SCHOOL ASSESSMENT REPORT

Name of School:	**Dodge City Middle School**
School Address:	**2000 Sixth Avenue**
	Dodge City, KS 67801
School Phone:	**620-227-1610**
School Fax:	**620-227-1731**
School Principal:	**Michael King**
Principal E-Mail:	**king.michael@usd443.org**
Grades:	**7–8**
School Enrollment:	**812**
Number of Staff:	**70**
Number Taking Assessment:	**79**
Assessment Window:	**8/18/2009–9/23/2009**
Date of Visit:	**NA**
Name of Consultant:	**John Swaim**
Signature of Consultant:	*John H. Swaim*
Date:	**10/12/2009**

INTERPRETATION OF NMSA TOOLKIT DATA

The National Middle School Association is pleased to have had the opportunity to work with your school in this process of school improvement.

In order to better understand the data on the following pages, the categories for the responses on the online assessment are listed below.

①   Little or no development

②

③   Limited development or partial implementation

④

⑤   Fully functioning and operational level of development and implementation

⑥

⑦   Exemplary level of development and implementation

Scores are reported as mean scores with standard deviations for each exemplar. The mean is reported with the standard deviation in order to provide a better understanding of a distribution than can be established by considering only the mean. The following explanations will help you interpret the scores:

Mean score: The mean score represents the average score for the exemplar.

Grand mean score: This is the average score given for each area and is computed as follows in this example (Area Two):

Characteristic #2 mean score = 3.0 with 13 exemplars
Characteristic #12 mean score = 6.0 with 8 exemplars
Characteristic #15 mean score = 4.2 with 9 exemplars

Formula to compute grand mean:

$$\frac{13(3.0) + 8(6.0) + 9(4.2)}{13+8+9} \qquad \frac{\#exemplars(mean) + \#exemplars(mean) + \#exemplars(mean)}{\#exemplars + \#exemplars + \#exemplars}$$

Standard deviation: The standard deviation is a measure of the variability of the scores in relation to the mean of the group. In other words, *a larger standard deviation indicates greater differences between the individual scores and the mean of the scores.*

GENERAL COMMENDATIONS
Dodge City Middle School
Dodge City Public Schools
Dodge City, KS

Based on the results of the assessment, the staff of Dodge City Middle School identified the following as strengths in their school:

- The school is to be commended for engaging in the NMSA Toolkit Assessment.

- The range of scores indicates that school personnel engaged in reflective, thoughtful work as they responded to the assessment.

- The principal provides vision, passion, and professional knowledge that propel the school in ongoing school improvement, planning, and implementation.

- The school leadership team represents all facets of the staff.

- Administrators and the leadership team use the expertise of all individuals.

- All programs and practices are regularly reviewed by the school leadership to ensure that they serve the best interests of all students.

- The principal and school leadership team demonstrate collaboratively that school reform is an ongoing proposition by linking school goals and knowledge of research-based practice into plans for school improvement.

- The vision and mission of the school are revisited on a regular basis and amended as needed.

- The principal and the leadership team work closely with team leaders to see that the flow of the school is seamless.

- The principal leads the process for disaggregating the data with the leadership team and then with the entire school.

- The principal improves the instructional program through frequent informal conversations as well as formal conversations and conferences with teachers.

- Parents, teachers, and students are involved in collaborative decision-making with the principal throughout the school year.

- District goals, state and federal guidelines, data from national studies, and local research are considered as the school develops its mission statement.

- Cultural and local considerations are part of the decision-making process when the school collaborates with families.

- Teaming is an integral part of the school, and adequate common planning time is provided for teams.

- Administrators, the leadership team, and team leaders all work hand in hand to ensure that all decisions are made in light of the goals of the school.

- The use of vending machines is limited to choices such as milk and water.

- Specialists support students with learning needs as well as social and emotional issues.

- Adults in the building meet on a regular basis to discuss and assess student behaviors and needs.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS
Dodge City Middle School
Dodge City Public Schools
Dodge City, KS

Based on the results of the assessment, the staff of Dodge City Middle School should consider the following:

- providing training so that teachers model best practices (inclusive, collaborative, democratic, team-oriented)

- ensuring that all teachers have licensure or certification in middle level education, involving at least two content areas, as well as an understanding of the learning process for young adolescents and extensive field-based experiences at the middle level

- displaying student work and exemplars on a regular basis

- providing students with designated adults to serve as advisor-mentors throughout their time in the middle school

- refining the advisory program so that the advisor serves as the primary liaison between school and home

- instituting a program that provides advisors with tools to help families stay engaged with the school

- exploring service learning as a way to connect students authentically to the community and the world

- providing concentrated staff development for teachers in integrative learning

- providing opportunities for students to learn concepts and skills in areas of interest to them as well as in areas required by the curriculum

- ensuring that the school culture includes goal setting and student choice, and that students are full participants in those experiences

- providing multiple ways for students to be involved in presentations of their learning to a variety of audiences

- developing a variety of assessment techniques that emphasize individual progress and actively involve students in the assessment process

- enlarging the scope of student assessment to include areas such as critical thinking, independence, responsibility, and other desirable personal attributes

- researching and investigating the possibility of developing long-term teacher-student relationships (looping, multiage teaming, partner teams)

- extending the intramural and cocurricular programs so they are developmentally appropriate, developmentally responsive, and open to all students

OVERVIEW OF RESULTS BY AREA
Dodge City Middle School
Dodge City Public Schools
Dodge City, KS

CATEGORY	GRAND MEAN SCORE
Grand Mean Score for Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment *Characteristic 6, 9, 10, 11*	**4.89**
Grand Mean Score for Leadership and Organization *Characteristic 2, 12, 15*	**5.51**
Grand Mean Score for School Culture *Characteristic 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 13, 14*	**5.16**
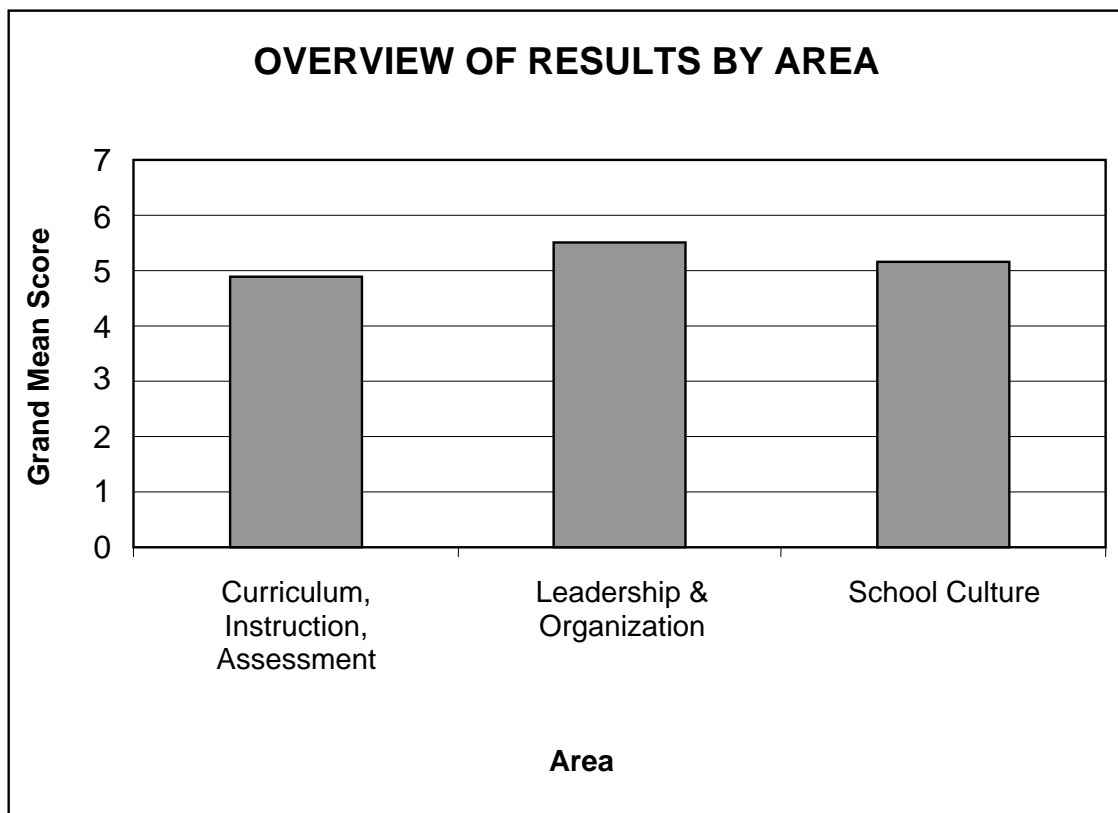
OVERVIEW OF RESULTS BY AREA

