

10

PLUS 10

Characteristics Of Exemplary Middle School Programs

1. A philosophy based on the unique needs and characteristics of the young adolescent
2. Educators knowledgeable about and committed to the young adolescent
3. A balanced curriculum between the cognitive (subject-centered) and affective (student-centered) needs of the young adolescent
4. Teachers who use varied instructional strategies
5. A comprehensive advisor/advisee program
6. An interdisciplinary team organization at all grades
7. A flexible block master schedule
8. A full exploratory program
9. Both team planning and personal planning for all teachers
10. A positive and collaborative school climate
11. Shared decision-making in which the people closest to the "client" are involved in the decision-making process of the school
12. A smooth transition process from elementary to middle school and from middle school to high school
13. A high-quality extracurricular program including intramurals, interest-based mini-courses, clubs, and social events
14. A physical plant where teams are housed together for core classes and large areas for full team sessions
15. A commitment to the importance of health and physical fitness for all students on a regular basis
16. A commitment to regular involvement of families in the education of young adolescents by keeping them informed of student progress and school programs and by giving them meaningful roles in the schooling process
17. A positive connection between school and the community through student service projects, business partnerships, and use of community resources within the school curriculum
18. Consistent use of cooperative learning strategies in the classroom
19. An emphasis on the use of higher-order thinking skills and hands-on instructional strategies
20. Empowerment of students whenever possible

From *How To Evaluate Your Middle School* by Sandra Schurr. Columbus, OH: National Middle School Association, 1992. Used by permission.

10

PLUS 3

Major Distinctions Between The Middle School And The Junior High School

MIDDLE SCHOOL

JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

1. Is student-centered
2. Fosters collaboration and empowerment of teachers and students
3. Focuses on creative exploration and experimentation of subject matter
4. Allows for flexible scheduling with large blocks of time
5. Varies length of time students are in courses
6. Encourages multi-materials approach to instruction
7. Organizes teachers on interdisciplinary teams with common planning period
8. Arranges work spaces of teamed teachers adjacent to one another
9. Emphasizes both affective and cognitive development of student
10. Offers advisor/advisee teacher-oriented guidance program
11. Provides high-interest "mini-courses" during school day
12. Uses varied delivery systems with high level of interaction among students and teachers
13. Organizes athletics around intramural concept

- Is subject-centered
- Fosters competition and empowerment of administrators
- Focuses on mastery of concepts and skills in separate disciplines
- Requires a regular six-period day of 50- to 55-minute periods
- Offers subjects for one semester or one year
- Depends on textbook-oriented instruction
- Organizes teachers in departments with no common planning period
- Arranges work spaces of teachers according to disciplines taught
- Emphasizes only cognitive development of student
- Offers study hall and access to counselor upon request
- Provides highly-structured activity program after school
- Uses lecture styles a majority of the time with high percentage of teacher talk time
- Organizes athletics around interscholastic concept