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Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
A Portal for Middle Grades Educators

Document Library Index

The following documents were collected specifically for *TCSII*. Some represent key portions of books such as *Caught in the Middle,* some are journal articles; still others were donated by school team members as illustrations of ideas modeled in *TCSII* videos or "spotlights." If your team has a document that would be helpful to other middle grades educators, please Submit Your Idea!

A — F G — L M — R S — End

- Acceptance of Young Adolescent Priorities Leads To Reciprocal Identification With Academic Values
- ACE Class Description—Silverado Middle School
- Affix and Root Word Charts (DOC; 298 KB; 6p.)
- After Hours Academic Programs in Middle School (DOC; 28 KB; 1 pp.)
- A Middle School Culture Supporting Standards-Based Education
- A Rationale for Steps in the Process of Explicitly Teaching a Critical Word With a Goal of Developing Expressive Vocabulary Knowledge (DOC; 84 KB; 2pp.)
- Behavior Warning Letter to Parent Regarding Their Student — Example
- Bloom's Taxonomy-—Implications for Testing (DOC; 24 KB; 1 pp.)
- California Middle Grades Content Standards
- Characteristics of Differentiated Instruction
- Characteristics of Effective Explicit Vocabulary Instruction in Mixed-Ability 6-12 Classrooms (DOC; 32 KB; 1p.)
- Characteristics of Middle Grade Students
- Civic Literacy and the Civic Mission of Schools
- Civility, Ethical Behavior, and Social Consciousness: Needs and Commitments for Students, Parents, and Teachers
- Content Area Reading Graphic Organizers (DOC; 241 KB; 44 pp.)
- Curriculum Calibration — Lessons Learned From Underperforming Schools
- Designing the Master Schedule as a Mosaic
- Developing Local Benchmark Assessments
- Developing, Using, and Communicating Complex Reasoning
- Digital Literacy in 21st Century Middle Schools: A Scenario
- Early Warning Signs of Violent Behavior by Students
- Education Code Sections about Parent Roles
- Effects of Multiple Intelligences on Instruction
- English Language Learners
- English Learner Resources
- Examples of Caring Behavior
- Explicit Vocabulary Instructional Strategy (to Develop Expressive Word Knowledge) (DOC; 30 KB; 1p.)
- Four-Point Scoring Guides for Seventh Grade Writing Tasks
- Foreign Language Education
- Frequently Asked Questions about Podcasts (DOC; 43 KB; 2 pp.)
- Galt Joint Union Elementary District — Middle School Report Cards (DOC; 104 KB; 9 pp.)
- Ground Rules for Class Discussion (DOC; 46KB; 1p.)
- Guidelines for Prioritizing Words to Address from a Text (to Support Reading Comprehension and Academic Vocabulary Acquisition) (DOC; 32 KB; 1p.)
- Guidelines for Using Time
- Guidelines for Writing Effective Response Starters (DOC; 72KB; 1p.)
- Historical Perspective: Setting the Stage for California's Middle School Reform Movement
- How to Create a Podcast for a MAC (DOC; 2 MB; 4 pp.)
- How to Create a Podcast for a PC (DOC; 2 MB; 4 pp.)
- Idea Bank: School-Based Professional Development
- Language Strategies for Active Classroom Participation (DOC; 63KB; 1p.)
- Learning Styles and the Environment (DOC; 40KB; 2pp.)
- Lesson Observation and Reflection Tool - Structured Academic Discussion (DOC; 109KB; 1p.)
- Lesson Observation and Reflection Tool–Structured Learner Engagement (DOC; 77KB; 1p.)

- *Let the Games Begin — Video Games in the Classroom* (PDF; 214KB; 2 pp.)
- Linking the Recommendation on Rigor with Education Code, State Board of Education Policies, and Curricular Frameworks (DOC; 44 KB; 2 pp.)
- Major Characteristics of A Middle School Culture Capable of Implementing and Sustaining Standards –Based Education (DOC; 32 KB; 1 pp.)
- Middle Grades Courses of Study and Instructional Time (DOC; 107 KB; 9 pp.)
- *Middle Grades Spotlight*: A Best Practice Periodical: Archived copies of this best practice periodical for middle grades educators.
- Middle School Philosophy
- Models of Team Teaching Showing Unique and Overlapping Features (DOC; 33 KB; 1 pp.)
- Nurturing Motivation, Effort, and Investment in Schoolwork
- Parent Grade Warning Letter — Example
- Pickle in the Middle by James Beane
- Podcast Rubric (DOC; 41 KB; 1 p.)
- Pragmatics of Structured Partnering (DOC; 84KB; 1p.).
- "Prepped for Life—Part 4: A Day of Reckoning Arrives for Dropouts and Their Schools" (DOC; 47KB; 7pp.)
- Professional Considerations—Accountability
- Professional Considerations—After Hours Academic Enrichment
- Professional Considerations—Assessment
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- Professional Considerations—California Middle Schools Prepared to Close the Achievement Gap
- Professional Considerations—Creating A School Culture
- Professional Considerations—English Learners and Academic Success
- Professional Considerations—Health, Safety, Resilience, and Civility
- Professional Considerations—Professional Development
- Professional Considerations—Providing Time
- Professional Considerations—School Board Members
- Professional Considerations—School Vision
- Professional Considerations—Team Teaching
- Prototype Student Performance Report (DOC; 60 KB; 3 pp.)
- Qualities of Exemplary Teachers
- Questioning Strategies That Lead To Higher Level Thinking Skills
- Reading Aloud To Students of All Ages
- Reciprocal Accountability Model for Stakeholders in the Middle Grades Report (DOC; 34 KB; 1 pp.)
- Recommended Professional Learning Community Resources
- Right to Literacy (The)—Chapter 5 (PDF; 154 KB; 16 pp.)
- Role of Parents in Helping to Create Safe, Violence-free Middle Schools (The)
- Roles of Stakeholders in a Middle Grade Accountability System
- School Board Policy On Adolescent Literacy
- School "Personality" (The)
- Schools to Watch-Taking Center Stage Thumbnail Sketch (DOC; 155KB; 6pp).
- Self-Scoring Guide for Assessment and Accountability
- Structured Academic Discussion Strategy: Instructional Steps (DOC; 86KB; 1p.)
- Structured Academic Discussion Task: Preparation and Implementation (DOC; 68KB; 1p.)
- Student, Parent, Teacher Contract — Example
- Summary Writing Task — Grade 7, Trimester 1: Example
- Summative Essay Recipe
- Team Guidelines
- Television Viewing: Guidelines for Middle Grades
- Think-Write-Pair-Share: Characteristics of Effective Partners (DOC; 25KB; 1p.)
- Think-Write-Pair-Share: Reasons for U.S. Immigration (DOC; 25KB; 1p.)
- Think-Write-Pair-Share Template (DOC; 24KB; 1p.)
- Vocabulary Notetaking Guide (DOC; 105 KB; 1p.)
- WICR—An AVID Strategy (DOC; 18KB; 1p.)
- Wiseburn School District Seventh Grade Response to Literature Writing Rubric (DOC; 68 KB; 3 pp.)
- Writing Prompt Guidelines for Teacher Teams

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Acceptance of Young Adolescent Priorities Leads to Reciprocal Identification with Academic Values

Taking Center Stage. Sacramento. California Department of Education, 2001, p. 110

The complex physical and emotional changes taking place in the lives of students during grades six through eight introduce multiple agendas that compete with academic goals. As a result the intellectual priorities of teachers and parents may be temporarily set aside in favor of more demanding considerations, at least from the standpoint of the students.

Teachers, principals, and parents need to accept the legitimacy of the nonacademic preoccupations of middle grades students, even if they seem on the surface to be trivial. It may be surprising to everyone but the students themselves that subject matter is not always their most basic concern.

Research indicates that physical appearance, peer popularity, and athletic activities represent areas of intense concern among young adolescents and that their friends are their single most significant personal preoccupation. Again, this should not be surprising because the socializing functions of schools are very important to the eventual development of mature young adults.

When teachers, counselors, and principals accept the priorities of young adolescents, they can become more tolerant and more intelligent about ways to nurture and strengthen the school's academic expectations. The emphasis should be on *acceptance,* and not necessarily on *approval.*

It is axiomatic that there will be tensions between teachers and students regarding relative priorities, but these need not and should not lead to disabled relationships. Students do not ask for approval. But they have the right to ask for acceptance of legitimate aspects of their growing-up experiences. The weight of a significant volume of research in the social and behavioral sciences is on their side.

School should indeed be a major intellectual experience, but it is also a significant socializing experience. There is an interesting twist to this discussion that is understood by many educators and parents. When students experience acceptance by the significant adults in their lives, the consequence often leads to a much closer identification with the academic goals that those adults value.

The potential also exists for a schoolwide domino effect. Even a few students who develop a clear sense of academic values prized by their teachers and parents can positively influence large numbers of other students in their own classroom and throughout their school.

In essence there is no necessarily unresolvable conflict between the priorities of adolescents related to their growing, maturing bodies and emotions and the parallel concerns of adults for the growth and development of their minds. When each of these discrete yet integrally related agendas is understood and accepted as valid by teachers and parents, everyone's life becomes more enjoyable, and the likelihood of academic success takes a quantum leap forward.

Teachers and principals who strive to understand what makes young adolescents tick and who respond with sensitivity and acceptance will find themselves being rewarded by students who increasingly identify as their own the adult values that relate to intellectual growth and academic achievement. This agenda lies at the heart of successful standards-based middle schools.

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ACE Class Description
Silverado Middle School

ACE Intervention class is a one- or two-semester class designed to help students in their core academic classes. Its purpose is to teach students how to:

- Plan
- Study
- Organize
- Complete homework and projects
- Interact with adults and peers for success
- Maintain a positive attitude and successful behavior.

The class has a regular routine that helps teach the students how to organize and complete their work

1. As students arrive, they get out their planners while appointed representatives from core academic classes write down the homework from those classes on the board (for example, “Tom” lists the math homework; “Jessica” lists language arts assignments, etc.)

2. While the student reps finish writing homework assignments on the board, the teacher quickly checks student planners to see that they have written the assignments down.

3. The teacher then leads the class in a review of what is coming up during the week (test in math; project due in social studies, etc.). If there are tests, the teacher helps the students determine when to place a “study” reminder in their planners.

4. One day each week, the teacher has a “backpack check” to help students put forms that need to go home in their planners and to toss old papers.

5. On Thursdays, students take weekly progress reports home from each core academic class. If all the students return the signed progress reports on Fridays, the class holds a celebration of some sort.

6. Also on Fridays, the class celebrates each other’s successes. As each student tells about a success (“I got an A on my social studies test”) the others cheer.

Since self-knowledge and reflection are important skills to learn, the class holds a joint reflection at the end of each trimester. At that time, they work both individually and in pairs on an “ACE Class Reflection” worksheet” that asks if the student(s) did or did not use their time wisely, and how ACE could change to be even more helpful.

The class also uses a journal where students write personal and academic goals. At regular intervals, the students take time to review the goals as a class and to reflect on how they are progressing toward those goals.

Peer tutors are available to help with homework in all the core content areas.

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A Middle School Culture Supporting Standards-Based Education

Adapted from *Taking Center Stage,* California Department of Education, 2001, pp. 116-119.

Teachers and principals working to build a school culture that promotes academic excellence and rich pedagogy within a standards-based teaching and learning environment will give a high priority to ensuring that the following norms, beliefs, practices, and routines are in place. In high impact schools, students:

- *Are involved with issues they regard as important and that have meaning in their own lives.* When the importance of specific learning tasks is not immediately evident, time should be allowed in class to discuss relevance and meaning. Knowledge and skills do not exist in an intellectual or experiential vacuum. Middle grades students are helped to understand that content standards represent the efforts of specialists and scholars to identify the most important things that students should know and be able to do.

- *Engage in exploring human differences.* Ideally, learning should take place within a rich, heterogeneous context of ethnic, linguistic, and cultural variables. Middle grades students need to understand as much as possible about the deeper meaning of such learning experiences and recognize that human diversity can contribute to enriched understanding of nearly any learning activity.

- *Participate in planning many of their learning experiences.* Participation, cooperation, and collaboration are essential elements of a rich middle school culture. Consequently, students should participate in the implementation and continued development of standards-based education. For example, they should be involved in helping to develop performance tasks used to evaluate their academic performance levels and become thoroughly knowledgeable about the scoring criteria developed for that purpose.

- *Can apply such ideals as fairness, equity, and justice to their school and classroom relationships and to the larger world about them.* Many middle grades students may be confronting complex issues outside their immediate school environment for the first time as they explore local, state, national, and global challenges—whether economic, social, or political. The ideals of fairness, equity, and justice cut across all areas of the curriculum and content standards and lie at the heart of efforts to inculcate honor, civility, and service.

- *Are actively involved in their learning.* They may conduct an experiment, act in a play, construct a model, write an essay, or otherwise creatively and productively engage in various active learning assignments and assessments. The activities provide evidence of the connection between knowing and doing. Bringing critical elements of the curriculum together, active learning often produces a powerful synergistic effect. For example, students move from knowing musical notes to playing an instrument; from identifying a problem to solving it; from developing a hypothesis to testing it; from using color theory to painting a canvas; or from using knowledge of specialized software to designing a building or retrieving original documents for a social studies project.

- *Are involved in real-life situations that bring them into direct contact with adults in many different walks of life.* In the minds of some critics, standards-based education has acquired a reputation for intellectual sterility—a by-the-numbers approach to curriculum and instruction. To the contrary, standards-based education helps teachers to make relevant connections and to engage students in diverse, real-life, field-based learning that helps students develop academic proficiency.

- *Are actively involved in inclusive classrooms that value divergent questioning strategies, multiple assignments in the same class, tiered instruction, and activities that allow for alternative responses and solutions.* Heterogeneous grouping remains a hallmark of middle grades education. Standards-based education recognizes that students learn in many different ways and at different rates of speed and promotes flexibility in adapting to those expectations. Strategies include effective, purposeful, differentiated instruction and fluid grouping of special needs students at both extremes of the learning continuum (e.g., GATE students and students needing remediation). (An extensive discussion of learning styles and differentiated instruction can be found in Chapter 8 of this publication.)

- *Are urged to consider ideas together with reasoning that includes the ability to compare, contrast, analyze, synthesize, evaluate, and generalize.* Middle school students typically experience major developmental breakthroughs in their ability to engage in tasks that require complex reasoning. Teachers should, therefore, provide ample opportunities for the students to demonstrate their expanding

ability and develop assignments that require students to use demanding intellectual processes.

- *Redo, polish, or otherwise strive to perfect their work.* Evidence of good student work and rich pedagogy lies at the heart of developing and implementing standards. The knowledge and skills students possess must be refined so that they can reach the elusive goal of excellence. Prime examples of practicing until perfect include participating in sports, solving problems, playing a musical instrument, composing a work of art, using effective oral and written expression. Only through repeated efforts to refine the quality of significant assignments can students improve their level of academic performance.

- *Know how to access and use information.* Good work and rich pedagogy include the ability to locate and use sources of information (e.g., the library, CD-ROMs, DVDs, the Internet) needed to complete assignments. Gaining access to information also includes the ability to know what questions to ask, to determine the integrity of sources of information, and to distinguish between documented and undocumented data.

- *Engage in reflective thought.* Middle grades students need to understand the processes involved in using their developing intellectual abilities effectively. They can do so by reflecting on their own experiences, thereby gaining an understanding of others. Standards-based education pays specific attention to the knowledge and skills and the core values on which a democratic society must depend, including tolerance, honesty, and respect for others.4

(See also “Major Characteristics of a Middle School Culture Capable of Implementing and Sustaining Standards-Based Education” [DOC; 32KB; 1p.])

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Behavior Warning Letter to Parent Regarding Their Student Example

Place on school letterhead.

Date:

From: Team (team name) Teachers

To: The parent or guardian of (Name of student)

Dear (parent or guardian),

Over the past few weeks we as a team have observed some behaviors in class which are of concern to us. Listed below you will see some behaviors exhibited by your son/daughter that occur regularly in our classes. We feel it is important that you are aware of these.

Up to this point, we have handled these behaviors by giving verbal warnings, having one on one discussions and assigning either brunch or lunch detention. The behaviors may or may not have an effect on the student's grade in our classes.

Our primary concern is that disruptive behaviors interfere with other students being able to learn to the best of their ability. If the behaviors continue, we may request a conference to discuss other options to facilitate better behavior.

We have observed these behaviors on a daily or weekly basis:

_____ Excessive talking to peers
_____ Tardies
_____ Calling out inappropriately (answers or comments)
_____ Out of seat with permission
_____ Throwing objects
_____ Disrespectful when corrected

_____ (Other) _____

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

(signed by all members of the teaching team)

Parent Signature: _____

Document Library
California Middle Grades Standards

California Career Technical Education Model Curriculum Standards Grades Seven Through Twelve (PDF; 1.58MB; 441pp.)

English-Language Arts Content Standards for California Public Schools Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve (PDF; 830KB; 91pp.)

- Grade Six: page 35
- Grade Seven: page 42
- Grade Eight: page 49

English-Language Development Content Standards for California Public Schools Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve (PDF; 851KB; 93pp.)

History-Social Science Content Standards for California Public Schools Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve (PDF; 847KB; 68pp.)

- Grade Six: page 23
- Grade Seven: page 27
- Grade Eight: page 33

Mathematics Content Standards for California Public Schools Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve (PDF; 3.22MB; 411pp.)

- Algebra I: page 80
- Geometry: page 85
- Algebra II: page 90
- Probability and Statistics: page 100

Physical Education Model Content Standards, Adopted Jan-2005 (PDF; 2.56MB; 72pp.)

- Grade Six: page 25
- Grade Seven: page 28
- Grade Eight: page 31

Science Content Standards for California Public Schools Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve (PDF; 541KB; 61pp.)

- Grade Six: page 18
- Grade Seven: page 22
- Grade Eight: page 26

Visual and Performing Arts, Adopted January 2001 (PDF; 1.67MB; 172pp.)

For ease of use and accessibility, the document is also available in parts:

- Grade Six: Visual and Performing Arts
- Grade Seven: Visual and Performing Arts
- Grade Eight: Visual and Performing Arts
- Visual and Performing Arts, Dance
- Visual and Performing Arts, Music
- Visual and Performing Arts, Theatre
- Visual and Performing Arts, Visual Arts

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Characteristics of Differentiated Instruction

Taking Center Stage, Sacramento*:* California Department of Education, 2001, pp.140, 141.

Differentiated instruction provides many more ways for students to take in new information, assimilate it, and demonstrate what they have learned in contrast with instruction aimed at the average student and delivered through uniform lectures, activities, homework assignments, and assessments. Unfortunately, few teachers modify instruction for struggling or advanced learners.

Three principles of cognitive research (the need for emotional safety, for appropriate challenges, and for self-constructed meaning) suggest that a one-size-fits-all approach to classroom teaching is ineffective for most students and even harmful for some. Some students need more repetition, fewer ideas presented at one time, clearer homework assignments, or more time to read instructions. Others require more individualized instruction, more time for independent hands-on problem solving, or tutorial help. The principles that point clearly to the need for differentiated instruction are listed as follows:

1. *Need for emotional safety.* Learning environments must feel emotionally safe to students for the most effective learning to take place. A student who needs an accepting and relatively open learning environment will be intimidated by a teacher who stifles wholesome spontaneity. Classrooms in which one right answer is always required will blunt creative minds that might otherwise invent valid alternative solutions to problems. A student whose first language is other than English and who struggles to make sense out of what is going on will experience one emotional block after another when he or she cannot grasp key concepts. When students experience high levels of emotional insecurity, they may spend more time in figuring out how to cope than in how to learn. Although teachers cannot control all of the variables that contribute to emotionally unsafe classrooms, they can influence many of them.

2. *Need for appropriate challenges.* Students require appropriate levels of challenge. When students are confronted with content and performance standards well beyond their level of readiness, intense stress frequently results. The brain overproduces neurotransmitters (substances transmitting nerve impulses across a synapse) that impede learning. But if the curriculum is repetitive and lacks stimulus, the brain is not inclined to respond and therefore does not release the neuro-chemicals needed for optimal learning, causing apathy.

   A one-size-fits-all approach to teaching produces lessons pitched at a single-challenge level, virtually ensuring that many students will be overchallenged or underchallenged. Neither group will learn effectively. Research supports the conviction that all students should strive to meet the same content and performance standards, although many will do so at different levels of acceptable proficiency.

3. *Need for self-constructed meaning.* Students need opportunities to develop their own meaning as new knowledge and skills are encountered. They have different learning styles, process ideas and concepts differently, have varied backgrounds and experiences, and express themselves differently. All must be helped to assimilate new knowledge and skills within the framework of prior personal experiences.

Differentiated Instruction in Middle Schools

Differentiated instruction in middle schools includes the following characteristics:

- Teachers spend quality time learning all they can about their students' emotional security, readiness to address specific content and performance standards, and success in making sense of the curriculum.

- Classrooms are student centered. Students are not embarrassed by individual differences or learning difficulties. They are helped by their teachers to identify and value the similarities and differences each one brings to the classroom, show mutual respect for one another, and work together to create an emotionally safe environment.

- Teachers refine professional skills and practices, enabling them to function democratically in their interpersonal relationships with

each student and the class as a whole. Professional qualities of openness and spontaneity are combined with a sense on the part of students that their teachers want to reduce root causes of emotional stress.

- Teachers vary their instructional practices in response to their students' learning styles and readiness levels to provide appropriate degrees of academic challenge for all individuals. Their doing so is not, however, a license to lower standards for students with learning deficits. Rather, the goal is to work with students where they are and to make provisions for those who need more time, need to learn in smaller increments of content, need help in overcoming language barriers, or have other special needs.

- Teachers develop skills to present curricular content in multiple ways (e.g., deductively, inductively, aurally, orally, visually, hands-on) to respond to individual learning differences.

- Teachers frequently give choices to students concerning topics of study, ways of learning, ways of presenting evidence of learning, and learning environments. Care is taken to ensure that choices are consonant with grade-level content standards.

- All students are expected to demonstrate acceptable levels of performance in response to grade-level content standards. Varied but equally valid ways of demonstrating individual performance are provided.

- Teachers ensure that content and performance standards and the manner in which performance levels are determined are clearly and regularly communicated to students and parents.

- Teachers may assign students to work by themselves, in random groups, or according to similar or mixed readiness, similar interests or mixed interests, or similar learning profiles or mixed learning profiles. Students with acute physical, emotional, or intellectual deficits are mainstreamed as fully as possible. Effective schools use ongoing, formative assessments to regularly group and regroup their students to ensure that they receive the most pertinent and highest quality instructional program possible.

- Teachers design homework to extend individual knowledge and skills. Parents are enlisted as fully as possible to monitor homework and are helped to understand which content standards are being addressed at any given time. They encourage their children to use rubrics in assessing the quality of their homework.

- Standardized tests are augmented by varied assessment options, including oral presentations, portfolios, real-life problems to be solved, research projects, and tests designed by students and teachers. Assessments seek to reduce emotional stress by providing varied and valid tasks that reflect the students' ability to apply knowledge and skills free of the pressures of time.

- Reporting of student progress reflects performance levels thoroughly understood in advance. Teachers and students frequently discuss these matters, and individual students can tell with substantial accuracy where they fall in a continuum of acceptable performance. The reporting of progress employs formats designed to reflect standards-based education. Students who fail to reach acceptable performance levels receive appropriate support.

- Teachers are academic coaches who attend to the needs of individual students, groups of students, and the entire class. Their primary goal is to encounter all students where they are (those with learning deficits, those who are gifted, and all who are in between) and to move them forward as far and as fast as possible.

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Characteristics of Middle Grade Students

"Characteristics of Middle Grade Students," *Caught in the Middle (1989).* Sacramento: California Department of Education, pages 144-148.

A. Intellectual Development

Middle Grade Students:

1. Display a wide range of individual intellectual development as their minds experience transition from the concrete-manipulatory stage to the capacity for abstract thought. This transition ultimately makes possible:
   - Propositional thought
   - Consideration of ideas contrary to fact
   - Reasoning with hypotheses involving two or more variables
   - Appreciation for the elegance of mathematical logic expressed in symbols
   - Insight into the nuances of poetic metaphor and musical notation. Analysis of the power of a political ideology
   - Ability to project thought into the future, to anticipate, and to formulate goals
   - Insight into the sources of previously unquestioned attitudes, behaviors, and values
   - Interpretation of larger concepts and generalizations of traditional wisdom expressed through sayings, axioms, and aphorisms
2. Are intensely curious;
3. Prefer active over passive learning experiences; favor interaction with peers during learning activities;
4. Exhibit a strong willingness to learn things they consider to be useful; enjoy using skills to solve real life problems;
5. Are egocentric; argue to convince others; exhibit independent, critical thought;
6. Consider academic goals as a secondary level of priority; personal social concerns dominate thoughts and activities;
7. Experience the phenomenon of metacognition the ability to know what one knows and does not know.
8. Are intellectually at-risk; face decisions that have the potential to affect major academic values with lifelong consequences.

