schools were in rural communities, 21% in urban areas, and 38% in suburban areas.

Thirty-six percent of responding schools reported that 51% or more of their students qualified for the free or reduced lunch program. About one-fourth of schools had between 1 and 20 percent of students who qualified for this program. Ten percent of responding schools had 81% or more of the student body eligible for the free and reduced lunch program (Table 1). Information about this topic was not collected in earlier surveys.

School Enrollments

As was the case in the 1993 and 2001 surveys, the percentage of small middle schools, those with enrollments of 400 or fewer, remained at about one-fourth of all middle schools. The number of smaller middle schools was greater in the 1968 and 1988 studies. Although the percentage of larger middle

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**Number and Percent of Students Eligible for Free or Reduced Lunch:
2009 Randomly Selected Middle Schools**

Percent Free or Reduced Lunch	Number	Percent
None	2	<1
1-10	74	9
11-20	119	15
21-30	114	14
31-40	109	13
41-50	100	12
51-60	100	12
61-70	61	8
71-80	46	6
81-90	57	7
91-100	28	3
Total	810	99

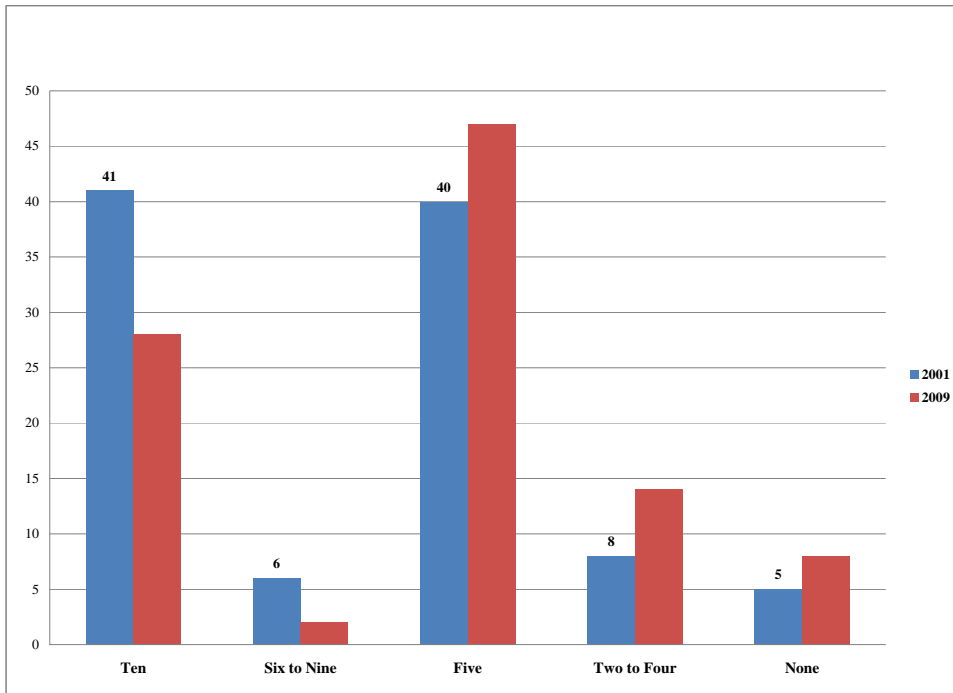
Standardized Tests Results

Respondents were asked to provide data about the percentages of students at their school who were on or above grade level in mathematics and reading. Eighty-two percent of schools had 51% or more of students scoring on or above grade level on standardized mathematics tests. Thirty percent reported that 81% or more of students scored at that level in mathematics (Table 3). Scores for standardized reading tests were higher with 86% of schools having 51% or more of students scoring on or above grade level. Thirty-nine percent of schools had 81% or more students scoring on or above grade level on standardized reading assessments (Table 4). Data regarding standardized test results were not collected in earlier surveys.

