

UNDERLYING BELIEFS

Early in their discussions, the Commission agreed that several fundamental principles would guide the work:

- Because there is no one model for successful middle level schools, the recommendations should suggest a range of school program possibilities.
- The middle level philosophy is well documented and supported by research. The concepts that comprise middle level philosophy should be reflected in the Core Practices endorsed in this report.
- In all instances, we have advocated for what is right for young adolescents, not what might be current practice, expedient, or easy to accomplish.
- We recognize that change is never easy. Balancing the big picture with the need to make improvements in manageable pieces is easy to understand and difficult to implement. However, incorporating the findings of current research on teaching and learning into the central fabric of every school is a necessity.
- In 2009, middle level theory and practice is not well known or understood. We must be sure that the public realizes how middle level schools influence attitudes and beliefs about young adolescents, the purposes of schools for 10 to 15-year-olds, and the nature of middle level educators' work.
- The recommendations in this report have specific and important meaning for all young adolescents, middle level educators, and parents in that the demands of the 21st century require more sophisticated skills and knowledge of its population than at any other time in our history.
- Middle level schools play a critical role in Maine's K-16 educational system. As the school in the middle, a major responsibility is to make connections with elementary and high schools. Those connections are acknowledged throughout this report, particularly in relationship to *Promising Futures—A Call to Improve Learning for Maine's Secondary Students* (2000).