B. Physical Development

Middle Grade Students:

1. Experience accelerated physical development marked by increases' in weight, height, heart size, lung capacity, and muscular strength;
2. Mature at varying rates of speed. Girls tend to be taller than boys for the first two years of early adolescence and are ordinarily more physically developed than boys;
3. Experience bone growth faster than muscle development; uneven muscle/bone development results in lack of coordination and awkwardness; bones may lack protection of covering muscles and supporting tendons;
4. Reflect a wide range of individual differences which begin to appear in prepubertal and pubertal stages of

development. Boys tend to lag behind girls. There are marked individual differences in physical development for boys and girls. The greatest variability in physiological development and size occurs at about age thirteen;

5. Experience biological development five years sooner than adolescents of the last century; the average age of menarche has dropped from seventeen to twelve years of age;

6. Face responsibility for sexual behavior before full emotional and social maturity has occurred;

7. Show changes in body contour including temporarily large noses, protruding ears, long arms; have posture problems;

8. Are often disturbed by body changes:
   - Girls are anxious about physical changes that accompany sexual maturation;
   - Boys are anxious about receding chins, cowlicks, dimples, and changes in their voices;

9. Experience fluctuations in basal metabolism which can cause extreme restlessness at times and equally extreme listlessness at other moments;

10. Have ravenous appetites and peculiar tastes; may overtax digestive system with large quantities of *improper* foods;

11. Lack physical health; have poor levels of endurance, strength, and flexibility; as a group are fatter and unhealthier;

12. Are physically at-risk; major causes of death are homicide, suicide, accident, and leukemia.

C. Psychological Development

Middle Grade Students:

1. Are often erratic and inconsistent in their behavior; anxiety and fear are contrasted with periods of bravado; feelings shift between superiority and inferiority;

2. Have chemical and hormonal imbalances which often trigger emotions that are frightening and poorly understood; may regress to more childish behavior patterns at this point;

3. Are easily offended and are sensitive to criticism of personal shortcomings;

4. Tend to exaggerate simple occurrences and believe that personal problems, experiences, and feelings are unique to themselves;

5. Are moody, restless; often feel self-conscious and alienated; lack self esteem; are introspective;

6. Are searching for adult identity and acceptance even in the midst of intense peer group relationships;

7. Are vulnerable to naive opinions, one-sided arguments;

8. Are searching to form a conscious sense of individual uniqueness "Who am I?";

9. Have emerging sense of humor based on increased intellectual ability to see abstract relationships; appreciate the "double entendre";

10. Are basically optimistic, hopeful;

11. Are psychologically at-risk; at no other point in human development is an individual likely to encounter so much diversity in relation to oneself and others.

D. Social Development

Middle Grade Students:

1. Experience often traumatic conflicts due to conflicting loyalties to peer groups and family;

2. Refer to peers as sources for standards and models of behavior; media heroes and heroines are also singularly important in shaping both behavior and fashion;

3. May be rebellious towards parents but still strongly dependent on parental values; want to make own choices, but the authority of the family is a critical factor in ultimate decisions;

4. Are impacted by high level of mobility in society; may become anxious and disoriented when peer group ties are broken because of family relocation to other communities;

5. Are often confused and frightened by new school settings which are large and impersonal;

6. Act out unusual or drastic behavior at times; may be aggressive, daring, boisterous, argumentative;

7. Are fiercely loyal to peer group values; sometimes cruel or insensitive to those outside the peer group;

8. Want to know and feel that significant adults, including parents and teachers, love and accept them; need frequent affirmation;

9. Sense negative impact of adolescent behaviors on parents and teachers; realize thin edge between tolerance and rejection; feelings of adult rejection drive the adolescent into the relatively secure social environment of the peer group;

10. Strive to define sex role characteristics; search to establish positive social relationships with members of the same and opposite sex;

11. Experience low risk-trust relationships with adults who show lack of sensitivity to adolescent characteristics and needs;

12. Challenge authority figures; test limits of acceptable behavior;

13. Are socially at-risk; adult values are largely shaped conceptually during adolescence; negative interactions with peers, parents, and teachers may compromise ideals and commitments.

E. Moral and Ethical Development

Middle Grade Students:

1. Are essentially idealistic; have a strong sense of fairness in human relationships;

2. Experience thoughts and feelings of awe and wonder related to their expanding intellectual and emotional awareness;

3. Ask large, unanswerable questions about the meaning of life; do not expect absolute answers but are turned off by trivial adult responses;

4. Are reflective, analytical, and introspective about their thoughts and feelings;

5. Confront hard moral and ethical questions for which they are unprepared to cope;

6. Are at-risk in the development of moral and ethical choices and behaviors; primary dependency on the influences of home and church for moral and ethical development seriously compromises adolescents for whom these resources are absent; adolescents want to explore the moral and ethical issues which are confronted in the curriculum, in the media, and In the daily interactions they experience in their families and peer groups.

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Civic Literacy and the Civic Mission of Schools

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A national movement that invokes renewed interest in civic literacy has emerged and is gaining strength. The Civic Mission of Schools campaign encourages educators around the country to examine existing practice and instructional strategies in an assessment of how civic education goals are being met in our schools at all grade levels. Civic literacy is one critical aspect of civic education that addresses the skills needed for citizenship development as well as the connections to existing standards in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and critical thinking skills. At a time when voter disenfranchisement is increasing and voter turnout levels are decreasing, civic education is a critical issue for our schools, our citizens, and our future. The time has come to re-examine some of our basic practices in preparing our young people to become engaged, productive citizens.

The Civic Mission of Schools movement encourages examination of how schools might progress beyond quantitative assessment data and isolated instructional content to a renewed interest in addressing student learning in a societal context. In teaching our students to become future leaders and engaged citizens, all students should be acquiring the skills of civic literacy. To this end, educators in all regions of the country have begun an intentional and strategic effort in assessing and reviewing current teaching practice of civic literacy or, as is more commonly known in the broad sense, civic education.

Civic literacy should be embraced throughout the educational community without hesitation. We know that the fundamentals of democracy must be taught to each generation, as part of an on-going educational effort that begins with the earliest grades and continues through lifelong learning. We know that helping to create effective citizens for the 21st century requires a convergence of skills, knowledge, dispositions, and understanding of democratic practices, principles, and concepts. As most schools and districts across the county have adopted mission statements that clearly define citizenship or civic education as a primary objective of the educational process, civic literacy today is a mandate and high quality civic education is a moral obligation.

Civic literacy is an intentional instructional set of goals that provide skill practice, application, and evaluation of civic education issues and content. The term itself, civic literacy, draws attention to both the literacy movement in general and to the focus on skills as a part of the civic education curriculum package. Although civic education advocates are united in their understanding of the need for a strong civic knowledge base through history and government classes that focus on content, available curriculum resources have been less attentive to the development of cognitive and participatory skills. This is particularly true in educational climates that emphasize testing data and standardized tests to the detriment of class activities such as structured debate, analysis of current events, understanding of judicial review of contemporary issues, and student-initiated projects. The civic literacy curriculum represents a coherent curriculum effort that addresses higher level thinking skills, informed decision-making practices, evaluation of information, participatory skills, and civic engagement, and understanding of the broad implications of political, economic, and social issues. Civic literacy is a direct response against attitudes of alienation and distrust of government, disengagement of youth, and disconnectedness between school, community, and life skills.

A project sponsored by the California Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools in California and the Constitutional Rights Foundation has selected ten high schools to examine, within the school setting, how to adopt a stronger and more effective civic mission within their schools. Foothill High School of Palo Cedro, a rural comprehensive high school of approximately 2000 students in the far northern part of California, was one of the selected schools. A group of six teacher-leaders from across departments and disciplines came together, in the spirit of a professional learning community, to plan and implement a school-wide civic literacy focus.

The planning at Foothill High School began with a review of the six recommendations of the CIRCLE report, a report of the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) and the Carnegie Corporation of New York. These recommendations for effective civic education, based on research-based scholarship, include 1) providing a strong foundation of classroom instructional content in democratic foundations; 2) classroom discussion of current events; 3) service learning; 4) extracurricular activities; 5) increased use and quality of student voice in school governance; and 6) classroom simulations such as mock trial, mock congressional hearings, debate, and other projects.

As teachers at Foothill High School began to discuss the recommendations, they assessed the current program at their school and, simultaneously, began to identify areas and programs that could be improved or implemented. From the new ideas generated, a school-

wide plan emerged that included development of a teacher resource packet, monthly themes around civic education topics, formation of a student activist group, development of literature and a Website, and numerous presentations to community and school groups. The teacher resource packet included articles and resources for increasing and improving classroom discussion, civic education themes and topics, service learning project development, simulation activities, and civic education in general. The monthly themes included topics such as rights and responsibilities, ethics, decision-making, tolerance, civic engagement, volunteerism, voting, justice, authority, and civic virtue. The program emphasized dialogue, questioning skills, and taking and defending a stand on issues.

Through the two year process of the development of this program at Foothill High School, civic literacy has blossomed. Students have expressed increased interest in current events and school governance. Students have become increasingly involved in community issues, careers in community leadership, and current events. Teachers have become interested in cross-discipline efforts centered on civic education themes and projects. Parents and school board members have become more aware of civic education goals.

The planning and program development process of Foothill High School can easily be replicated at any school. The three-step planning process includes assessment of current programs, generation of new ideas, and developing a plan for implementation. The implementation phase, at times concurrent with the planning phase, includes trying new programs, integrating the civic education themes with existing curriculum, developing classroom resources, and adjusting the planned activities as needed.

To begin your school or district planning process, discussion should focus on the six recommendations of the CIRCLE report. From those activities, the following checklist for program assessment of civic literacy should include the following:

Cognitive and Reasoning Skills

- Development of logical argument (oral and written)
- Persuasive argument development or debate skills
- Multiple perspectives
- Evaluation of information
- Recognition of bias
- Drawing conclusions based on evidence
- Decision making skills
- Analytic and synthesis skills

Foundational Content

- Historical understanding
- Foundations of democracy
- Government structure and institutions
- Constitutional constructs
- Landmark Supreme Court cases
- Political, economic, and geographic knowledge

Participation Skills

- Communication skills
- Formal debate skills
- Consensus-building and compromise
- Working together
- Simulations of institutional processes (e.g. Mock Trial, Mock Congressional Hearings)
- Student voice (school and/or local governance)
- Community involvement
- Volunteerism

Dispositions and Attitudes

- Equity and inclusiveness
- Voting and campaign activism
- Community issues interest and research
- Service learning
- Civic engagement

- Role models and career exploration
- Opportunities for school and community involvement

The CIRCLE report is available at Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools and resources can be obtained from Websites such as Center for Civic Education (Outside Source) or Constitutional Rights Foundation (Outside Source) or Educating for Democracy. A Web site for student voices on current issues can be accessed at Student Voices (Outside Source).

Civic literacy is a noble attempt to address literacy issues from across the disciplines with a focused, coherent, central theme of citizenship. The potential for success increases dramatically with the adoption of student-centered activities and discussion on topics of relevance and importance. The intentional and focused examination of civic literacy within the school setting will generate lively discussion, new perspectives, and great ideas among teachers, students, and all stakeholders in the education of our students. Perhaps most importantly of all, we should aspire to achieve the recognition that the civic education of our students belongs not exclusively to the history-social science departments, but to all who have a part in the development of our citizens and future leaders.

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Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
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Civility, Ethical Behavior, and Social Consciousness: Needs and Commitments for Students, Parents, and Teachers

From *Taking Center Stage,* Sacramento: California Department of Education, 2001, pp. 229-231.

Students	Parents, Teachers, and Principals
■ I have priorities in my life, including my friends, that may not be priorities for my parents and teachers. I need to be able to say what is important to me and to know that when I do, I will be heard with respect.	■ I need to listen carefully to what my (children, students) have to say about what matters most to them. I need to show through my responses that I respect differences about priorities in our lives. We also need to talk about why our priorities differ.
■ I need to ask for help when I need it. I also need to expect that my parents, teachers, and counselors will help me learn to think through and solve my problems without preaching to me, embarrassing me, or making me wish I had never confided in them.	■ I need to realize that having my (children, students) come to me with a request for help is one of the highest kinds of respect I can be shown. I must honor this behavior by spending time responding with sensitivity and wisdom as I help her or him find answers to whatever the problem may be.
■ I need to be able to attend a school that is safe and where I can learn without fear of being hurt physically or emotionally. I have an obligation to help create this kind of school through the things I say and do daily that influence the lives of my classmates and teachers.	■ I need to do everything reasonably possible to observe and monitor the behavior of my (children, students) and to provide appropriate prevention and intervention before emotional crises develops. I cannot do this alone. As parents and teachers we must work together in providing a safe school.
■ I need to be treated as a competent person whose opinions, knowledge, and values are respected. I know that I am a young adolescent and that I still have a lot to learn. But I expect my parents and teachers to support me as I try to be a responsible person at home and at school.	■ I need to understand as fully as possible that my (children, students) are experiencing rapid developmental changes in their lives and that the unfolding of their minds and emotions is to be celebrated. When I can give praise, I will. When I believe guidance is needed, I will offer it in a responsible and caring way.
■ I need to live life free of prejudices and stereotypes directed at me or others because of race, language, sexual preferences, or other types of differences which humans experience. I know it is not a perfect world and that the kind of life I am talking about begins with me.	■ I need to work on my own tendencies to judge others on the basis of unfair criteria. I also need to face the fact that my (children, students) will pick up on my example far faster than my words. I will seek to express true respect for others whatever their personal or social circumstances.

▪ I need to be able to change my mind or make mistakes without fear of ridicule or punishment. I need to give others the kind of slack I want for myself—including my friends as well as my parents and teachers.	▪ I need to be less judgmental and more understanding of my (children, students). When I show respect, the chances are that I will receive it back. This is one of the best ways we can build a mature relationship.
▪ I need to have acceptance from my parents and teachers, even when they do not approve of what I do at all times. I know that I must be responsible and accountable for my behavior and that there are consequences when I do something that must be punished. Even then, I need to feel I am still loved and cared for as a person.	▪ I need to remember that my (children, students) expect punishment when they do something wrong. But I must never give punishment in anger or send signals, by words or actions, of personal rejection that may lead to a break in our relationship.
▪ I have a right to demand that others change their behavior towards me when it violates my space or my personal integrity. I need the wisdom and strength to say “No!” to unreasonable or morally wrong requests without having to feel guilty. I must also be accountable for honoring the rights and values of others at all times.	▪ I need to accept responsibility for recognizing that young adolescents have a right to their own space and to honor this right to privacy. I also have a responsibility to discuss matters of personal ethics with my (children, students) and in the process to help build the inner strength which will allow them to behave morally and responsibly.
▪ I need help in knowing when and how to share the hurts of my friends—and even their weird behavior—with my parents and teachers. I know that kids who do weird things, including threatening others or talking about how they are going to do some kind of violent thing, really need help. I could be the only one that would keep them from doing something stupid or far worse. But the “code of honor” thing can mean really hard consequences if it is broken. Why do kids have to carry this monkey on their backs? Why don’t parents and teachers talk more about this?	▪ I need to face up to the fact that the “code of honor” that keeps kids from telling threatening things they know about someone else is also present among adults. As a (parent, teacher), I need to examine my own life in this regard. I also need to take note of how often I watch things that are wrong rather than try to do something positive, honorable, and right to correct the problems. I will spend more time with my (children, students), helping them to learn that there is a higher code of honor, when it should be invoked, and why it is the only way that one can live with a clear conscience throughout life.
▪ I need to know that my parents and teachers recognize that I am growing in my ability to learn many things about the world I live in. I sometimes have deep thoughts and feelings about the meaning of life. I am able to ask a thousand questions that I know neither my parents nor my teachers seem to want to hear: “Why am I here?” “Why is there suffering?” “Why do bad things happen to good people?” “Why are there wars?” “Why is there evil?” I would really like to get some answers or at least talk about these questions. But there are too many times when I start to think out loud that it seems as if the questions are out of bounds. I ask why. I have no good answer.	▪ I need to do a much better job of trying to deal with my own thoughts and feelings about big, unanswerable questions—at least unanswerable in some absolute sense. As a (parent, teacher), I must not be afraid to talk about the deeper meaning of life and all of the why questions because I feel threatened myself. What kind of a lesson does that teach my child or students? I need to realize that young adolescents do not expect perfect answers but do expect to be able to think about the larger meaning of so many things they are studying. Their schoolwork would be so sterile if it didn’t raise questions about moral and ethical dilemmas: war, poverty, injustice, and even the awesomeness of life itself. I will do a better job of helping my (children, students) think big thoughts. After all, what is life really about?
▪ I need to have hope in the future, my future—that there is something out there worth trying to get. My friends and I often get depressed. Our parents and teachers say, “Oh, it’s just from growing up!” I don’t	▪ I often wonder myself about what kind of world my (children, students) will inherit. It is more comfortable not to think about it too much. But that is a major cop-out. Too many kids act out their depression by high-risk behavior.

want to grow up feeling depressed. My friends and I often hide our real feelings behind noisy, weird behaviors, but underneath we wonder about a lot of things.	As a (parent, teacher), I need to help my (children, students) know that life does hold many promises and to learn what it takes to achieve them.

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Curriculum Calibration—Lessons Learned from Underperforming Schools

Taking Center Stage, Sacramento: California Department of Education, 2001, pp. 48, 49.

Curriculum Calibration analysis of student work reveals that instructional materials used at underperforming schools are below grade-level as measured by the new California Content Standards.

At DataWorks Educational Research we evaluate student achievement for over 500 California schools each year using multiple measures. However, this year in a new role as External Evaluators, we became investigators searching out “barriers to student achievement” for several of California’s II/USP schools. The Intermediate Intervention/Under Performing Schools Program (II/USP) requires schools identified by low SAT 9 scores to use an External Evaluator to initiate school-wide reform to improve student achievement.

As part of our investigation we performed an in-depth analysis of everything connected with student learning. We observed classroom instruction. We grilled the school’s parents, teachers, students, paraprofessionals and administrators with bubble-in surveys, written comments and personal interviews. We disaggregated two years of SAT 9 results, reviewed two years of multiple measures data and dissected transcripts of student grades. For three months we reviewed this information with the II/USP school site action team members as we worked together to prepare the school’s final Action Plan for school improvement.

Even though we had reviewed extensive data, we thought something was missing. We wanted to go one step further but didn’t quite know what to do. Suddenly, we decided to look at student work. We wanted to hold in our hands the actual pieces of work the students were doing – not exemplary work, not SAT 9 printouts – but real down to earth, day to day work. We faxed a direct request to the school principals: “Collect every single piece of paper that every student does for a solid week. Box it and ship it to us.”

After several days, the incoming FedEx boxes grew to an astonishing accumulation of 6,318 examples of student work.

Curriculum Calibration
Grade-Levels of Instructional Materials Being Presented to Students

Mathematics Percent on Grade Level

Grade	K	1	2	3	4	5	Average Grade Level
K	100						K
1st		100					1.0
2nd		20	80				1.8
3rd		2	14	84			2.8
4th		2	30	35	33		3.0
5th			28	60	10	2	2.9

Language Arts Percent on Grade Level

Grade	K	1	2	3	4	5	Average Grade

							Level
K	100						K
1st		100					1.0
2nd		23	77				1.8
3rd			45	55			2.6
4th			40	40	20		2.8
5th		2	35	59	2	2	2.7

Armed with a dog-eared copy of the California Content Standards downloaded off the Internet we started working one-by-one through the entire 6,318 pieces of paper. We eventually hand coded the grade-level content standard covered on every single piece of student work.

When we finished tabulating the results we were surprised. As can be seen from the table, only kindergarten and first grade were being taught at grade level. Curriculum slippage begins at second grade where only 77% of the math material and 80% of the language arts material being presented to the students was on grade level. By the 5th grade only 2 percent of the work being given to the students was on grade-level. Keep in mind that we calibrated every assignment that the students were being asked to do. By the 5th grade, the student assignments were mostly second and third grade material. Instruction at this school was miscalibrated, often significantly below grade-level!

The Curriculum Calibration results were then presented to teachers, principals, school board members and superintendents. Each presentation produced similar results. The room was in a state of shock. Mouths were open. People looked at each other in a combination of denial, disbelief, hurt and anger.

"Our instruction is below grade-level? Are we teaching below grade-level?"

"I never realized this!"

"I have been teaching what I always did."

"I've got a three inch binder of the standards somewhere, but really didn't know what to do with them."

So, What Are the Standards?

The California Content Standards are a progressing, expanding, non-repeating curriculum of increasing complexity, depth, and breadth for all students. According to the California Mathematics Standards, for example, students in kindergarten count to 30; first grade to 100; second grade to 1,000; third grade to 10,000 and fourth grade to millions. In Language Arts kindergartners write words and brief sentences; first-graders write a paragraph. By sixth grade students should be writing multiple paragraph compositions of 500 to 700 words (word-processed!).

What to Do ASAP

- Immediately adopt a new school vision, a mission statement:

  ALL INSTRUCTION AND
  ASSESSMENT AT THIS SCHOOL
  WILL BE AT GRADE-LEVEL
  ACCORDING TO THE
  CALIFORNIA STANDARDS

- Perform a Curriculum Calibration to see where you stand.
- Order sufficient rubber stamps to print "GLS K," "GLS 1," "GLS 2" etc. to calibrate every ditto, handout and worksheet floating around the school.
- Redirect training and resources to concentrate on teaching at grade-level.

Schoolwide Instructional Recalibration

Teaching to the rigorous California standards requires a major instructional recalibration. Start teaching from the first day of school at grade level. In the fourth grade, for example, teach multiple paragraph compositions right from the start as opposed to teaching students where

they are, i.e., repeating single sentences or single paragraphs.

Curriculum Calibration provides a real missing link to explain student achievement. We have all looked at SAT9 scores, grades and multiple measure results and said, “OK, now what?” Well, now we have a quantifiable piece of hard data to connect what goes on in the classroom to what the assessments are showing.

The Curriculum Calibration results can provide a simple, easy-to-understand unifying focal point for school-wide reform to improve student achievement: *All Instruction on Grade-Level.* As one principal summed it up:

“*In my entire career, the Curriculum Calibration is the best school evaluation I have ever seen!*

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Taking Center Stage, California Department of Education, 2001, p.154.

Designing the Master Schedule as a Mosaic

Very few resources provide scheduling strategies and examples of finished products. One reason for this lack is that each school is based on a unique configuration of time, talent, and teaching. Someone has suggested that the most likely source of help in designing a school schedule is a good book on creating mosaics. That suggestion is not far off the mark because a good school schedule is much like a mosaic.

Like a finished mosaic, a school schedule should reflect a logical process and an end product that is aesthetically pleasing rather than a random juxtaposition of pieces with no apparent definition. Unfortunately, many school schedules appear to be made randomly rather than being produced by an artful process.

The metaphor of the mosaic has proved to be helpful for principals and teachers in designing school schedules. The artist who designs a mosaic begins by identifying the pieces of material that are to be incorporated into the work and assigns them their relative prominence in the finished design. Likewise, those responsible for the school master schedule begin by identifying the program features they want to include and assigning them relative priorities. Time is defined in terms of equal intervals of instruction or in blocks of multiple intervals. Time for professional planning and collaboration is identified as another piece. It is specified for advisory programs, service-learning, tutoring and mentoring, independent study, lunch, any unique instructional features, and every desired program.

All identified program features are seen as pieces of the completed schedule mosaic. Like the artist who refuses to leave any piece out of the mosaic for fear of compromising the completed work, the designers of the school schedule strive to include every significant program variable.

This is the moment for specifying and defending every proposed feature of the school program. All features are then represented by individual squares of cardboard with different colors to represent each one. The pieces are moved about on a tabletop or attached to a vertical surface with Velcro.™ Principal and staff collaborate in arranging program elements in various designs as consensus builds as to the most attractive and inclusive schedule. An instant camera is available for keeping track of potential designs while others are being examined.

The scheduling process takes time. It involves commitment and collaboration. The task cannot be rushed any more than an artist rushes a finished work of art and is not complete until the majority of those affected are able to step back and say, “Aha!”

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Developing Local Benchmark Assessments

Adapted from *Taking Center Stage* (2001), pp. 29, 30

Through the collaborative process, content area teachers and the principal do the following:

1. Select the standards they want to assess (not too many at one time or the assessment becomes too long, unfocused, and difficult to evaluate).

2. Determine what evidence they need to collect from students that will demonstrate whether the students are gaining or have gained the necessary proficiency in the content standards.

3. Develop a question, prompt, or task that they think will elicit the evidence. (Assessment items usually go through a series of refinements based on actual student responses before they are perfected.) (See Chapter 3.)

4. Agree upon the way the assessment will be administered so that all students have equal access to time and resources (exclusive of students who require documented special accommodations).

5. Develop an initial scoring guide (rubric-criteria) based on what is expected. Typically, scoring guides are based on four levels, five levels, or six levels, depending on the level of specific feedback desired for teachers and students (see Appendix 3-A for a four-point scoring guide for grade-seven writing).

6. Decide on a cut score that separates score points. (There is a cut score for each level, but the critical ones are those between the levels that will trigger targeted-accelerated assistance to those students just below proficiency (basic) and immediate interventions for those students who are below basic performance levels.)

7. Administer the assessment/assignment and reconvene with the student work to be evaluated. Read several papers, and based on initial scoring criteria, sort them into score-point categories.

8. Discuss student work samples.
    a. Were expected responses received?
    b. Do the scoring criteria need to be simplified, expanded, or refined to take into account that which was not expected?

9. Agree and defend why each of the student “exemplars” fits the finalized scoring criteria and score point received. (This “like mindedness” is referred to as calibration and gives a teacher the confidence to score anonymous papers with the same expertise and objectivity as colleague teachers across the district.)

These initial steps outline the time-intensive collaborative process teachers and principals go through to develop assessment assignments, scoring guides, exemplars, and cut points for a first-time performance task. The teachers score all papers, using the scoring guide and exemplars, also called anchor papers, as their references. The first time scoring a new assessment is always the most difficult and most time intensive. After the work is scored and recorded, the data can be used to inform subsequent instruction and make important decisions about interventions and resources.

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Developing, Using, and Communicating Complex Reasoning

From *Taking Center Stage,* Sacramento: California Department of Education, 2001, p. 73.