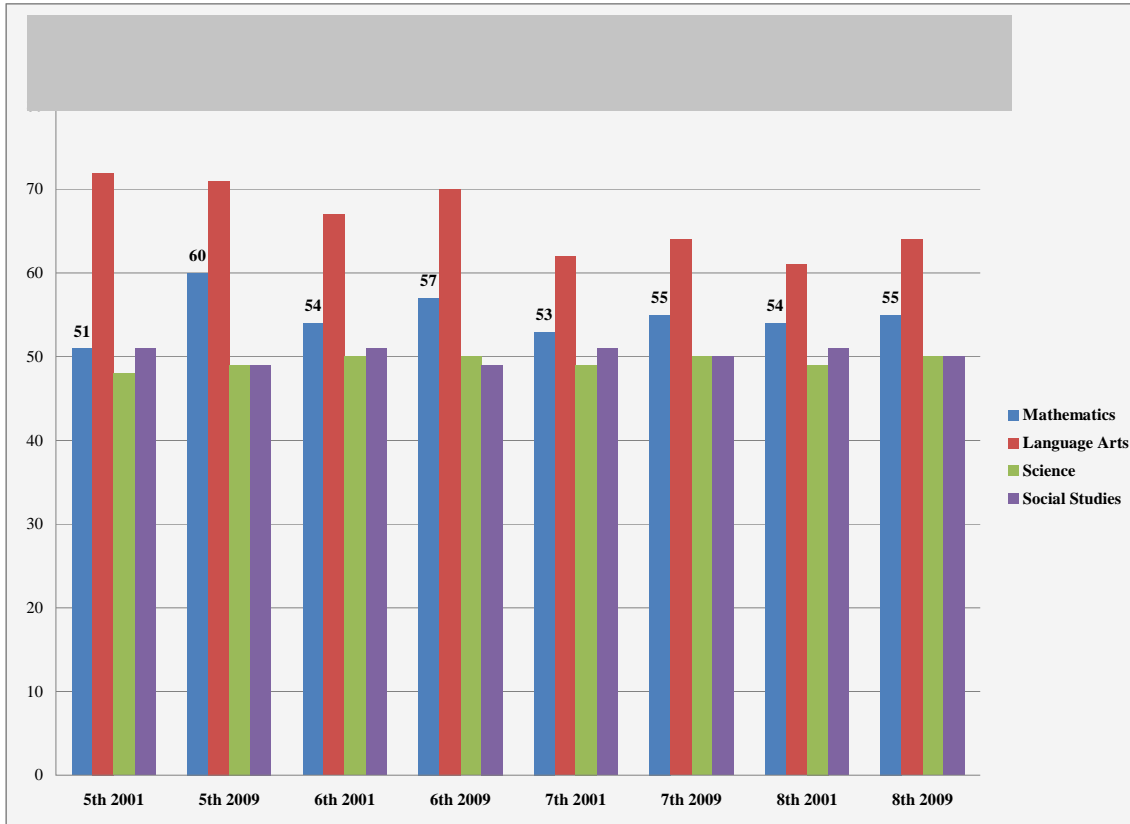
Interdisciplinary Team Organization and Common Planning Time

Results from earlier surveys have shown increases in the percentages of middle schools utilizing interdisciplinary team organization. Data from the 2009 random study, however, revealed a decrease in the number of schools using this organizational plan. The percentage of middle schools organized into interdisciplinary teams decreased from 77% in 2001 to 72% in 2009 (Figure 2). The survey instrument did not inquire about the reasons for using or not using the interdisciplinary team organization plan. However, in the open-ended comments section of the survey, some middle school principals lamented the loss of teaming in their schools due to difficult economic times. Whatever the reasons, this finding is especially disappointing considering that successful practice and the research base strongly support the

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Middle Level Curriculum

Curriculum is of the utmost importance in middle level programs and schools (Beane, 1990; Brazee & Capelluti, 1995; Lounsbury & Vars, 1978; NMSA, 2004b, 2005). As noted in the National Middle School Association's landmark publication

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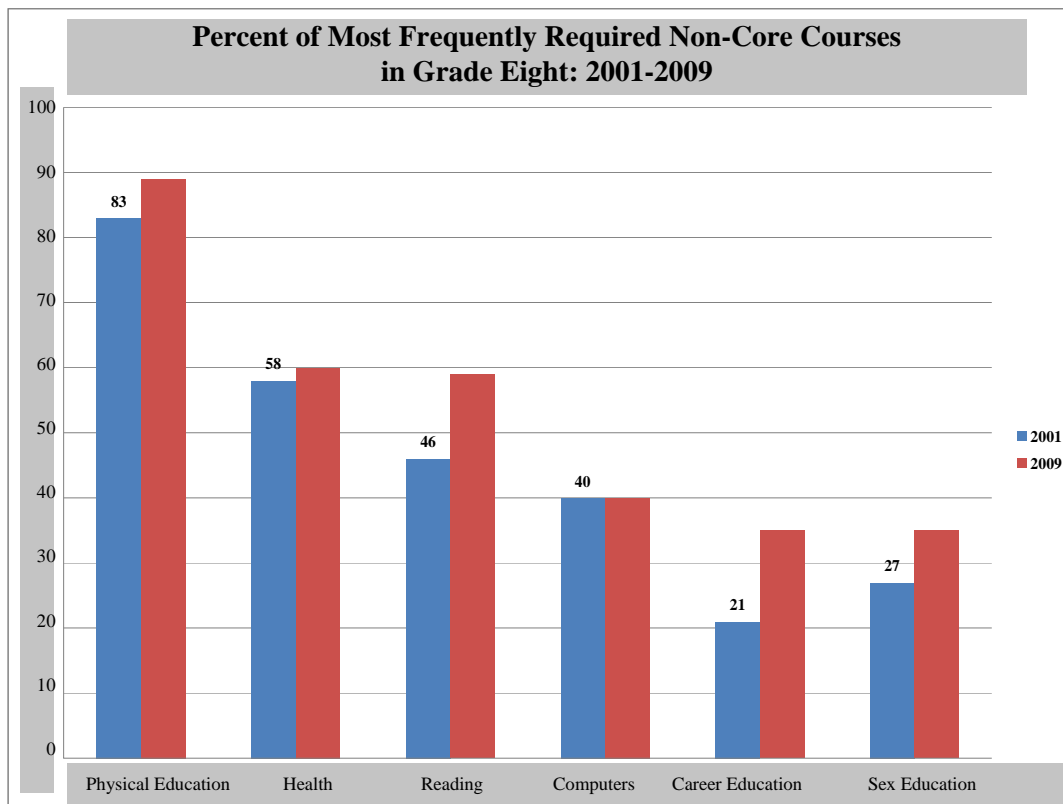
**Percent of Types of Scheduling Plans Utilized: 1993, 2001, and 2009
Randomly Selected Middle Schools**

