

**The Characteristics and
Conditions Associated with
Exemplary Middle Schools**

Six Characteristics



1

**Educators Committed to
Young Adolescents**

As evidenced by:

- **Making a conscious choice to work with young adolescents**
- **Understanding the developmental uniqueness of young adolescents**

- **Being advocates for all young adolescents**



***Middle School Advocate* - one who (1) enjoys middle school students, (2) understands their culture, (3) values interdisciplinary work and integrated learning and can help all students learn well and (4) is sensitive to and positively responds to individual differences.**

•Being a good role model by modeling inclusive, collaborative and team-oriented approaches to learning.

- **Having specific preparation for middle level classrooms and continuous professional development.**

2

A Shared Vision



As evidenced by:

- **A collaborative process of developing a vision and shared mission statement**
- **Use of research and practice to guide direction**
- **Regularly revisiting vision as change occurs**

3

High Expectations for All



As evidenced by:

- **Empowering students to learn, to become intellectually engaged, and to behave in keeping with responsible citizenship.**
- **Teachers and administrators who hold high expectations for themselves and for one another.**

4

An Adult Advocate for Every Student



As evidenced by:

- **Each student having one adult who knows and cares for that individual,**
- **And who supports that student's academic and personal development.**

5

**Family and
Community
Partnerships**



As evidenced by:

- **The school's actively encouraging family and community involvement**
- **The school supporting and assisting families in creating and sustaining positive home learning environments**
- **Appropriate partnerships with businesses, social service agencies and other organizations.**



6

A Positive School Climate

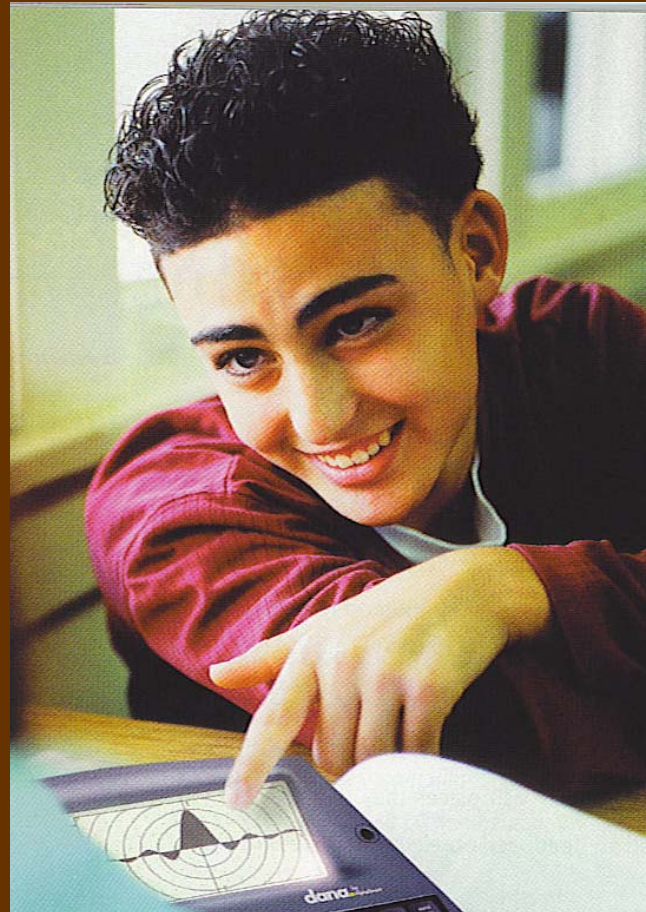
As evidenced by:

- **The school is safe, inviting and caring.**
- **The school promotes a sense of community.**
- **The school encourages learning.**

Six Conditions

1

**Curriculum that is challenging,
integrative and exploratory**



As evidenced by:

- **Challenging curriculum that actively engages students.**
- **Emphasis on in-depth study and application of important ideas and skills**
- **Relevant curriculum**
- **Adapting curriculum to challenge each and every student**