Middle grades students should have frequent opportunities to develop and demonstrate complex reasoning and to use written and oral communication to convey their thought processes. Content and performance standards in core subjects should reflect curriculum and instruction that prepare students to engage in progressively more demanding cognitive tasks, including those that require them to:

- *Participate in oral discussions* of solutions to mathematical problems; outcomes of scientific experiments; or the formulation and testing of hypotheses in science, social studies, and other subjects.
- *Use knowledge of facts, procedures, and operations to solve problems,* arrive at conclusions, or propose novel solutions based on original thinking.
- *Prepare papers, essays, or other appropriate written materials which describe the steps followed in conducting research, analyzing data, and using other complex reasoning in studying social, political, economic, and scientific problems and issues.* This work should reflect proficient writing skills and appropriate use of numbers, symbols, graphs, photos, charts, and other visual materials. Written work should be shared with other students, who are encouraged to ask questions, offer suggestions, provide alternative problem-solving logic, and otherwise interact creatively.
- *Engage in history–social science, mathematics, and science projects that call for a high level of abstractive thought before solutions can be found—sometimes referred to as "power problems."* These projects should require extended reasoning, which takes the student beyond conventional facts and rules. Assignments of this type might be given once a semester and typically require highly focused homework. Parents should be apprised of "power problems" and invited to work with their child, if appropriate; but in all cases their role is to make certain that the assignment is completed.
- *Provide detailed descriptions of how answers are determined for selected test items in history–social science, mathematics, and science.* Items should require students to process, analyze, compare, contrast, generalize, or use other types of abstract thought. Students' responses should reflect the application of new knowledge and skills introduced during classroom instruction or learned through related assignments.
- *Use graphs, pictographs, charts, and other similar representation of statistical data to communicate complex ideas.* Use real or hypothetical data and demonstrate the ability to choose the most appropriate type of graphic representation.
- *Use computer software applications,* which develop abilities to use spreadsheets and graphing calculators, to process information, or to otherwise perform calculations, solve problems, or analyze data.
- *Complete assignments on the Internet* to locate data, including original source materials, and to provide web site addresses in bibliographic material.

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Digital Literacy in Twenty-First Century Middle Schools: A Scenario

Taking Center Stage. Sacramento, California Department of Education, 2001, pp. 111, 112.

Middle schools of the new century must increasingly provide the means by which students and teachers may develop and make use of digital technology in order to enhance both teaching and learning. This scenario provides a glimpse of the possibilities inherent in the advanced use of digital technology in the middle grades. A few schools have already achieved this level of sophistication. All are challenged to pursue the goal.

Information technology continues to explode, and there is no end in sight. As a case in point, library science continues to experience a massive technological transition from conventional shelves, stacks, and three-by-five cards to the use of technology based on horizontal bandwidths, CD-ROMS, ISPs, and interactive networks—to name only a few of the present rapidly unfolding scientific marvels that are continually revolutionizing the field.

Electronic school libraries and media centers now make it possible to integrate conventional print and media collections with data sources via the Internet as well as through regional networking capabilities dedicated to linking together kindergarten through grade twelve schools, institutions of higher education, research labs, and other types of informational sources across the world. The possibilities appear limitless. What will this mean for a twenty-first century middle school? Consider this scenario:

A group of middle school students descends on the computers in their school's electronic library. These students are working on a project that requires them to demonstrate learning of knowledge and skills embedded in the content standards of the curriculum they are studying. It also requires digital literacy, the ability to access electronically mediated information sources, including CD-ROMs and the Internet, and to evaluate and validate the quality and credibility of the data that they find through their electronic searches.

Their teacher believes in activity-based instruction. This has led to an assignment that emphasizes collaborative, interdisciplinary learning—a mirror of the way adults in the real world of business, industry, and the professions tackle the search for answers to basic questions or strive for synergy in creating collective solutions to community problems, world issues, or corporate challenges.

The group navigates carefully through the electronic database that brings the library collection to their fingertips almost instantaneously. The Internet is then accessed, and students debate which search engine is the most appropriate to use for their project. They decide to use at least three different search engines and to compare the results. A laser printer stands ready to provide hard copies of information. Other devices allow downloading of audio-voice clips, other types of sound bytes, videos, photographs, and film.

Some of this information already has been integrated via multimedia technology and is available in this format for downloading.

Hypertext links, or successor technology, enable students to return to their original data sources on the Internet or to refer to new sites housed in cyberspace, allowing them to connect with sites halfway around the world. Students also use hypertext links to check on the credibility and integrity of their data sources by electronic cross-referencing. This provides them with information about the authors of their data. It also reveals evidence of either well-substantiated information or raises questions about the integrity of what they have found through their use of various Internet search engines.

Final determination is made about information that will be used in completing the project. The students have been well taught about the concept of intellectual property rights and copyright laws and are careful to document all of their sources, including Internet addresses.

The data search process, qualitative assessments of information, and final choices of material to be used in completing their project are then followed by group-learning activities designed around the use of complex reasoning skills. These may involve analysis and synthesis, generation and testing of hypotheses, or other types of higher-order thinking.

Student work is compiled in a format designed to show evidence of meaningful connections between their new knowledge and prior experience. Students next prepare project reports, using multimedia technology that allows them to integrate content in ways that reflect a growing understanding of interdisciplinary learning.

The entire project has also pushed them to demonstrate and further develop their academic literacy and digital literacy skills and knowledge. Their work is saved on a CD-ROM for presentation to their teacher and fellow students. The CD-ROM becomes a part of the students' personal portfolios after their work has been assessed in order to determine proficiency levels related to the knowledge and skills addressed in the content standards that prompted the original assignment.

The scenario presented here is far more than a visionary glint in the eyes of technologists. Many features of the electronic library are already available or are being placed in service in growing numbers of schools, universities, and other public institutions around the country.

Perhaps of greatest interest to teachers is that the emerging electronic library and its corollary of digital literacy will make a major contribution to the goals of powerful teaching and learning that require quick and selective access to massive amounts of information. This capability is essential to the development of enhanced academic proficiency by students in standards-based middle schools.

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Early Warning Signs of Violent Behavior by Students

From *Taking Center Stage*, Sacramento: California Department of Education, 2001, pp. 225-227; adapted from *Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools.* Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 1998.

There are early warning signs in most cases of violence to self and others, certain behavioral and emotional signs that, when viewed in context, can signal a troubled student. Early warning signs are a signal that a student needs help—now!

Psychologists emphasize several important principles to observe when early warning signs appear evident: (1) *do no harm*—early warning signs should not be used as a rationale to exclude, isolate, or punish a student; (2) *understand violence and aggression within a context*—there may be many antecedent factors, in the home and/or school, for students at risk of committing violent acts; (3) *avoid stereotypes*—it is important to be aware of false cues, including race, socioeconomic status, learning difficulties, or physical appearance; (4) *view warning signs within a developmental context*—know what is developmentally appropriate behavior so that supposed warning signs are not misinterpreted; (5)*understand that students typically exhibit multiple warning signs*—research confirms that most students at risk of aggression exhibit more than one warning sign repeatedly and with increasing intensity over time.

Warning Signs

A good rule of thumb is to assume that warning signs, especially when exhibited in combination, indicate a need for further analysis to determine an appropriate intervention for the student.

- *Social withdrawal.* Withdrawal often stems from feelings of depression, rejection, persecution, unworthiness, and lack of confidence.
- *Excessive feelings of isolation.* The majority of students who appear isolated or friendless are *not* violent and may be in need of other types of specialized help. However, research also shows that such feelings can be associated with violent behavior and should not be ignored.
- *Excessive feelings of rejection.* Some aggressive students who are rejected by non-aggressive peers may seek out aggressive friends who, in turn, reinforce violent tendencies.
- *Being a victim of violence.* Research shows that students who have been victimized by others are sometimes at risk of becoming violent toward themselves or others.
- *Feelings of being picked on or persecuted .* Students who feel constantly teased, bullied, singled out for ridicule, or humiliated at home or school may, if not given adequate support, vent their emotions in possible aggressive behavior.
- *Low school interest and poor academic performance.* In some situations, such as those in which the low-achiever feels frustrated, unworthy, chastised, and denigrated at home or at school, acting out behavior in aggressive ways may occur. It is important to assess the emotional and cognitive reasons behind poor performance in school to determine the true nature of the problem.
- *Expression of violence in writings and drawings.* Many students express themselves through drawings, stories, diaries, journals, poetry, and other expressive forms. Most are essentially harmless. However, an overrepresentation of violence that is focused on depictions of family members, peers, teachers, administrators, or others consistently over time may signal emotional problems and potential violence.
- *Uncontrolled anger.* Everyone gets angry. It's a basic human emotion. However, anger that is expressed frequently and intensely in response to minor irritants may signal potential violent behavior toward self or others.

- *Patterns of impulsive and chronic hitting, intimidating, and bullying behavior.* Students often engage in acts of shoving and mild aggression. However, some mildly aggressive behaviors, such as constant hitting or bullying of others, if left unattended, may escalate into more serious problems.

- *History of discipline problems.* Students with a history of chronic behavior problems both in school and at home indicate unmet needs. These problems may set the stage for more deliberate violations of norms and rules, defiance of authority, disengagement from school, and involvement in aggressive behavior directed toward peers and adults.

- *Past history of violent and aggressive behavior.* Unless provided with emotional support and professional help, students who have previously committed violent or aggressive acts are at significant risk of repeating such behavior. Prior aggressive behavior may have been directed at persons or expressed through cruelty to animals, firesetting, lying, vandalism, or other antisocial acts. *Research suggests that age of onset may be a key factor in interpreting early warning signs. Students who engage in aggression and drug abuse at an early age—before age twelve—are more likely to show violence later on than are students who begin such behavior at a later age.* In the presence of such signs it is important to review the student's history with behavioral experts and to seek parents' observations and insights in planning help.

- *Drug and alcohol use.* Apart from being unhealthy behaviors, drug use and alcohol use reduce self-control and expose students to violence . . . as perpetrators, as victims, or both.

- *Affiliation with gangs.* Gangs that support antisocial values and behaviors, including extortion, intimidation, and acts of violence toward other students, cause fear and stress among other students. Youth who are influenced by gangs, who emulate their behavior and values, as well as those who actually join a gang, may act in violent and aggressive ways in certain situations. Gang-related violence and turf battles are common occurrences in some communities and often lead to injury and death, frequently including innocent victims.

- *Inappropriate access to, possession of, and use of firearms.* Families can reduce inappropriate access to and use of firearms by their children through careful monitoring and supervision. Students with a history of aggressive, impulsive, or other emotional problems should not have access to firearms or other weapons.

- *Serious threats of violence.* Idle threats are a common response to frustration. *Alternatively, one of the most reliable indicators that a student is about to commit a violent act toward self or others is a detailed, specific threat to use violence.* Such threats must always be taken with utmost seriousness. Steps must be taken to understand and address the reasons for the threats and to prevent them from being carried out.

Responses to Warning Signs

Imminent warning signs of violent behavior require immediate response! *Physical aggression, destruction of property, rage, detailed threats of lethal behavior, possession of firearms and other weapons, or self-injurious behaviors or threats of suicide are each sufficient cause for immediate action.*

When warning signs or overt behavior indicate imminent danger, safety must always be the first and foremost consideration. *Immediate intervention by school authorities and possibly law enforcement agencies is needed when a student:*

- Has presented a detailed plan—time, place, method—to harm others
- Is carrying a gun or other lethal weapon

In situations where students exhibit threatening behavior, parents should be notified immediately after the safety of students and faculty members has been assured.

School personnel, parents, and other concerned citizens have the responsibility to seek assistance for troubled youth from appropriate agencies, such as child and family services and community mental health agencies.

School boards should also have policies in place which set forth a comprehensive violence prevention and response plan. These policies should provide clear direction for principals and teachers regarding:

- Identification of warning signs
- Reporting of warning signs
- Responses to imminent danger
- Provision of prevention and intervention strategies in close collaboration with parents and appropriate community services and agencies

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EDUCATION CODE Sections about parent roles

- 8070 Vocational education advisory committee
- 11503 Parent involvement program
- 35147 School site councils and advisory committees
- 35172 Promotional activities
- 44032 Travel expense payment
- 44033 Automobile allowances
- 52012 School site council
- 52065 American Indian advisory committee
- 52176 Advisory committees (LEP program)
- 52852 Site council, school-based program coordination
- 54425 Advisory committees; compensatory education
- 54444.1-54444.2 Services to migrant children; parent advisory councils
- 54724 Site council, motivation and maintenance program
- 56190-56194 Community advisory committee, special education
- 62002.5 Continuing parent advisory committees; schools receiving funds from economic impact aid or
- bilingual education act
- GOVERNMENT CODE
- 820.9 Members of local public boards not vicariously liable
- 54950-54963 The Ralph M. Brown Act

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Effects of Multiple Intelligences on Instruction

Taking Center Stage, California Department of Education, 2001, pp. 140-145.

Gardner's work on multiple intelligences during the past two decades is significant. He defines intelligence as "the ability to solve problems or fashion products that are valued in at least one culture." Conventional intelligence tests, he emphasizes, are unable to estimate a product's value or an individual's ability to produce a product. His theory appears to be particularly true outside one's own cultural experience and may help to explain why multicultural classrooms often challenge teachers and students as they seek to assign values to one another's unique contributions.

Gardner has identified seven intelligences: verbal/linguistic, logical/mathematical, musical/rhythmic, visual/spatial, body/kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. Everyone, he contends, has these intelligences in varying degrees. He and his colleagues continue to engage in significant research designed to confirm the theoretical basis of their work and, more important, develop practical ways to use their findings to improve teaching and learning. Teachers who use multiple-intelligence theories seek to present subject matter in ways that respond to the multiple intelligences of their students. Language, numbers, environment, sound, physical movement, and social skills, for example, are used to carry out various instructional approaches.1

(See also "Multiple Intelligences Contribute to the Learning Potential of all Students," at the end of this section.)

Effects of Learning Styles on Instruction

Attempts to define learning styles are intended to reveal how students differ in the ways they learn. Although all students can learn, they process and absorb new information differently. Twenty-one learning-style elements affect students' motivation and achievement. Students may perform poorly in a given subject not because they cannot learn but because the strategy used to teach them was inconsistent with their learning styles. And teachers and students alike often confuse mismatches in styles of teaching and learning with lack of ability. If underachievers are taught in ways that complement their strengths, research has found, they can increase their scores on standardized tests significantly. For example, students who are hearing oriented learn and recall information when they hear it. And students with more developed kinesthetic abilities may need to experience physically what they are to learn through such strategies as role playing and the use of manipulatives.2

Some ways to adapt the environment to accommodate the learning styles of students are listed as follows:

- *Noise.* Students who prefer a quiet, relaxed work environment for independent study are provided with individual desks or carrels and are allowed to listen to soft music. Those students who wish total quiet are provided headphones without cords.

- *Light.* Many students prefer to work with less light, particularly to avoid the glare of fluorescent lighting. Separate switches control several banks of lights in the classroom. Some banks have had all but one fluorescent tube removed. For those concerned about the effects of reduced lighting on students' eyes, current research reveals that even when the light is reduced markedly, the eyes will not be injured.

- *Temperature.* Mental work is done most effectively in a cool environment. Thermostats are set to 65 degrees. Students who prefer a warmer classroom are urged to wear sweaters, and those who prefer a cooler classroom are urged to wear layered clothing.

- *Design.* The aesthetics of the learning environment can affect students' perceptions about learning negatively or positively. A neat, clean, graffiti-free classroom is essential. The walls are painted in pleasing pastel colors, and wall decorations show the work of serious students. Evidence of work related to the content and performance standards is displayed prominently.

- *Sociological stimuli.* Students are engaged in learning activities emphasizing independent work. They work in pairs and in small groups. Those who need special supervision by the teacher (e.g., vision-impaired, hearing-impaired, and emotionally troubled students) are seated near the front of the room or near the teacher's desk.

- *Perception centers.* Instruction within the classroom or the instructional media center provides for auditory and tactile-kinesthetic learning modes, including access to listening centers and computers.

- *Intake (high metabolic rates).* Provision is made for a limited number of snack times during scheduled classes. Only healthful foods are provided in school vending machines.

Other learning styles are also worth considering. Sensitivity to the various learning styles of students on the part of teachers and principals is consistent with the attention paid by employers to the work environment of their employees.

Students need to be aware of their schools' efforts to respond to at least some aspects of their learning styles. The flexibility provided in a classroom adapted to differences in learning styles carries significant personal responsibilities for students. They should discuss the concept of learning styles with their teachers and should be urged to suggest improvements in their classrooms to enhance their learning. Those who identify the kind of learning environment in which they are the most productive should be asked to share that information with their parents, who then should be urged to create appropriate settings for study at home.

There are no good or bad learning styles—just differences in learning that frequently continue into adult life. Teachers and principals are aware of the kinds of work environments in which they experience the greatest sense of their own productivity. Helping students identify their learning styles and providing them with opportunities to capitalize on them are worthy goals. That process should be repeated with every new class at the beginning of the school year and with individual students who transfer in during the year.

It may take three to five years to develop learning environments responsive to the factors that influence effective learning. To do so is a sound educational investment. Providing for differences in individual learning styles benefits a whole range of students, including those identified as being learning disabled or experiencing attention deficit disorders.

Multiple Intelligences Contribute to the Learning Potential of All Students

Harvard professor Howard Gardner has identified, through his extensive research, "seven intelligences" present to some extent in every individual. These intelligences, in combination, influence thinking and learning. The categories identified for each type of intelligence suggest useful instructional emphases for developing the learning potential of all students.

How We

Verbal/Linguistic

- Reading
- Vocabulary
- Formal speech
- Journal/diary keeping
- Creative writing
- Poetry
- Verbal debate
- Impromptu speaking
- Humor/jokes
- Storytelling

Body/Kinesthetic

- Folk/creative dancing
- Role playing
- Physical gestures
- Drama
- Martial arts
- Body language
- Physical exercise
- Mime
- Invention
- Sports games

Intrapersonal

- Silent reflection methods
- Metacognition techniques
-

Thinking strategies
- Emotional processing
- “Know-thyself” procedures
- Practice of mindfulness
- Focusing/concentration skills
- Higher-order reasoning
- Complex guided imagery
- Centering practices

Interpersonal
- Giving feedback
- Intuiting others’ feelings
- Using cooperative learning strategies
- Communicating person to person
- Practicing empathy
- Dividing work
- Developing collaboration skills
- Receiving feedback
- Sensing others’ motives
- Participating in group projects

Musical/Rhythmic
- Rhythmic patterns
- Vocal sounds/tones
- Musical composition/creation
- Percussion vibrations
- Humming
- Environmental sounds
- Singing
- Tonal patterns
- Musical performance

Visual/Spatial
- Guided imagery
- Active imagination
- Color schemes
- Patterns/designs
- Painting/drawing
- Mind mapping
- Pretending
- Sculpture
- Pictures

Logical/Mathematical
- Abstract symbols and formulas
- Outlining
- Graphic organizers
- Number sequences
- Calculation
- Deciphering of codes
- Forcing of relationships
- Syllogisms
- Problem solving

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English Language Learners

Adapted from Chapter 10 of Taking Center Stage, Sacramento: California Department of Education, 2001, pp.155-171.

Schools in California have always been comprised of linguistically diverse students. However, the dramatic increase of students with a remarkable variety of linguistic and cultural differences over the last two decades has presented a significant challenge to educators in providing an excellent educational experience to all students.

California's diverse student population comes from many different ethnic groups, speaks a variety of languages and dialects, varies in English proficiency, and comes to school with a variety of experiences, academic and nonacademic. The state Language Census for 2004-05 revealed that 2.66 million students enrolled in California public schools have a primary language other than English and 1.59 million are identified as English learners. English learners represent 25.1 percent of the total California school enrollment as reported by their school districts in 2004-05. The five languages most commonly reported for English learners are Spanish (85.3prcent), Vietnamese (2.2percent), Hmong (1.4percent), Cantonese (1.4percent), and Filipino (1.3percent).

All students with a home language other than English are provided an instructional program targeted to their English language proficiency level if they meet designated criteria and are identified as English learners.

If the Home Language Survey, completed by parents/guardians upon students' initial enrollment in a California school, indicates a language other than English, students are assessed with the California English Language Development Test (CELDT). Assessment results determine whether a student is EL or Fluent English Proficient (FEP). (EC 60810) CELDT results are reported according to the five proficiency levels approved by the State Board of Education (beginning, early intermediate, intermediate, early advanced, advanced) and form the basis for measuring student improvement in acquiring listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in English. However, the effective use of CELDT data requires a thorough understanding of how CELDT results are to be interpreted and how to use them to identify learning needs. For a more complete description of the scoring and reporting process for the CELDT see the CELDT Assistance Packet for School Districts/Schools, posted on the CDE Web site.

Students who demonstrate on the CELDT that they have difficulties in speaking, reading, writing or understanding the English language that may impede the individuals' successful achievement in the classroom, are considered to be English learners and must receive instruction designed to meet their individual linguistic and academic needs. In addition to identifying students as EL, the CELDT is used.

- To determine the level of English language proficiency of pupils who are English learners
- To annually assess the progress of English learners in acquiring the skills of listening speaking, reading and writing in English.

The CELDT is aligned to the English language development (ELD) standards adopted by the State Board of Education, found on the CDE Web site at Administrative Forms and Documents.

From the earliest stages of their academic career and in concert with direct instruction, English learners should be provided with understandable and meaningful experiences in English that enable the students to communicate effectively with peers and adults and to participate fully in the academic program.[1] "For these pupils to have access to quality education, their special needs must be met by teachers who have essential skills and knowledge related to English language development, specially designed content instruction delivered in English…" *Education Code* 44253.

Organizing for Success

Significant numbers of English learners are enrolled in the middle grades, and schools need to accommodate their needs. School district administrative staff as well school site staff share the important role to assist English learners to effectively acquire English language skills and to develop their capacity to fully succeed in the mainstream classroom. Based on the school district's criteria of reasonable fluency in English, EL are placed in structured English immersion (SEI) or English-language mainstream (ELM) program settings. Developing a comprehensive plan at a school site that identifies and then meets the learning needs of all English learners requires the collaborative effort of administrators, teachers, and other staff members involved in providing the instructional program such as:

- Principal or designee
- Classroom Teachers
- Resource teacher
- Grade level chairs
- Content specialists
- Guidance counselors

The primary goal for teachers of EL students is two-fold:

- To help their students become proficient in the English language and
- To ensure that their students meet state-adopted standards in the core curriculum.

Two sets of interdependent state standards guide teachers in determining appropriate instructional strategies for accomplishing this goal. In California, these standards are the English Language Development (ELD) Standards, approved by the State Board of Education (SBE) in 1999 and the Content Standards (English-language arts, mathematics, history/social science, science and visual and performing arts)). In order to ensure that EL have full and equal access to a school district's educational program, EL must receive both ELD and ELA.

The ELD standards state explicitly what EL need to know and be able to do as they move through the proficiency levels toward fluent English proficiency. State and federal laws require that all EL be provided with ELD defined as direct, systematic, explicit development of vocabulary, grammar, comprehension and expression in both oral and written domains of English using a curriculum and instructional methods appropriate for second language learners. EL are to receive instruction specifically designed to enable students at each proficiency level to acquire academic English rapidly, efficiently, and effectively.

English language development instruction is required for all English learners, from the beginning level of English proficiency to the advanced. It is critical to provide students with the academic language required in the more advanced levels of English proficiency so they can fully participate in the core curriculum and master the content standards.

The content standards were designed to encourage the highest achievement of every student, by defining the knowledge, concepts, and skills that students should acquire at each grade level. The English–language arts content standards describe what students, including English learners should know and be able to do at each grade level in English-only classrooms. These content standard are supported and amplified through the Reading/Language Arts Framework for California Public Schools-Kindergarten through Grade twelve.

Together, the ELD standards, the content standards and the framework form the foundation for decisions about curriculum, instructional strategies and materials and assessments in California public schools. The EL related sections of the framework recommend instructional strategies, instructional support in reading and writing, alignment of instruction and assessment, differentiated instruction through pacing and complexity and grouping as an aid to instruction. As in the English –language arts framework, state frameworks for all core subject area provide assistance for teachers.

Current core instructional materials for grades six through eight, adopted by the SBE provide the third component of the state's three-pronged system for improving the academic achievement of all students, including English learners. The first component, the standards, identify what students should know and be able to do in every core subject and at each grade level. The second component, state curriculum frameworks provide the contextual structure for relating identified state standards to curriculum and instruction. The third component, core instructional materials provide the necessary tools for teaching, assessing and supporting instructional goals. In addition to teaching skills and knowledge for specific content areas, most SBE-adopted core materials feature embedded assessments for diagnosing student learning needs and suggested interventions for use as needed.

English Language Development

English language development (ELD) instruction for all English learners is to be delivered by a teacher authorized to provide EL services. ELD should target the student's level of proficiency (beginning, early intermediate, intermediate, early advanced, or advanced) and include many opportunities for student-to-student practice at that proficiency level as well as systematic teaching of language skills at the next level of proficiency. English-language development (ELD) requires purposeful, daily instruction during specific times. Although there are many opportunities in a language-rich classroom environment for language learning, merely being exposed to, even engaged in, activity in English is not sufficient to ensure the development of full academic language proficiency. The state ELD standards emphasize the connection of ELD and literacy and encourage reading and writing instruction early in learning English with an emphasis on direct teaching of new language concepts, greater attention to the features of English language, increased practice of complex language skills, and appropriate corrective feedback within the context of meaningful and rich language learning and interaction.[2]

The California Reading and Literature Project, in its Professional Development Institute for Teachers of English Learners, proposes that ELD include:

- Forms—grammatical structures and word usage

- Fluency—ease of comprehension (listening and reading) and production (speaking and writing)
- Functions—purposes and uses of language (e.g., make statements, joke, inquire, compare) in formal and informal settings
- Vocabulary development

Although many EL may be appear proficient in the basic language skills used in everyday social interaction, they frequently lack the specialized subject-matter vocabulary unique to each area of the curriculum and the generalized academic language functions, structures, and vocabulary needed to master standards at the middle grades. English learners entering middle school with strong literacy skills in their primary language have the advantage of being able to concentrate on acquiring and learning academic language functions.

Academic language is defined in the *Reading/Language Arts Framework* as "the language of literacy and books, tests, and formal writing." It differs from conversational speech in terms of "language function, vocabulary, background knowledge, text structure, syntactic complexity, and abstract thinking."1 Another way to think of the academic language is to recognize that it represents a much higher level of literacy, a level basic to the full development of complex thinking skills.

Whether in specialized ELD courses or through the English–language arts program, students' academic language must be continuously developed and explicitly taught as its own area of study and within all subject areas. Higher-level ELD students need explicit instruction and practice using advanced phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics.[3] The challenges posed by a lack of proficiency in academic language (academic literacy) are especially acute in the middle grades. The level of academic success achieved in grades six, seven, and eight is pivotal in determining the extent to which students will be prepared to pursue progressively more demanding curricula in high school. Development of proficiency in academic language is closely linked to a commitment to provide equal access to the most valued curriculum for all students.

Universal access materials that are part of reading/language arts adoptions through grade eight offer additional support for EL by providing instructional material for benchmarks and strategic interventions. Classroom teachers can utilize universal access materials in a number of ways to:

- Help students master ELA Content Standards
- Address specific skills in ELD proficiency levels
- Provide support in areas of difficulty such as
  - Academic language vocabulary and concept development sentence structure
  - Grammar
  - Phonologically-based spelling
  - Listening and speaking
  - Organization and delivery of oral and written communication
  - Speaking applications in context

Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English

Teachers use *specially designed academic instruction in English* (SDAIE) methodologies to help EL who have reasonable fluency in English learn grade-level content in the core curriculum. In implementing strategies to build academic literacy teachers can:

- Provide examples of excellent student work. Let the students see clearly the level of academic proficiency they should be striving to achieve.
- Enunciate clearly. Let the students hear correct English spoken well.
- Demonstrate respect for primary languages other than English.
- Use controlled vocabulary. Be deliberate about introducing new words and concepts specific to the subject being learned.
- Avoid the extensive use of idioms. Check for meaning and explain the origin of the idioms.
- Use nonverbal language, including gestures, facial expressions, and dramatization, to make a point.
- Use manipulative materials and props as you introduce new material. Employ as many of the students' senses as possible.
- Use illustrations, comparisons, and examples from daily experiences to clarify key points until the students progress to the point where they can derive meaning from abstract ideas on the printed page.
- Check frequently for understanding. Ask the students to rephrase key definitions and ideas.
- Provide an emotionally secure learning environment where it is safe to make mistakes as long as they are used as a basis for learning how to correct errors.
- Record material on tape for later review by the students.
- Rewrite key concepts from texts and other materials in simpler language to communicate difficult ideas without losing the integrity of the meaning.
- Engage the students in cooperative learning experiences. Ensure that every student in a cooperative learning group is responsible for learning new concepts and skills.
- Use peer, cross-age, and adult tutoring whenever possible. Recruit support actively.
- Use active learning strategies designed to reinforce students' conceptual learning (e.g., experiments and projects).

- Ask the students regularly to refine and polish all-important assignments until they represent the students' best effort.
- Grade the students on their level of proficiency in response to performance standards rather than on a class curve.
- Reinforce key concepts frequently. Watch for opportunities to do so naturally.
- Wait a sufficient amount of time for the students to think and to respond to questions. Keep from succumbing to the temptation to answer your own questions.
- Engage the students in complex reasoning experiences. Teach the students the scientific method. Involve them regularly in using it.
- Ask the students to verbalize in speech or in writing when they are ready. Help them find alternative ways to express difficult ideas, such as using visual representations.
- Summarize and review frequently. Involve the students in the process.

SDAIE with Scaffolding

Aptly characterized as an effective educational practice, SDAIE allows teachers to present rigorous academic content to all students through *scaffolding* for linguistic complexity which the *Reading/Language Arts Framework* defines as the "temporary support, guidance, or assistance provided to a student on a new or complex task."[4]

The use of scaffolding may range from learning basic knowledge and skills to understanding complex principles and higher-order thought processes. Scaffolding requires that teachers observe their students and gradually hand over responsibility to them.

Scaffolding involves the teacher in modeling and demonstrating skills and providing supports at strategic points in the lesson to help students assimilate new ideas and strategies.

Students will need many opportunities for scaffold use of a word, phrase, verb tense, or sentence structure before they are able to produce or understand it independently, orally or in writing. To develop high levels of language proficiency, the teacher must provide comprehensible instruction, clear modeling, many opportunities for practice, accurate and timely feedback, and reasons to apply new language skills in new ways. Particularly in settings with few native English-speaking models, teachers need to create many opportunities for English learners to hear and use academic language for the purpose of building the linguistic competencies required to achieve grade-level content standards. "Scaffolding . . . does not involve simplifying the task; it holds the task difficulty constant, while simplifying the child's role by means of graduated assistance from the adult expert."[5] Among the most important elements of scaffolding are the tools listed below.[6] They represent functional approaches to instruction, emphasizing the movement of students from dependence to automaticity and independence and the development of academic-language proficiency through expressive oral and written communications.

- *Modeling and demonstrating.* The teacher directly models and demonstrates, showing students *how,* by walking them through the steps of an activity, process, or skill until they understand how to proceed and can demonstrate their ability to do so. The number of times a teacher needs to model and demonstrate desired learning will vary according to the needs of individual students.

- *Bridging.* The teacher uses the personal experiences of students, including prior knowledge or skills, to provide a bridge from the known to the unknown concepts. Teachers help students make a personal connection with the content, leading to the internalization of new learning.
- *Contextualizing.* The teacher helps clarify and bring to life abstract concepts by using pictures, manipulatives, or other objects and by creating analogies or metaphors based on the students' own experiences.

- *Schema building.* The teacher helps students establish the connections that exist between and across concepts that may otherwise appear unrelated. This strategy helps students gain perspective about where ideas fit in the larger scheme of things. For example, diagrammatic outlines and other graphic organizers are used to compare concepts and show interrelationships.

- *Metacognitive development.* The teacher involves students in using strategies to monitor their own learning. In metacognition, the process of thinking about thinking, students are helped to understand how they learn and how they know. The teacher consciously focuses students' attention on strategies for accomplishing academic tasks and helps students internalize them for later use.

- *Text re-presentation or alternate presentations.* The teacher helps students extend their understanding and apply them in novel formats. Students use different modes to present material being learned, including oral, written, or graphic formats, to ensure that they understand the material.

Collaborative learning

An anxiety-free classroom is necessary for the kind of risk taking required to expand language development and promote other kinds of cognitive growth. Having students collaborate in small groups and encouraging them to use expressive oral language in presenting their thoughts, feelings, and opinions about the material being studied foster an appropriate learning environment. By deepening their understanding and mastery of ideas and concepts, they increase their academic literacy. Collaborative learning in small groups also allows

students to practice and apply content taught by the teacher and encourages students with conflicting viewpoints to attempt to clarify, analyze, synthesize, speculate on, and evaluate their views as they work their way toward solutions to problems or carry out other tasks. This process (1) promotes refinement of meaning based on the diversity of the group; and (2) encourages the members to reflect on their own understanding of the curriculum content. Teachers assist students in making connections between ideas presented in class and their prior knowledge—in effect, to move gradually from street-level literacy to academic literacy.

Developing Academic Literacy in the Middle Grades

Learning strategies designed to develop academic literacy should include ensuring that students understand the significance of grade-level content and performance standards in each subject area. They should also be provided with the scoring criteria by which their performance levels will be determined. Emphasis is placed as follows:

- Standards are reviewed with students and explained prior to the start of each unit or other curricular increment. Content standards and performance standards are written at a basic adult reading level. Most middle grades students who are reading at grade level should not have difficulty reading the California content standards. For English learners and other students with reading difficulties, teachers may want to simplify the language without losing the significance of complex concepts.

- Students are helped to understand the difference between fluency in social language and proficiency in academic language. Teachers explicitly teach academic-language functions and structures and design opportunities for students to practice and apply them. In academic language the meaning must be derived from written material standing on its own. Prior association with ideas, events, or surroundings in the lives of students that help them derive meaning is limited. The ability to derive meaning from written or spoken communication lacking familiar interpretive cues lies at the heart of academic literacy.

- Vocabulary building emphasizes new terminology associated with the study of core subjects. The selection of words, phrases, or concepts is determined on the basis of language essential to deep learning of content standards. Those choices are based on language ordinarily used by professionals for a given subject. Vocabulary lists are developed collaboratively by teachers and supplemented by students.

- Students frequently participate in small study groups in which assignments are tailored to the subject and content standards being addressed in the curriculum. Small-group assignments include problem-solving or issue-oriented tasks requiring students to use new academic vocabulary and concepts.

Similarly, complex reading and expressive writing provide opportunities for students to use their new academic-language skills. Students are encouraged to connect new ideas, concepts, and vocabulary through, for example, reflective logs, quick writes, and essays. In mathematics and science students are encouraged to provide written explanations of solutions and processes used in problem solving, investigations, or research projects.

Developing Academic Literacy Through Reading

The next set of examples suggests strategies designed to practice and apply academic-language proficiency through complex reading experiences:

- *Oral reading* with advanced vocabulary is practiced frequently in small, heterogeneous study groups. Essays, stories, articles, or other reading materials are selected collaboratively for their relevance to the subject and content standards. Students take turns reading aloud to improve listening skills, build academic-language proficiency, and ensure comprehension of complex ideas. Although reading aloud is typically used to promote the study of literature, it can also contribute to an understanding of complex concepts in all curriculum areas.

- *Reading aloud* with advanced vocabulary is a variation of oral reading in which students follow the text while their teacher or a guest reads portions aloud, emphasizing fluency, expression, and clarification of complex ideas. The underlying emphasis is placed on comprehension and the use of academic language. (Reading Aloud to Students of All Ages)

- *Team reading* involves pairing a more able reader with a less able reader. The subject matter is linked to the curriculum. Through this approach the weaker reading skills of the less able reader are not exposed to the class, and the other team member knows that he or she is serving in a helping role. Sometimes, more able readers are recruited from the higher grades. In this approach the less able reader, feeling emotionally secure, is able to concentrate on improving his or her academic literacy. The more able reader, given extra credit, is trained to be an effective helper.

- *Tutorial reading* involves a teacher, a trained aide, or a tutor leading a small group of students (or sometimes an individual student).

Under the leader's direction they read, talk, think, and question their way through a book or other material related to the curriculum. Each participant should have a copy of the material being read. The leader helps the students ask questions about the reading selection and questions they might pose to the author. Advanced vocabulary is emphasized. The students are helped to find meaning in their reading as they explore concepts and use complex thinking skills.

- *Classroom community reading,* a variation of the previous strategy, involves having the entire class read and discuss the same book or other reading material, preferably one related to the curriculum. The teacher guides the discussion, emphasizing new vocabulary, themes, and complex ideas and generally focusing on academic-language proficiency. When done in moderation, whole-class reading, as opposed to reading in small groups, is an excellent way for teachers to know students better, observe their attitudes toward reading, examine how they read, and build a classroom-based reading community.

- *Independent reading of advanced material* engages students, with their teacher's approval, in reading materials selected by the students. Self-paced, independent reading involves periodic individual conferences with the teacher, a trained aide, or a tutor. The students may meet in small groups to discuss their independent reading selections. The primary focus is placed on building confidence in reading and developing complex reasoning skills. The students continue to build academic-language proficiency, using advanced vocabulary and growing in their ability to manage complex ideas.

Developing Academic Literacy Through Writing

The next set of examples suggests strategies designed to practice and apply academic-language proficiency through complex writing experiences:

- *Writing of topical drafts* preferably takes place in small groups. Topics are selected from the curriculum and linked to content standards. Emphasis is placed on writing short, focused drafts that involve new vocabulary and concepts. The process often begins with a brainstorming session about the topic to involve the students in the subject. The students share their writing and help one another clarify ideas. The teacher helps the students understand that writing good drafts is an essential part of academic literacy.

- *Special-interest writing* occurs when students write about a particular interest related to their present learning. Or they may choose through independent study to become the class "expert." Students who feel at ease about the subject matter often write more naturally and creatively than they would otherwise. They are asked to read the completed work of other students or read aloud to one another. They enjoy learning about the "expertness" of their peers.

- *Writing with a scribe* involves a student working with a teacher, a trained aide, or a tutor to compose a written assignment. This approach is suitable for students experiencing unusual difficulties in writing or being unable to write or use a computer keyboard because of a physical disability. The teacher, aide, or tutor acts as the scribe. The content results from a process in which meanings, choice of words, and topics are decided jointly. Students see that their ideas can be translated into meaningful written content and that clear thought leads to clear writing with good structure and logical expression.

- *Quick writing* encourages fluency of thought and self-confidence. It provides short, timed writing assignments requiring students to write about a subject related to their studies as quickly as possible and without editing. They are also told to use new vocabulary and are reminded that the task is intended to show proficiency in academic language. Quick writing can be used to free up students' knowledge and understanding of a particular subject or issue because it avoids constricting the students' thoughts to the limits of their ability to write correctly. Quick writing is especially useful in working with second-language students or native speakers of English whose writing skills are limited because of learning deficits.

- *Essay writing* illustrates a student's ability to take a point of view and, through a series of logical arguments based on factual information, lead the reader to a reasoned conclusion. Essays are to be measured not by their length but by the depth of their content. They are especially attractive to teachers because they can provide substantial insight into the levels of academic literacy achieved by the students. Although essay writing is appropriate for any content area, it should relate to the content standards for the class.

- *Process writing* describes problem-solving strategies, experimental procedures, and summaries from which a narrative outline of activities is produced. Because process writing is usually subject specific, it provides strong evidence of students' ability to use specialized vocabulary correctly and effectively, thereby demonstrating their levels of proficiency in written academic language.

- *Academic journaling* provides an ongoing record of learning by individual students, differing greatly from an ordinary diary. Rather than providing a free flow of ideas and emotions related to personal issues, academic journaling involves focused writing in which students reflect on their assignments. Examples of appropriate subjects for academic journaling are observations, new knowledge, and skills. Students understand that their journals, unlike diaries, will be subject to teacher review because their content provides a valid means of assessing important aspects of individual progress. Included is the ability to demonstrate academic-language

proficiency through use of subject-specific vocabulary, conceptualize complex ideas, and engage in effective written communication of information. When teachers are sensitive to and respectful of their students' efforts to do journaling, they often observe dramatic success. The process then becomes an integral part of the curriculum.

Health, physical education, and history–social science also provide many opportunities for writing assignments that involve interpretation of important activities, issues, or events in the context of real-life experiences. Literature and the visual and performing arts equally provide opportunities for students to use expressive writing as they

- explore their individual responses to historically or culturally significant works;
- explain the intent of the authors or artists; or
- analyze and clarify their ideas and connect them to other works. All teachers of English learners are reading and language development teachers, regardless of their content area. In planning effective instruction, content-area teachers should consider:
  - Content-specific vocabulary required for conceptual understanding
  - Language complexities, including language forms
  - Demands of the text structure of textbooks and other readings, including chapter and section headings, charts, graphs, and maps
  - Reading strategies required for comprehension of that type of text
  - Ways of both accessing and building student background knowledge of the content
  - Cognitive processes students must employ to meet content demands
  - Ways in which to engage students' interactions to further both linguistic and conceptual goals of the lesson.

Effective SDAIE includes consideration of these areas. Simply accessing prior knowledge and ensuring student motivation and interaction—while critical—are not enough to ensure student learning. As teachers plan instruction, they must thoughtfully consider language, content, and the cognitive process involved in the learning task.[7]

Footnotes

[1]*Reading/Language Arts Framework,* pp. 234–35.
[2]R. Scarcella, "Effective Language Instruction for English Learners." Paper presented at the Standards-Based Evaluation and Accountability Institute for English Learners and Immigrant Students: A Focus on English Language Development, sponsored by the California Department of Education, Santa Barbara, Calif., December 4, 2000; R.Gersten and S.Baker, "What We Know About Effective Practices for English-Language Learners," *Exceptional Children,* Vol. 66, No.4 (2000), 459–70; L. Wong Fillmore and C. Snow, "What Teachers Need to Know About Language (2000)" (PDF; Outside Source).

[3]California Reading and Literature Project (binder materials for the California Professional Development Institute for Teachers of English Learners, 2000).

[4]*Reading/Language Arts Framework,* p. 279.
[5]P.M. Greenfield, "A Theory of the Teacher in the Learning Activities of Everyday Life," in *Everyday Cognition: Its Development in Social Contexts.* Edited by B. Rogoff and J. Lave. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984, pp. 117–38.

[6]Aida Walqui-van Lier, "Sheltered Instruction: Doing It Right" (1992; California Reading and Literature Project, 2000, binder materials).
[7]S. Dutro, "Reading Instruction for English Language Learners: Ten Pedagogical Considerations" (California Reading and Literature Project, 2000, binder materials).

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Document Library
English Learner Resources

Added December 2008

- Babel Fish Translation Tool (Outside Source)
- California Association for Bilingual Education (Outside Source) (CABE)
- California Association of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (Outside Source) (CATESOL)
- California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (Outside Source) (CTC)
- California Department of Education (CDE) Web page on English Learners
  - Bilingual Teacher Training Program (BTTP)
  - California English Language Development Test (CELDT)
  - Clearinghouse for Multilingual Documents
  - Document Translations Reference
  - English Language Development Standards (English) (PDF; 830KB; 91pp.)
  - English Language Development Standards (Spanish) (PDF; 1.5MB; 98pp.)
  - Language Learner and Support Division Resources
  - [for English learners]
  - Title III
  - Two-Way Language Immersion Program Resources
- Center for Applied Linguistics (Outside Source)
- Center for Multilingual Multicultural Research (Outside Source), University of Southern California
- Center for Research on the Educational Achievement and Teaching of English Language Learners (CREATE) (Outside Source)
- Developing Reading and Writing in Second-Language Learners
  Lessons From the Report of the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth (Outside Source)
- Doing What Works on English Language Learners (Outside Source)
- Doing What Works: Teaching Vocabulary to English Learners
- Double the Work: Challenges and Solutions to Acquiring Language and Academic Literacy for Adolescent ELLs (PDF; Outside Source)
- English Language Learners (ELL); Santa Clara County Office of Education (Outside Source)
- Improving Assessment and Accountability for English Language Learners in the No Child Left Behind Act (PDF; Outside Source)
- National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education (Outside Source) (NCBE)
- National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (Outside Source) (NCELA)
- A National Study of School Effectiveness for Language Minority Students' Long-Term Academic Achievement (PDF; Outside Source), W. Thomas & V. Collier
- Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (Outside Source) (OBEMLA)
- Programs for English Language Learners: Resource Materials for Planning and Self-Assessment (Outside Source)
- Project GLAD: Guided Language Acquisition Design (Outside Source)
- Project QuEST, Quality English and Science Teaching (Outside Source)
- Quality Teaching for English Learners (Outside Source) (QTEL)
- Santa Clara County Office of Education support materials for teaching English Learners (Outside Source)
- SchoolsMovingUp Webinars including TCSII on EL (Outside Source)
- Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (Outside Source)
- Specially-Designed Academic-Instruction in English (SDAIE) handbook (Outside Source)
- *Successful Bilingual Schools*(PDF; Outside Source)
- TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) (Outside Source)
- White House Initiative on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans (Outside Source)

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Examples of Caring Behavior

Adapted from *Taking Center Stage,* California Department of Education, 2001, pp. 115, 116.

Caring relationships within the school setting are expressed in multiple ways. The following suggestions represent only a partial list of possibilities. Caring is evident when students:

- Are affirmed as worthy individuals and assigned responsibilities that match their maturing levels of ability and independence. They are allowed to make decisions that fit their age, needs, and interests.
- Are helped to fully participate in their classes—to achieve a sense of belonging—through learning experiences that emphasize opportunities for recognition based on academic achievement and citizenship.
- Understand that their teachers are committed to helping them achieve academic success and that individual help is available for each student.
- Are provided full information about standards and academic performance levels and the ways in which their work will be evaluated. They are partners in their education and are able to monitor their own progress.
- Have access to a mentorship experience with at least one teacher or other significant adult. These experiences are long term, preferably during the entire time students are enrolled in their present school. Mentoring experiences are never forced and can be altered as appropriate.
- Are corrected or disciplined without being shamed, abused, or confused. They know that adults will make reasonable allowances for mistakes without personal condemnation. They also know that teachers will concentrate more on what is done well than to dwell on past failures.
- Are given ways to help themselves by helping others, taking on such service-learning roles as teacher assistants, cross-age tutors, and community volunteers (see Recommendation 5 — Relationships).
- Can express what they feel, believe, and value. They can talk things out with their teachers and peers without being ignored, afraid, or ashamed. They learn essential interpersonal communication skills that emphasize respect for the feelings and beliefs of others.
- Are helped to learn that caring relationships are a two-way process and that caring for others often leads to being cared for in return.
- Are contacted in person by a teacher or counselor when absences occur. They are made to feel that their presence in school is important and that their success is something that the entire faculty cares about.
- Experience early identification and help when their grades decline. They receive sympathetic assistance and encouragement in working out personal problems. Academic “bungee cords” are readily available to help them in times of crisis, and they know how to access them.
- Have something to believe in and work for because adults live their ideals before them.

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DOCUMENT LIBRARY

Four-Point Scoring Guides

Taking Center Stage, California Department of Education, 2001, p. 76.

- Four-Point Guide for Writing Tasks for Grade Seven
- Four-Point Scoring Guide for Writing Tasks for Grades Nine and Ten
  Response to Writing Prompt

  Response to Literacy/Expository Text

Four-Point Guide for Writing Tasks for Grade Seven

(Based on California's English–language arts content standards for grade seven)

FOUR

The writing—

- *clearly* addresses the entire writing task.
- demonstrates a *clear* understanding of purpose and audience.
- maintains a *consistent* point of view, focus, and organizational structure, including the *effective* use of transitions.
- includes a *clearly presented* central idea with *relevant* facts, details, and/or explanations.
- includes sentence *variety*.
- contains *few*, *if any*, *errors* in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors do *not* interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.

Fictional or autobiographical narrative writing—

- provides *a thoroughly developed* plot line, including major and minor characters and a *definite* setting.
- includes *appropriate* strategies (e.g., dialogue, suspense, narrative action).

Response to literature writing—

- develops interpretations that demonstrate a *thoughtful,* comprehensive grasp of the text.
- organizes *accurate and coherent* interpretations around *clear* ideas, premises, or images from the literary work.
- provides *specific* textual examples and details to support the interpretations.

Persuasive writing—

- *authoritatively* defends a position with precise and relevant evidence and *convincingly* addresses the reader's concerns, biases, and expectations.

Summary writing—

- summarizes text with clear identification of the main idea(s) and most *significant* details in the student's own words, and clearly reflects underlying meaning.

THREE

The writing—

- addresses most of the writing task.
- demonstrates a *general* understanding of purpose and audience.
-

maintains a *mostly consistent* point of view, focus, and organizational structure, including the *isolated* use of single word transitions.
- presents a central idea with *mostly relevant* facts, details, and/or explanations.
- includes some sentence *variety*.
- contains *some errors* in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors do *not* interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.

Fictional or autobiographical narrative writing—
- provides an *adequately developed* plot line, including major and minor characters and a *definite* setting.
- includes *appropriate* strategies (e.g., dialogue, suspense, narrative action).

Response to literature writing—
- develops interpretations that demonstrate a comprehensive grasp of the text.
- organizes accurate and *reasonably* coherent interpretations around *clear* ideas, premises, or images from the literary work.
- provides textual examples and details to support the interpretations.

Persuasive writing—
- *generally* defends a position with relevant evidence and addresses the reader's concerns, biases, and/or expectations.

Summary writing—
- summarizes text with the main idea(s) and *important* details, mostly in the student's own words and generally reflects underlying meaning.

TWO

The writing—

- addresses *some* of the writing task.
- demonstrates *little* understanding of purpose and audience.
- maintains an *inconsistent* point of view, focus, and/or organizational structure, which may include *ineffective or awkward* transitions that do not unify important ideas.
- *suggests* a central idea with *limited* facts, details, and/or explanations.
- includes *little* sentence variety.
- contains *several errors* in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors *may* interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.

Fictional or autobiographical narrative writing—

- provides a *minimally developed* plot line, including characters and a setting.
- *attempts* to use strategies but with *minimal* effectiveness (e.g., dialogue, suspense, narrative action).

Response to literature writing—

- develops interpretations that demonstrate a *limited* grasp of the text.
- includes interpretations that *lack* accuracy or coherence as related to ideas, premises, or images from the literary work.
- provides *few, if any,* textual examples and details to support the interpretations.

Persuasive writing—

- defends a position with *little, if any*, evidence and *may* address the reader's concerns, biases, and/or expectations.

Summary writing—

- summarizes text with some of the main idea(s) and details, which may be superficial; minimal use of the student's own words; and minimal reflections of underlying meaning.

ONE

The writing—
- addresses *only one part* of the writing task.
- demonstrates *no* understanding of purpose and audience.

- *lacks* a point of view, focus, organizational structure, and transitions that unify important ideas.
- *lacks* a central idea but may contain *marginally related* facts, details, and/or explanations.
- includes *no* sentence variety.
- contains *serious errors* in the conventions of the English language (grammar, punctuation, capitalization, spelling). These errors interfere with the reader's understanding of the writing.