Schedule Type	1993	2001	2009
Daily Uniform Periods	86	75	72
Daily Periods-Varying Length	11	10	10
Flexible Block Schedule	33	23	14
Self-Contained Classrooms	9	9	<1
Other	4	4	3

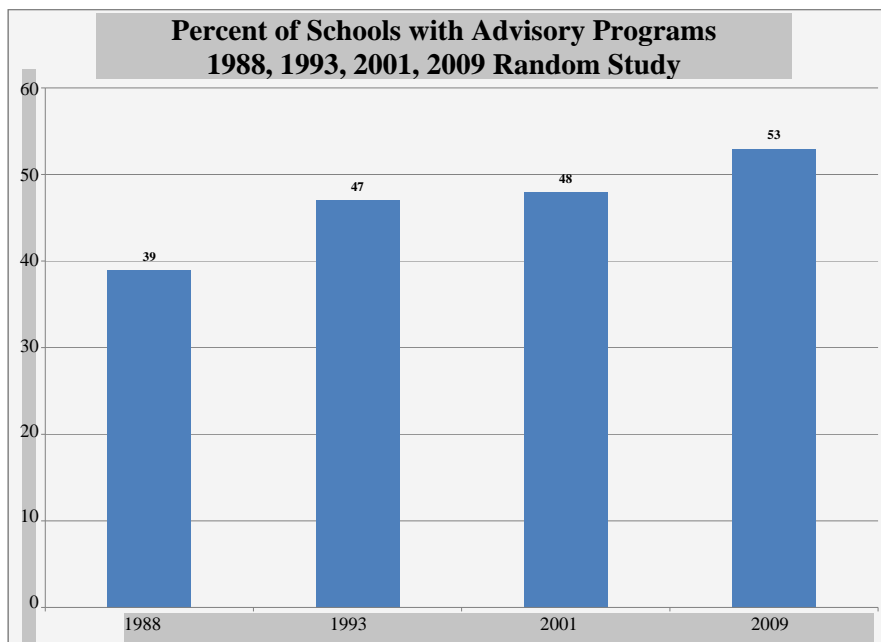
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Percent of Schools Requiring Selected

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offering orchestra in seventh grade dropped from 72% in 2001 to 39% in 2009 (Table 7).

Band (99%), chorus (80%), art (63%), foreign language (46%), computers (44%), and orchestra (39%) were the most frequently offered electives at the eighth grade level. These percentages represented increases from the 2001 study with the exception of orchestra which dropped from 72% of schools in 2001 to 39% in 2009.

Interest/Mini-course Programs

The survey asked respondents to indicate if they had interest/mini-course programs at their schools.

Interest/mini-courses were defined as short term, student interest-centered courses sometimes called exploratory courses. Thirty-nine percent of schools reported having these programs. This percentage is an increase from the 1993 study (31%), but a decrease from the 2001 study (49%).