CHARACTERISTIC SCORE SUMMARY REPORT
Dodge City Middle School
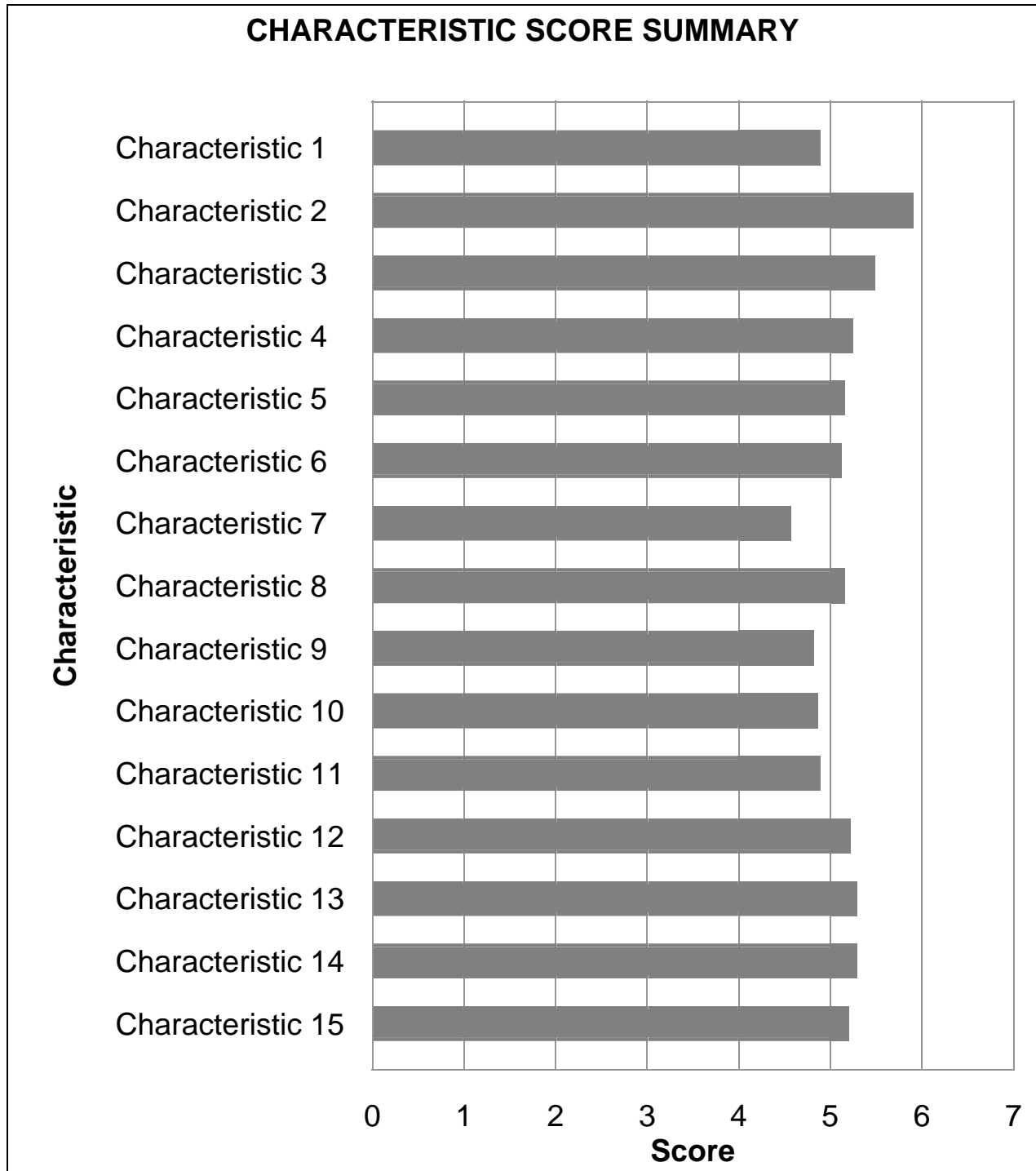*Dodge City Public Schools*
Dodge City, KS

CHARACTERISTIC	MEAN SCORE
1 Successful schools for young adolescents are staffed by educators who value working with this age group and are prepared to do so.	**4.90**
2 Successful schools for young adolescents exemplify courageous and collaborative leadership.	**5.91**
3 Successful schools for young adolescents have a shared vision that guides decisions.	**5.49**
4 Successful schools for young adolescents demonstrate an inviting, supportive, and safe environment.	**5.24**
5 Successful schools for young adolescents hold high expectations for every member of the learning community.	**5.15**
6 In successful schools for young adolescents, teachers and students are engaged in active learning.	**5.11**
7 Successful schools for young adolescents provide an adult advocate for every student.	**4.57**
8 Successful schools for young adolescents establish school-initiated family and community partnerships.	**5.15**
9 Successful schools for young adolescents plan a curriculum that is relevant, challenging, integrative, and exploratory.	**4.82**
10 Successful schools for young adolescents use multiple learning and teaching approaches that respond to the diversity of young adolescents.	**4.88**

11	Successful schools for young adolescents use assessment and evaluation programs that promote quality learning.	**<u>4.90</u>**
12	Successful schools for young adolescents have organizational structures that support meaningful relationships and learning.	**<u>5.22</u>**
13	Successful schools for young adolescents provide school-wide programs and policies that foster health, wellness, and safety.	**<u>5.29</u>**
14	Successful schools for young adolescents have multifaceted guidance and support services.	**<u>5.30</u>**
15	The elements of successful schools for young adolescents are interdependent and work best as parts of the larger whole.	**<u>5.21</u>**

CHARACTERISTIC SCORE SUMMARY REPORT
Dodge City Middle School
Dodge City Public Schools
Dodge City, KS

CHARACTERISTIC SCORE SUMMARY

AREA 1
Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment
Characteristic 6, 9, 10, 11

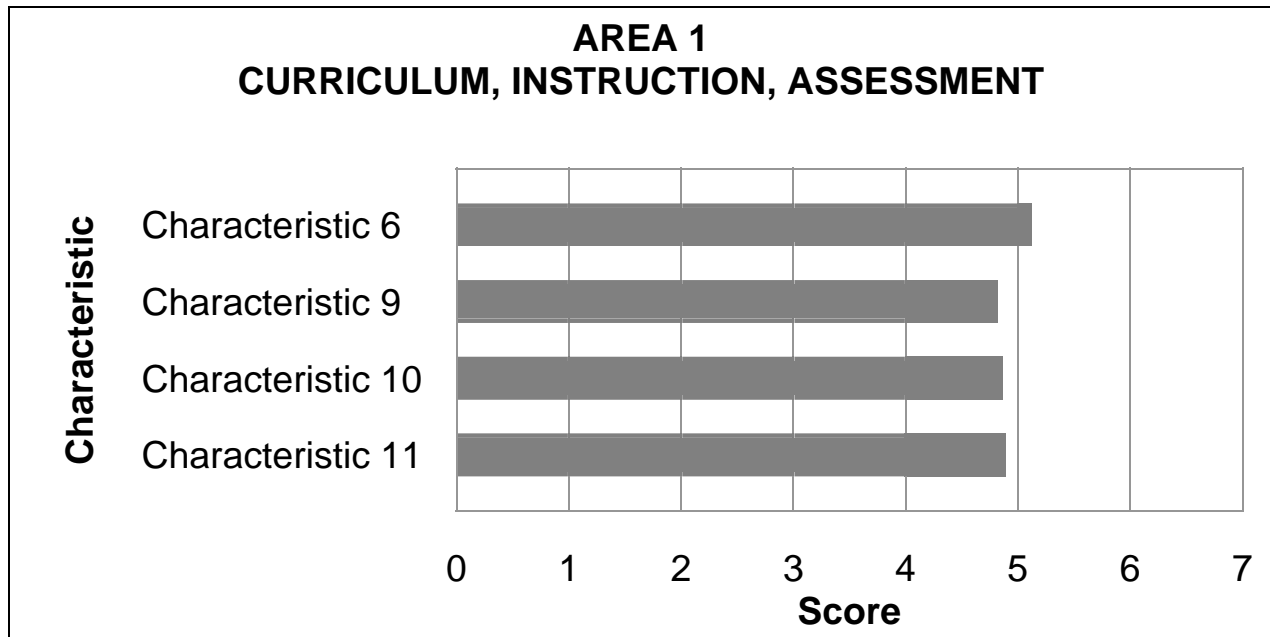*Dodge City Middle School*
Dodge City Public Schools
Dodge City, KS

AREA 1
Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment
Summary Scores
Dodge City Middle School
Dodge City Public Schools
Dodge City, KS

AREA	GRAND MEAN SCORE
Grand Mean Score for Area 1	**4.89**

CHARACTERISTIC	MEAN SCORE
Score for Characteristic #6 *In successful schools for young adolescents, teachers and students are engaged in active learning.*	**5.11**
Score for Characteristic #9 *Successful schools for young adolescents plan a curriculum that is relevant, challenging, integrative, and exploratory.*	**4.82**
Score for Characteristic #10 *Successful schools for young adolescents use multiple learning and teaching approaches that respond to the diversity of young adolescents.*	**4.88**
Score for Characteristic #11 *Successful schools for young adolescents use assessment and evaluation programs that promote quality learning.*	**4.90**

AREA 1
Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment
Summary Scores
Dodge City Middle School
Dodge City Public Schools
Dodge City, KS

**AREA 1
CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, ASSESSMENT**

AREA 1
Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment
Characteristic #6 Results
Dodge City Middle School
Dodge City Public Schools
Dodge City, KS

In successful schools for young adolescents, teachers and students are engaged in active learning.