Fictional or autobiographical narrative writing—

- *lacks* a developed plot line.
- *fails* to use strategies (e.g., dialogue, suspense, narrative action).

Response to literature writing—

- demonstrates *little* grasp of the text.
- *lacks* an interpretation or *may* be a simple retelling of the passage.
- *lacks* textual examples and details.

Persuasive writing—

- *fails* to defend a position with *any* evidence and *fails* to address the reader's concerns, biases, and expectations.

Summary writing—

- summarizes text with few, if any, of the main ideas and/or details, little or not use of the student's own words, little or no reflection of underlying meaning.

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Four-Point Scoring Guide for Writing Tasks for Grades Nine and Ten

(Based on California's English–language arts content standards for grades nine and ten)

Response to Writing Prompt

FOUR

The essay –

- *clearly* addresses all parts of the writing task.
- provides a *meaningful* thesis and maintains a consistent tone and focus and *purposefully* illustrates a control of organization.
- *thoughtfully* supports the thesis and main ideas with *specific* details and examples.
- provides a *variety* of sentence types and uses *precise, descriptive* language.
- demonstrates a *clear* sense of audience.
- contains *few, if any errors* in the conventions of the English language. (Errors are generally first-draft in nature.)

Persuasive compositions:

- *authoritatively* defends a position with precise and relevant evidence and *convincingly* addresses the reader's concerns, biases, and expectations.

THREE

The essay–

- addresses all parts of the writing task.
- provides a thesis and maintains a consistent tone and focus and illustrates a control of organization.
- supports the thesis and main ideas with details and examples.
- provides a *variety* of sentence types and uses *some descriptive* language.
- demonstrates a *general* sense of audience.
- contains some errors in the conventions of the English language. (Errors do *not* interfere with the reader's understanding of the essay.)

Persuasive compositions:

- *generally* defends a position with relevant evidence and addresses the reader's concerns, biases, and expectations.

TWO

The essay–

- addresses *only parts* of the writing task.
- *may* provide a thesis and maintains an *inconsistent* tone and focus and illustrates *little, if any* control of organization.
- *may* support the thesis and main ideas with *limited, if any,* details and/or examples.
- provides *few, if any,* types of sentences, and uses *basic, predictable* language.
- demonstrates *little* or *no* sense of audience,
- contains *several errors* in the conventions of the English language. (Errors *may* interfere with the reader's understanding of the essay.)

Persuasive compositions:

- defends a position with *little, if any,* evidence and *may* address the reader's concerns, biases, and expectations.

ONE

The essay may be too short to evaluate or–

- addresses *only* one part of the writing task.
- *may* provide a *weak, if any* thesis; *fails to maintain* a focus, and illustrates *little,* or *no* control of organization.
- *fails* to support ideas with details and/or examples.
- provides *no* sentence variety and uses *limited* vocabulary.
- demonstrates *no* sense of audience.
- contains *serious errors* in the conventions of the English language. (Errors interfere with the reader's understanding of the essay.)

Persuasive compositions:

- *fails* to defend a position with *any* evidence and fails to address the reader's concerns, biases, and expectations.

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Response to Literacy/Expository Text

FOUR

The response–

- demonstrates a *thorough* and *thoughtful,* comprehensive grasp of the text.
- accurately and coherently provides *specific* textual details and examples to support the thesis and main ideas.
- demonstrates a *clear* understanding of the ambiguities, nuances, and complexities of the text.
- provides a variety of sentence types and uses *precise, descriptive* language.
- contains *few, if any,* errors in the conventions of the English language. (Errors are generally first-draft in nature.)

Response to informational passages:

- *thoughtfully* anticipates and addresses the reader's potential misunderstandings, biases, and expectations.

Response to literary passages:

- clearly demonstrates an awareness of the author's use of literary and/or stylistic devices.

THREE

The response–

- demonstrates a comprehensive grasp of the text.
- accurately and coherently provides general textual details and examples to support the thesis and main ideas.
- demonstrates a *general* understanding of the ambiguities, nuances, and complexities of the text.
- provides a variety of sentence types and uses *some descriptive* language.
- contains *some errors* in the conventions of the English language. (Errors do not interfere with the reader's understanding of the essay.)

Response to informational passages:

- anticipates and addresses the reader's potential misunderstandings, biases, and expectations.

Response to literary passages:

- demonstrates an awareness of the author's use of literary and/or stylistic devices.

TWO

The response–

- demonstrates a *limited* comprehensive grasp of the text.
- provides *few, if any,* textual details and examples to support the thesis and main ideas.
- demonstrates a *limited,* or *no,* understanding of the ambiguities, nuances, and complexities of the text.
- provides *few, if any,* types of sentences and uses *basic, predictable* language.
- contains *several errors* in the conventions of the English language. (Errors may interfere with the reader's understanding of the essay.)

Response to informational passages:

- *may* address the reader's potential misunderstandings, biases, and expectations, but in a limited manner.

Response to literary passages:

- *may* demonstrate an awareness of the author's use of literary and/or stylistic devices.

ONE

The response–

- demonstrates *little, if any,* comprehensive grasp of the text.
- provides *no* textual details and examples to support the thesis and main ideas.
- demonstrates *no* understanding of the ambiguities, nuances, and complexities of the text.
- provides *no* sentence variety and uses *limited* vocabulary.
- contains *serious errors* in the conventions of the English language. (Errors interfere with the reader's understanding of the essay.)

Response to informational passages:

- does *not* address the reader's potential misunderstandings, biases, and expectations.

Response to literary passages:

- does *not* demonstrate any awareness of the author's use of literary and/or stylistic devices.

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FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Foreign language is considered a core academic subject under NCLB legislation: *The term "core academic subjects" means English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts, history, and geography* [*NCLB*, Title IX, Section 9101(11)].

To emphasize the importance of foreign languages, 2005 was declared the Year of Languages by U.S. Senate Resolution 170 (Dodd). The initiative promoted the concept that every American should develop proficiency not only in English, but also in other languages.

The ability to communicate in another language enables students to grow academically and personally. To be most effective in today's global society, a person must have knowledge of other cultures and the ability to interact with people from different cultures in both California and throughout the world. Moreover, learning a second language helps pupils from different backgrounds to interact with each other and build self-esteem. As California corporations continue to establish production facilities in developing world countries, there is an increasing need for linguistic competence and cultural understanding in languages other than English.

Instruction in Foreign Languages

Frameworks. The new *Foreign Language Framework* focuses on developing the highest levels of foreign language proficiency in California students and outlines the content of the foreign language curriculum. This new edition is anchored in the Language Learning Continuum, published by the College Entrance Examination Board. The continuum provides clear benchmarks for measuring students' ability to perform in the target language in culturally appropriate ways. It outlines five stages of student progress, beginning with stage one, when a student first begins to learn a second language. Each stage includes the following categories: function, context, text type, accuracy, and content.

The framework also provides guidance on assessment and professional development, along with the role of parents or guardians, administrators, and the community in foreign language education.

Instructional Resources. The last chapter of the *Foreign Language Framework* sets forth the evaluation criteria to guide the development and govern the adoption cycle of kindergarten-through-grade-eight instructional materials, which took place in 2003. The criteria may also be used by publishers and local educational agencies as a guide for the development and selection of instructional materials for grades nine through twelve.

Standards Legislation

Senate Bill 5 Chapter 826, Statues of 2003 (Education Code Section 60605.3) requires the State Board of Education to adopt content standards for teaching foreign languages in kindergarten and grades one to twelve, inclusive, pursuant to recommendations developed by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction on or before June 1, 2009. These standards are intended to guide schools that offer programs of instruction in languages other than English. Further, it requires these standards to support the goal of providing programs of instruction in languages other than English as early as feasible, and to include a description of the skills to be attained at each grade level and alignment of the course content with the entrance requirements of the California State University and the University of California. This bill also authorizes the Commission on Teacher Credentialing to align the teacher subject matter standards and examinations with the state content standards for pupils in the content area of foreign languages.

Foreign Language Education Requirements

Education Code. The following *Education Code Sections* outline the foreign language education and adopted course of study:

- **Intent to establish foreign language programs.** *Education Code Section 51212*. It is the intent and purpose of the Legislature to encourage the establishment of programs of instruction in foreign language, with instruction beginning as early as feasible for each

school district.

- **Adopted course of study.** *Education Code Section 51220*. The adopted course of study for grades 7 to 12, inclusive, shall offer courses in the following areas of study:
  (c) Foreign language or languages, beginning not later than grade 7, designed to develop a facility for understanding, speaking, reading, and writing the particular language.

- **Graduation requirements.** *Education Code Section* 51225.3 stipulates that *(a)* Commencing with the 1988-89 school year, no pupil shall receive a diploma of graduation from high school who, while in grades 9 to 12, inclusive, has not completed all of the following:
  (E) One course in visual or performing arts or foreign language. For the purposes of satisfying the requirement specified in this subparagraph, a course in American Sign Language shall be deemed a course in foreign language.

  Foreign language education and university admission requirements.

  - University of California: Two years of study in the same language is required for admission to the University of California system; three years of study is recommended.
  - California State University: Two years in the same language is required for admission to the California State University system.

Toolkit Items

1. **Professional Organizations.** Sites that provide information on groups dedicated to the advancement of foreign language instruction.
   - California Language Teachers Association (CLTA) (Outside Source)
   - American Council on Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) (Outside Source) National
   - Council of State Supervisors of Foreign Languages (NCSSFL) (Outside Source) National
   - Network for Early Language Learning (Outside Source)

2. **Funding Sources and Grant Awards.** The following sites contain information on professional development opportunities for foreign language teachers.
   - NCLB. Title II, Part A funding of NCLB allows a Local Educational Agency to carry out activities that focus on increasing the subject matter knowledge of teachers [NCLB, Title II, Part A, Sections 2113(c)(1)(c), 2123(a)(3)(A)]. The primary purpose of this funding is to increase teachers' subject matter knowledge so that teachers may become highly qualified and effective teachers. For further information on highly qualified teachers under NCLB.

   - Fulbright Teacher Exchange Program (PDF; Outside Source)
     Administered by the U.S. Department of State, the Fulbright Teacher Exchange Program allows teachers at K-12 schools and two-year colleges to participate in exchanges abroad. This program promotes mutual understanding between citizens of the United States and other countries. Schools and communities gain the expertise and perspective of the visiting exchange teacher and, subsequently, share the experiences of their returning faculty members.

3. **Professional Development.** The California Foreign Language Project (Outside Source) is one of the California Subject Matter Projects, a statewide network of subject-specific professional development programs for teachers. The project sponsors multiple long-term, content-focused programs and opportunities for participants to pursue professional growth and to develop leadership capacity. It supports teachers in increasing subject matter content knowledge, strengthening linguistic competence, and expanding pedagogical practices. The project also supports teachers in developing linguistic and cultural competence in their students.

4. **Resources for Foreign Language Education.** The following sites provide research on foreign language education.
   - Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) (Outside Source). CAL is a private, non-profit organization comprised of scholars and educators, that uses the findings of linguistics and related sciences in identifying and addressing language-related problems. CAL's activities include research, teacher education, analysis and dissemination of information, design and development of instructional materials, technical assistance, conference planning, program evaluation, and policy analysis.

   - Language Acquisition Resource Center (LARC) (Outside Source). One of fourteen Title VI funded Language Resource Centers established by Congress in 1989, LARC is housed at San Diego State University. LARC seeks to develop and support the teaching and learning of foreign languages in the United States through research, technology, and publications. Particular emphasis is placed on the less commonly taught languages, cross-cultural issues, language skills assessment, and teacher training.

5. **Advocacy for Foreign Language Education.**

- Joint National Committee for Languages and National Council for Languages and International Studies (JNCL-NCLIS) (Outside Source). The JNCL and the NCLIS are united in the belief that all Americans must have the opportunity to learn and use English and at least one other language. Their goals include: 1) ensuring support for languages and international competence at every level of educational reform and 2) assisting language and international educators in becoming activists in policy and legislative initiatives in their states and communities.

- Discover Languages (Outside Source) is an initiative sponsored by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages. This will be a long-term effort to raise public awareness about the importance of learning languages and understanding cultures in the lives of all Americans.

6. **Promising foreign language programs at the middle school level**
   - International Baccalaureate (IB) programs (Outside Source).

   - In particular, two schools in California with strong programs are as follows:
     - **Winston Churchill Middle School** (San Juan Unified)
       Mr. Guy Roberts, Middle Years Program
       4000 Edison Avenue
       Sacramento, CA 95821
       Phone 916-487-7817

     - **Burnett Academy**
       Ms. Liz Seabury, IB Coordinator
       275 North 24th Street
       San Jose, CA 95116
       Phone 408-535-6320

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Guidelines for Using Time

Adapted from *Taking Center Stage,* Sacramento: California Department of Education, 2001, pp. 150-152.

The following guidelines apply to block scheduling or conventional scheduling. The guidelines emphasize the finiteness of time, the urgency of using time well, and the intrinsic relationship between standards-based education and school schedules:

- School team members believe that any program element associated with a standards-based middle school is administratively possible to implement. If it is educationally sound, it can be scheduled. Time is viewed as a factor supporting learning, not a boundary that marks its limits.
- Time is no longer viewed within the context of six- or seven-period days five times per week. Rather, the total number of available instructional hours becomes the primary criterion in creating the school schedule.
- The schedule divides available hours into a larger number of increments of shorter duration than regular periods. The increments provide needed flexibility in determining the amount of time required for different instructional tasks. Flexibility of this kind is essential for block scheduling, advisory programs, assemblies, service-learning experiences, and other needs.
- Blocks composed of any number of time increments are as long as needed to accomplish instructional goals. For example, the extended amount of time blocked for interdisciplinary teaching teams provides for differentiated instruction and active, cooperative learning experiences within the context of an integrated curriculum.
- Time is allocated differentially to allow for courses that require setup and takedown time for instructional purposes. Science laboratories, exploratory programs, school-to-career, shops, instrumental and vocal music classes, visual arts programs, physical education activities, and computer laboratories fall into this category. The same logic is applied to other than regular instructional programs, such as tutoring programs, mentoring programs, and advisory programs.
- When a village or house organization exists, the school's master schedule provides substantial flexibility in sharing staff time and instructional facilities.
- All teachers have a daily planning period consistent with contract provisions. Members of the teaching teams are assigned common planning time each day—again, consistent with contract provisions. For those who are not members of a teaching team, efforts are made to provide common planning time when the teachers share assignments or when other program considerations suggest that doing so would encourage professional collaboration.
- Advisory programs or guidance activities are accommodated within the students' schedules in ways that emphasize their significance.
- The schedule allows opportunities for school-based and community-based service-learning experiences within the students' schedules to ensure that instructional time remains uncompromised. The same is true for access to health care providers, human services agencies, and other health support services. Conflicts with regular classroom learning activities should be avoided unless emergencies exist.
- When block scheduling is used, passing time is reduced. Only part of the student body moves on any given passing bell. Consequently, the amount of in-class instructional time is increased.
- Passing bells are replaced by chimes or soft music to avoid interrupting classes that remain in place and to improve the school environment.
- Early research on adolescent sleep habits has prompted some schools to consider later start times to give students an extra hour or so of sleep (see Chapter 13).
- Roll taking, announcements, and similarly disruptive activities are reduced to their absolute minimum. The time saved is reallocated to instructional priorities.
- Computerized scheduling is used to ensure that predefined time specifications for each course, program, service, or activity are incorporated into the master schedule. The best minds and available technology should be used to ensure that the schedule is of the highest quality and is creative.
- Students' schedules reflect regular classes and other learning experiences (e.g.,tutorials, exploratory classes, service-learning projects, and performing groups) are generated by computer. This increases the likelihood that students will be placed correctly within the master schedule.
- Every decision about instructional or other program priorities related to the master schedule is subordinated to achieving full implementation of standards-based education. Time is visualized as a resource to be used in a number of ways (altered, refined, lengthened, shortened, banked, rotated, molded, or otherwise configured) in the pursuit of that goal.

(See also “Designing the Master Schedule as a Mosaic.”)

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Historical Perspective: Setting the Stage for California's Middle School Reform Movement

Taking Center Stage. 2001, California Department of Education, p.6

Those who were engaged in middle-level education during the latter half of the twentieth century are familiar with the debate over the most appropriate kind of schooling to be provided for young adolescents. During that period deep concerns developed over the failure of many junior high schools to respond adequately to the unique developmental characteristics of middle-level students. The typically rigid organization of junior high schools, which mimicked the departmentalized structure of secondary education, rendered young adolescents unprepared for the transition from the emotionally safe haven of elementary schools to the demands of the junior high schools.

Two things became increasingly clear. First, students in grades six, seven, and eight required schools that would focus on the students' physical, social, and emotional development. Second, they needed schools that would respond effectively to the students' rapidly developing intellectual abilities. Unfortunately, the staffs in many junior high schools in California were ill prepared by training or inclination to take on that dual requirement. Nor were conventional elementary schools, kindergarten through grade eight, prepared to alter their self-contained classroom structures to provide for a more rigorous academic emphasis, particularly in mathematics and science, even though their nurturing student-centered focus was laudable. In short, young adolescents found themselves caught in the middle.

Concerns about meeting the needs of those students led to the publication in 1987 of *Caught in the Middle: Educational Reform for Young Adolescents in California Public Schools,*[1] which captured the essence of a new kind of school for young adolescents. Before its publication many California educators and parents saw the middle school years as a period of time to be endured rather than celebrated. But much of that mentality has disappeared with the advent of middle schools. Because of concerted efforts by middle school principals to hire teachers who embrace this more positive philosophy, a much higher number of those teaching in middle grades schools today do so by choice, not by chance. Teachers with specialized training in core subjects are attracted to middle schools that emphasize high academic standards. At the same time, school administrators have been successfully recruiting teachers with serious interest in the promise rather than the problems of early adolescence.

Early adolescence is one of the most exciting periods of intellectual, physical, social, and emotional development in the human life span. To energize the education of the state's young adolescents, hundreds of new middle schools have emerged throughout California during the past decade. The resulting changes that have occurred in middle-level education constitute one of California's most successful educational reform efforts.

Combining demands for academic proficiency and enlightened responsiveness to the physical, emotional, social, and intellectual challenges of students in the middle grades, teachers and principals have created middle schools in which students are no longer caught in the middle. Their efforts, together with those of approximately 500 middle grades partnership schools in the California Middle Grades Partnership Network, have produced dynamic new learning environments (see also Appendix 1-A, "California Middle Grades Partnership Network," at the end of this chapter).

A research-based report funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, *Turning Points 2000: Educating Adolescents in the 21st Century,*[2] documents the progress made by middle schools in the last decade. The first *Turning Points* report and recommendations, published in 1989,[3] called on middle schools to "transmit a core of common, substantial knowledge to all students in ways that foster curiosity, problem solving, and critical thinking." *Turning Points 2000* reshapes and adds precision to that recommendation and the others, having based the new recommendations on practices found to be effective.

The new recommendations call for "middle grades schools that:[4]

- Teach a curriculum grounded in rigorous public academic standards for what students should know and be able to do relevant to the concerns of adolescents and based on how students learn best. . . .
- Use instructional methods designed to prepare all students to achieve higher standards and become lifelong learners. . . .

- Staff middle grades schools with teachers who are expert at teaching young adolescents and engage teachers in ongoing, targeted professional development opportunities. . . .
- Organize relationships for learning to create a climate of intellectual development and a caring community of shared educational purpose. . . .
- Govern democratically, through direct or representative participation by all school staff members, the adults who know the students best. . . .
- Provide a safe and healthy school environment as part of improving academic performance and developing caring and ethical citizens. . . .
- Involve parents and communities in supporting student learning and healthy development. . . ."

The *Turning Points 2000* recommendations are consistent with those of California's Middle Grades Task Force (see Introduction). California's Middle Grades Task Force's recommendations reflect the best of middle grades philosophy (including equal access to the most demanding curricula, interdisciplinary team teaching, active and cooperative learning, flexible scheduling, inclusive classrooms, multicultural education, complex reasoning, and differentiated instruction, along with mentoring, tutoring, and counseling experiences) and an increased emphasis on academic expectations through standards-based education. The task force's recommendations follow.

Taking Center Stage Key Elements and Recommendations

IBID, pp.2,3.

Key Element I—Rigorous Academic Content and Performance Standards

To ensure the success of all students:

- **Recommendation 1:** Implement rigorous and consistent standards while maintaining a dynamic student-centered culture. (See Chapters 1, 2, 5, and 10.
- **Recommendation 2:** Provide sustaining resources and support for standards-based education. (See Chapters 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 10, and 12.)

Key Element II—Curriculum and Instruction

To ensure the success of all students:

- **Recommendation 3:** Demonstrate commitment to essential elements of the middle grades philosophy. (See Chapters 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 12.)
- **Recommendation 4:** Align curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices with the California content and performance standards. (See Chapters 2, 3, and 14.)
- **Recommendation 5:** Connect the contributions of California's diverse multicultural population as standards are implemented. (See Chapters 6, 10, 12, and 14.)
- **Recommendation 6:** Use technology as a tool to improve and increase student academic achievement. (See Chapters 6 and 14.)
- **Recommendation 7:** Examine the use of time to provide students and teachers opportunities to plan, integrate, teach, and learn. (See Chapters 7, 9, and 11.)
- **Recommendation 8:** Work with feeder elementary schools and destination high schools to provide consistent expectations and seamless transitions. (See Chapters 2, 4, 11, and 13.)

Key Element III—Assessment and Accountability

To ensure the success of all students:

- **Recommendation 9:** Relate performance standards to content standards to define levels of academic excellence and proficiency. (See Chapters 2, 3, and 4.)

- **Recommendation 10:** Develop classroom and local assessment data systems that are used to determine appropriate instructional practices. (See Chapters 3, 4, and 8.)

- **Recommendation 11:** Hold all stakeholders accountable for high academic and behavioral expectations. (See Chapters 1, 2, 4, and 11.)

Key Element IV—Student Interventions

To ensure the success of all students:

- **Recommendation 12:** Provide appropriate accelerated interventions based on the results of relevant assessment instruments. (See Chapters 3, 10, 11, 12, and 14.)

Key Element V—Professional Development

To ensure the success of all students:

- **Recommendation 13:** Provide relevant and appropriate school-based, comprehensive, ongoing professional development. (See Chapters 7 and 14.

Key Element VI—Parent and Community Partnerships

To ensure the success of all students:

- **Recommendation 14:** Engage families and the community to support student achievement. (See Chapters 9, 12, and 13.)

Key Element VII—Health and Safety

To ensure the success of all students:

- **Recommendation 15:** Create and sustain safe school environments. (See Chapters 6, 8, 12, and 13.)

- **Recommendation 16:** Provide access to health and social services to maximize student well-being. (See Chapter 13.)

Footnotes

[1]*Taking Center Stage.* 2001, California Department of Education, p. 6
[2]Anthony Jackson and Gayle Davis, *Turning Points 2000: Educating Adolescents in the 21st Century*: A Report of Carnegie Corporation of New York. New York: Teachers College Press, 2000.
[3]*Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century*. Report of the Task force on the Education of Young Adolescents, Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development. New York: Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1989.
[4]Jackson and Davis, *Turning Points 2000*.

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Middle School Philosophy

from
Caught in the Middle: Educational Reform for Young Adolescents in California Public Schools. Sacramento: California Department of Education, 1987.

1. **Core Curriculum:** Every middle grade student should pursue a common, comprehensive, academically oriented core curriculum irrespective of primary language or ethnic background (page 2).

2. **Knowledge:** Every middle grade student should be empowered with the knowledge derived from studying the ideas, experiences, and traditions found in the core, elective, and exploratory curricula (page 8).

3. **Thinking and Communication:** Every middle grade student should develop the capacities for critical thought and effective communication (page 13).

4. **Character Development:** Every middle grade student should be helped to personalize ideas and to develop the ability to make reasoned moral and ethical choices (page 20).

5. **Learning to Learn:** Every middle grade student should develop a repertoire of learning strategies and study skills which emphasizes the goal of independent learning (page 24).

6. **Instructional Practice:** Instructional practice should emphasize active learning strategies which are consistent with the goals of the core curriculum and the developmental characteristics of young adolescents (page 35).

7. **Academic Counseling**: Every middle grade student should have timely information about the relationship between the curricula of the middle and secondary grades and should be provided access to the opportunity to prepare for the broadest possible range of academic options (curriculum paths) in high school (page 48).

8. **Equal Access**: Every middle grade student should have access to the most advanced levels of curricula offered during each of the middle grades; this opportunity should be facilitated through educational policies and practices which make the highest level of content mastery a valid and obtainable goal for vastly increased numbers of students (page 55).

9. **Student Diversity and Underrepresented Minorities**: Every underrepresented minority middle grade student should receive encouragement and incentives to pursue academic and occupational goals (page 59).

10. **At-Risk Students:** Many middle grade students are “at risk” of dropping out of school; they should have access to educational programs which emphasize personal commitments to academic achievement (page 65).

11. **Physical and Emotional Development**: Many middle grade students require specific primary health care services and strong counseling and guidance programs in order to be able to concentrate their intellectual abilities on academic goals (page 71).

12. **School Culture**: Every middle grade student should experience a positive school culture which reflects a strong, student-centered educational philosophy (page 80).

13. **Extracurricular and Intramural Activities**: Every middle grade student should have access to extracurricular and intramural programs which develop a sense of personal connectedness to school through activities which promote participation, interaction, competition, and service (page 85).

14. **Student Accountability**: Every middle grade student should be accountable for significant standards of academic excellence and personal behavior (page 87).

15. **Transition**: Every middle grade student should experience a successful and positive transition among elementary, middle, and secondary levels of school organization (page 91).

16. **Structure**: Middle grade education should be identified with grades 6, 7, and 8; disparities in state funding formulas among elementary, high school, and unified school districts should be eliminated for these grades (page 98).