Global Education Curriculum

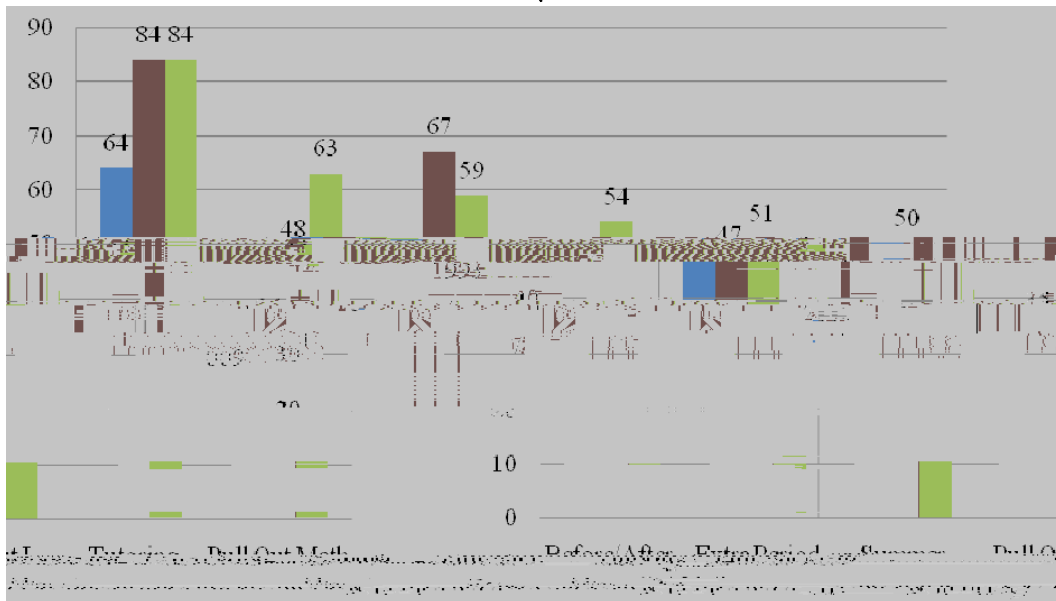
There is growing recognition of the importance of middle level students gaining a global perspective through middle level curriculum (Asia Society, 2008; Jackson, 2009). Respondents were asked to indicate the level of emphasis placed on global education in the curriculum at their schools based on a series of statements that encompassed core global education components. The two areas that were most often highly emphasized were those of mathematics (54%) and science (40%) (Table 8). When responses to the choices of highly emphasized and emphasized were combined, the core components with the highest levels of emphasis were: (a) mathematics, 92%; (b) critical thinking and problem solving, 89%, (c) communication, 89%; (d) science, 88%; (e) creativity and innovations, 77%; (f) social justice, humanity, civic literacy, 70%; (g) leadership, 69%; and (h) integration, 69%. The least amount of emphasis was placed on bilingual opportunities with 32% of schools indicating this component was

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Percent of Levels of Emphas

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**Percent of Frequency of Advisory Meetings:
1988, 1993, 2001 and 2009 Randomly Selected Middle Schools**

Frequency of Advisory Meetings	Percent			
	1988	1993	2001	2009
Daily	78	63	56	54
Four Days per Week	1	2	<1	4
Three Days per Week	3	4	2	1
Two Days per Week	9	6	16	7

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**Percent of Schools Using Selected Instructional Grouping Practices:
1993 and 2009 Randomly Selected Middle Schools**

Instructional Grouping Practices	Percent	
	1993	2009
Grouping is Random	32	23

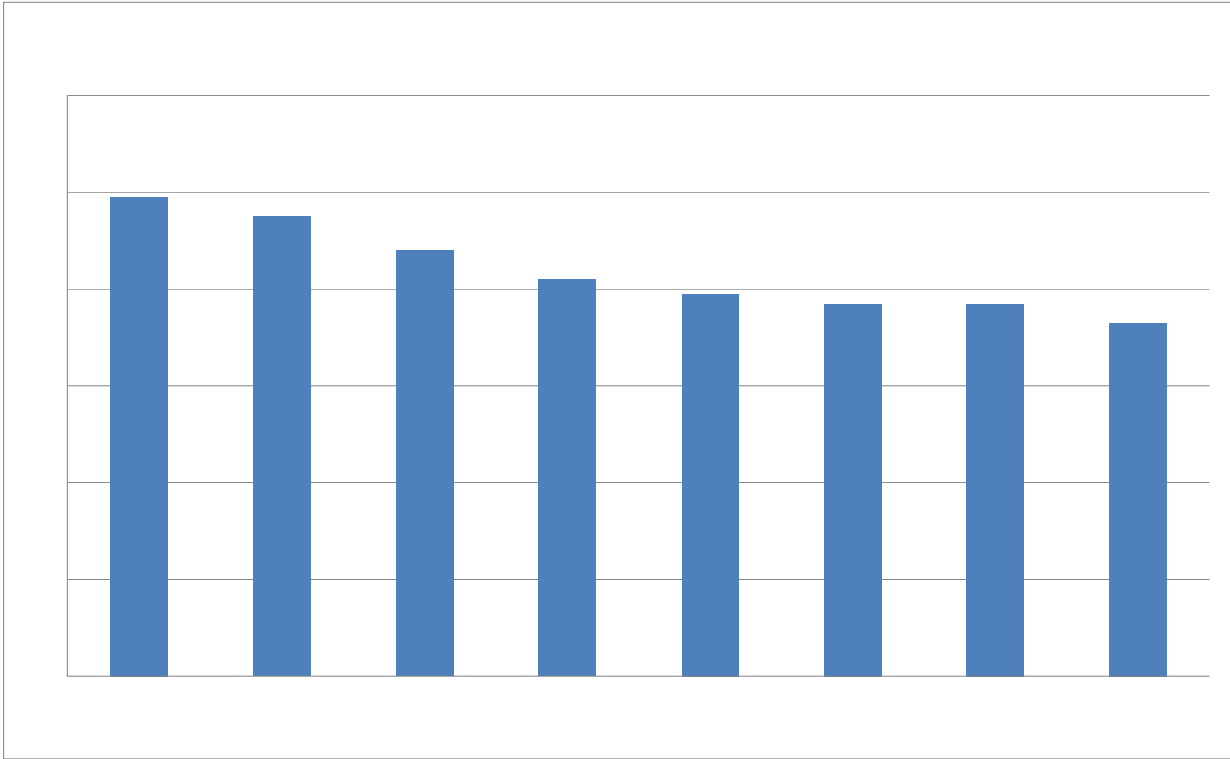
percentages in this category. In 9 of the 10 responses, the percentages represented the majority of respondents. The highest percentages in the positive response category were curriculum rigor and clarity