An Integrative Curriculum

A Continuum of Curriculum Integration

(Adapted from Brazee & Capelluti, 1994)

1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____ 6

1. Conventional

2. Correlated

3. Interdisciplinary

4. Integrated

5. Integrative

6. Empowering



Exploratory Curriculum

- Students self discover**
- All courses & activities reveal opportunities for making contributions to society**
- Acquaint students with enriching, healthy, leisure-time pursuits.**

2

Varied Teaching & Learning Approaches



As evidenced by:

- **Accommodation of the diverse skills, abilities & knowledge of students**
- **Cultivating multiple intelligences**
- **Capitalizing on students' individual learning styles**

3

Assessment and Evaluation that Promote Learning



As evidenced by:

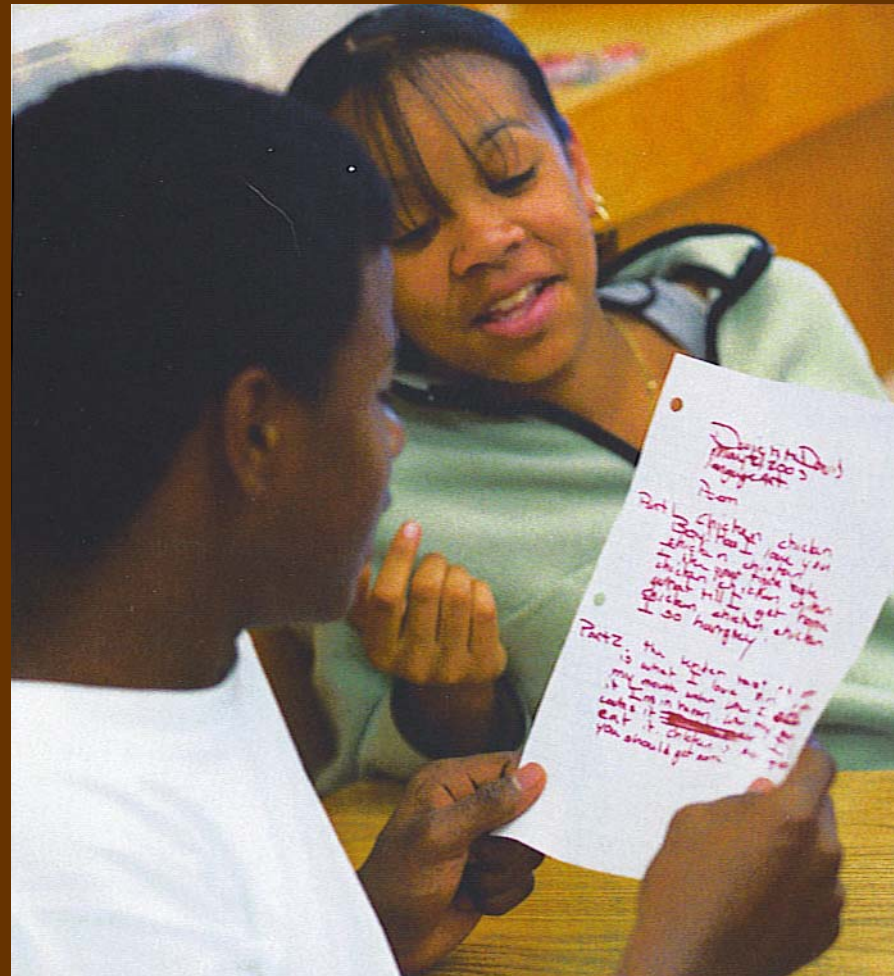
- **Continuous, authentic, and appropriate assessment & evaluation**
- **Students set personal standards and assess their own progress**
- **Assessment & evaluation address all aspects of student's growth**

Assessment: process of measuring a student's progress toward a goal or objective.

Evaluation: process of using data and standards to judge the quality of progress.

4

Flexible Organization Structures



As evidenced by:

- **Structures that build a sense of community and connection**
- **Use of enrichment programs, cooperative learning groups and independent study**
- **Instruction outside of the classroom**

In an exemplary middle school, teachers design and operate much of the program...



