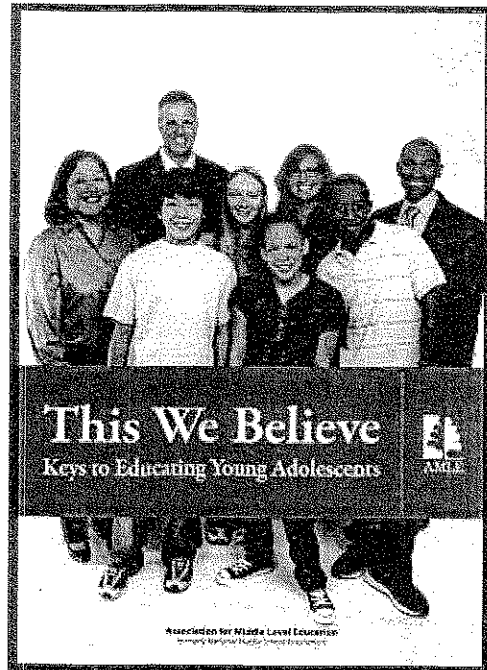


Middle School Reorganization

Thoughts and Ideas from the
Middle School Team

Middle School Philosophy



The Wilton-Lyndeborough Cooperative Middle School Program has existed since 1995 to meet the unique intellectual, emotional, and social needs of the adolescent. The Middle School program, housed in the "Middle School" wing since 2000, is organized into teams of core academic teachers who all teach the same students. Teaming promotes that all students experience success and challenges with a rigorous curriculum designed to meet their developmental needs.

Supported by New England League of Middle Schools (NELMS) and Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE)

16 Characteristics for Successful Middle Schools

An education for young adolescents must be: Developmentally responsive, challenging, empowering, equitable

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

- **Educators value young adolescents and are prepared to teach them**-Effective middle grades educators make a conscious choice to work with young adolescents and advocate for them. They understand the developmental uniqueness of this age group, the appropriate curriculum, effective learning and assessment strategies, and their importance as models.
 - **Students and teachers are engaged in active, purposeful learning**-Instructional practices place students at the center of the learning process. As they develop the ability to hypothesize, to organize information into useful and meaningful constructs, and to grasp long-term cause and effect relationships, students are ready and able to play a major role in their own learning and education.
 - **Curriculum is challenging, exploratory, integrative, and relevant**-Curriculum embraces every planned aspect of a school's educational program. An effective middle level curriculum is distinguished by learning activities that appeal to young adolescents, is exploratory and challenging, and incorporates student-generated questions and concerns.
 - **Educators use multiple learning and teaching approaches**-Teaching and learning approaches should accommodate the diverse skills, abilities, and prior knowledge of young adolescents, cultivate multiple intelligences, draw upon students' individual learning styles, and utilize digital tools. When learning experiences capitalize on students' cultural, experiential, and personal backgrounds, new concepts are built on knowledge students already possess.
 - **Varied and ongoing assessments advance learning as well as measure it**-Continuous, authentic, and appropriate assessment measures, including both formative and summative ones, provide evidence about every student's learning progress. Such information helps students, teachers, and family members select immediate learning goals and plan further education.
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Leadership and Organization

- **A shared vision developed by all stakeholders guides every decision**-When a shared vision and mission statement become operational, middle level educators pursue appropriate practices in developing a challenging academic program; they develop criteria to guide decisions and a process to make needed changes.
 - **Leaders are committed to and knowledgeable about this age group, educational research, and best practices**-Courageous, collaborative middle level leaders understand young adolescents, the society in which they live, and the theory of middle level education. Such leaders understand the nuances of teaming, student advocacy, exploration, and assessment as components of a larger middle level program.
 - **Leaders demonstrate courage and collaboration**-Leaders understand that successful schools committed to the long-term implementation of the middle school concept must be collaborative enterprises. The principal, working collaboratively with a leadership team, focuses on building a learning community that involves all teachers and places top priority on the education and healthy development of every student, teacher, and staff member.
 - **Ongoing professional development reflects best educational practices**-Professional development is a continuing activity in middle level schools where teachers take advantage of every opportunity to work with colleagues to improve the learning experiences for their students.
 - **Organizational structures foster purposeful learning and meaningful relationships**-The ways schools organize teachers and group and schedule students have a significant impact on the learning environment. Interdisciplinary teams common planning time, block scheduling, and elimination of tracking are related conditions that contribute to improved achievement.
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Culture and Community

- **The school environment is inviting, safe, inclusive, and supportive of all-**A successful school for young adolescents is an inviting, supportive, and safe place, a joyful community that promotes in-depth learning and enhances students' physical and emotional well-being.
 - **Every student's academic and personal development is guided by an adult advocate-**Academic success and personal growth increase markedly when young adolescents' affective needs are met. Each student must have one adult to support that student's academic and personal development.
 - **Comprehensive guidance and support services meet the needs of young adolescents-**Both teachers and specialized professionals are readily available to offer the assistance many students need in negotiating their lives in and out of school.
 - **Health and wellness are supported in curricula, school-wide programs, and related policies-**Abundant opportunities are available for students to develop and maintain healthy minds and bodies and to understand their personal growth through health-related programs, policies, and curricula.
 - **The school actively involves families in the education of their children-**Schools and families must work together to provide the best possible learning for every young adolescent. Schools take the initiative in involving and educating families.
 - **The school includes community and business partners-**Genuine community involvement is a fundamental component of successful schools for young adolescents. Such schools seek appropriate partnerships with businesses, social service agencies, and other organizations whose purposes are consistent with the school's mission.
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Ideas to Enhance and Enrich

5th Period

- Period 5 could be restructured to become an extra teaching block or intervention/enrichment in content area.
 - 6 contact periods a week instead of 5
 - Approximately 30 extra periods of core instruction/interaction per year
 - Allows student support needed in all subjects

Would explore the possibility of Band and Chorus being offered as a UA to ensure that no students miss intervention or core instruction

Enrichment/Honor's Prep Option

- Students would be offered learning experiences that represent a higher level of rigor and self-direction
 - Primary sources- document-based questions
 - More challenging novels
 - More complex word problems
 - Depth of scientific inquiry and analysis
 - Parents and students would be offered a syllabus/contract with descriptions of expectations
 - Students would benefit for future learning experiences, including possible high school honors course

Considerations and Concerns

Considerations

- Creating a shared Middle School philosophy-What is the ultimate motivation for restructuring the Middle School?
- Include Middle School and High School staff in discussions related to programming changes.
- Maintain current programming in order to allow ample time to realize results from recent changes in the last 3 years (Studies show that it takes 3-5 years of successful, dedicated implantation to see results).
 - Changes in personnel
 - New Assessments
 - Change in curriculum
 - Period 5 restructuring
- Could we create a more formalized RTI structure that would include at least one intervention specialist, with strengths in math and reading who could work with students throughout the day?

Concerns

- Loss of common planning time/teaming in some models (8th grade and pushin/pullout model) will diminish:
 - Data analysis/communication
 - Collaborative curriculum development
 - Social/emotional support
 - Time to meet with parents, school counseling, and special ed teachers unless teachers are pulled from instructional time

Additional Points to Consider about our Current Model

- The Department of Education, in their 2017 review of the Middle School had no recommendations.
 - We were in total compliance and they were impressed with our program.
 - Areas assessed included curriculum, safety, use of planning time, our teaming, rigor, etc...
- The Middle School was also critical in providing authentic and quality evidence for meeting accreditation standards during the NEASC visit last year.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Check it out for yourself!

www.nelms.org

www.amle.org