Mean Score for Characteristic #6

5.11

EXEMPLAR		STD. DEV.	MEAN SCORE
6a	The student is at the center of the learning process, and all decisions made about the school focus on improving student learning.	**1.19**	**5.48**
6b	All teachers and students are actively engaged in learning. Students and teachers collaborate on meaningful and engaging work.	**0.91**	**5.04**
6c	Teacher and student collaboration leads to mastery of important concepts, uses democratic processes, and demonstrates mastery by applying concepts to new situations.	**0.88**	**5.03**
6d	Teachers are active participants and facilitators in learning activities with their students.	**1.10**	**5.20**
6e	All students play a major role in their own learning and education.	**1.22**	**4.81**
6f	All classrooms demonstrate evidence of active learning.	**1.17**	**5.09**

AREA 1
Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment
Characteristic #9 Results
Dodge City Middle School
Dodge City Public Schools
Dodge City, KS

Successful schools for young adolescents plan a curriculum that is relevant, challenging, integrative, and exploratory.

Mean Score for Characteristic #9

4.82

EXEMPLAR		STD. DEV.	MEAN SCORE
9a	Every teacher demonstrates that knowledge of 10- to 15-year-olds is fundamental in planning curriculum and instruction responsive to students' needs.	**1.00**	**5.05**
9b	The curriculum is highly integrative; for example, students have varied and ongoing opportunities to study concepts and answer questions they have about themselves and the world.	**1.26**	**4.48**
9c	Students have opportunities to study concepts and learn skills in areas that interest them, as well as in those areas deemed important by adults.	**1.37**	**4.52**
9d	The applicability of content and skills learned are routinely built into every aspect of the school.	**1.02**	**4.87**
9e	The curriculum actively engages young adolescents, challenging them to learn and think at higher levels.	**1.03**	**4.96**
9f	The curriculum addresses substantive issues and skills, and increasingly enables students to assume control of their own learning.	**1.25**	**4.65**
9g	With multiple opportunities for students to learn in different ways, tracking is made obsolete.	**1.36**	**4.24**
9h	Goal setting and student choice are essential parts of the school's culture, and students are full participants.	**1.25**	**4.49**
9i	The curriculum includes regular opportunities for students to examine varying values, assumptions, basic principles, and alternate points of view.	**1.16**	**4.80**

9j	Teachers and students plan learning activities that ensure appropriate challenges for all types of learners.	**1.23**	**4.78**
9k	Curriculum helps students make sense of their lives and the world around them.	**1.20**	**4.63**
9l	Students learn how to make significant, meaningful decisions about their learning.	**1.43**	**4.63**
9m	All teams provide experiences, courses, and units that are specifically designed to be integrative, connecting significant concepts to students' lives.	**1.34**	**4.57**
9n	Reading, writing, and other fundamental skills are taught and practiced wherever they apply and woven into the fabric of the curriculum.	**1.10**	**5.48**
9o	Intellectual, social, physical, communication, and technological skills are interwoven into the structure of the school and are not offered as separate entities.	**1.13**	**5.09**
9p	The entire curriculum is exploratory in nature; students have many opportunities to try out different experiences and engage in enrichment activities, including interest-based activities or mini-courses.	**1.23**	**4.56**
9q	Students have opportunities to develop their special interests and aptitudes, to engage in activities that will broaden their views of the world and of themselves.	**1.48**	**4.53**
9r	All students have multiple opportunities to participate in a variety of courses in the fine and applied arts, technology, and health and physical education.	**1.16**	**5.62**
9s	Exploratory courses are inclusive, and all students in the school have access to them.	**1.33**	**5.11**
9t	An inclusion model is used throughout the school for special needs students.	**1.17**	**5.42**

AREA 1
Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment
Characteristic #10 Results
Dodge City Middle School
Dodge City Public Schools
Dodge City, KS

Successful schools for young adolescents use multiple learning and teaching approaches that respond to the diversity of young adolescents.

Mean Score for Characteristic #10

4.88

EXEMPLAR	STD. DEV.	MEAN SCORE
10a All teachers consistently address literacy and numeracy development in their own subject areas.	**1.05**	**5.22**
10b All teachers and students develop learning activities together that lead to higher levels of learning and motivation.	**1.20**	**4.76**
10c The school provides experiences for all students with special talents or interests in intellectual, athletic, or artistic endeavors.	**1.14**	**5.27**
10d All school personnel work in partnership with families of special needs students to develop an appropriate inclusion plan.	**1.28**	**4.97**
10e All teachers and students use technology regularly and authentically, with a focus on developing higher-order thinking skills.	**1.21**	**4.97**
10f All students have multiple opportunities to present their learning to parents, community, and other audiences.	**1.17**	**4.33**
10g Students are members of heterogeneous teaching teams; but within the team, students may participate in flexible instructional groups for a small part of the day.	**0.92**	**5.24**
10h All teachers ensure that learning experiences capitalize on students' cultural, experiential, and personal backgrounds.	**1.21**	**4.54**
10i All teachers build new concepts based on students' cultural, experiential, and personal knowledge.	**1.17**	**4.62**

AREA 1
Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment
Characteristic #11 Results
Dodge City Middle School
Dodge City Public Schools
Dodge City, KS

Successful schools for young adolescents use assessment and evaluation programs that promote quality learning.

Mean Score for Characteristic #11
4.90

EXEMPLAR	STD. DEV.	MEAN SCORE
11a A variety of authentic assessment measures are used by all faculty to inform practice, including rubrics, journals, portfolios, demonstrations, and peer feedback.	**1.35**	**4.95**
11b Assessment and evaluation emphasize individual progress rather than comparison to others; students set learning goals, chart their individual growth, maintain portfolios, and reflect on their progress.	**1.37**	**4.10**
11c All aspects of students' development—critical thinking, independence, responsibility, and other desired personal attributes—are assessed as well as content and skills.	**1.46**	**4.35**
11d Teachers recognize students' efforts and support their developing work ethic, knowing that all students cannot reach a uniform standard at the same time.	**1.31**	**4.99**
11e Multiple student-led parent conferences are used to achieve the goals of assessment and evaluation, as are other means of reporting to parents—telephone, e-mail, various types of reports, Web sites, and newsletters.	**1.36**	**5.59**
11f All teachers use differentiated teaching styles, cooperative learning, inquiry, group projects based on test data, and other student assessments to consistently engage students.	**1.15**	**4.89**
11g Data is disaggregated regularly (three to five times each year) by all teachers and leaders, and the information is used to provide excellence and equity for all.	**1.15**	**5.43**

AREA 1
Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment
Characteristic 6, 9, 10, 11
Areas of Strength and Areas for Improvement
Dodge City Middle School
Dodge City Public Schools
Dodge City, KS

Characteristic: *6*   *In successful schools for young adolescents, teachers and students are engaged in active learning.*

9   *Successful schools for young adolescents plan a curriculum that is relevant, challenging, integrative, and exploratory.*

10   *Successful schools for young adolescents use multiple learning and teaching approaches that respond to the diversity of young adolescents.*

11   *Successful schools for young adolescents use assessment and evaluation programs that promote quality learning.*

Areas of Strength

Based on the results of the assessment, the staff of Dodge City Middle School identified the following as strengths in their school:

- Decisions about learning in this school center on students' success.

- Reading, writing, and other basic skills are taught and practiced across each of the curriculum areas.

- All students have multiple opportunities to participate in a variety of courses in the fine and applied arts, technology, and health and physical education.

- Students with special needs are intentionally included within the regular program.

- Students with special talents or interests have the opportunity to participate in a variety of activities designed to foster intellectual, athletic, or artistic endeavors.

- Students are grouped in heterogeneous teams with flexible instructional groups.

- Student-led conferencing is part of the school culture that involves students in the assessment process as well as their parents.

- Everyone on campus uses disaggregated data multiple times during the year to ensure success for all students.

Areas for Improvement

Based on the results of the assessment, the staff of Dodge City Middle School should consider the following:

- ensuring greater participation of students in the development of learning goals

- integrating the curriculum more fully

- incorporating issues into the curriculum that capitalize on the interests of students

- exploring and developing a variety of ways for students to learn so that these strategies can be incorporated into all classrooms and tracking can be made obsolete

- ensuring that students are engaged as full participants in the development of learning goals and have choice in instructional activities

- providing additional opportunities for students to share their learning with parents and the community

- emphasizing assessment and evaluation techniques that center on individual student progress rather than on comparison to other students

- ensuring that all aspects of student development (critical thinking, independence, responsibility) are part of the assessment process

Consultant Observations, Area One (Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment)

Curriculum, instruction, and assessment at the middle school level must be viewed holistically as interdependent parts of the education of young adolescents. It is evident in Area One (Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment) that the faculty is aware of the connection between these three areas by their consistent rating of 4's and 5's on Characteristics 6, 9, 10 and 11. Although the rating in this area indicates that the school's curriculum, instruction, and assessment meets the criteria for being at the "fully functioning and operational level of development and implementation" as defined by the toolkit, it has the lowest score of the three areas within the toolkit (4.89). The average of all standard deviations in Area One was 48%, which implies that there is disparate thinking on how the characteristics within this area are being implemented within Dodge City Middle School.

Area One of the assessment centers on curriculum, assessment, and delivery of instruction in the middle school. The true purpose of any school is to provide quality educational experiences for students in ways that are challenging and appropriate to their needs. In the middle school, this becomes even more important because students are entering a period of time when their very

nature is transitional, and the challenge of the school is to capture their attention, to engage and challenge them academically, while attending to their physical, social, and emotional needs.