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**Percent of Impact of Standardized Testing on Selected Middle School Components:
2001 and 2009 Randomly Selected Middle Schools**

Component	Percent					
	Positive Impact		No Impact		Negative Impact	
	2001	2009	2001	2009	2001	2009
Academic Achievement in General	74	79	10	13	16	9
Advisory Program	27	28	58	61	15	12

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**Number and Percent of Schools Incorporating Selected Technologies into Teaching:
2009 Randomly Selected Middle Schools**

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**Percent of Level of Importance Respondents Placed on Middle Level Components:
2009 Randomly Selected Middle Schools**

Components	Very Important	Important	Unimportant	Very Unimportant
Advisory Programs	36	51	12	2
Interdisciplinary Team Organization	63	30	7	<1
Flexible Scheduling and Grouping	48	40	12	<1
Strong Focus on Basic Subjects	78	22	0	0
Educators Who Value Working with Young Adolescents	94	6	0	0
Inviting, Supportive, Safe Environments	94	6	0	0
Teachers and Students Engaged in Active Learning	92	8	0	0
School Initiated School and Community Partnerships	51	47	2	0
Curriculum That is Relevant, Challenging, Integrative, and Exploratory	88	12	0	0
Multiple Teaching and Learning Approaches	85	15	0	0
School-wide Efforts to Foster Health, Wellness, and Safety	65	34	1	0
Teacher With Middle School/Level Teacher Certification/Licensure	35	49	14	2
Trusting and Respective Relationships Among Administrators, Teachers, and Parents	89	11	0	0
Evidence-Based Decision Making	70	29	1	0
A Shared Vision of Mission and Goals	79	21	0	0
Assessment and Evaluation Programs that Promote Quality Learning	77	23	0	0

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**Percent of Levels of Implementation of Selected Middle Level Components:
2009 Randomly Selected Middle Schools**

Components	Highly Implemented	Implemented	Limited Implication	Not Implemented
Advisory Programs	17	29	24	29
Interdisciplinary Team Organization	45	27	19	9
Flexible Scheduling and Grouping	22	33	33	13
Strong Focus on Basic Subjects	73	25	2	0
Educators Who Value Working with Young Adolescents	53	44	3	0
Inviting, Supportive, Safe Environments	65	33	2	0
Teachers and Students Engaged in Active Learning	42	49	9	0
School Initiated School and Community Partnerships	19	46	34	2
Curriculum that is Relevant, Challenging, Integrative, and Exploratory	40	52	8	0
Multiple Teaching and Learning Approaches	31	57	11	0
Schoolwide Efforts to Foster Health, Wellness, and Safety	35	51	14	0
Teacher With Middle School/Level Teacher Certification/Licensure	27	36	27	10
Trusting and Respective Relationships Among Administrators, Teachers, and Parents	46	48	6	0
Evidence-Based Decision Making	32	57	11	0
A Shared Vision of Mission and Goals	42	52	6	0
Assessment and Evaluation Programs that Promote Quality Learning	35	52	13	0

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**Percent of Agreement between Levels of Importance and Levels of Implementation
of Selected Middle Level Components:
2009 Randomly Selected Middle Schools**

Component	Level of Importance				Level of Implementation			
	VI	I	U	VU	HI	I	LI	NI
Advisory Programs	36	51	12	2	17	29	24	29

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The Highly Successful Middle School Survey

Introduction

This section provides results from a second national survey conducted by the authors during the same time period as the national survey of randomly selected middle schools described in Section II of this report. The same research instrument, with the exception of a few questions, was used in both surveys. Whereas the primary purpose of the first 2009 random study of public middle schools was to determine the overall status of programs and practices, the most important purpose of the second 2009 survey was to find out about the nature of middle level programs and practices in some of the nations' most successful middle schools. The authors were interested in questions such as the following:

Are these highly successful schools utilizing programs and practices that are widely recommended for middle level programs and schools or are they moving away from programs and practices commonly associated with the middle school concept? In what ways are these schools the same and different from schools in the random sample? Are there lessons that can be learned from these highly successful middle schools that could help improve all middle schools?