17. **Scheduling**: An Expression of Middle Grade Philosophy: The school schedule for the middle grades should be a direct reflection of a sound educational philosophy and should facilitate equal access by all students to the full range of instructional programs and student support services (page 106).

18. **Assessment**: Assessment programs for the middle grades should be comprehensive; they should include measurement of a broad range of educational goals related to student achievement and program effectiveness; the primary purposes of middle grade assessment should be to compile data which lead to improved curriculum and instructional programs and more effective student support services (page 112).

19. **Professional Preparation**: Middle grade teachers and principals should be prepared to teach/administer grades 6, 7, and 8; specialized preparation should address the content areas of the core curriculum, instructional strategies which emphasize active learning, and the developmental characteristics of young adolescents (page 118).

20. **Staff Development**: Middle grade teachers and principals should participate in comprehensive, well-planned, long-range staff development programs which emphasize professional collegiality (page 125).

21. **Parents, Communities, and School Boards**: Parents, communities, and school boards should share accountability for middle grade educational reform (page 1334).

22. **State-of-the-art Middle Grade Schools**: A partnership involving local school districts, institutions of higher education, and the State Department of Education should be created to facilitate the development of 100 state-of-the-art middle grade schools; the mission of these schools should be to serve as a catalyst for middle grade educational reform throughout California (page 140).

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Parent Grade Warning Letter

Example

Place on school letterhead.

From: Team (team name) Teachers

To: The parent or guardian of (Name of student)

Date:

Dear (parent or guardian),

As Team (name) teachers we want every student on our team to be academically successful. Although we do not currently have grades ready, over the past two weeks we as a team have noticed that your child is missing assignments or he/she has received low scores on assignments. We feel it is important that you are aware of this. The first progress report will be mailed home (date). We want to work with you to insure that your child has a successful year at (school name).

Here are a few ways you can help your child succeed on our team:

- Ask your child to have their **teachers sign the binder reminder** every day sometime before they leave class. If there is no homework, they should write "NO Homework".
- Please check the binder reminder **every night**. You do not need to sign it, but we do recommend you look for our signatures to make sure that the homework was written down correctly.

We are not requesting a parent conference at this time. We would like to start with daily use of the binder reminder for a few weeks and see how effective this tool is in improving work habits.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

(signed by all members of the teaching team)

Parent Signature: _____

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Pickle in the Middle

James A. Beane

Published in *California English,* Sacramento: California Association of Teachers of English, September 2006.

In that moment of shock and surprise, I suddenly realized what the Jim Carrey character in The Truman Show must have felt when faced with the possibility that his life to the moment had been a fiction.

It is September, 2005. I have been invited to respond to the *Mayhem in the Middle* report at its National Press Club release. As I sit waiting my turn to speak, Cheri Yecke describes what she claims are the history and goals of the middle school concept. It is she says a lost cause dreamed up by misguided progressives, a bankrupt idea based on anti-academic ideas that leave America's young adolescents far behind their international peers. A failure on all accounts.

Where had I been for the past 40 years? I would have sworn a major portion of my career had been spent working with middle schools determined to give more young adolescents more access to more knowledge, organize themselves to support quality relationships between and among teachers and students, generally get past the junior version of the high school that Charles Silberman had described in 1970 as the "cesspool of American education." True, not all schools that called themselves "middle schools" had been sincere, diligent, or successful in these ways. In fact, most had sooner or later struggled under the usual obstacles to school reform – outmoded bureaucratic regulations, inappropriate external curriculum mandates, poor leadership, staff inertia, lack of funding, and so on. But they tried. And when it all worked, the results were wonderful. So what was Cheri Yecke talking about? Did I simply imagine all this? Or was Yecke playing mind games?

The Middle School Concept

The middle school "concept" is not dead. In fact, the concept is more alive than ever as study after study shows that when it is implemented well over a period of time, students achieve significant increases in academic achievement and significant decreases in behavior problems. And therein lies the real problem with the middle school concept: it has not been well implemented over a period of time. More often, the title of "middle school" has less to do with the concept and more to do with changing the name in front of the school and the letterhead on the school stationery.

For the record, just what is this middle school concept? Most middle level educators refer to two sources for a definition: the Carnegie Council's 1989 report, *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century*, and the National Middle School Association's policy statement, *This We Believe: Successful Schools for Young Adolescents*, most recently revised in 2003. These two statements offer a set of guidelines and priorities for high quality middle level schools, including improved academic achievement for all students, a challenging and engaging curriculum, supportive and safe environments, better teacher preparation, and improved relationships with families and communities. And, for the record, both recognize that schools for young adolescents can be found inside a variety of grade configurations including 6-8, 5-8, 7-8, K-8, 7-12, K-12, and more.

As interest in middle level education has grown, it has also been the subject of considerable research. Between 1991 and 2003, over 3,700 studies related to middle schools were published (Hough, 2003). A number have looked at what happens when the components of the middle school concept have been implemented as a complete set, over time, and with high fidelity (DePascale, 1997; Felner et al., 1997) The results: increases in academic achievement and decreases in behavior problems. Moreover, various components within the middle concept have shown considerable promise on their own (Beane & Brodhagen, 2002; Juvonen, Kaganoff, Augustine, & Constant, 2004; Research Committee, 2003). For example, when teachers work in small teams rather than as individual specialists, students report better teacher-student relationships and higher levels of commitment to their schools. Likewise, use of varied activities and integrative units are both associated with higher levels of academic achievement.

The Fuss Over Grade Levels

The grade 5-8 and 6-8 configurations widely used at the middle level emerged early on mainly as a result of overcrowding in elementary

schools (as the Baby Boomers came through them in the 1960s and early 70s). In southern states, the 5-8 configuration also helped to more quickly move students out of segregated neighborhood K-8 schools into more integrated middle or intermediate schools. Advocates for reform at the middle level did argue for aspects of the middle school concept, but those arguments alone would not have produced the wide-scale move to middle schools without the presence of factors like overcrowding and desegregation.

However, proponents of the middle school concept have long cautioned not to equate the middle school concept with grade configurations. For example, almost 20 years ago Paul George (1988, p.17) suggested that "slavish adherence to one grade configuration or another continues to obscure the need for substantive change and draws our attention away from potentially viable alternatives such as K-8 and K-12." In the early 1990s Lounsbury and Clark (1991) found that eighth graders in K-8 schools reported more favorable experiences than those in 6-8 schools. The widely cited Philadelphia study (Offenberg, 2001) showing better achievement in K-8 schools than in middle schools was actually published in the Middle School Journal. And a recent issue of that journal (September, 2005) is almost entirely devoted to research and policy questions related to K-8 schools.

Some researchers have suggested the move to K-8 schools in larger urban areas around the country appears to offer some academic benefits to students involved. But, as always, we must be cautious not to attribute these benefits to simply changing the grades. Those same researchers have suggested that the improved achievement is most likely a result of (1) the relationships among teachers, students, and parents that are possible in smaller K-8 schools and (2) students not having to transition to a new school for the middle grades (for example, Balfanz, Spiridakis, & Neild, 2002; Offenberg, 2001; Simmons & Blyth, 1987). In fact, it may be that the problem of transitions accounts for the fact that the achievement advantages of students in small K-8 centers over those in large 6-8 schools in Miami-Dade begin to erode in the eighth grade and essentially disappear in the ninth (Abella, 2005).

Facing Reality

As the record of middle schools themselves shows, simply changing the grade configurations is not sufficient to improve education for young adolescents. The question we need to answer is, "what kind of education should we provide for young adolescents wherever they are?" The middle school concept offers well-established and research-based guidance to answer that question. There is no way around that. Nor is there any way around the fact that it has often been poorly or partially implemented. It is fair to criticize the middle school movement for its poor or incomplete implementation rate, but it is not fair to declare the middle school concept or its goals a failure.

The large urban school districts at the center of the move to K-8 schools are very complicated systems. Their sheer size may well work against creating the smaller school communities favored by research. Diminishing state and federal resources make school success more difficult for students, the majority of whom already suffer the injustice of having to live in poverty (Kozol, 2005). And the moves to punish struggling schools and students, sterilize the curriculum, and demand unattainable test results come down especially hard on large urban districts.

t is misleading for the media and middle school critics to suggest that poor achievement and difficult conditions in our urban schools result from a particular school configuration. This sleight-of-hand rhetoric actually does a disservice to young adolescents and their schools by diverting attention from the more powerful effects of poverty and the unsavory re-segregation of our nation's communities and schools (Bracey, 1997; Kozol, 2005). Poverty is the single greatest correlate and predictor of school success. K-8 schools do not necessarily outperform middle schools when serving students from the same neighborhood and especially when both serve high-poverty students. When will we learn that the schools are not simply a "black box?" What happens on the outside inevitably affects what happens inside.

The debate over which grade configuration is best for the middle grades distracts our attention from much more important topics (Beane& Lipka, 2006). The energy used for that debate would be much better spent creating a curriculum that intellectually engages and inspires young adolescents, pushing for organizing structures that support high quality relationships, and finding better ways to reach out to families and communities. And if we really want to do something worthwhile for many young adolescents, a good deal more energy must be spent working to overcome the poverty and prejudice that relentlessly work against their chances for success inside the school and a decent life outside it.

Looking Backward

Near the end of *Mayhem in the Middle* (p. 47), Cheri Yecke claims that the way to resolve the "mayhem" in middle schools is by "going back." And herein lies the real text of the report Now Chancellor of K-12 Education in Florida, Yecke is a major player in the neoconservative ranks. A close reading of the report's school case studies and the final sections reveals that this diatribe is not simply about K-8 schools. More than that, it is about promoting school choice, abstinence-only sex education, direct instruction and phonics, test scores and accountability, and other ultraconservative initiatives. The middle school just happens to be Yecke's "pickle in the middle."

The rule notwithstanding, sometimes you can tell a book by its cover – and occasionally even judge it too. For *Mayhem in the Middle*, it is a photo from Corbis Productions, a stock photography company offering thousands of "school" samples from which the Fordham Foundation could have chosen. But they chose this one. It is a 1960 photo of adolescents crowding a school corridor, pushing and shoving their way out

at the end of the day. To one side stands a girl, books in hand, smiling demurely in the midst of hallway chaos. From a long-past era, frozen in time. Just like the author's ideas.

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The Twists and Turns of *Mayhem in the Middle*

James A. Beane

Mayhem in the Middle is filled with out-of-context and distorted quotes, overstated claims, factual errors, and contradictory statements. Here is a sampling. The page numbers refer to the report itself.

- p. iii: I am quoted as saying, "I would claim that the middle school concept is essentially destroyed."

  In context of the 2001 speech from which it was taken, the actual quote was: "the middle school concept requires that the teacher have the flexibility to work with students to define relevant themes or topics, draw upon a wide range of knowledge,

select worthwhile projects and activities, and create appropriate assessments. **When externally imposed standards, tests, and methods eliminate that flexibility, the middle school concept is essentially destroyed**."

- p. 2: The report states, "In retrospect, the middle school 'concept,' born as an egalitarian dream of activists such as education professor Paul George – who saw schools as 'vehicles for [the] movement toward increased justice and equality in society' – was doomed from the start."

  Paul George (1998) actually said: A great portion of today's middle schools were established during the late sixties and the seventies as the nation wrestled with human rights issues and the concern for racial equality. The schools became the focus of social experimentation, the vehicle for movement toward increased justice and equality in the society as a whole. One of the ways in which dozens of districts attempted to desegregate their schools was through new middle schools . . In the South, in particular, the middle school rode the coattails of desegregation."

- p. 7 Claiming that the junior high schools were caught up in progressive education in a large way is a historical stretch. Grace Wright of the US Office of Education surveyed junior high schools nationally in the mid-1950s and found that only about 8% had problem-centered block-time core programs, the model program of progressive junior highs.

- p. 8: I checked the reference section of about 30 books considered middle school "classics" and could not find one reference to the paper by C.L. Midjaas paper to which Yecke refers. Moreover, it was the first I had ever heard of it. To say that Midjaas was "prescient" or "very influential" is a far stretch of historical imagination.

- p. 9: The brain growth periodization theory to which Yecke attributes so much influence never really had much traction in middle schools and, in fact, only briefly appeared in the literature. Within a few years of its introduction – 25 years ago - it had disappeared from statements related to the middle school concept.

- p 15-16: The Rand Corporation report did indeed raise questions about the grade structures of middle schools and the problems of transitions. However they also reported that the middle school concept has substantial research support regarding academic and social achievement, including several comprehensive school reform designs derived from it. Thus it does not follow, as in the report, that the middle school concept is against academic achievement or does not have empirical support.

- p. 46: There is no evidence here (or elsewhere) that "the damage done by favoring non-academic endeavors has clearly taken its toll." Nor does the middle school concept favor non-academic endeavors over academic ones.

- p. 52: It seems odd to call for a strict transfer policy when the author and sponsors of this report have otherwise pushed for complete parental choice in school selection.

- p. 57: Blue Earth, Minnesota has a middle school that has been implementing the middle school "concept" over the past few years. According to the state education department website, the school advanced from a 3 to a 4 star rating on the state academic achievement report card in 2004-05. According to local media reports parents in one of two feeder elementary school protested in 2005 about a plan to move the 6th grade in that school to the middle school, though none complained about the quality of the middle school itself (the other elementary school already sends 6th graders to the middle school).

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Taking Center Stage – Act II (TCSII)
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Professional Considerations
Accountability

Taking Center Stage, California Department of Education, 2001, p. 95.

- **A system of accountability ultimately means that each and every stakeholder assumes both a personal and a collective responsibility**. What are you accountable for as an individual? What are you accountable for as a member of your team, grade level, department, school? To deliver higher levels of student achievement, what support and resources do you need from the stakeholders above you? How well do the state-adopted instructional materials in language arts, mathematics, science, and history–social science, and career/technology support instruction that will enable students to meet state and local standards? Do the stakeholders who provide you support and resources understand the special needs of a young adolescent population? Do they understand what standards, assessment, and accountability systems require? What can you do to facilitate this understanding? To deliver higher levels of student achievement, what do you need and what do you need to do?

- **The statewide *Academic Performance Index (API)* continues to incorporate the results of standards-based measures. Based on *API* rankings, schools may receive recognition, assistance, or sanctions**. Are the *API* targets of your school and district being met? If not, what plans are under way to meet them? In what ways are STAR results used to determine how well students are meeting standards and to shape instruction? How can these results be used to identify and prepare students at risk of not passing the *California High School Exit Examination?* What is your school or district doing locally to support teachers and students to achieve the standards? What is your school or district doing when individuals or groups fall short?

- **Local accountability systems vary by district across the state.** How does your school and district monitor its progress? Using the rubric in Appendix 4-B, evaluate your system. Discuss your evaluation with your colleagues. Where are your school and district in developing and implementing their own accountability system? Are all stakeholders part of the process? What is your next step? How are you monitoring your progress in areas not yet covered by the *API*?

- **Standards and assessments are integral parts of an accountability system.** Reflect on your standards, both content and performance (Recommendation 2— Instruction, Assessment, and Intervention). Reflect on your assessments (Recommendation 3 — Time). How do they fit together? How do the results from these assessments drive your instruction and assist you in moving toward higher levels of student achievement?

- **Results are measurable. They are not anecdotal or isolated instances of success or failure.** How does your school monitor its progress toward attaining its goals? What are its sources of data? Are the data consistent, reliable, and valid? Are you and your colleagues sufficiently trained in administering assessment instruments and evaluating results? What criteria constitute the basis for intervention? What do the data imply if a few students do not show any gain? What do the data imply if students show less gain or more gain than your colleagues' students? What are your responsibilities in either case? What do the data imply if minimal gain is made in your grade level, team, or department? Can you target improvements based on the data? Do you know how to use the data to shape instruction and refine your practices?

See the Self Scoring Guide for Assessment and Accountability for more detail about evaluating a school or district accountability system.

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Professional Considerations
After-Hours Academic and Enrichment Programs

Adapted from *Taking Center Stage,* California Department of Education, 2001, p. 195.

- **Has your school implemented after-hours academic and enrichment programs?** If so, how do you rate the level of cooperation between program staff and the staff of the regular school program? What factors have contributed to effective cooperation? What suggestions can you offer for improvement? Share the information with others.

- **After-hours academic and enrichment programs require the same kind of rigorous attention to planning, management, and supervision as that required for the regular day program.** Are after-hours academic programs at your school the product of a carefully developed consensus involving school staff, parents, and partner organizations? How can consensus building and shared decision making be strengthened? Can your ideas influence the process? What might you do next?

- **After-hours academic and enrichment programs require the availability of transportation, library/media centers, and trained professionals.** Are the students who are most in need of remediation able to attend the enrichment center? If not, is transportation a problem? Work with the district to remedy transportation problems. Also, work with the principal and library/media center staff to ensure that the center is open for academic enrichment during the after-school program hours. Finally, have all of the after-school staff received training required to fulfill their responsibilities?

- **After-hours academic and enrichment programs fill a critical void in the day of an average young adolescent student and provide specific support.** If your school has after-hours academic programs, do the students, the regular teachers, the after-hours staff, and the parents understand the purpose of the programs? If so, how is that purpose apparent? If not, what specifically can be done to improve the chances that students will benefit from the programs? How are these programs advertised and promoted?

- **After-hours academic and enrichment programs can be very effective in extending the regular school day.** The programs are also viewed as a potent response to threats of failure and grade retention. If your school offers after-hours academic programs, are students actively recruited and enrolled? Are content and performance standards for the regular classroom linked with the instructional support available in the after-hours programs? If so, what has contributed most to your school's success in realizing those goals? If not, what can be done to improve those critical connections?

- **If your school does not offer after-hours academic programs or lacks careful planning, management, or supervision for the programs you do offer, can you provide leadership to improve the situation?** Do you know of colleagues who might help?

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Professional Considerations
Assessment

Taking Center Stage, California Department of Education, 2001, p. 66.

- **California has made a major commitment to student assessment. There are also multiple elements of this structure that are a part of legislation.** Ask your principal to devote a faculty meeting to the subject of standards-based assessment. Especially review the degree to which aspects of student assessment you and your colleagues understand. Are there areas that should be strengthened? How aware are parents about these issues? What things might your school do to ensure that students, parents, and the professional staff fully benefit from the provisions of California's assessment system?

- **Organizations that represent the academic disciplines generally agree that nearly all students are capable of achieving a high standard of performance in a rigorous curriculum.** As your school uses standards-based assessments, are you finding increased numbers of students rising to the academic challenge? In what way are you seeing this occur? If this is not occurring, do you have ideas about probable causes? Is there a deliberate school wide effort to focus on this challenge? What is your personal role? How are your assessments modified for EL and special education students?

- I**mplementation of an assessment system includes assignments that allow students to demonstrate what they know relative to the content standards. It also includes regular student and teacher use of scoring criteria or generic rubrics, applying those criteria to student work, and ultimately determining individual student performance.** Consider each of these variables and assess how well you and your colleagues who teach the same grade and subject are doing in your efforts to develop and implement these components. Are there ways to improve your consensus-building process? At staff meetings, do you individually score sample student work and then compare scores to see if you are consistent in grading? Could teachers of other subjects and grades benefit by these efforts? How might you develop a cross-discipline assessment with teachers from another subject area? Invite them to participate with you.

- **If you are a principal, how would you evaluate your professional ability to provide direct assistance to teachers who need help in developing performance assessments?** Do you regularly provide such assistance? If not, do you broker assistance by others? What kind of professional assistance would benefit you as you seek to support your staff? With whom will you share your need? Have you taken advantage of the professional development available for principals through AB 75, CLMS (California League of Middle Schools) or, ACSA (Association of School Administrators)?

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Professional Considerations
Authentic Middle Schools

Taking Center Stage. 2001, California Department of Education, p. 106

- **Exemplary middle schools have common characteristics that have been recommended or recognized in *Turning Points 2000* and in the** *Schools to Watch-Taking Center Stage* Rating Rubric (DOC; 413KB; 9pp.; 30-Apr-2007). How many of these characteristics does your school embody? Do you have a master plan and timeline for incorporating these characteristics? How have these characteristics enhanced student achievement? How does the middle grades philosophy provide a solid foundation for standards-based reform?

- **Is your middle school student centered?** Do the students feel that yours is a caring faculty? Do the teachers and other staff members make a deliberate attempt to develop strong, positive relationships with students, leading to higher levels of achievement?
  Is improvement needed? What can your faculty do? What can you do?

- **Among the common characteristics of standards-based middle schools identified in the Schools to Watch scoring rubric, which, if any, require increased attention by your school?** What specific suggestions do you have for accomplishing this task? Are any components missing from the illustration that you believe are essential? What are they?

- **Consider your own school.** Are instructional practices and support programs related to a comprehensive plan in which the pieces fit together logically? Are there changes you would like to make? Are there others on the staff who may feel the same way? What can you do about it? Will you?

- **Are there instructional strategies you would like to use but do not because you feel that you are unprepared?** Do they require others to participate who are unwilling to do so? If so, consider your priorities. Do you know how to use performance data to evaluate your instructional strategies? Would you like to discuss them with someone? Do you have colleagues who share your thinking? Are you willing to discuss your concerns with them? With your principal? If not, what prevents you? How can you resolve your concerns?

- **Observers frequently remark that too little communication exists between the several levels of schooling: elementary, middle, and secondary.** Is that criticism valid in your own circumstances? If so, why does the problem continue to exist? Who is accountable for improving the situation? How has the need for better articulation been magnified because of content standards, grade-level performance standards, the *High School Exit Examination,* promotion and retention policies? What part of the problem is your responsibility? What actions do you think would help most to ensure that education becomes a seamless process in your school district?

- **Instructional leadership is often shared among teachers, and the principal is at the periphery (because of many other demands).** If the principal takes an active role in curriculum, standards-based instruction, and assessment, what are the benefits to teachers and students? What types of support and training does the principal need to make that happen?

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Professional Considerations
California's Middle Schools:
Prepared to Close the Achievement Gap

- **Periodic review of a school's mission and vision statements provides direction and focus for all staff.** Is your school vision consistent with the middle grades philosophy and standards-based education? Has your staff developed a consistent professional development plan? Share your thoughts about what it means to have a student-centered standards-based program.

- **Delivering standards-based education to all students.** How has your staff organized to increase reading levels in your school? In what ways have you and your staff considered algebra preparation for *all* your students? Have collaborative discussions and planning with feeder elementary schools and destination high schools taken place about what students should know and be able to do in all content areas?

- **Content area teachers know the value of articulation with high school staff.** Has your staff been a part of discussions with high school staff about *California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE)* criteria? What is (would be) the role and responsibility of each? Have mathematics teachers discussed how to get all students prepared for algebra? What new strategies will be required to ensure success on the *CAHSEE* for struggling students? Accelerated students? Students with special needs?

- **The California Middle Grades Partnership Network has played a major role in implementing standards-based middle grades reform.** Have you had opportunities to review the frameworks and standards and share issues, challenges, and concerns about standards-based education with colleagues at your site? With colleagues in your district? Middle grades educators in your county? How can sharing with colleagues help your school implement the findings and recommendations found in *Taking Center Stage?* Become a state-of-the-art middle school? Explore knowledge and research about increased academic and intellectual development for your students?

- **As middle schools respond to the various state initiatives, a need will arise to clarify new roles for educational stakeholders.** How have you helped students, their families, and community supporters understand the transition to standards-based education and assessment? What will it mean to hold everyone accountable? Teachers and administrators? Students and families? Policymakers and community supporters? What will you need from each to ensure student success?

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Professional Considerations
Creating a School Culture

Taking Center Stage, California Department of Education, 2001, p.121.

- **Study the diagram in *"Major Characteristics of a Middle School Culture"* with a group of colleagues.** Consider each of the major characteristics of a school culture essential for implementing and sustaining a standards-based middle school. Collectively, they emphasize the need for specific behaviors on the part of both students and staff members. Discuss each of the major elements in the graphic and their presence in your school. Be generous in affirming positive evidence of each major element whenever appropriate. Be equally frank in identifying elements that need improvement or are missing. Develop proposals for doing something about the deficits. Organize your findings and share them with your principal.

- **Effective, standards-based education includes a schoolwide commitment to differentiate instruction in accordance with the varied styles of learners as well as the differing strengths or deficits.** Assess your own ability to differentiate your students' learning experiences. Provide examples of ways in which you work to achieve this goal. How do you grade your effectiveness? Do you need help? What would be the most effective format for obtaining assistance? District-level in-service classes? Mentoring? Peer coaching? Independent study? School-site seminars with colleagues? Other? Have you made known your needs to those in a position to act?

- **In your school what are the most pervasive and consistent behaviors on the part of teachers and administrators that project a caring attitude toward students?** First, list the ways you show each student that adults care. Are there ways for enhancing these behaviors? If so, suggest examples. Have you shared your thoughts with the principal? As a PLC team?

- **Sociologists emphasize the role of the physical environment to one's perception about the significance of what transpires within a school building.** Assess your own school in terms of its aesthetics and the academic ambiance it physically projects. On a scale of one to ten (with ten being high), is there evidence of pride in the exterior appearance of the school building and grounds? Is the interior—including entry, halls, and individual classrooms—bright, pleasant, and inviting? If you have given high marks, identify those factors that express how education is valued. If you have given low marks, how what can improve the situation? What can be done short-term/long term? List potential projects next to timelines and responsibilities.

- **Effort and quality are among the most valued aspects of student work in determining academic proficiency in standards-based classrooms.** Discuss the role of effort and ways to keep it from becoming confused with true academic achievement in response to standards.

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Professional Considerations
English Learners and Academic Success

Adapted from *Taking Center Stage,* California Department of Education, 2001, pp. 164-165.

The new, global economy requires advanced level of academic literacy so that students may gain the more complex knowledge and skills in the grade-level content standards.