In addition to the faculty showing strong support for teaming, classes outside the team such as health, physical education, applied arts, and technology were rated as one of the factors in making the school successful.

Teacher perceptions of the student-led conference program and other means of communication with parents is rated one the highest items under Area One (5.59). This is consistent with what *This We Believe: Successful Schools for Young Adolescents* recommends about involving students in their own assessment and involving parents in their son's or daughter's education. Although there is strong support for this program, the standard deviation (1.36) indicates that not all staff members are aligned in their perception of the assessment process. Possibly a follow-up survey of teachers regarding the issue of student-led conferences would be appropriate.

Scores in Area One indicate that the staff as a whole feels that instruction that occurs within the vast majority of the classrooms actively engages students in the learning process. Passive learning seems to be the exception rather than the case. This also would include students with special needs.

It also is apparent that the staff felt basic learning skills are being taught throughout the school, particularly in the areas of reading and other related literacy skills. It is not as clear from the responses whether these skills are being taught in an integrated manner, as recommended in *This We Believe: Successful Schools for Young Adolescents*, or taught as isolated skills in designated content areas. One of the foundations of integrated curriculum is not only the ability to integrate the content, but also to integrate the skills that connect those content areas. The school would benefit by assessing the degree to which content is being integrated within the school as well as the integration of basic learning skills that encompass all content areas.

According to staff perceptions in Area One of the assessment, they are in agreement that heterogeneously grouping students within the teams provides a productive learning environment. However, when asked if tracking is "obsolete" within the school, some teachers still indicate that it is a viable option. On the other hand, the exemplar dealing with tracking has one of the highest standard deviations (1.36). This would indicate that there is some difference of opinion among faculty about the implementation of tracking. *This We Believe: Successful Schools for Young Adolescents* takes a strong position against tracking in the middle school. Research indicates that separation of students by academic ability is counterproductive to what we know to be developmentally responsive for effective learning among young adolescents.

AREA 2
Leadership and Organization
Characteristic 2, 12, 15
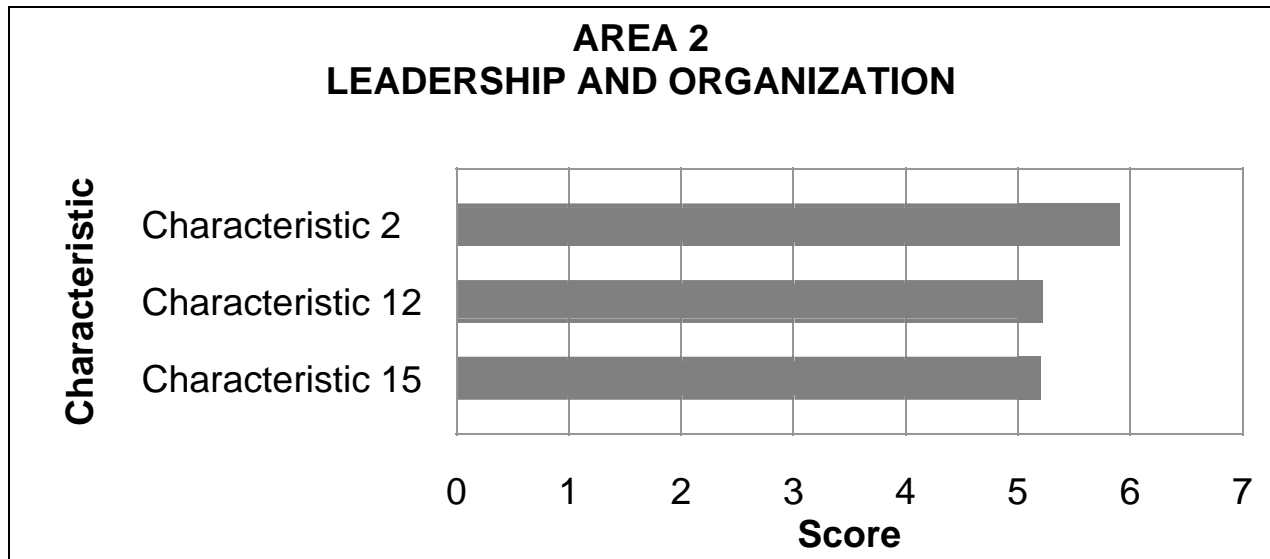
Dodge City Middle School
Dodge City Public Schools
Dodge City, KS

AREA 2
Leadership and Organization
Summary Scores
Dodge City Middle School
Dodge City Public Schools
Dodge City, KS

AREA	GRAND MEAN SCORE
Grand Mean Score for Area 2	**5.51**

CHARACTERISTIC	MEAN SCORE
Score for Characteristic #2 *Successful schools for young adolescents exemplify courageous and collaborative leadership.*	**5.91**
Score for Characteristic #12 *Successful schools for young adolescents have organizational structures that support meaningful relationships and learning.*	**5.22**
Score for Characteristic #15 *The elements of successful schools for young adolescents are interdependent and work best as parts of the larger whole.*	**5.21**

AREA 2
Leadership and Organization
Summary Scores
Dodge City Middle School
Dodge City Public Schools
Dodge City, KS

AREA 2
LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION

AREA 2
Leadership and Organization
Characteristic #2 Results
Dodge City Middle School
Dodge City Public Schools
Dodge City, KS

Successful schools for young adolescents exemplify courageous and collaborative leadership.

Mean Score for Characteristic #2

5.91

EXEMPLAR		STD. DEV.	MEAN SCORE
2a	The superintendent, central office personnel, and school board provide implicit and specific support for the school and its program.	**1.18**	**5.15**
2b	The principal provides vision, passion, and professional knowledge that propel the school in ongoing school improvement, planning, and implementation.	**0.69**	**6.57**
2c	The school has a leadership team composed of representatives from all grade levels, exploratory programs, special education, guidance, administrative staff, and support staff.	**1.11**	**5.81**
2d	Administrators and the leadership team provide leadership to the school by using the distinctive expertise of all individuals.	**0.77**	**5.87**
2e	Administrators and school leaders demonstrate that school reform is an ongoing proposition by linking school goals and knowledge of research-based practice into plans for improvement.	**0.78**	**6.16**
2f	The school leadership regularly evaluates and changes practices that do not serve students' best interests.	**0.77**	**5.95**
2g	Administrators and school leaders collaborate to provide ongoing, integrated professional development that is individualized, is directly related to school goals, and becomes a part of the daily life of the school.	**1.01**	**5.78**
2h	Administrators and school leaders take every opportunity to educate colleagues, parents, policymakers, and community members about middle level philosophy and proven practices.	**1.23**	**5.28**

2i	The administrative team of the school meets regularly to provide a common vision, voice, and direction for the school.	**0.99**	**6.04**
2j	The principal collaborates with the leadership team as they develop, implement, and assess each year's school improvement plan.	**0.81**	**6.18**
2k	The principal possesses the knowledge and provides the impetus and structure for the leadership team to disaggregate and use data in decision making.	**0.80**	**6.29**
2l	The principal advocates, nurtures, and sustains an effective instructional program through ongoing, frequent, and informal conversations with all teachers about classroom practices, as well as by more formal conversations and conferences.	**1.03**	**5.89**
2m	The principal involves teachers, students, and parents in collaborative decision making at regular intervals during the year.	**1.00**	**5.82**

AREA 2
Leadership and Organization
Characteristic #12 Results
Dodge City Middle School
Dodge City Public Schools
Dodge City, KS

Successful schools for young adolescents have organizational structures that support meaningful relationships and learning.

Mean Score for Characteristic #12

5.22

EXEMPLAR	STD. DEV.	MEAN SCORE
12a Teaching teams of various types and sizes are the foundation for the school. Every teacher belongs to a team, and special education and exploratory teachers are full members of these teams of two to five teachers.	**1.21**	**5.75**
12b All teams work together to design and operate the school's program—collaborating across teaching specialties, sharing responsibility for literacy development, advocacy, and student life.	**1.31**	**5.11**
12c All teams design programs that take advantage of time, space, staff, and grouping arrangements to achieve flexibility and success for every student.	**1.51**	**4.76**
12d All teams have adequate common planning time (at least 40 minutes, four times each week), as well as personal planning time. During common planning time, teams pursue serious curriculum work.	**1.19**	**6.06**
12e Teams build a learning community with a sense of family, where students and teachers know one another well, feel safe and supported, and are encouraged to take intellectual risks.	**1.16**	**5.41**
12f Teams foster long-term student-teacher relationships by keeping students and teachers together for multiple years, for example, via looping, multiage teams, or partner teams.	**1.67**	**3.76**
12g The principal and leadership team work with team leaders to ensure that decisions made are aligned with the goals of the school.	**1.16**	**5.92**
12h Teams use enrichment programs, cooperative learning groups, independent study, and other practices that respond to the many student competencies, interests, and abilities to meet the needs of advanced learning.	**1.25**	**5.00**

Leadership and Organization
Characteristic #15 Results
Dodge City Middle School
Dodge City Public Schools
Dodge City, KS

The elements of successful schools for young adolescents are interdependent and work best as parts of the larger whole.

