

## Middle Level Committee Goal

We are working to create a middle level school where the environment maximizes the unique developmental needs of the early adolescent. Their academic success is dependent on the education of the whole child and the creation of life-long learners. Our proposal will include a restructuring that will benefit all students in the Onteora Central School District.

# THE QUALITIES AND NEEDS OF THE MIDDLE LEVEL STUDENT

The uniqueness of this phase of early adolescence stems from a variety of developmental needs. Seven key developmental needs (Scales, 1991) that characterize middle level students are:

- **Positive social interaction with adults and peers**
- **Structure and clear limits**
- **Physical activity**
- **Creative expression**
- **Competence and achievement**
- **Meaningful participation in families, school**
- **Communities, opportunities for self definition**

# The Maine Educational Assessment 1999

Students who were in schools where the components of the middle school philosophy were in place consistently outscored other students by a wide margin in tested areas.

# Five Key Components of Exemplary Middle Schools

*Both empirical data and conventional wisdom support these components:*

1. Interdisciplinary Teaming
2. Advisory Programs
3. Varied Instruction
4. Exploratory Programs
5. Transition Programs

# NYSED Policy Statement

Schools should contain AT LEAST three grade levels. Why?

- Being in a school for three or more years encourages a sense of a caring community needed in these developmental years.
- Multiple and frequent transitions hamper academic performance and student motivations.
- Dramatic drop in GPA for students who experience school change between 6 and 7

# Why Research Supports a 5 – 8 Configuration

1. Continuity
2. Student affiliation with the school/staff
3. Enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of curricular articulation and staff communication
4. Great similarity between 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades and 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>

# Why Research Supports a 5 – 8 Configuration

5. Time for transition is critical – onset puberty
6. NYSED establishes the Middle Level as beginning with 10 year olds.
7. The NYSED standards address K-4, 5-8, and 9–12.
8. NYSED assessments for Report Cards in grades 4 and 8.

# NY Schools with 5 – 8 Configuration

There are 99 schools in NYS with a 5 - 8 configuration.

*Possible visitation schools:*

Rondout Valley (already visited)

Chappaqua\* (already visited)

Fayetteville-Manilus\* (Syracuse area)

Williamsville\* (Buffalo area)

Nanuet, Rockland County

Ardsley\* Westchester

Byram Hills\*, Westchester

Hastings-On-Hudson, Westchester

Mamaroneck, Westchester

Pleasantville\*, Westchester

**\*in group of top 25 performing schools in NYS grade 8 assessments.**



# Alley's Research into 5 - 8

Benefits to students and teachers in six areas:

1. Physical
2. Social
3. Individual Learning Needs
4. Guidance/Advisory
5. Developmental nature of MS programming
6. Teachers

# Why K - 4?

- Programs tailored to the K-4 learner
  - Developmentally
  - Socially
  - Academically
- Fourth grade benchmark based on developmental research

# Why K – 4?

- K – 2 Focus
  - Reading/Writing/Mathematics
  - Early intervention
  - Space options/varied programs
- 3 – 4 Focus
  - Reading mastery for grade level
  - Content areas
  - More opportunity for enrichment

# Why 9 – 12?

- Opens **possibilities** for small sub-schools
  - Arts Academy
  - Science and Technology Academy
  - Business Academy
- Expand all programs

# STEPS FOR 5-6

- Team teaching in all elementary schools
- Parallel programs and schedules
- Dedicated staff for 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades
- Provide similar resources
- Explore K-4 possibilities for new programs

# First Steps for 7 - 8

## 1. Staff Assigned to Middle Level

- \*impacts teams
- \*impacts schedules
- \*impacts communication/curriculum development

## 2. Four Teams

- \*mentoring and advisory
- \*flexible schedules
- \*enrichment

# Accomplishments

- Visited two 5 – 8 schools
  - Rondout Middle School
  - Seven Bridges Middle School
- Created a brief summary of findings
- Created a web page
- Met in each elementary school for staff dialogue
- Met with PTA's for parental/community input

# Future Plans

- Additional visitations to 6 – 8 and 5 – 8 schools
- Arrange visitations to K-4 schools
- Additional visits to each elementary school for staff dialogue
- Additional visits with PTA's for parental/community input
- Cultivate accurate communication with stakeholders



# SUMMARY

Regents Policy Statement on Middle-Level Education:

“The Board of Regents believes that the middle grades, grades 5 through 8, are a vital link in the education of youth, a critical period of individual growth and development, and a key to success in high school. Creating effective schools with middle-level grades will necessitate systemic change and require a philosophy and mission committed to developing the whole child...”