...collaborate across teaching specialties, and share responsibility for literacy development, guidance/advocacy, and student life.

5

Programs and Policies that Foster Health, Wellness and Safety

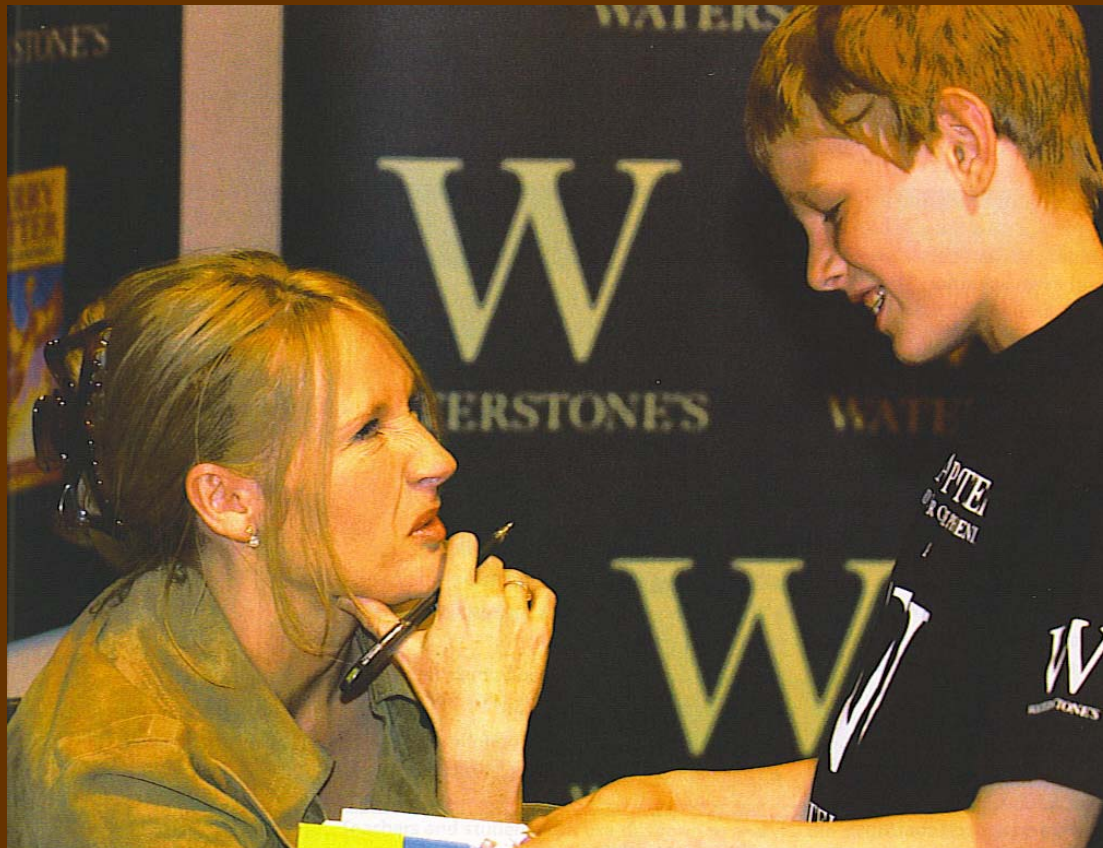


As evidenced by:

- **Abundant opportunities to achieve and maintain healthy minds and bodies**
- **A comprehensive healthy & fitness program**
- **Partnership with homes & community to address risks and provide protective conditions**

6

Comprehensive Guidance & Support Services



As evidenced by:

- **Both teachers and specialized professionals available to offer needed assistance.**
- **Teacher advocates & advisory programs**
- **All teachers know & use appropriate referral services and procedures**

•School counselors support teachers in advocacy programs, demonstrate group activities and offer one-on-one and small group guidance.

•School counselors coordinate the support services.



**We believe
they're
worth it!**

**A summary of the National Middle School Association
white paper, *This We Believe* (1995).**