Mean Score for Characteristic #15
5.21

EXEMPLAR	STD. DEV.	MEAN SCORE
15a The school has a comprehensive school improvement plan that demonstrates the interconnectedness of all characteristics of *This We Believe*.	**1.38**	**5.20**
15b School achievement data reflect an upward trajectory for the past three years, and gaps between groups are being eliminated.	**0.95**	**5.66**
15c The climate of the school is positive, and all students and adults are eager to embrace new ideas and new learning.	**0.91**	**5.24**
15d Visitors who enter the building know within minutes that this school is student-centered; the visitors feel welcome and comfortable in the school.	**1.07**	**5.28**
15e All students are eager to participate in the school's programs, are involved in a variety of activities, and feel they are valued and cared for at the school.	**1.03**	**4.80**
15f Discipline issues are handled with dignity and caring; as a consequence, learning occurs for students, parents, and teachers.	**1.02**	**5.76**
15g The master schedule is flexible, creative, and sensitive to the developmental needs of the young adolescent. The schedule enhances the educational program.	**1.30**	**4.95**
15h Core teacher teams are balanced in terms of philosophy and style so that the varied needs of all students can be met.	**1.52**	**4.86**
15i Transitions into, within, and out of the school are planned with care so that all students are comfortable with changes they face, feel valued and cared for, and are challenged academically.	**1.14**	**5.10**

AREA 2
Leadership and Organization
Characteristic 2, 12, 15
Areas of Strength and Areas for Improvement
Dodge City Middle School
Dodge City Public Schools
Dodge City, KS

Characteristic: **2**   *Successful schools for young adolescents exemplify courageous and collaborative leadership.*

     12   *Successful schools for young adolescents have organizational structures that support meaningful relationships and learning.*

     15   *The elements of successful schools for young adolescents are interdependent and work best as parts of the larger whole.*

Areas of Strength

Based on the results of the assessment, the staff of Dodge City Middle School identified the following as strengths in their school:

- The principal and the leadership team provide vision and professional knowledge that propel the school forward.

- The school has created an appropriate leadership team composed of members from all areas of the faculty and staff.

- The principal regularly involves and takes advantage of individual staff members' strengths.

- School reform is a priority and is linked to research-based planning.

- The leadership of the school regularly assesses school life and makes adjustments in order to improve the well-being and learning of students.

- Staff development is individualized, is focused on school goals, and becomes a part of daily life for members of the faculty and staff.

- The leadership of the school works continually to educate parents and the community about middle level philosophy and practices.

- The administrative team meets on a regular basis and provides vision, voice, and direction for the school.

- The principal works with the leadership team to develop, implement, and assess school improvement plans.

- The principal guides the leadership team and the entire school in the use of disaggregated data to make informed decisions about adjustments to curriculum and instructional planning.

- The principal directs and enhances the instructional program of the school through frequent informal interactions with teachers concerning instructional strategies and practices, as well as through more formal conferences.

- The principal meets with teachers on a regular basis and incorporates their voice in decisions and policies of the school.

- Teams have adequate planning time that includes both personal planning time and time spent as a team on curriculum and instructional strategies.

- The principal works closely with the leadership team and team leaders to ensure that all aspects of the school work together seamlessly to provide optimum learning conditions for students.

- Achievement data from the school reflects growth over the past three years, and gaps between groups are being eliminated.

- The adults in the building are willing to embrace new ideas and challenges.

- Visitors to the school are made to feel welcome and comfortable.

- Discipline issues are handled in a manner that is positive and promotes learning for both students and parents.

Areas for Improvement

Based on the results of the assessment, the staff of Dodge City Middle School should consider the following:

- using time, space, staff, and grouping within teams to achieve flexibility and success for all team members

- developing an atmosphere in which students are eager to participate in the school's programs, are involved in various activities, and feel valued and cared for by the school

- using structures that foster long-term student-teacher relationships

- working toward a more flexible master schedule that would further enhance the educational program

- advancing teacher teams in ways that will ensure that each student has exposure to a variety of instructional techniques to better meet their learning needs and styles

Consultant Observations, Area Two (Leadership and Organization)

Area Two of the assessment centers on leadership and organization in the middle school. Effective middle level schools are characterized by courageous, collaborative leadership: leadership that extends beyond the principal and administrative team to departmental, team, and teacher leaders. These schools are further characterized by a strong teaming structure for teachers and students; a schedule that accommodates the unique learning and emotional needs of young adolescents; a well-developed and comprehensive school improvement plan; and discipline policies that center on clear expectations, consistent enforcement of procedures, and positive growth for students.

Area Two has the highest rating of the three areas of the assessment (5.51). In addition, it has the highest ranked characteristic of the 15 characteristics within the entire assessment, Characteristic 2b: *"Successful schools for young adolescents exemplify courageous collaborative leadership"* (5.91). Furthermore, six scores in Area Two were 6.0 or above, which indicates strong alignment among the faculty in their view of the successful implementation of these exemplars. At the same time it is interesting to note that the lowest score for any exemplar in the entire assessment document is also found in Area Two (12f): *"Teams foster long term student-teacher relationships by keeping students and teachers together for multiple years, for example looping, multiage teaming or partner teaming."* It also is very significant to note that 71% of the standard deviations in Area Two were below 1.2, indicating strong staff alignment in their perception of how these exemplars are implemented in Dodge City Middle School. This average is unusually high among schools that have participated in the toolkit assessment to date.

Five of the six scores rated 6.0 or higher related to the functioning of the principal and the administrative team. In addition, all of these scores had very low standard deviations, indicating that it is clearly evident to the staff that the principal and his team have played a central role in the success of the school. They should be commended for their committed leadership to the school.

Another exemplar (12d) rated 6.06, dealt with teachers' common and personal planning time. It would appear that not only has adequate planning time been provided, but also that teachers are using this common planning time in a productive manner. At the same time another exemplar, (12c), rated 4.76, indicates that the team teachers are under-utilizing the opportunity during their common planning time to be more flexible with scheduling time and grouping students within the block. Addressing flexibility within the block is critical to the integration of content and skills. Teachers must learn to fit time to the learning activity rather than fitting the learning activity into a set time. This is a professional growth area that not only team teachers could benefit from, but also all teachers throughout the school.

The lowest rating of any exemplar in the entire assessment document is found in Area Two (12f, 3.76). This exemplar deals with the concept of fostering long-term teacher-student relationships

by keeping students and teachers together for multiple years. The score on this exemplar clearly indicates that this has not been a priority of the school, but the responses to this exemplar do not necessarily indicate that there is opposition to this concept. A research base exists that supports the idea of long-term partnering of students and teachers in the middle school, and references for further study are included in the publications portion of the professional growth suggestions in this assessment. The school might further investigate the possible implications of such a program. If there is an interest, a two-year pilot could be developed (that is, a seventh grade team of teachers and students could be put together for both their seventh and eighth grade years). The pilot should be carefully monitored over the two-year period to determine whether it should be discontinued, offered as an alternative, or expanded.

How a school is organized is a prime factor in determining the degree to which a school provides meaningful and positive interactions: teacher to teacher, teacher to student, student to student, teacher to administrator and school to parent. It is obvious from the responses in Area Two that the school's overall organization has provided the structure for success in this area.

Scores given by staff members indicated some concerns regarding the makeup and balance of the teams. Difference in philosophies, instructional strategies, and assessment procedures do not have to be problematic within teams. In fact, in most cases it can enhance the effectiveness of the team. It only becomes a problem when a team fails to establish a common vision. Those teams that have a common vision use the differences between the team members to accomplish their shared vision in a variety of ways. Those teams who have not established a common vision usually react to differences by feeling threatened. The school might consider concentrating some professional development efforts in the area of team building: not just for those teams who are struggling, but for all teams, so that best practices in teaming can be shared.

AREA 3
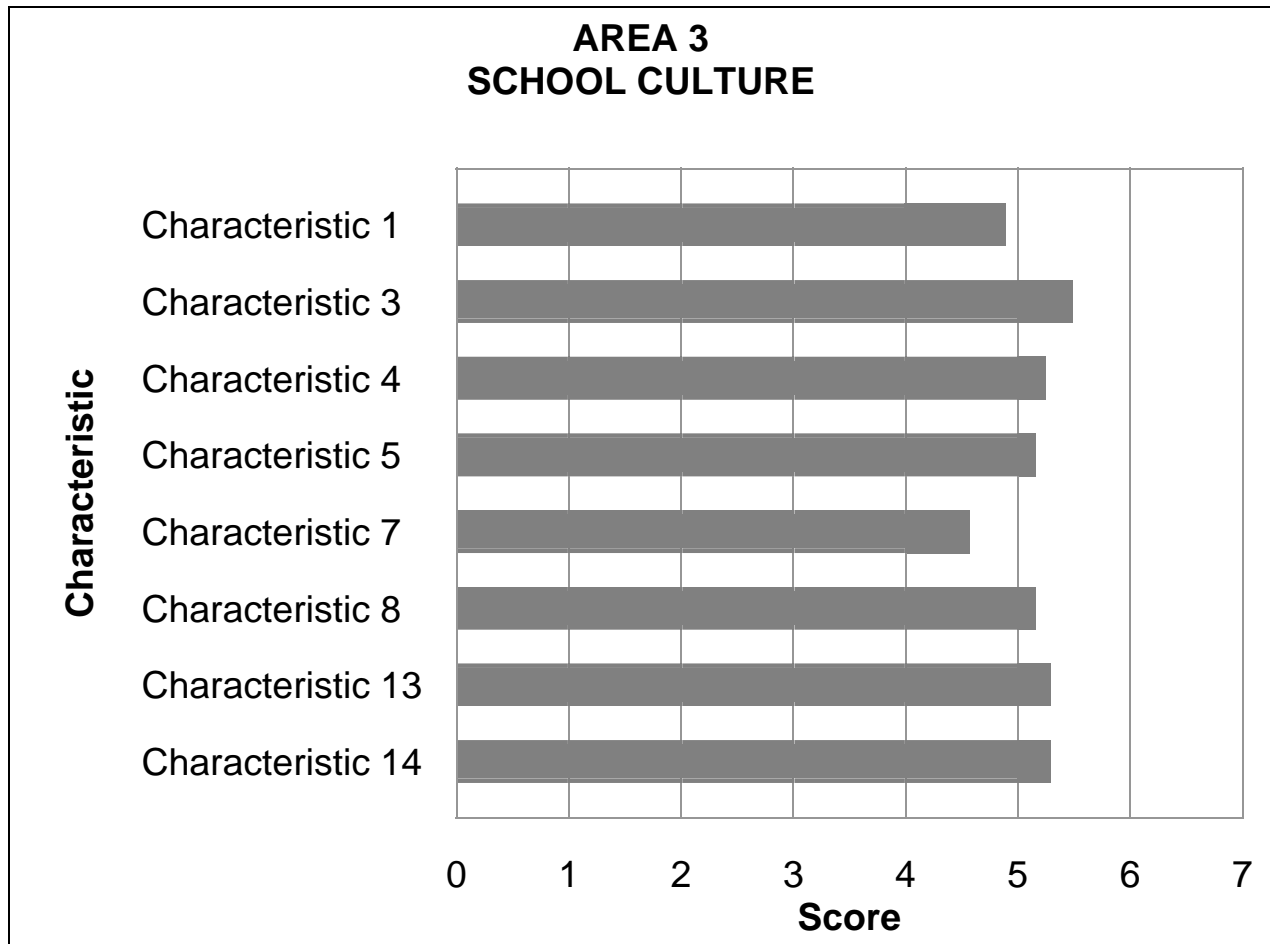## School Culture
Characteristic 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 13, 14

Dodge City Middle School
Dodge City Public Schools
Dodge City, KS

AREA 3
School Culture
Summary Scores
Dodge City Middle School
Dodge City Public Schools
Dodge City, KS

AREA	GRAND MEAN SCORE
Grand Mean Score for Area 3	**5.16**

CHARACTERISTIC	MEAN SCORE
Score for Characteristic #1 *Successful schools for young adolescents are staffed by educators who value working with this age group and are prepared to do so.*	**4.90**
Score for Characteristic #3 *Successful schools for young adolescents have a shared vision that guides decisions.*	**5.49**
Score for Characteristic #4 *Successful schools for young adolescents demonstrate an inviting, supportive, and safe environment.*	**5.24**
Score for Characteristic #5 *Successful schools for young adolescents hold high expectations for every member of the learning community.*	**5.15**
Score for Characteristic #7 *Successful schools for young adolescents provide an adult advocate for every student.*	**4.57**
Score for Characteristic #8 *Successful schools for young adolescents establish school-initiated family and community partnerships.*	**5.15**
Score for Characteristic #13 *Successful schools for young adolescents provide school-wide programs and policies that foster health, wellness, and safety.*	**5.29**
Score for Characteristic #14 *Successful schools for young adolescents have multifaceted guidance and support services.*	**5.30**

AREA 3
School Culture
Summary Scores
Dodge City Middle School
Dodge City Public Schools
Dodge City, KS

AREA 3
SCHOOL CULTURE

AREA 3
School Culture
Characteristic #1 Results
Dodge City Middle School
Dodge City Public Schools
Dodge City, KS

Successful schools for young adolescents are staffed by educators who value working with this age group and are prepared to do so.

Mean Score for Characteristic #1

4.90

EXEMPLAR		STD. DEV.	MEAN SCORE
1a	All teachers understand the developmental uniqueness of young adolescents.	**0.97**	**5.18**
1b	All teachers enjoy being with young adolescents, understand the dynamics of youth culture, and serve as role models for students.	**1.05**	**5.08**
1c	All teachers model best practices—inclusive, collaborative, democratic, team-oriented approaches to teaching and learning.	**1.07**	**4.65**
1d	All teachers are sensitive to individual differences in students, parents, and their colleagues and respond positively to this diversity.	**0.99**	**4.99**
1e	All teachers have special preparation for middle level teaching, with an initial licensure or appropriate graduate work in middle level education, involving depth of knowledge in at least two content areas, understanding of the learning process, and extensive middle level field-based experiences.	**1.41**	**4.57**
1f	Every adult is dedicated to working together for the betterment of all students, and structures are provided to make that happen.	**1.18**	**5.01**
1g	All teachers translate their knowledge of young adolescents into curriculum, effective instruction, and assessment strategies responsive to their needs.	**0.97**	**4.80**

AREA 3
School Culture
Characteristic #3 Results
Dodge City Middle School
Dodge City Public Schools
Dodge City, KS

Successful schools for young adolescents have a shared vision that guides decisions.

Mean Score for Characteristic #3

5.49

EXEMPLAR		STD. DEV.	MEAN SCORE
3a	The school's vision evolved from the philosophies and experiences of teachers, parents, and community members involved in a collaborative process.	**0.98**	**5.38**
3b	A shared vision and mission statement are consistently operational as evidenced by a challenging academic program, criteria to develop decisions, and a process to make change.	**1.05**	**5.47**
3c	The school's vision has been summarized and encapsulated in a mission statement that is updated regularly, known, respected, associated with the school, and used as a basis for decision making at all levels.	**1.05**	**5.47**
3d	The school's mission statement considers district philosophy and goals, relevant state and federal guidelines, and data from national studies and local research.	**1.11**	**5.84**
3e	All new ideas, proposals, and programs are reviewed through the filter of the approved mission statement, and how it fits within the larger framework of the school.	**1.18**	**5.29**

AREA 3
School Culture
Characteristic #4 Results
Dodge City Middle School
Dodge City Public Schools
Dodge City, KS

Successful schools for young adolescents demonstrate an inviting, supportive, and safe environment.

Mean Score for Characteristic #4

5.24

EXEMPLAR		STD. DEV.	MEAN SCORE
4a	The school is an inviting, supportive, and safe place, a joyful community that promotes in-depth learning while enhancing students' physical and emotional well-being.	**1.13**	**5.41**
4b	Interactions among and between staff members and students reflect democracy, fairness, and mutual respect.	**0.92**	**5.46**
4c	Teachers and students use skills of direct feedback, mediation, healthy and appropriate problem-solving, positive risk-taking, and personal and collaborative goal setting.	**0.93**	**5.34**
4d	The school encourages students to take intellectual risks, to be bold, to have high expectations, and to explore new challenges.	**1.11**	**5.27**
4e	All students are known and valued through structures such as teaming and advisory.	**0.95**	**5.63**
4f	Students' work is prominently displayed and updated regularly; exemplars are posted.	**1.21**	**4.66**
4g	A comprehensive transition plan, for both incoming and outgoing students, includes activities throughout the year for students, parents, the community, and teachers.	**1.20**	**4.92**
4h	A wide array of cocurricular and extracurricular activities is open to students, and all students participate in a variety of activities.	**1.17**	**4.90**
4i	All teachers and students work proactively to eliminate harassment, verbal abuse, bullying, and name calling.	**0.99**	**5.62**

AREA 3
School Culture
Characteristic #5 Results
Dodge City Middle School
Dodge City Public Schools
Dodge City, KS

Successful schools for young adolescents hold high expectations for every member of the learning community.

Mean Score for Characteristic #5

5.15

EXEMPLAR		STD. DEV.	MEAN SCORE
5a	All teachers and students hold high expectations for each other and act on these by personal example, gesture, casual remarks, and attitudes.	**0.88**	**5.29**
5b	Students are fully involved in every aspect of the school. They, along with their teachers, make the school a vibrant, exciting place.	**0.91**	**4.80**
5c	Teachers empower all students to learn, to become intellectually engaged, to behave as responsible citizens, and to achieve at a high academic level.	**0.87**	**5.43**
5d	All instructional decisions are made with a full understanding of students' needs, interests, and learning styles.	**1.04**	**5.19**
5e	All teachers fashion a curriculum and pace for learning to accommodate individual levels of understanding and development.	**1.04**	**5.05**
5f	All teachers establish learning expectations that are concrete, clearly written with examples, congruent with the school's mission, and frequently revisited.	**0.90**	**5.16**

AREA 3
School Culture
Characteristic #7 Results
Dodge City Middle School
Dodge City Public Schools
Dodge City, KS

Successful schools for young adolescents provide an adult advocate for every student.

Mean Score for Characteristic #7

4.57

EXEMPLAR		STD. DEV.	MEAN SCORE
7a	The school has adopted an attitude of caring-advocacy for all students—that is more than a specific program and translates into actions when adults are responsive to the needs of every young adolescent.	**1.46**	**5.10**
7b	Every student has a designated adult who serves as a mentor-advisor for his or her entire time in the school.	**1.86**	**4.80**
7c	All advisors, teachers, and staff facilitate healthy and caring peer relationships by modeling the interpersonal relationships that define the school vision.	**1.12**	**5.06**
7d	The advisor is the primary liaison between the school and families and often initiates contacts with parents.	**1.50**	**3.84**
7e	All advisors help families stay engaged with the school.	**1.52**	**4.05**

AREA 3
School Culture
Characteristic #8 Results
Dodge City Middle School
Dodge City Public Schools
Dodge City, KS

Successful schools for young adolescents establish school-initiated family and community partnerships.

