



## ***Essential Element 1: Philosophy and Mission***

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A philosophy and mission that reflect the intellectual and developmental needs and characteristics of young adolescents (youth 10-14 years of age).

*Every young adolescent deserves a school that values academic achievement and personal development and provides a supportive environment....*

The middle-level educational program has a purpose beyond linking the elementary grades and the high school. Its basic aims are to educate and nurture. It has a culture of collective and shared responsibility. To be successful, it must attend to both the intellectual development and the personal needs of young adolescents. The philosophy and mission of a standards-focused middle-level school or program must reflect a set of shared beliefs.

The school and staff within the school must commit to:

- 1.1** Developing the whole child, intellectually and academically, personally and socially, physically, emotionally, and ethically.
- 1.2** Working together to ensure that all students achieve at high levels and, with appropriate guidance and structure, develop independence and responsibility.
- 1.3** Accepting - individually and collectively - responsibility for the educational and personal development of each and every student.
- 1.4** Ensuring for each student a safe, inviting, trusting, and mutually-respectful learning environment that offers both physical and psychological safety.
- 1.5** Connecting each young adolescent in positive ways with the school and with caring adults within the school.
- 1.6** Providing each student with a variety of learning experiences that are academically challenging, developmentally appropriate, and personally relevant in order for each of them to make informed educational and personal decisions.
- 1.7** Providing a successful transition from the elementary grades to the middle grades to the high school grades and from childhood to adolescence.
- 1.8** Establishing partnerships with the home and the community.

<b>1. A philosophy and mission that reflect the intellectual and developmental needs and characteristics of young adolescents.</b>				
Criteria	1	2	3	4
<i>1.a The degree to which the shared beliefs of the school and staff reflect developing the whole child, intellectually, academically, personally, socially, physically, emotionally and ethically.</i>	School and staff operate with an apparent lack of regard for the development of the whole child.	School and staff operate inconsistently regarding the development of the whole child. Certain aspects of child development are emphasized more than others.	School and staff act on their shared beliefs of the development of the whole child by highlighting adolescents' intellectual, academic, social, physical, emotional and ethical development.	School and staff actively promote and advocate the development of the whole child within and outside the school. The larger school community shares and supports these beliefs.
<i>1.b The degree to which the school and staff work together to ensure that all students achieve at high levels and develop as individuals.</i>	There are no collaborative efforts to ensure that all students achieve at high levels and/or develop as individuals.	School and staff work with each other on occasion to help selected students achieve at high levels and/or develop as individuals.	School and staff regularly work together to promote students' achievement and individual development. These efforts favor some students more than others.	School and staff purposefully promote all students' achievement and success and individual development.
<i>1.c The degree to which the school and staff accept – individually and collectively – responsibility for the educational and personal development of each and every student.</i>	School and staff – individually and collectively – do not assume responsibility for the educational and personal development of each and every student.	School and staff – individually and collectively – accept responsibility for enacting policies and programs, but not for their effectiveness in promoting students' success.	School and staff – individually and collectively – understand the direct link between their programs and practices and students' learning. These efforts favor some students more than others.	School and staff implement programs, policies and practices based on their success in promoting each student's learning. Individually and collectively, they accept responsibility for the educational and personal development of each and every student.

Comments:

<b>1. A philosophy and mission that reflect the intellectual and developmental needs and characteristics of young adolescents (con't).</b>				
Criteria	1	2	3	4
<i>1.d The degree to which the school ensures each student a safe, inviting, trusting and mutually respectful learning environment that offers both physical and psychological safety.</i>	The school environment is unsafe and threatening for staff and students..	The school environment focuses primarily on discipline and student management issues.	The school environment primarily focuses on learning with occasional disruptions by behavior management issues.	The environment of the school is safe, inviting and trusting promoting the focus to be on learning. Staff and students are mutually respectful. - Misbehaviors are primarily minor and minimally disruptive.
<i>1.e The degree to which the school community models caring and respectful interactions with students and with other adults.</i>	The school community does not encourage caring and respectful interactions.	The school community encourages students to be respectful and caring of each other and of other adults.	The school community creates a respectful, caring sense of community in the students and other adults with whom they interact.	The school community operates in a culture where respect and caring for one another are pervasive.
<i>1.f The degree to which the school and staff accept responsibility for providing a successful transition from the elementary grades to the high school grades and from childhood to adolescence.</i>	Organized efforts to assist young adolescents in making these transitions are nonexistent.	Organized efforts by the school and staff to assist young adolescents in making these transitions are sporadic and generally initiated by a few staff members, an individual team, or a single department.	Organized efforts by the school and staff to assist young adolescents in making these transitions, while thoughtfully planned and implemented by the whole school, reflect an unequal emphasis on either the grade-to-grade transitions or the transition from childhood to adolescence.	Organized efforts by the school and staff to assist young adolescents in making these transitions are purposefully planned and implemented by the whole school and provide balanced attention to both the grade to grade transitions and the transition from childhood to adolescence.

Comments:

