

General Recommendations

1. The Maine Department of Education should encourage middle grade schools to adopt *Bright Futures'* 12 Core Practices and should make funds available to systems to implement the recommendations contained within this report. (The recently released ACT report, *The Forgotten Middle* (2008), also recommends increased state funding for middle grades education.)
2. The Maine Department of Education should develop and fund a center whose purpose is to provide leadership to oversee the implementation of this report. This should include partnering with other organizations within Maine whose mission is to promote the education of young adolescents.
3. The Maine Department of Education should designate a full-time Distinguished Educator to coordinate the work related to Middle Level Education in the Department and around the State. The duties of this position would include: giving visibility to middle level concerns and issues statewide; writing grants; and serving as liaison for the connections with *Promising Futures* high schools.
4. The Department of Education should support research on achievement in middle schools in Maine. The Commission recommends that Maine develop a system to recognize and support exemplary middle level schools.
5. A middle level profile for every school that houses seventh grade in the State should be developed and updated yearly through the Department of Education. This profile should include the status of each school on each of the Core Practices described in this report. This data-based profile would continue to inform the work of the various partnerships as systemic implementation of the middle level model of education continues.
6. Licensing requirements for middle level educators should be changed in order to ensure that young adolescents attend schools with programs and policies founded in the academic, physical, social, and psychological needs of young adolescents:
 - The certification system should have three certification options for classroom teachers: K-5, 5-8, and 9-12, recognizing and supporting the specific knowledge and skills needed to work with young adolescents in the new area of grades 5-8.
 - The middle level certificate should be based on the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) standards developed by National Middle School Association: 2 areas of subject area concentration, student teaching in a successful middle level school, and the skills and knowledge needed to meet the NCATE required professional standards.
7. Universities in Maine should provide middle level programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels (including the Ph.D/Ed.D.), to prepare educators for all roles in middle level schools.
8. Universities preparing principals should give special attention to addressing the shortage of specially trained middle level principals. Prospective middle level principals should be recruited into programs that will prepare them for that role. Prospective and

current administrators and school counselors should take university coursework to prepare them for experiences as middle level administrators and counselors.

9. All professional organizations should develop or continue to develop a focus around middle level education, for teachers, principals, counselors, special educators, and anyone else responsible for middle level students.

10. The Maine Department of Education should regularly review and update this report to ensure that the education of students in the middle grades is based on the best possible data and research.

11. All Maine schools should use this report, along with *A Solid Foundation: Supportive Contexts for Early Literacy Programs in Maine Schools*, *Promising Futures*, *Taking Responsibility*, and *Sports Done Right* to write their Comprehensive Education Plans.

12. Schools should consider more carefully their joint responsibilities for preparing students in grades K-16 for a bright future, as delineated in the *Learning Results*. School systems should regard this as a systemic issue, as important in elementary schools and middle level schools as in high schools. It is critical that these K-12 school networks be used to their fullest advantage to improve learning for all children, young adolescents, and adolescents. While this report focuses on the middle level grades, as *Promising Futures* did on the secondary grades and *A Solid Foundation* did on the primary grades, in truth this is a K-16 report. For meaningful change to occur, the entire system must work together seamlessly to make it happen.

Middle Schools Cannot Do It Alone

Accomplishing the critical goals outlined in this report will take the concerted efforts of many stakeholders from every section of Maine. Further, everyone involved in improving middle level schools must recognize that the process takes time and we must make a long-term commitment to the task.

In addition to the schools responsible for their middle level students, there are several organizations that also support young adolescents in middle level schools. Project Reach, the middle school program of Jobs for Maine Graduates (JMG), Gear-Up, and the Center for Community Inclusion at the University of Maine provide excellent and critical services to young adolescents in Maine, supporting these young adolescents and the work of Maine in middle level schools.

Middle level stakeholder groups need to collaborate more fully in the future to bring the recommendations of the Maine Commission on Middle Level Education to fruition. For example, The Maine Department of Education and Maine's colleges and universities need to work closely together to address the teacher education and licensing issues; various organizations like Maine Association for Middle Level Education (MAMLE) and the Maine Principals' Association (MPA) might focus on services and advocacy; collaborations among organizations like the Great Schools Partnership, MAMLE, and the Middle Level Education Institute could provide powerful and transforming professional development for teachers and principals.

The Maine Commission on Middle Level Education has begun to seek a commitment from each partner so that they will support the Commission's Report and build goals and activities from their organizations to further the recommendations of this Report. In particular, the Commission has worked closely with the Maine Learning Technology Initiative (MLTI) and recommends that the networks established by MLTI continue to be used extensively by all stakeholders working with the middle level network of schools in Maine. While the Commission has a finite existence, the various partners existed well before the Commission and will remain after its report has been presented and the Commission disbanded

Two Goals to Implement Immediately

1. The key organizations serving middle level schools will form a consortium spearheaded by the Maine Department of Education to continue the work of implementing the recommendations in this report.
2. The newly developed Middle Level Consortium will secure funding to assist schools in their work in meeting the recommendations in this report.