Design of the Study

The sample in this survey, the Highly Successful Middle Schools (HSMS) survey, was middle schools that hagram

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Percent of Community Types:

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Percent of Enrollments of Schools:

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**Percent of Students Scoring On or Above
Grade Level in Reading:
2009 HSMS Study and 2009 Random Study**

On or Above Level Scores	2009 HSMS Study	2009 Random Study
	Percent	Percent
1-10	0	<1
11-20	0	1
21-30	0	2
31-40	0	4
41-50	2	6
51-60	6	10
61-70	16	13
71-80	31	24
81-90	18	25
91-100	27	14
Total	100	99

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**Percent of Scheduling Plans
Utilized by Schools:
2009 HSMS Study and 2009 Random Study**

Schedule Type	2009 HSMS Study	2009 Random Study
	Percent	Percent
Daily Uniform	45	72
Daily Periods-	22	10
Flexible Block	30	14
Self-Contained	0	<1
Other	3	3
Total	100	99

and emphasized were combined, results from the two surveys were not as divergent. However, percentages representing levels of emphasis were still higher in all areas, with the exception of mathematics, in the HSMS

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Percent of Schools with Electives in Selected Subjects by Grade Level: 2009 HSMS Study

Fifth

Sixth

Seventh

Eighth

heterogeneous grouping (44%), and teaming (43%). With the exception of teaming, these were also the top choices in the 2009 random survey. The components in the HSMS survey that received the largest percentages of views that standardized testing had a negative impact included elective/enrichment classes (26%), flexible scheduling (23%), school climate (22%), and heterogeneous grouping (18%). As shown in Table 45, results from the 2009

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Percent of Curriculum Emphasis on Global Education: 2009 HSMS Study

Curriculum Emphasis on Global Education	Highly Emphasized	Emphasized	Somewhat Emphasized	Not Emphasized
Critical Thinking and Problem Solving	61	32	6	1
Communication	47	40	10	2
Creativity and Innovations	32	51	14	2

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Percent of Agreement with Global Awareness Statements: 2009 HSMS Study

Global Awareness Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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**Percent of Schools with
Types of Sports Programs:
2009 HSMS Study and 2009 Random Study**

Program Types	2009 HSMS Study	2009 Random Study
	Percent	Percent
Interscholastic Only	35	45
Intramural Only	12	9
Interscholastic and Intramural	53	46
Total	100	100

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**Percent of Frequency of Advisory Meetings:
2009 HSMS Study and 2009 Random Study**

Frequency of Advisory	2009 HSMS Study	2009 Random Study
	Percent	Percent
Daily	44	54
Four Days/Week	9	4
Three Days/Week	0	1
Two Days/Week	5	7
One Day/Week	22	18
Other	19	16
Total	99	100

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**Percent of Number of Minutes
Scheduled for Advisory:
2009 HSMS Study and 2009 Random Study**

Number of Minutes	2009 HSMS Study	2009 Random Study
	Percent	Percent
1-15	13	17
16-30	62	53
More than 30	24	30

Trusting and respectful relationships among administrators, teachers, and parents;
School-wide efforts to foster health, wellness, and safety;
A shared vision of mission and goals; and,
Assessment and evaluation programs that promote quality learning.

The five remaining components with the lower levels of agreement still reflected strong support for the components listed:

Evidence-based decision making (99%);
Interdisciplinary teaming (98%);
Flexible scheduling and grouping (96%);
Advisory programs (91%); and,
Teachers with middle school/level teacher certification/licensure (86%).

Comparison of these results with those collected in the 2009 randomly selected middle schools show high levels of agreement between results from the two surveys. However, HSMS respondents supported some key middle level components at somewhat higher levels (e.g., advisory, 91% vs. 87%; teaming 98% vs. 93%; flexible scheduling and grouping 96% vs. 88%).

Levels of Implementation of Middle Level Components

To determine if middle level components highly

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Percent of Use of Selected Teaching Strategies: 2009 HSMS Study and 2009 Random Study

	Rarely or Never		Occasionally		Regularly	
	HSMS	Random	HSMS	Random	HSMS	Random
Direct Instruction	2	<1	27	18	71	81
Cooperative Learning	0	2	15	34	85	64
Inquiry Teaching	0	5	43	53	57	42
Independent Study	6	14	60	54	33	32
On-Line Instruction	22	31	58	54	20	15

Teachers and students engaged in active learning (98%);

Educators who value working with young adolescents (97%);

Assessment and evaluation programs that promote quality learning (95%);

Curriculum that is relevant, challenging, integrative, and exploratory (94%);

Evidence-based decision making (93%);

Multiple teaching and learning approaches (92%);

Schoolwide efforts to foster health, wellness, and safety (89%);

Interdisciplinary team organization (88%);

Flexible scheduling and grouping (83%);

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**Percent of Types of Instructional Grouping Practices:
2009 HSMS Study and 2009 Random Study**

Instructional Grouping Practices	2009 HSMS Study	2009 Random Study
	Percent	Percent
Grouping is Random	23	23
All Grade Levels in All Basic Subjects	10	7
All Grade Levels in Selected Subjects	40	38
Certain Grade Levels in All Basic Subjects	0	2
Certain Grades Levels in Certain Subjects	28	30
Total	101	100