I. **Consider specific examples of the standards that you teach.**

To what extent do they already reflect an emphasis on academic literacy?

Can they be improved?

Do they need to be simplified or more clearly explained to English-language learners

Are they clear to struggling readers

II. **English-language development (ELD) is an essential program component for all English learners, even those at higher levels of English proficiency.**

Do all the English learners in your classes have access to a full program of English-language development?

Is ELD included in English–language arts courses for students at the intermediate level of proficiency or higher?

What strategies for ELD instruction are employed?

What is the specific content of ELD instruction?

III. **SDAIE Strategies are presented to EL as they strive to develop both basic and advanced literacy levels.**

To what extent are you using the suggested SDAIE strategies?

Prepare a checklist, using the discussion provided.

Are there suggestions not yet part of your repertoire of instructional strategies that you would like to attempt?

If so, try them out and keep a journal of the results.

Share the process with potentially interested colleagues.

Invite them to take part with you.

IV. **For teachers of subjects other than English–language arts:**

Do you regularly incorporate grade-level reading and writing skills development with your daily instruction?

If your answer is yes, what kinds of experiences have worked best for you in your efforts to help your students achieve a

higher level of literacy?

Are your expectations based on the grade-level English–language arts content standards?

Consider the recommendations related to reading and writing activities described in the text. Which have the most relevance for your own teaching situation? Find ways to mix and match your choices and, if you are not already doing so, integrate them into your teaching on a regular basis. Let your principal know what you are doing and provide her or him with a periodic progress report.

V. **Proficiency in academic language is linked to equal access to the most valued curriculum.**

Basic literacy skills and academic-language proficiency still present a difficult challenge in many schools.

How can your school more aggressively ensure that basic reading and writing skills are consistently taught by every teacher?

What would it take to move beyond this level to the development of academic literacy skills, including the ability of students to:

- use effectively the formal language of each discipline; and
- engage in assignments calling for complex reasoning based on their ability to read and interpret challenging material from grade-level texts and other sources. Ask your principal to convene interested members of your staff to pursue these issues.

VI. **Does your school have a literacy council**

(a committee of staff members dedicated to the goal of achieving a significant level of academic literacy for all students)?

If not, encourage its creation. Focus on the development of school wide efforts to develop a comprehensive literacy program that incorporates multiple strategies and involves every staff member at the most critical point—daily classroom instruction.

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Professional Considerations
Health, Safety, Resilience, and Civility

From *Taking Center Stage,* Sacramento: California Department of Education, 2001, pp. 214, 215.

- **The relationship between a healthy body and a healthy mind is well documented.** However, many young adolescents come to school without breakfast only to see vending machines loaded with soda and candy. Yet they are overly concerned with their body image. Teachers complain that students are too tired or hyperactive to learn effectively. Analyze your school's approach to student nutrition in light of research on proper diet, emotional balance, and mental acuity. What messages do school meals and snacks send to students? Are they consistent? What food choices are available? Are sodas, sweetened beverages, or high-fat snacks offered in the vending machines? What dining facilities are available? How much time do students have to purchase and eat their meals? Are the students involved in deciding which foods and beverages the school offers? What can PLCs do to improve the situation? Present your recommendations for change at a faculty meeting.

- **Data from the annual California Healthy Kids Survey consistently shows that middle grades students watch many hours of television, eat many high-fat snack foods, and participate in very little exercise.** As your school assesses the health, nutrition, and exercise needs of its students, what trends emerge? Are a significant number of your school's students living a "couch potato" lifestyle? What can your school do to encourage a healthier lifestyle for its students? Are there ways the school community can encourage students to develop a regular program of vigorous physical exercise? Are there ways in which your school can help students to monitor their own nutrition and exercise—to set goals for themselves and to meet those goals? How can your school increase the health and fitness of its staff while doing the same for all students?

- **Sleep can be an important element in ensuring students' health and intellectual development.** Many middle school students get an inadequate amount of sleep or sleep in a room with stimulation, such as television sets, computers, stereos, and video games. As a result, some adolescents are at risk of sleep deprivation. What can your school do to help all its students to get the sleep that they need for their physical and intellectual growth? How can you help students and their parents to monitor the situations in which students sleep? How can the PLC help students and their families value the role that sleep plays in assisting students to reach their maximum potential?

- **Research shows the importance of building youth assets as a deterrent to high-risk behavior.** Has your school examined the research? Has the PLC conducted youth-asset inventories to identify students who need help? What additional actions can the PLC take to increase youth assets? Present your recommendations to your school-wide PLC.

- **Does your school have a district-developed, comprehensive violence prevention and response plan?** Such a plan should address identifying warning signs, responding to imminent danger, and providing for prevention and intervention strategies developed together with appropriate community services and agencies. If a plan exists, suggest a staff review to ensure that everyone understands it, is effectively implementing it, and can make recommendations to strengthen its provisions. If no plan exists, take aggressive action through proper channels to have a plan developed.

- **Does your middle school have a positive climate? Does your school emphasize and reward civility?** See "Civility, Ethical Behavior, and Social Consciousness: Needs and Commitments for Students, Parents, and Teachers," and discuss it with colleagues, students, and parents. Explore ways in which you might improve student behavior. Involve parents in your efforts.

- **Is your school a healthy place in which to work for many hours each day?** Are there qualitative issues that trouble you? If so, bring them to the attention of your PLC.

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Professional Considerations
Professional Development

Adapted from *Taking Center Stage,* California Department of Education, 2001, p. 238.

- **Research emphasizes the importance of Professional Learning Communities (PLC) among teachers for the purpose of planning and implementing standards-based instruction.** Yet many teachers spend a majority of time in isolation from other colleagues. Although a lack of time to interact is undoubtedly an important part of this problem, are there other variables that contribute to a go-it-alone approach at your school? Which factors are unique to you? Which are widely present among the teachers you know? Can you suggest ways to introduce or improve PLC effectiveness at your school? Invite other teachers to join you in this process. Consider appropriate ways to share the results.

- **School-based professional development is an effective way to gain knowledge and skills.** Evaluate your school's professional development program. What are its strengths? Its weaknesses? What can you recommend to ensure that you and your colleagues have the knowledge and skills needed to function professionally in a standards-based middle school? How can the results of student assessments help you identify your professional development needs?

- **Consider the range of professional staff development strategies listed in Idea Bank: School-Based Professional Development.** Identify your list of highest priorities among those suggested. Are any categories missing? If so, identify them. Share this information with your principal, Professional Learning Community, and/or school-based professional development council.

- **Is coaching/mentoring a part of your school's professional development strategy?** What are the most important qualities in a strong mentoring relationship? Consider first the role of the mentor and then the role of the person being mentored. Respond in the context of what mentoring might ideally be among professionals already engaged in their careers. Seek opportunities to discuss your thinking with others. If you do not have a mentor, whom might you invite to serve in that capacity? What would be required to have you take this step?

- **What would be your major priorities in communicating to your district and/or to an institution of higher education ways to strengthen teacher or administrator certification programs?** Develop a list of suggestions from your school and arrange to meet with the district representative and/or university dean of education to consider them. Explore ways in which your school might help implement some of your suggestions.

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Professional Considerations
Providing Time

Adapted from *Taking Center Stage,* California Department of Education, 2001, p.153.

- **An examination of middle school master schedules frequently reveals major priorities that serve as the basis for allocating time.** Consider your own middle school master schedule. What is the basic core value guiding its structure? Does it facilitate instructional activities known to work well with young adolescents? Does it honor the role of teachers in a standards-based system by maximizing flexibility in making decisions, planning time, and evaluating student work? Does it minimize classroom interruptions? Are the rigorous academic goals of standards-based education facilitated? Based on the above, suggest ways to improve your present master schedule. Share your PLC findings with the entire staff.

- **Is there a program element that would improve or enhance your school's schedule?** Is it explained away as being "a good idea but we can't schedule it"? Is that program element a priority in the minds of other staff members? Using a modified version of the mosaic strategy, explore ways of solving the scheduling problem and suggest the best options to fellow staff members.

- **The United States Department of Education's Commission on Time and Learning estimates that in many schools students actually spend less than half their time in the classroom on academics.** Among reasons given for this situation are excessive interruptions from outside the class and too much time spent on activities such as drill and practice routines that contribute little to the mastery of academic content standards. Effective schedules provide more time for rigorous assignments that engage students in tasks that move them toward academic proficiency. Evaluate your own teaching. Can you make better use of the instructional time allotted to you? Consider to what extent your instruction focuses systematically on the content standards. Be generous with yourself in terms of what you are doing well. Be equally candid in identifying (1) ways in which you might improve; and (2) things others might do to eliminate unwanted interruptions into your teaching time. Share your thoughts in a faculty seminar on the subject.

- **Analysts of school master schedules estimate that as much as one hour each day could be redefined for instructional purposes through the more creative use of time and the elimination of disruptive routines.** Consider how you can create an extra instructional hour each day for each student by the most ingenious and workable ways you can devise. If you are the principal, challenge all teachers to do the same and reward the best ideas. Then plan ways to implement them.

- **This chapter identifies the master schedule as the single most important factor in communicating a school's philosophy.** Think through this assertion with a group of colleagues. Compare your educational commitments with schoolwide priorities reflected in the use of time. Are they congruent? Can there be a better match? How might it be achieved?

Other quotes about TIME from the original *Taking Center Stage:*

- "Time must be closely managed and tightly focused to ensure that all students have maximum opportunities to learn and demonstrate their ability to meet or exceed the standards." [p. 149]

- Instructional time must be viewed as a malleable resource --- altered, refined, lengthened, shortened, banked, rotated, molded or reconfigured --- to be used in pursuit of goal of increased student learning. [p. 152 – paraphrased for emphasis]

- "The master schedule is the most basic expression of a school's philosophy. It must facilitate the access of all students in a middle school to the full array instructional resources and opportunities to learn." [p. 149]

- "Time is no longer viewed within the context of six- or seven-period days repeated five times per week. Rather, the total number of available instructional hours becomes the primary resource for creating a school's schedule." [p. 151]

- Emphasis on: (1) the finiteness of time and the urgency of using time well and (2) the intrinsic relationship between standards-based education and school schedules. [pp. 150-151]

- “Time is allocated differentially to allow for courses that require setup and takedown time for instructional purposes. Science laboratories, exploratory programs, school-to-career courses, instrumental and vocal music classes, visual arts programs, physical education activities, and computer laboratories fall into this category.” [p. 151]

- “Analysts of school master schedules estimate that as much as one hour each day could be redirected for instructional purposes through the more creative use of time and the elimination of disruptive traditional routines.” [p. 153]

- The “Mosaic” metaphor on p. 154

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Professional Considerations
School Board Members

The suggestions included in the list come from a CSBA Board member session on improving middle grades education, September 10, 2005, at the annual board meeting in Sacramento.

1. How do you recognize the needs of middle grades and provide support for standards-based education? If, as a board member, you are asked to describe a best practice in middle schools, what would you expect to see taking place in a classroom?

2. How can you help middle schools wrap enrichment and engagement into the mandated 120 minutes for RLA; 90 minutes for math; and 40-50 minutes for PE? Talk about **fiscal adequacy**—having the resources to do the job the middle schools need to do.

3. Questions to ask middle school staff members:
   - Are our practices about expulsions working?
   - What do you do with this data?
   - Have you looked at your truancy rates per class/per day? What does the data tell you? What will you do as a result?
   - How do you set priorities?

4. What would you hope to see in a workshop between teachers and administrators?

5. Union demands and money constraints are a reality: What school improvement efforts can you promote within those fixed parameters? For example, encourage staff members at each middle school to consider ways to improve culture, climate, and good will. Discuss schedule changes that would result in regular, meaningful 45 minute meetings.

6. What resources improve student achievement?

7. How do you as a Board provide support to a struggling school staff so they re-engage?

8. Emphasize the importance of ***using*** the data—how to interpret; how to apply. For example, study the changing demographics of a school/district. Who are you serving now? How do their needs differ from our expectations of a few years ago? How do we serve our target population?

9. **Grade configuration:** Talk about the financial component of grade level configuration. Talk about funding based on the kind of district and the district needs.

10. **Suggestion:** workshops for Board members to meet with middle school staff teams to understand middle school issues.

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Professional Considerations: School Vision

Adapted from *Taking Center Stage*, Sacramento: California Department of Education, 2001, p.102.

- Teacher and administrator turnover is high in many middle schools. As a result, regular discussion about philosophy, policy, and practice is critical. Review how staff cohesion and collegiality have been affected by turnover. Add discussions about the school mission and vision in team building exercise. Discuss other ways to refresh commitment to the vision in regular team activities and decision-making.

- An authentic middle school vision communicates clearly the commonly agreed-upon simple yet powerful definitions to those who have responsibility for translating the vision into reality. Is there a common understanding and acceptance of the vision among school staff members?

- Discuss if your school's vision is clearly and concisely communicated to students, parents, and the general public. Have you communicated new or revised policies and practices in ways that are understandable?

- Standards-based middle schools clearly and repeatedly share expectations about achievement with all students and their parents. Discuss how your school shares the expectations. Are there newer, fresher ways to involve students and parents in understanding the standards and goals for improvement? Do school expectations describe what the school will do to help all students succeed? Do parents share in affirming content standards? Do parents understand performance levels, including their relationship to the mastery of subject matter? How do you as a school team ensure parental understanding (rather than just sending information out without feedback about how parents understand or accept the information?)

- Is the school vision linked to basic convictions about the nature of early adolescence? Is it flexible? Does the staff review it often to see that it addresses a fresh generation of young adolescents who bring new challenges, priorities, and shifts in values associated with its peer culture? How can you involve students in revising the school vision?

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Professional Considerations: Team Teaching

Adapted from: *Taking Center Stage,* Sacramento: California Department of Education (2001), pages 136 and 137.

- **Teaming is considered one of the most important organizational characteristics of middle schools.**

  Is teaming a regular practice in your school? Is it helping students make progress toward grade-level proficiency? How do you know? What might help you and your team colleagues do a better job? If team teaching has worked well in your situation, describe the most important factors in the success. Work to share the information with teams in your school that may be struggling. (See next page for types of team structures.)

- **How do your teams include "traveling" colleagues such as Resource Teachers, EL specialists, coaches, music teachers and art specialists?**

  Do you regularly collaborate with the EL specialists and resource teachers to examine instructional practices and how to better support the learning of struggling students? Does your team schedule rotate between days of the week or times so that roving teachers have a regular space on the agenda at least once a quarter? Does your team structure allow adjunct faculty to participate in discussions about benchmark assessments and celebration event planning so that they have an equal stake in the success of the learning experiences?

- **How consistently are all members of the teaching staff supporting students in learning the standards?**

  Are you and your team partners collaborating in designing student assessments based on standards and performance levels? Have you engaged in planning thematic units? What accomplishments are giving you the most professional satisfaction as you have sought to incorporate the elements of standards-based education into your team teaching? How might you do more? What kinds of assistance do you need? Who can provide it? Will you try to obtain the necessary resources?

- **How well has your school dealt with turnover among teachers and principals?**

  How has turnover affected efforts to implement a successful middle grades program? Are you facing personal challenges to your own team-teaching assignment and the ability to do your best work? If so, seek out a colleague with whom you can share your concerns. Become a catalyst in helping to resolve existing challenges so that your school's teaching teams will become stronger.

- **Are interdisciplinary teams a reality in your school?**

  Do teams organize content standards from several different subject areas according to important themes? Are students' assignments and benchmark assessments reflective of this integrative approach? Can you assess student work by using rubrics aligned with your instructional strategies? If you have experienced success, find ways to share your work with other teaching teams. If any of your answers are qualified, what kinds of assistance would benefit you and your team colleagues? Share this need with your principal.

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The Qualities of Exemplary Teachers

from *Caught in the Middle*, pages 118 and 119.

Motivation: The teachers have a strong *commitment to their work and to their students.* "These teachers not only demand achievement, but they provide opportunities for it… They select appropriate materials, teach the material thoroughly, monitor frequently, provide much feedback to each student, reteach if necessary, and are especially careful to ensure student success on new materials or individual work." They express expectations verbally and clearly.

The teachers are *committed to students outside of class.* Not only do they get involved in students' activities, but they "sacrifice their personal time in order to be accessible to their students who need more guided instruction."

The teachers establish *personal goals* and determine a course of action for attaining them. They hold role models to be very important to them.

The teachers have what the researchers call an *"integrated perception"* of students—they view them as "whole individuals operating in a broader context beyond the classroom."

Also, the teachers stay professionally enthusiastic through a "*reward orientation."* They are rewarded when students exhibit understanding and achieve their goals. "It appears," say the researcher, "that great teaching is inspired by the simple, yet beautiful act of one human being touching another through the learning process."

Interpersonal Skills: The teachers' routines are *carefully patterned* to prevent disruptions; they have a variety of "preventive maintenance" behaviors. The researchers noticed "withitness," or constant awareness of what was going on in the classroom; and "overlappingness," the ability to do more than one thing at a time. When disruptions do occur, "these teachers approach the problem objectively and methodically."

The teachers are "*active listeners."* The most common technique is paraphrasing, restating students' responses with phrases like "Are you saying that…?" The teachers also "listen" on paper, sensitive to nuances in students' writing. And they are sensitive to the mood of a class or individual.

Teachers build *rapport* with students by showing them respect, treating them fairly, and trusting them. They show *empathy* by being able to "perceive the thoughts and emotions of their young, teenage students…" They are warm and caring and set high expectations "by laying well-planned paths to success for their students."

Cognitive Skills: The teachers have *individualized perceptions* of their students. They try to find out about them as individuals, "diagnose their needs and learning styles, and then incorporate that knowledge into planned instructional activities." The *effective teaching strategies* used by the teachers include skillful and enthusiastic teaching; well-organized courses; student-centered style; careful monitoring and evaluating; a structured, yet flexible, approach; and active involvement of students. The teachers are deeply involved with their classes. To win over students, good teachers use a combination of techniques, and for them, "no two days are alike."

Having *knowledge* of a subject area and teaching techniques basic, but the exemplary teachers, "continually engage in professional development, thus presenting and considering themselves as lifelong learners who value the learning process itself." They discuss their "perpetual renewal of knowledge" with enthusiasm.

The teachers actively *see innovation.* "Our teachers talk animatedly about change to improve students' learning and bout taking risks in an attempt to find and adopt new approaches to enhance teaching effectiveness," according to the researchers. In addition, the teachers "take time to reflect on the changes they propose and avoid change for the sake of change." These findings convey a significant set of expectations for the professional preparation of teachers—expectations that are poorly articulated in too many teacher preparation programs.

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Questioning Strategies that Lead to Higher-Level Thinking Skills

Caught in the Middle. Sacramento: California Department of Education, 1989, pp. 17,18.

The questioning techniques that follow are generally applicable to any questioning model and maximize the potential for a meaningful discussion:

1. **Plan key questions to provide lesson structure and direction**. Write them into lesson plans, at least one for each objective—especially higher-level questions. Ask some spontaneous questions based on student responses.

2. **Phrase questions clearly and specifically.** Avoid vague or ambiguous questions such as “What did we learn yesterday? or “What about the heroine of the story?” Ask single questions; avoid run-on questions that lead to student frustration and confusion. Clarity increases probability of accurate responses.

3. **Ask questions logically and sequentially**. Avoid random questions lacking clear focus and intent. Consider students’ intellectual ability, prior understanding of content, topic, and lesson objective(s). Asking questions in a planned sequence will enhance student thinking and learning.

4. **Ask questions at a variety of levels.** Use knowledge-level questions to determine basic understandings and to serve as a basis for higher-level thinking. Higher-level questions provide students opportunities to practice higher forms of thought.

5. **Follow up on student responses**. Develop a response repertoire that encourages students to clarify initial responses, lift thought to higher levels, and support a point of view or opinion. For example:
   - “Can you restate that?”
   - “Could you clarify that further?”
   - “What are some alternatives?”
   - “how can you defend your position?”

   Encourage students to clarify, expand, or support initial responses to higher-level questions.

6. **Give students time to think when responding.** Increase wait time after asking a question to three to five seconds to increase number and length of student responses and to encourage higher-level thinking. Insisting upon instantaneous responses significantly decreases probability of meaningful interaction with and among students. Allow sufficient wait time before repeating or rephrasing questions to ensure student understanding.

7. **Use questions that encourage wide student participation**. Distribute questions to involve the majority of students in learning activities. For example, call on nonvolunteers, using discretion for difficulty level of questions. Be alert for reticent students’ verbal and nonverbal cues, such as perplexed look or partially raised hand. Encourage student-to-student interaction. Use circular or semicircular seating to crate environment conducive to increased student involvement.

8. **Encourage student’s questions.** This encourages active participation. Student questions at high cognitive levels stimulate higher levels of thought essential for the inquiry approach. give students opportunities to formulate questions and carry out follow-up investigations of interest. Facilitate group and independent inquiry with a supportive social-emotional climate, suing praise and encouragement, accepting and applying student ideas, responding to student feelings, and actively promoting student involvement in all phases of learning.

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Reading Aloud to Students of All Ages

Taking Center Stage, California Department of Education, 2001, pp. 168-169.

"Books are like ships, and libraries and classrooms are the ports from
which readers may sail on voyages of high adventure."
—Anonymous

Experience shows that people of all ages enjoy having someone read aloud to them. From early childhood and on through life until one is too old to hold the book or see the print (and even then), being read to is a pleasurable experience and should happen much more frequently for students regardless of age or grade level. Use of school time for that purpose, no matter what the regular subject matter may be at the moment, is time well spent in building fundamental and advanced literacy skills.

A few of the reasons we read aloud to students are helpful to consider. We read aloud to help them experience the joys of reading and to develop the art of listening. We read aloud to model clear diction and the art of inflection in making content come alive. Perhaps most of all we read aloud to expose students to a rich array of adventures of the mind and to awaken them to a more active reading life of their own.

These and other similar justifications fit directly with the efforts of educators to help all students achieve basic and advanced levels of literacy, including the *academic literacy* emphasized in this Recommendation.

Students benefit from being read to because they:

- Extend their knowledge of human relationships and important events across the centuries to the present even as they anticipate the future.
- Deepen their understanding of the essential differences between written and spoken language.
- Develop new vocabulary and conceptual understanding of the world in general and of specialized areas of human experience in particular.
- Experience the interaction of their own minds with the minds of authors past and present. The popularity of dead poet societies illustrates the attractiveness of this kind of intellectual experience for many students.
- Learn about new writers and new ideas consistent with their age and interests—intellectually stimulating experiences for all students.
- Become familiar with different genres and forms of writing. They learn that there is more to the life than textbooks and comic books.
- Enjoy content understood aurally even when they cannot comfortably read by themselves. Students are challenged to pursue their own reading and comprehension levels, the essence of literacy.
- Have the door opened to a world of previously unknown source material to complement formal academic study or provide pleasure.
- *Students have positive read-aloud experiences when:*
- Books or other reading materials are carefully selected for their interest, appropriateness, style, and capacity to hold the attention of listeners. Suspense is always a winner and can be found in works that represent either fact or fiction.
- Reading is fluent, paced, and inflected appropriately. Teachers do not have to have golden throats to be effective oral readers. Reviewing the material in advance, practicing challenging passages, and checking on vocabulary that may be unfamiliar are just a few of the things that can be done to be more effective.
- Passages of appropriate length are selected that are long enough to capture the imaginations and short enough to fit the students' attention spans and the class time available. It is better to stop reading at a suspenseful point than to risk listener fatigue.
- Reading done in a series of episodes should always be prefaced by a short review of the previous material. Engage students in this process. Ask leading questions (e.g., "What was the most important point so far?" "What is the author or specific character trying to say?").
- Interruptions at key points are allowed to enable students to imagine outcomes, interpret or clarify events, check word meaning, or otherwise interact with the reader and the author.
- Reading occurs in a relaxed environment, which will differ for varying age groups. Having the students sit quietly with their eyes closed works for children of nearly all ages. However, there is no magic formula. The teacher's judgment should always prevail.
- Reading aloud is viewed as something to be anticipated, even a reward, yet always in the context of a substantive learning experience. When reading aloud can be tied directly to the subject matter being studied, so much the better.
-

Reasons for reading aloud are clearly communicated to the students. The students themselves, depending upon their age and maturity, should be encouraged to develop their own reasons. The depth of their insight may be surprising, ranging from simple enjoyment to the more subtle yet powerful contributions the process makes to developing basic and advanced literacy skills.

- Time is provided to reflect on what has been read, identify key insights and new knowledge, or otherwise draw major lessons from each experience, depending on the nature of the subject matter.

Being read to and reading aloud to others represent lifelong sources of enjoyment, shared experiences, new knowledge, and the ever-present thrill of setting sail on voyages of the mind. Never apologize for reading aloud to your students, no matter their age or sophistication, out of fear that others will not understand.

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Recommended Professional Learning Community Resources

For Books, Videos, or Conferences contact Solution-Tree (Outside Source)
by phone at 1-800-733-6786

- ***Book & Video*****:** *Professional Learning Communities at Work: Best Practices for Enhancing Student Achievement* (DuFour & Eaker)
- ***Book*****:** *Getting Started: Reculturing Schools to Become Learning Communities* (Eaker, DuFour & DuFour)
- ***Book*****:** *Whatever It Takes: How Professional Learning Communities Respond When Kids Don't Learn* (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, Kahanek)
- ***Book*****:** *On Common Ground: The Power of Professional Learning Communities* (DuFour, Eaker, DuFour)
- ***Video*****: Through New Eyes: Examining the Culture of Your School** (DuFour)
- ***Video*****: How to Develop a Professional Learning Community: Passion & Persistence** (DuFour)
- ***Video*****: Let's Talk About PLC: Getting Started** (Rick DuFour, Bob Eaker, Becky DuFour, Dennis Sparks)

National Association of Elementary School Principals (Outside Source)

- ***Book & Video Series*****:** *Leading Learning Communities: What Principals Should Know and Be Able to Do*

National Staff Development Council (Outside Source)

- ***Journal of Staff Development, Tools for Schools & Results***

American Association of School Administrator (Outside Source)

- ***The School Administrator*** **May, 2003**
  Learning Communities: What do they look like and how do you get there?