Mean Score for Characteristic #8

5.15

	EXEMPLAR	STD. DEV.	MEAN SCORE
8a	The school initiates meaningful relationships with parents and family groups.	**0.94**	**5.62**
8b	The principal and teachers use a variety of ways to reach out to families. Examples might include meeting in community centers or local housing projects, using language interpreters, planning student-led conferences, or setting up a school family learning center.	**0.83**	**5.66**
8c	The school is actively involved in partnerships with businesses and social service agencies.	**1.32**	**4.91**
8d	The school is constantly sensitive to local and cultural considerations when collaborating with families.	**1.06**	**5.86**
8e	Students become involved in apprenticeships or service learning projects that are consistent with the school's mission.	**1.38**	**3.70**

AREA 3
School Culture
Characteristic #13 Results
Dodge City Middle School
Dodge City Public Schools
Dodge City, KS

Successful schools for young adolescents provide school-wide programs and policies that foster health, wellness, and safety.

Mean Score for Characteristic #13

5.29

EXEMPLAR	STD. DEV.	MEAN SCORE
13a An environment is maintained in which peaceful and safe interactions are expected and supported by written policies, scheduled professional development, and student-focused activities.	**1.12**	**5.63**
13b A strong sense of school community is developed by teaching students how to manage anger, resolve conflicts peacefully, and prevent hateful or violent behaviors.	**0.88**	**5.68**
13c A comprehensive health and wellness program includes student-focused, integrated experiences that are implemented throughout the curriculum, collaborative projects with the community and parents, plus daily physical education activities.	**1.16**	**4.94**
13d A comprehensive health and wellness program includes specific units dealing with sex and drug education. All students are required to participate in these programs unless exempted by their parents or guardians.	**1.17**	**4.94**
13e All students are involved in either intramural or cocurricular activities that are developmentally appropriate and comply with national standards.	**1.35**	**4.63**
13f The school emphasizes lifelong physical activities such as aerobics, dance, leisure-time sports, and fitness that all students participate in; these activities focus on countering or preventing obesity.	**1.35**	**4.84**
13g The school works closely with food services personnel to ensure that all students receive a balanced diet at school, including snacks and treats.	**1.28**	**5.32**
13h Vending machines are not available or, if available, offer only healthy choices such as milk and water.	**1.42**	**5.99**
13i A full-time nurse offers students and their families a wide range of services by being a liaison to health providers in the community and by providing health education and preventive care within the school.	**1.31**	**5.63**

School Culture
Characteristic #14 Results
Dodge City Middle School
Dodge City Public Schools
Dodge City, KS

Successful schools for young adolescents have multifaceted guidance and support services.

Mean Score for Characteristic #14

5.30

EXEMPLAR	STD. DEV.	MEAN SCORE
14a Teachers have the training, preparation, and knowledge to act as the front-line resource for all students.	**1.23**	**5.48**
14b Specialized professionals on student support teams, counselors, special needs teachers, school psychologists, social workers, school nurses, and community liaisons exist to support young adolescents with learning difficulties, social adjustments, family issues, and health problems.	**1.18**	**5.76**
14c Regularly scheduled meetings among specialists and teachers ensure that student behaviors and learning needs are accurately assessed and met.	**1.07**	**5.86**
14d The school counselor has a caseload of no more than 350 students.	**1.04**	**5.38**
14e School counselors support teachers in advisory and advocacy programs, demonstrate and conduct classroom group activities, offer one-on-one and small group guidance sessions for students, sponsor peer mediation and peer tutoring programs, and share their expertise with teams and individual teachers.	**1.35**	**4.94**
14f School counselors coordinate the support services provided by their school system and facilitate transition programs for students entering and exiting the middle level school.	**1.31**	**5.13**
14g School counselors help identify special needs students and communicate their assistance plans to those responsible.	**1.36**	**5.05**
14h An advocacy climate exists based on the culture of the school and community and the personal and social needs of students.	**1.31**	**4.84**

AREA 3
School Culture
Characteristic 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 13, 14
Areas of Strength and Areas for Improvement
Dodge City Middle School
Dodge City Public Schools
Dodge City, KS

Characteristic:

1 *Successful schools for young adolescents are staffed by educators who value working with this age group and are prepared to do so.*

3 *Successful schools for young adolescents have a shared vision that guides decisions.*

4 *Successful schools for young adolescents demonstrate an inviting, supportive, and safe environment.*

5 *Successful schools for young adolescents hold high expectations for every member of the learning community.*

7 *Successful schools for young adolescents provide an adult advocate for every student.*

8 *Successful schools for young adolescents establish school-initiated family and community partnerships.*

13 *Successful schools for young adolescents provide school-wide programs and policies that foster health, wellness, and safety.*

14 *Successful schools for young adolescents have multifaceted guidance and support services.*

Areas of Strength

Based on the results of the assessment, the staff of Dodge City Middle School identified the following as strengths in their school:

- Adults in the building enjoy the students, understand their developmental needs, and use that understanding when designing curriculum and instruction.

- The school has developed a vision built on collaborative experiences.

- The vision and mission statement of the school are embedded in the academic program and are used as a basis for decision-making and change.

- The vision and mission statements are revisited and revised frequently based on changing needs.

- The school's mission includes district philosophy and goals.

- The school is an inviting and safe community for students and adults.

- An atmosphere of mutual respect and fairness exists throughout the school.

- A variety of skills, such as direct feedback, mediation, problem solving, positive risk-taking, and personal and collaborative goal setting, are used by teachers for instructional purposes.

- All students are encouraged to achieve at high levels.

- Teams and other structures ensure that every student is known well and valued.

- Students are empowered to learn, to become intellectually engaged, to behave as responsible citizens, and to achieve at high levels.

- Everyone in the school works to eliminate harassment, verbal abuse, bullying, and name-calling.

- Everyone in the school holds high expectations for each other and acts on these in everything they do.

- The school initiates relationships with parents and family groups.

- The school makes conscious and frequent efforts to reach out to families and the community to involve them in the school.

- The school is sensitive to local and cultural considerations when collaborating with families.

- Peaceful and safe interactions are expected and supported by written policies, scheduled professional development, and student-focused activities.

- Students understand behavior expectations and are taught appropriate strategies to deal with anger and conflict.

- Vending machines are not available in the school.

- A wide range of health care services is offered by a full-time nurse.

- Specialists, counselors, and other support personnel work effectively to ensure that adequate supports are in place to help young adolescents and their families.

- Specialists and teachers meet on a regular basis to discuss student behaviors and learning needs and to develop strategies to ensure that those needs are being met.

- The caseload of students for counselors is within established guidelines.

Areas for Improvement

Based on the results of the assessment, the staff of Dodge City Middle School should consider the following:

- encouraging best practices in teaching and learning to ensure that teachers are using inclusive, collaborative, democratic, team-oriented approaches

- providing opportunities for teachers to engage in staff development appropriate for middle school

- posting current exemplars and student work throughout classrooms and hallways

- providing a wider array of cocurricular and extracurricular activities available to all students

- involving students more fully in all aspects of the school, thus providing them with opportunities for relevant input into both social and academic endeavors

- ensuring every student has an adult who serves as an advisor throughout his or her time at the school

- creating mechanisms to facilitate an advisory program that uses advisors as the primary liaison between home and school

- developing an advisory program that uses advisors in a role of helping families stay actively engaged in the school

- creating a service learning program in the school that enables students to become involved in apprenticeships and projects aligned with the mission of the school

- providing additional opportunities for students to be involved in cocurricular activities

- developing a climate of advocacy so that the personal, academic, and social needs of every student are met

Consultant Observations, Area Three (School Culture)

Area Three of the assessment centers on the culture of the school, beginning with a concise and realistic vision and mission that are the driving forces for decisions made in the school. School culture includes attention to the environmental and the emotional climate in the school, as well as the structures in place to provide support during this critical developmental stage. Attention to health and wellness and a strong guidance program are other important aspects of this area.

The grand mean score of 5.16 indicates that the school is well within the level of "fully functioning and operational level of development and implementation" as defined by the toolkit. While the overall rating for this area is high (5.16), a lack of consistency exists within the staff's responses regarding three of the eight characteristics (7, 13, and 14) and should be further addressed by the staff. While the average standard deviation for these three characteristics is (1.64), 55% of the standard deviations in Area Three are at or below 1.2.

Students contribute to setting the environment in a school, but it is the adults within the school that bear the ultimate and most significant responsibility for establishing and maintaining that environment. The results of this assessment indicate that the staff perceives that Dodge City Middle School has a school culture that provides a positive working environment for the staff and consequentially is developmentally responsive to the needs of young adolescents.

Of the fourteen belief statements in *This We Believe: Successful Schools for Young Adolescents,* a shared vision is one of the most critical elements within a school if that school is to become an effective middle school. Such a vision must be grounded in the creation of a developmentally responsive school for young adolescents. However, a vision is only as effective as the degree to which it is implemented and practiced. It would appear that not only does Dodge City Middle School have a well articulated vision, but the staff believes in this vision and works to carry it out in their day-to-day responsibilities at the school.