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Percent of Use of Tracking Practices: 2009 HSMS Study and 2009 Random Study

Tracking Practices	2009 HSMS Study	2009 Random Study
	Percent	Percent
Mathematics	79	77
Language Arts	41	33
Reading	19	30
Science	19	13

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**Percent of Views of Influences of Standardized Testing:
2009 HSMS Study and 2009 Random Study**

Component	Positive Impact		No Impact		Negative Impact	
	HSMS	R	HSMS	R	HSMS	R
Academic Achievement in General	70	79	18	13	12	9
Advisory Program	31	28	52	61	17	12
Curriculum Rigor and Clarity	82	84	12	10	6	6
Electives/Enrichment Classes	38	41	36	32	26	27
Flexible Scheduling	40	38	37	49	23	14
Heterogeneous Instructional Grouping	38	39	44	48	18	14
Instructional Delivery	67	73	19	14	14	13
Instructional Grouping	57	64	29	25	13	11
Intramural Sports Programs	18	20	69	71	14	9
Professional Development for	77	80	18	13	5	7
Remediation Practices	81	82	18	13	1	5
School Climate	57	57	22	20	22	24
Teacher Planning Time	54	51	37	35	10	15
Teaming	52	55	43	34	5	11

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**Percent of Levels of Agreement with Statements about Professional Development for Technology:
2009 HSMS Study and 2009 Random Study**

Statements on Professional Development for Technology	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	HSMS	R	HSMS	R	HSMS	R	HSMS	R

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**Percent of Level of Importance of and Level of Implementation of Middle Level Components:
2009 HSMS Study**

Component	Level of Importance				Level of Implementation			
	VI	I	U	VU	HI	I	LI	NI
Advisory Programs	42	49	7	1	26	30	24	20

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**Percent of Levels of Implementation of Middle Level Components:
2009 HSMS Study and 2009 Random Study**

Component	Level of Implementation in HSMS				Level of Implementation in Randomly Selected Schools			
	HI	I	LI	NI	HI	I	LI	NI
Advisory Programs	26	30	24	20	17	29	24	29
Interdisciplinary Team Organization	71	17	7	5	45	27	19	9

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Conclusions and Recommendations

A major purpose for conducting the two 2009 national surveys was to gain perspectives on the status of programs and practices that are considered to be crucial to effective middle level schooling. This section includes some selected observations and conclusions based on results from the 2009 national survey of 827 randomly selected public middle schools (Section II) and the 2009 national survey of 101 highly successful middle schools (Section III). Data from the survey of randomly selected schools were compared with data from four earlier linked surveys. These surveys were conducted in 1968 (Alexander), 1988 (Alexander & McEwin, 1989), 1993 and 2001 (McEwin, Dickinson & Jenkins, 1996, 2003). Data from the 2009 randomly selected middle schools were also compared with results from the 2009 survey of programs and practices in highly successful middle schools (HSMS). The HSMS survey was conducted primarily to determine the extent to which these nationally recognized schools were using recommended middle level programs and practices and to explore what lessons could be learned from these schools. Detailed information about the design of these studies is provided in Sections II and III.

Recommendations for future actions are provided in this section of the report. Some of the results and recommendations provided here are also included in a article published in 2010 (McEwin & Greene). Since the focus of this section is on selected topics included in the surveys, readers are encouraged to explore data from the earlier sections of the report to gain a more comprehensive understanding of results.

Interdisciplinary Team Organization and Common Teacher Planning Time

One of the most disappointing findings that emerged was a decrease in the use of interdisciplinary team organization among middle schools in the randomly selected middle school survey. The percentage of middle schools utilizing this organizational plan had decreased from 77% in the 2001 survey to 72% in the 2009. This reversed a trend of ever increasing percentages of middle schools adopting this organizational plan beginning with the Alexander survey that was completed in 1968. This trend does not bode well for middle level schools or the young adolescents that attend them since this model is so widely recommended and effective (Arhar, 1990, 1992; Flowers, Mertens, & Mulhall, 1999, 2000; NMSA, 2010a, 2010b). Thi-6 e.a 7a5 (.) 5 () 1 (2) 5 (0) -1 5 ,

since the research base and successful practice support the importance of this organizational feature (Mertens & Flowers, 2006; Mertens, Flowers, Anfara, & Caskey, 2010; Mertens, Flowers, & Mulhall, 1998; NMSA, 2010a; Warren & Muth, 1995).

