

## POLICY 500-16

### MIDDLE LEVEL EDUCATION

Middle level schools shall implement specific practices to effectively meet the unique learning needs of young adolescents. The Department of Education shall ensure that middle level schools address the physical, social, and emotional developmental needs of young adolescents and set high expectations for academic achievement through incorporation of the following criteria based on the National Middle School Association's ("NMSA") characteristics of developmentally responsive middle level schools.

- A rich and challenging standards-based curriculum which addresses the developmental needs of young adolescents.
- Small communities of learners through interdisciplinary teaming of students and teachers.
- A nurturing environment where each student has at least one adult on the school staff, who knows, cares about and supports the student's academic and personal development.
- Varied instructional strategies and flexible use of instructional time.
- Varied organizational arrangements to ensure success for all students.
- Exploratory and co-curricular programs which meet the developmental needs of young adolescents.
- Educators who are knowledgeable about and committed to young adolescents.
- Families, communities and other stakeholders engaged in substantive partnership with the school in the education of young adolescents.
- Programs which foster the development of physical and emotional health, character and positive social relationships.

These criteria shall be incorporated and addressed through the Western Association of Schools and Colleges ("WASC") accreditation process.

The Department shall implement administrative guidelines that support the integration of middle level education beliefs and practices into the culture of each classroom, team, grade level, and school community. A mechanism to systematically implement middle level schools and ensure that these schools continually meet the criteria shall be specified in the administrative guidelines.

**Rationale:** The Board of Education recognizes that young adolescence is a critical period in the development and education of students.

[Approved: 05/19/2015 (as Board Policy 500.16); amended: 06/21/2016 (renumbered as Board Policy 500-16)]

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