Video Journal of Education (Outside Source)

- *Leadership in the Age of Standards and High Stakes*
- *Elementary Principals as Leaders of Learning*

Professional Learning Community Articles:

- "What Is a Professional Learning Community"? (Richard DuFour) *Educational Leadership,* May 2004 Vol. 61, No.8, pp. 6-11
- "The Learning-Centered Principal" (Richard DuFour) *The Best of Educational Leadership* 2001-2002
- "Leadership is an Affair of the Heart" (Rick DuFour) *JSD* Winter 2004
- "Building a Professional Learning Community" (Richard DuFour) &
- "Central-Office Support for Learning Communities" (Rebecca Burnette DuFour) *The School Administrator*, May 2003, pp 13-18
- "How We Formed our Community: Lights and Cameras are Optional, but Action is Essential" (Becky Burnette DuFour) *JSD* Winter 2002
- "Pull out Negativity by its Roots" (Rick DuFour & Becky Burnette DuFour) *JSD* Summer 2002
- "Professional Learning Communities: One School on its Way (R. John Waterhouse) *The ATA Magazine* Summer 2003

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The Role of Parents in Helping to Create Safe, Violence-Free Middle Schools

Taking Center Stage, Sacramento: California Department of Education, 2001, p.228

Parents can help create middle schools where all students can pursue high academic standards in a safe, caring and challenging learning environment. Take these steps now:

- Discuss the school's discipline policy with your son or daughter. Show your support for the rules and help your child understand the reasons for them.
- Involve your son or daughter in setting rules for appropriate behavior at home.
- Talk with your son or daughter about the violence he or she sees on television, in video games, and possibly in the neighborhood. Help your child understand the real-life consequences of violence.
- Teach your child how to solve problems. Give praise when she or he follows through.
- Help your son or daughter find ways to express anger that do not involve verbally or physically hurting others. When you get angry, use it as an opportunity to model these appropriate responses for your child and talk about it.
- Help your child understand the value of accepting individual differences.
- Note any disturbing behaviors in your child. For example, frequent angry outbursts, excessive fighting and bullying of other students, cruelty to animals, fire setting, frequent behavior problems at school and in the neighborhood, lack of friends, and alcohol and drug use can be signs of serious problems. Get help for your child. Talk with a trained professional in your child's school or in the community.
- Keep open communication with your child, even when it is tough. Encourage your child always to let you know where and with whom he or she will be. Know your child's friends.
- Listen to your son or daughter if she or he shares concerns about friends who may be exhibiting troubling behaviors. Share this information with a trusted professional, such as the school psychologist, principal, or teacher.
- Be involved in your child's school life by supporting homework, talking with his or her teachers, and attending school functions, such as parent conferences, open houses, PTA meetings, and other school activities.
- Work with your child's school to make it more responsive to *all* students and to *all* families. Share your ideas about how the school can encourage family involvement, welcome *all* families, and include them in meaningful ways in their children's education.
- Encourage your school to offer before- and after-school programs. These usually involve the need for extra financial resources. Take part in helping to identify them by working closely with your school's principal.
- Volunteer to work with school-based groups concerned about preventing school violence. If no such group exists, offer to form one. Find out if there is a violence prevention group in your community. Offer to participate in the group's activities.
- Talk with the parents of your child's friends. Discuss how you can work together to help ensure the safety and well-being of your children in their varied activities.

Ask your employer if there are provisions for parents to have time off to attend parent conferences which focus on helping you to understand and support your child.

From *Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools.* Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 1998.

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The Roles of Stakeholders in a Middle Grades Accountability System

Taking Center Stage, California Department of Education, 2001, pp. 91-93.

Middle Grades Principals

School-site administrators, as well as those in district and county offices of education, are pivotal in making an accountability system work at the local level. Keeping local needs and considerations in mind, administrators:

- Build capacity by working to provide teachers with standards-based materials and training.
- Work with local school boards, feeder elementary and destination high schools, staff, and the community to make decisions that ultimately and positively shape student learning and achievement.
- Make important decisions regarding planning, funding, and other resources (such as those used for instructional materials, professional development, and staffing needs) that serve to make standards-based instruction available and accessible for all students.
- Evaluate local achievement results to determine the instructional effectiveness, local procedures and plans, programs, materials, and professional development.
- Report local achievement results to parents, the public, and the media, helping these audiences to understand what the data reveal about students and the effectiveness of the school/district.
- Build on successes and strengths but are willing to make necessary changes when weaknesses or areas of concern surface.

Middle Grades Teachers

Teachers in the middle grades are responsible for providing relevant and appropriate standards-aligned instruction to their young-adolescent students. They are responsible for:

- Providing information about the standards to students and parents to ensure understanding about what students will be expected to know and be able to do by the end of each school year
- Working closely with parents and enlisting parental participation and support in students' schooling
- Working with colleagues to develop common grade-level, standards-based assignments and benchmark assessments with corresponding scoring guides
- Planning engaging, student-centered, standards-based lessons that build toward assessment of what has been taught
- Using the results of a variety of appropriate assessment and diagnostic measures to inform instructional planning and practices, to report, and explain progress to students and parents
- Differentiating classroom instruction and strategies to meet the varying needs of their students (English-language learners, advanced students, or students with special needs)
- Providing appropriate assistance and brokering interventions for students in need of additional help in meeting instructional goals
- Employing effective classroom management techniques that are appropriate for the middle grades
- Engaging in dialogue with colleagues and administrators to discuss successes, challenges, and areas in which professional development is needed.

Beginning teachers are supported through programs like the Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment program (BTSA) (Outside Source).

Genuinely outstanding teachers are now provided financial incentives to become *board certified* by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (Outside Source). Board-certified teachers are available to assist other teachers to increase their classroom effectiveness.

Parents of Middle Grades Students

Parents have always played an important role in the education of their children. Among other things, parents are personally responsible for developing their children's early language skills; transmitting values to their children; disciplining their children; and feeding, clothing, and providing shelter and medical care for them. Parenting encompasses many forms and is not consistent. Children come from a variety of advantaged, disadvantaged, and culturally diverse backgrounds.

Parents are held accountable for the attendance of their children in a public school or recognized educational alternative (e.g., private school, independent study program). On a personal accountability level, parents are requested to support their children and the efforts of their teachers by:

- Demonstrating that they value education and the professional expertise of the teacher
- Getting their children to school on time and to bed early on the nights before school
- Talking regularly to both the teachers and their children about what is going on in school
- Keeping in close contact and staying actively involved with their children's school (even if their children beg them not to)
- Making every effort to understand the learning expectations for their children
- Asking routinely about their children's homework and helping to ensure that they complete all assignments
- Talking to teachers and administrators about any special needs or concerns regarding their children
- Providing support and resources (such as transportation) so that their children take advantage of multiple learning opportunities, particularly if they are below basic performance levels.

Middle Grades Students

With cumulative top-down and parental support, middle grades students are accountable for attainment of grade-level standards by:

- Coming to school prepared to learn
- Taking responsibility for their own learning
- Staying informed about assignments and their progress towards standards, as well as understanding what is expected of them
- Asking for clarification, assistance, or extra help whenever they need it
- Completing all classroom and homework assignments on time
- Putting forth their best efforts in their learning experiences and assessments
- Taking printed information from school home to parent

Support Stakeholders

There are other stakeholders in a standards-based system whose assistance and support are crucial. They may not be in the direct line of accountability shown in Figure 4-4, but they are nevertheless valuable partners and should hold themselves accountable for providing support to community schools. County offices of education, teacher associations and unions, youth and service organizations, businesses, postsecondary schools, municipal services, and recreational districts all play a role in providing support. Districts and schools that actively seek and use the assistance and resources from other stakeholders enrich the whole school program.

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School Board Policy on Adolescent Literacy

WHEREAS, the _____ School District believes that one of the primary purposes of school is to raise the academic achievement of all its students; and

WHEREAS, research has shown that children must meet the California standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of the fifth grade to successfully progress and achieve in successive grade levels; the standards as set forth by the _____ School District will meet or exceed California State Standards in reading, writing and mathematics; and

WHEREAS, it has also been shown that regular collection and analysis of achievement data is necessary for informed and cost effective instructional decisions; and

WHEREAS experience has also shown that student achievement increases in districts that set clear policy expectations for achievement; and

WHEREAS, experience has also shown that all districts can benefit from understanding and considering the instructional success of other districts,

NOW BE IT RESOLVED that the _____ School District pledges to join the effort of other school districts, business foundations, non-profit, and other academic communities to assure that all _____ students will achieve world-class standards. In so pledging, it affirms its commitment to raise the achievement levels of all students for reading, writing and mathematics to meet _____ District standards by the end of the eighth grade and that all standards set forth meet or exceed California State Standards; to use student performance data to modify instructional approaches; and to share its successes with other school districts committed to the same pledge.

Approval Date:

Board President:

Superintendent:

Board Members:

The board template is adapted from the South Fayette Township School district School Board Resolution on Adolescent Literacy which was developed by the Education Policy and Issues Center, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and adopted by the South Fayette Township School District - Board of Directors. Mrs. Suzette Collins -President and Dr. Linda Hippert, Superintendent of Schools.

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The School “Personality”

Taking Center Stage, California Department of Education, 2001, pp. 113, 114.

Almost all schools can develop their own identity and build student, faculty, and community pride. Questions to be addressed by schools attempting to distinguish themselves include the following:

- Are places available for students to sit, relax, and enjoy the school, including places other than the cafeteria? Are there open interior spaces equipped with casual furniture and art? Are outside courtyards and foyers maintained as attractive places for student interaction? Are there well-maintained plantings and attractive landscaping? Does the ambience say, Education is important, and you are important?
- Are the interior walls painted in attractive colors with schemes students have helped to devise? Are they scrupulously maintained? Are they free of graffiti?
- Are the rest rooms clean, free of odor, and safe? Are all the fixtures in working order?
- Are the windows clean inside and out? Are broken windows fixed? Are burned-out light bulbs replaced? Is other maintenance attended to promptly?
- Is the evidence of students’ achievements prominently displayed in classrooms, corridors, offices, and other highly visible places? Is the work changed frequently to maximize the number of students recognized?
- Have opportunities been seized to develop special facilities not a part of the original school design (e.g., celestial observatory, amphitheater, greenhouse, computer labs)?
- Are there areas on campus where the students have access to current technology for conducting experiments, doing research, or creating presentations?
- Do student government meetings take place in a formal environment that tells student leaders that what they are doing is important (e.g., a carpeted floor and a formal conference table)?
- Are efforts made to ensure that students and visitors approach the entrance to the school with feelings of pride because of neat, well-cared-for premises regardless of the school’s age?

These questions address just a few of the issues that students, faculty, parents, and the general public care about deeply. The answers to the questions provide the context for assumptions about the importance of education in any school that go far beyond a simple preoccupation with aesthetics. Rather, the answers have to do with the degree to which education is truly honored in a community. This assumption is just as true for schools as it is for corporations. Outward appearances speak volumes about the core values of both private and public institutions.

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Self-Scoring Guide for Assessment and Accountability

Adapted from *Taking Center Stage,* Sacramento: California Department of Education, 2001, p. 98

Assessment and Accountability: The school, district, and community regularly review student progress toward accomplishing the expected schoolwide learning results. This assessment process is integrated into the teaching/learning process and encourages students and teachers to make connections between what they are teaching and learning and achievement of the expected schoolwide learning results. Assessment results are the basis for reevaluation and redesign of the curriculum, instructional practices, and students' personal learning plans.

4	3	2	1
The school staff members regard assessment as integral to the educational process. The district and school establish levels of accomplishment for the expected schoolwide learning results and create a system to continually assess student process through a comprehensive assessment program that emphasizes student knowledge, performance, and depth of understanding. All staff members participate in the continual evaluation system and feedback loop linked to authentic assessment of expected schoolwide learning results.	The school regards assessment as providing important feedback information and has regular formal assessment procedures in place that focus on systematic improvement in student performance relative to established norms or benchmarks. Many teachers make efforts to embed performance assessment tasks into instruction in order to assess students' learning processes and ability to use knowledge, critical thinking skills, and communication skills	Data about student achievement are collected sporadically and unevenly, often in response to external demands. Although these data are viewed as a means for improving instruction and documenting successful strategies or weaknesses in the program, there is a lack of expertise in assessment and an absence of a systematic process that makes improvement or meaningful change difficult. Thus, little real attention is paid to preventing student failure, and few changes in classroom instruction result from the assessment process.	Data about student achievement are collected as needed and generally on an individual basis. The school's instructional strategies are uniform and unchanging. Students' backgrounds (e.g., private or deprivation) are viewed as reasons for poor performance, over-riding school factors.
School professionals routinely gather formal and informal data on student achievement and products. School teams analyze these data to evaluate student performance and identify appropriate strategies for instruction and assessment. Teachers and administrators use these data both to inform instruction and as the subject for discussions and collegial feedback (including feedback from students). Teachers incorporate assessment tasks into instruction to stimulate thinking, including students'	Teachers periodically analyze student achievement data and documented improvements in student morale, attendance, to evaluate student performance levels and reflect on the effectiveness of instruction as well as to determine grades and plan subsequent instruction. Teachers modify curriculum and instruction as a result of these analysis.	Assessment of student performance is based on tasks designed to measure what students have learned and, in some classes, how well they can communicate their knowledge to others. These assessments are used by teachers to give students feedback and determine grades. Staff members have a superficial understanding of what should be involved in meaningful performance-based accountability and assessment.	Assessment of student performance is viewed as separate from instruction, usually taking the form of end-of-unit or end-of-semester tests that measure what students have learned. These assessments are used to judge student performance and determine grades.

ability to analyze, organize, interpret, explain, synthesize, evaluate, and communicate important ideas.			
Students learn to use self- and external assessments to sustain achievement and excellence and to evaluate and modify personal learning plans.	Teachers encourage students to consider their assessment results in relation to their personal learning plans.		

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Student/Parent/Teacher Contract - Example

Place on School Stationery

Student Name _____ Date _____

Reason for the conference:

_____
_____
_____
_____

As a result of the conference, the student agrees to:

_____
_____
_____
_____

As a result of the conference the parent(s) agrees to:

_____
_____
_____
_____

As a result of the conference the teachers agree to:

_____
_____
_____
_____

Signatures below indicate the agreement of all parties to participate in the student's success.

_____ Student Signature

_____ Parent Signature

_____ Teacher Signature

_____ Teacher Signature

_____ Teacher Signature

_____ Teacher Signature

_____ Counselor Signature

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Summary Writing Task – Grade 7
Trimester 1 - EXAMPLE

Directions:

- Read the following informational article.
- As you read, you may mark the article or make notes. Marks and notes will not be scored.
- After reading the article, write a summary of what you have read. You have 60 minutes to read, plan, write, and proofread your essay.
- You may reread or go back to the article at any time during the test.

Scoring:

Your writing will be scored on how well you:

state the main ideas of the article;

identify the most important details that support the main ideas;

write your summary in your own words, except for quotations; and

express the underlying meaning of the article, not just the superficial details.

Writing Prompt:

They Eat What?
(attached)

Writing the Summary

Write a summary of the article. Your writing will be scored on how well you:

state the main ideas of the article;

identify the most important details that support the main ideas;

write your summary in your own words, except for quotations; and

express the underlying meaning of the article, not just the superficial details.

Standard

Writing Applications (Genres and Their Characteristics)
2.5 Write summaries of reading materials:

Include the main ideas and most significant details.

Use the student's own words, except for quotations.

Reflect underlying meaning, not just the superficial details.

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Summative Essay Recipe

I. **Introduction**
   A. Sentence 1- Title of the article and the author (if you have it)
   B. Sentence 2- The topic of the article
   C. Sentence 3- Big idea statement #1
   D. Sentence 4- Big idea statement #2
   E. Sentence 5- Big idea statement #3

II. **Big Idea #1**
   A. Big idea #1 in detail
   B. Cite examples without copying

III. **Big Idea #2**
   A. Big idea #2 in detail
   B. Remember- do not copy any of the sentences; paraphrasing or the use of quotations is necessary.

IV. **Big Idea #3**
   A. Big idea #3 in detail
   B. Choose your words as if you were telling someone information.
   C. Try not to depend on the article for words.

V. **Conclusion**
   A. Give your impression of the information from the article.
   B. You can use the words “I” and “me” in this paragraph ONL

Brainstorm

(in short phrases to reference as you are writing)

BIG IDEA #1	BIG IDEA #2	BIG IDEA #3

My Impressions:

Summative essay recipe - Taking Center Stage-Act II (TCSII) (CA Dept of Education)

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Team (Teacher Team Name) Guidelines Example

Place on school stationery.

Teacher's name (Math)
Teacher's name (Science)
Teacher's name (History)
Teacher's name (English)

Welcome to the **(school name)** family! We look forward to working with you throughout the school year. **(school name)** follows a block schedule. **(school name)** embraces the block schedule for the following researched–based educational reasons: (1) quality of instruction is increased, (2) academic success is increased, (3) opportunities for more varied teaching strategies are provided.

Parents and students, please read the following guidelines together:

Team Rules and Expectations:

1. Respect yourself, others and school property
2. Be prepared with all supplies and ready to learn when the bell rings
3. Classrooms are food, drink, candy and gum free
4. Use behavior appropriate to a secondary classroom

Team Discipline Policy

Team (**teacher team name**) uses an Assertive Discipline plan for classroom management of behavior. Students who exhibit inappropriate behavior will have their name written on the board with the following consequences:

1. Name written on the board: Student's first warning
2. Name One check: Student's second warning
3. Name Two checks: Student consequences may include the following: a phone call home, detention with teacher
4. Name Three checks: Student will be sent to the "Opportunity Room" for the remainder of the class period and possibly the next period as well and a phone call home.

We may also schedule a team conference with our team counselor (school counselor name) and parents to discuss concerns.

(teacher team name) Tickets: Students may be given "**(teacher team name)** tickets" from any of their **(teacher team name)** teachers when they demonstrate exemplary behavior or work habits in the classroom. Once a student receives 10 tickets, they can turn them in for candy from (Teacher's name).

Grades: Grades will be a composite of homework, class work, quizzes, tests, reports, projects and will be received on a percentage basis: A=90-100 percent, B=80 to 89 percent, C=70 to 79 percent, D=60 to 69 percent, F=below 60 percent.

Assignments and Absent Work: Homework may be assigned every day. Expect approximately one hour of homework per night. Late work will not be accepted. If a student is absent, it is their responsibility to make up the work with in one week of the absence. Students should see the individual teacher for make-up work.

Binder Reminder: Students need to bring their Binder Reminders to class every day. Students will record homework assignments, project due dates, and special team functions in this organizer. Parents should check the binder reminder daily.

Supplies: General Supplies: One 3-ring 1 1/2- to 2-inch binder with 6 dividers, a homework folder, pencils, blue or black pens, a red pen, a green pen, dry erase marker, highlighter, lined paper, glue stick, small scissors.

- History: One 3-subject college ruled spiral notebook (preferably with a plastic cover and inside folder)
- Math: One 3-subject college ruled spiral notebook (preferably with plastic cover and inside folder)
- English: Two 1-subject college ruled spiral notebooks
-

Science: One 1-subject college ruled spiral notebook, Science workbook, and calculator.

- Also, students must have a **novel** in class at all times!

This page is to be signed and returned to *teacher's name* (subject class) tomorrow!!!!!

I have read and agree to follow the team guidelines.

Student's signature _____

I have reviewed the team guidelines with my child.

Parent's signature_____

Student Information:

Last Name _____First_____
Street Address _____
City and Zip _____

Father's Name _____
Home phone _____Work or cell phone _____
Email address _____

Mother's Name _____
Home Phone _____ Work or cell phone_____
Email address_____

*Approximately two times a year our team has a "Team Party" and we would like to have your permission to **show a PG rated movie**.
Permission Granted?

_____Yes _____ No Parent Signature_____

Any special needs that your child has that we should be aware of (i.e. glasses, hearing impaired, allergies, etc.)
_____
_____

Team (teacher team name)

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Television Viewing: Guidelines for the Middle Grades

from *Caught in the Middle*, page 31.

1. Involve students in discussion about the role and influence of television in society; stress the tendency of those who control program content to dramatize and glamorize the sensational in order to capture the viewer's interest; help students evaluate the meaning and consequence of these factors for themselves, as viewers;

2. Selectively assign television programs as adjuncts to regular classroom assignments;

3. Choose program content that has the ability to stimulate independent thought including documentaries about nature, geography, technology, and world events;

4. Include viewing assignments that introduce students to the visual and performing arts;

5. Have guided classroom discussions about what has been seen, heard, felt, and thought in relation to specific viewing assignments;

6. Have frank talks with students about television addiction and its power to compromise their minds, emotions and effective use of personal time;

7. Communicate with parents about the school's attempts to use television constructively to augment classroom learning;

8. Help parents confront the responsibility to involve their children in talking about the ways in which television can get out of control and thereby damage family relationships;

9. Provide parents with guidelines or other information to help them monitor the amount and type of viewing which their children experience;

10. Encourage students and parents to watch some programs together and to then talk about what they have seen and heard; for example, typical conversations might include:

    What were the issues expressed in this program? Were there morals?

    What kinds of choices or options were possible in response to the issues?

    What might have been the consequences of each of these choices or optional responses?

    Would each of you (parent and student) have chosen to respond in the same way as the main characters in the program (fictional or nonfictional)? If so, why? If not, why not?

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Writing Prompt Guidelines for Teacher Teams

Taking Center Stage, Sacramento: California Department of Education, 2001, pp.74,75.

General Item-Writing Guidelines

1. Use the standards to guide item-writing efforts. This will help ensure that all items are linked to targeted standards.

2. Make sure that items:
   - Focus on high-level thinking, reasoning, and problem-solving skills as much as possible.
   - Use simple, concise language to clearly articulate the tasks to be completed.
   - Include only information that is relevant and necessary for answering the items or completing the tasks.
   - Are within the appropriate range of difficulty for the intended student population.
   - Use the lowest readability level possible (e.g., grade-appropriate vocabulary and simple, concise sentences).
   - Use graphics (when applicable) that are clear and easy to understand.
   - Do not use language or content that could be offensive or inappropriate for a population or subgroup.
   - Do not include or implicitly support negative stereotypes.
   - Develop two to three times the number of items actually needed for the final assessment. This will make it possible to drop ineffective items following classroom tryouts and analysis of test results.

3. Develop two to three times the number of items actually needed for the final assessment. This will make it possible to drop ineffective items following classroom tryouts and analysis of test results.

4. Allow ample time for editing and proofreading of items. Check for clarity, as well as for errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

Multiple-Choice Item-Writing Guidelines (specific)

Present a clearly formulated, concise problem in the item's stem. The best stems focus on a single aspect of content (e.g., a concept or principle) and one type of cognitive performance (e.g., recall of knowledge or application of knowledge).

- State the item stem in positive terms whenever possible. Students, especially second-language learners, often have difficulty understanding questions that are phrased in negative terms (e.g., "Which is *not* an example of . . . "). They often overlook the word "not," and, therefore, misinterpret the question. If it is necessary to phrase a question using negative terms (e.g., "not," "except"), make sure to capitalize or bold-face the negative terms so that they stand out to students.

- Avoid the use of unnecessary or irrelevant details in the item stem and answer choices.

- Use answer choices that are brief and parallel (e.g., if one answer choice begins with a verb, make sure all answer choices begin with verbs).

- Use answer choices that are grammatically consistent with the stem of the item. Grammatical inconsistencies can provide clues that help uninformed students correctly guess the appropriate answer.

- Include distracters that are plausible and attractive to uninformed students. For example:
  - Use common or likely misconceptions or errors of students as distracters.
  - Make distracters similar to the correct answer in both length and complexity of wording.

    - Use scientific- and technical-sounding words to help make distracters enticing.

- Do not give clues that might enable students to guess the correct answer or to easily eliminate incorrect alternatives. For example:
    - Avoid using similar wording in the item stem and correct answer choice.
    - Avoid writing the correct answer in a style that is distinctly different from the distracters.
    - Avoid stating the correct answer in greater detail or length than the distracters.
    - Avoid including absolute terms (e.g., “always,” “never,” “all,” “none,” “only”) in distracters.

- Make sure each item has a correct answer that is unquestionably correct or clearly best.

Written-Response Item-Writing Guidelines (specific)

For all written-response items:

- Present a clearly formulated problem or situation (in paragraph form) in the item’s prompt. Make sure that the described problem or situation is novel but not entirely unfamiliar to students. The context or details in the prompt should not be beyond the ability of students to imagine.

- Provide specific instructions that tell students everything they need to do when responding to the prompt. Be sure, however, not to provide excessive information which might remove the challenge for students.

- Present the instructions in the form of statements rather than questions whenever possible (e.g., “Explain three reasons . . .” rather than “What are three reasons . . .”).

- Avoid unnecessary detail in both the prompt and instructions. Ask yourself, “Is this essential information?” If the answer is “no,” eliminate it.

For long written-response items:

- Clearly state the evaluation criteria (i.e., what students must demonstrate to receive a satisfactory rating). Providing this information helps students understand what is expected. (See "Four Point Scoring Guide for Writing Tasks for Grade Seven.")

- Make sure that the information presented in the prompt, instructions, and evaluation criteria is consistent. For example, concepts included in the evaluation criteria should reiterate or support information given in the instructions and the prompt.

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