Results from the HSMS survey showed that interdisciplinary team organization is more highly valued and more frequently implemented in HSMS than in schools responding to the 2009 randomly selected school survey. Ninety percent of the HSMS reported using the interdisciplinary team

Similar patterns for the elective subjects offered were comparable in both 2009 studies. Band, chorus, art, and orchestra, computers, and general music were popular electives at all grade levels. Band was offered somewhat more frequently at HSMS, but few other differences were found. Larger percentages of HSMS (49%) than randomly selected middle schools (39%) offered interest/mini-courses to enrich their curriculum. HSMS reported placing a stronger emphasis on global curriculum than schools in the 2009 randomly selected middle school survey. This included, but was not limited to, critical thinking and problem solving, collaboration, and science.

Advisory Programs

The importance of advisory programs has long been recognized in the junior high school and middle school literature (Alexander, 1968; Briggs, 1920; Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989; George & Alexander, 2003; Gruhn & Douglas, 1956; Powell, 2011; Van Til, Lounsbury & Vars, 1961). Results from both 2009 studies revealed that they are far from being universally implemented in the nation's middle schools. Fifty-three percent of schools in the randomly selected middle school sample and 65% of HSMS reported having advisory programs. HSMS allotted larger amounts of time for

Instructional Grouping Practices

Data from both 2009 studies revealed discouraging trends in instructional grouping practices. The number of schools in the 2009 random study using random instructional grouping has declined 9% since 1993, documenting a move away from heterogeneous grouping in middle schools. An identical 23% of schools in both 2009 studies reported that instructional grouping was random at their schools. Trends clearly show that ability grouping is increasing in middle schools despite serious concerns that this practice ma

schools in the random sample had this percentage.
Twenty-seven percent of HSMS had 81% or more

- € Higher percentages of middle schools required non-core courses such as physical education, health education, and reading at all grade levels;
- € The percentage of middle schools offering the most popular electives increased (e.g., sixth grade band, 82% vs. 97%; seventh grade chorus, 70% vs. 78%; eighth grade art 47% v. 63%);
- € The percentage of middle schools offering orchestra decreased significantly at the seventh and eighth grade levels (72% vs. 39%);
- € The percentage of middle schools with interest/mini-course programs decreased (49% vs. 39%);
- € The percentage of middle schools with advisory programs increased (48% vs. 53%);
- € The percentage of middle schools using cooperative learning on a regular basis increased (60% vs. 64%);
- € The percentage of middle schools using direct instruction on a regular basis decreased (88% vs. 81%);
- € The percentage of middle schools using random (non-tracked) instructional grouping remained about the same (22% vs. 23%);
- € The percentage of middle schools tracking in mathematics increased (73% vs. 77%);
- € The percentage of middle schools providing before and after school tutoring remained the same (84%); and,
- € With the exception of summer school for remediation (67% vs. 59%), the use of remediation plans increased (extra period

- € Used inquiry teaching more frequently (57% vs. 43%);
- € Had higher percentages of core teachers holding separate middle level teacher licensure (Table 51);
- € More frequently had advisory programs (65% vs. 54%);
- € Offered daily advisory periods less often (44% vs. 54%);
- € Had larger student enrollments (Table 28);
- € Had a smaller percentage of schools where 51% or more students qualified for the free or reduced lunch (27% vs. 36%);
- € Had a higher percentage of students—51% or higher—on or above grade level) in mathematics (94% vs. 82%);
- € Had a higher percentage of students—81% or higher—on or above grade level in mathematics (53% vs. 30%);
- € Had a higher percentage of students—51% or

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Implementing Highly Successful Developmentally Responsive Middle Level Schools

Results from the 2009 surveys and contemporary middle level literature lead to the overall conclusion that although there is much to celebrate, even more remains to be accomplished if authentic developmentally responsive middle level programs and schools are to become a reality for all young adolescents (George, 2009a, 2009b; Lounsbury, 2009). All stakeholders need to intensify their efforts to overcome the complex challenges associated with authentic middle level school reform and work persistently and collaboratively to implement key middle level programs and practices. Otherwise, middle level schools may slip further back into the mistakes made in the first reform movement to create developmentally responsive schools for young adolescents—the junior high school movement. The rationale for developmentally responsive junior high schools had much in common with the current rationale for developmentally responsive middle level schools. One of the problems with junior high schools was that so many

& MacIver, 1990; McEwin & Alexander, 1990; McEwin, Dickinson, & Jacobson, 2004; McEwin & Greene, 2011). It is young adolescents and those who teach them and serve them in other ways that are paying the price for this failure to fully implement developmentally responsive middle level program and practices.

One trap that must be avoided is defining effective middle schools as ones that have programs, practices, and policies that can be simply “checked off a list” without full implementation. The misuse of middle level programs and practices at some middle schools does not negate their importance nor provide a valid excuse for non-implementation. Being satisfied with the status quo is neither acceptable nor productive and can lead to what Di

goals of middle level education (e.g., increasing student learning; enhancing healthy development; helping produce productive citizens; achieving the goals of middle level education and American education in general). The possibilities for success at the middle level are promising, but only if each one of us commits our efforts to provide the young adolescents of our nation the quality of middle level education they need and deserve. The stakes are too high to allow for inaction on the part of all those responsible for the education and care of young adolescents.

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