Characteristic 1, "*Successful schools for young adolescents are staffed by educators who value working with this age group and are prepared to do so,*" rated lower (4.90) than all but one of the characteristics in Area Three. The lower ratings are not necessarily due to a lack of knowledge or willingness to work with young adolescents, but possibly can be attributed to a lack of incorporating what staff members know about the developmental needs of young adolescents and using that knowledge on a regular basis in their classrooms.

Assessment results indicate that the school provides opportunities for students and staff to interact beyond the classroom. However, it is not clear how teachers use these opportunities to provide each student with an adult advocate. Characteristic 7, "*Successful schools for young adolescents provide an adult advocate for every student,*" was rated 4.57. Defining adult advocacy as it applies to students and teachers would be a suggested first step, followed by a staff review of how the school is dealing with providing an adult advocate for every student. It should be noted that every student deserves an adult advocate.

Having the staff assume the role of an adult advocate is important, but equally important is having a guidance program that supports the teachers in this role. It would appear from assessment results that the staff is supportive and has confidence in the guidance program in general and the counselor specifically. The lowest rated exemplar in Characteristic 14 is 14e: "*School counselors support teachers in advisory and advocacy programs, demonstrate and conduct classroom group activities, offer one-on-one and small group guidance sessions for students, sponsor peer mediation and peer tutoring programs, and share their expertise with*

teams and individual teachers." This exemplar deals with the role of the counselor in providing adult advocates for students. It also had a relatively high standard deviation (1.31), indicating that there is a lack of information or shared consensus among staff members about the role of the counselor in adult advocacy for students.

Student behavior does not seem to be an issue at Dodge City Middle School. The staff rated safety within the school as a 5.63, and the procedure for handling discipline as a 5.68. These are two of the highest ratings not only for Area Three but also for the entire assessment document. This is a credit to the administration as well as the staff.

The average ratings of exemplars for health and physical education are 4.83, indicating that the offerings in physical education and health are adequate for students as compared with the majority of higher ratings of other areas within the school. Providing young adolescents with physical exercise on a regular basis is critical at this stage in their lives. Helping them understand how to lead a healthy life and how to deal with current health issues is likewise critical for them. It would appear that the staff feels that students should have a more comprehensive exposure in these two areas, including the cocurricular activities. All students should be encouraged to participate in cocurricular activities, particularly in the area of sports. Early adolescence is a time when young adolescents discover what talents and interests they have. An intramural program should be open to all students who wish to participate and an interscholastic program should likewise avoid having a cut policy. The staff might want to consider forming a committee to investigate further development in this important program area.

TOOLKIT ASSESSMENT
Ideas for Professional Growth

Dodge City Middle School
Dodge City Public Schools
Dodge City, KS

It is important to note that many of the standard deviations in all three areas are at or below 1.2, which indicates a common vision among teachers in their knowledge or perceptions of the exemplars as they relate to the school. The consultant suggests that attention be focused on the few exemplars in this report that are above 1.2 and work to develop a common vision of what is happening in those areas and where the staff would want the school to be in those areas in the next two years.

Staff Development Opportunities

An effective approach to develop areas of improvement in the school might be the use of faculty book study groups or professional conversations centered on specific topics as designated in this report. These might be grouped according to the areas of this assessment (Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment; Leadership and Organization; School Culture), with Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment being the initial area of focus. A study of *This We Believe in Action* (NMSA, 2005) with the faculty is recommended.

Book Study Recommendations

General

Dickinson, T. (2001). *Reinventing the middle school.* Westerville, OH: National Middle School Association.

Doda, N., & Thompson, S. (Eds.). (2002). *Transforming ourselves, transforming schools: Middle school change.* Westerville, OH: National Middle School Association.

Erb, T. O. (Ed.). (2005). *This we believe in action.* Westerville, OH: National Middle School Association.

Jackson, A. W., & Davis, G. A. (2000). *Turning points 2000: Educating adolescents in the 21st century.* New York: Teachers College Press.

McEwin, C. K., Dickinson, T., & Jenkins, D. (2004). *America's middle schools in the new century: Status and progress.* Westerville, OH: National Middle School Association.

National Association of Secondary School Principals. (2006). *Breaking ranks in the middle: Strategies for leading middle level reform.* Reston, VA: Author.

National Middle School Association. (in press). *This we believe: Keys to educating young adolescents*. Westerville, OH: National Middle School Association.

Powell, S. D. (2005). *Introduction to middle school.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Roney, K., Anfara, V., & Brown, K. (2008). *Creating organizationally healthy and effective middle schools: Research that supports the middle school concept and student achievement.* Westerville, OH: National Middle School Association.

Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment

Ainsworth, L. B. (2003). *Unwrapping the standards: A simple process to make standards manageable*. Englewood, CO: Advanced Learning Press.

Ainsworth, L. B., & Viegut, D. J. (2006). *Common formative assessments: How to connect standards-based instruction and assessment.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Anfara, V., & Stacki, S. (Eds.). (2002). *Middle school curriculum, instruction, and assessment.* Greenwich, CT: Information Age.

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School Wellness Policies

www.ActionforHealthyKids.org

www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/

www.cspinet.org/org/nutritionpolicy/policy_options.html

Exploring Essential Components: Nutrition, Physical Activity, and the Young Adolescent, a web-based advocacy tool that provides data on national obesity trends and information to assist schools and committees as they develop health policies.

Topics to Consider for Long-Term, Job-Embedded Staff Development

Well-designed professional development should include a combination of workshops and professional development during common planning time. In this way, faculty have the opportunity to learn new ideas, try these new strategies, and receive additional support through team meeting time and other small group opportunities. The combination of approaches meets the needs of teachers' different learning styles, gives them practice within their own setting, and allows school teams to "work around the work." Based on the assessment, the school might consider prioritizing the following areas for professional development and spend time through the various formats mentioned to allow staff to include this within their own practice. It is recognized that fully implementing change in these areas may occur over two to three years.

Professional Development Suggestions

Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment

- instructional strategies that encourage student choice and allow for active learning and high student engagement

- development of an integrated approach to curriculum that includes student voice, thematic interdisciplinary unit instruction, and application to the real world

- refinement of the inclusion program through staff development so that true co-teaching occurs in classrooms and the integration of regular and special education students is seamless

- exploratory options available to all students that develop their special interests and aptitudes as they participate in a variety of courses designed to broaden their view of themselves and the world around them

- differentiation of instruction, including student learning styles, brain research, and multiple intelligences as means to developing flexible skill groups within the classroom

- student-led parent conferencing that involves student goal setting, knowledge of the data, portfolio development, and an understanding of their own progress and areas for growth

- data-driven curriculum planning and instructional practices designed to meet the needs of all students in ways that optimize their learning and ensure their academic success

Leadership and Organization

- teaming strategies specifically focused on the use of protocols to look at student work and teacher assignments, planning across content areas, and developing targeted academic interventions

- development of professional learning communities to provide opportunities for growth for teachers as well as the opportunity to know their students well and to determine if the implementation of long-term student-teacher relationships (looping, partner teams, multiage teams) would enhance the educational process at the school

- master scheduling options that allow flexible blocks of time to support interdisciplinary instruction and provide opportunities for students to move among skills groups as needed

- learning opportunities for students that are characterized by adherence to a variety of learning styles and instructional practices designed to meet the needs of all students

- a school improvement plan that sets high goals for student performance and incorporates the characteristics of *This We Believe: Keys to Educating Young Adolescents*

School Culture

- professional development for all teachers and administrators that is job-embedded and has a focus on the characteristics of the young adolescent, effective instructional strategies, lesson design, and authentic assessments

- a vision for the school that incorporates the characteristics of *This We Believe*: *Successful Schools for Young Adolescents* and supports a culture of collaboration and thoughtful practice

- development of a service learning component that is embedded in the curriculum and provides students frequent, long-term opportunities to reach out into the community

- effective advisory, including roles and responsibilities of advisors, content for the program, and the possible integration of service learning in order to establish relationships of trust, respect, and advocacy

- physical education, as well as health and wellness programs and policies, designed for all students throughout their middle school years as a way to support learning, address adolescent developmental needs, and create healthy lifestyles

- cocurricular and extracurricular activities that are inclusive and encourage the active participation of all students in the school

Web Sites

National Middle School Association: www.nmsa.org

National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform: www.mgforum.org

National Association of Secondary School Principals, Middle Level Leadership Division: www.nassp.org (click on "Middle Level Leadership")

California Department of Education middle grades site: http://pubs.cde.ca.gov/tcsii

Learning-Focused Schools: www.learningfocused.com

Conferences

Finally, conferences provide opportunities for staff to hear leaders in the field, to explore ideas for programs and materials used in other middle schools and to network with teachers from a broader geographic area. The consultant would recommend that the school consider the following conferences:

National Middle School Association Annual Conference
Indianapolis, IN, November 5–7, 2009

Kansas Association for Middle Level Education Annual Conference
Topeka, KS, November 14, 2009

NASSP Annual Conference
Phoenix, AZ, March 12–14, 2010

National Forum Schools to Watch Annual Conference
Washington, DC, June 24–26, 2010

NMSA Institute for Middle Level Leadership
Williamsburg, VA, July 18–21, 2010
Whistler, British Columbia, Canada, July 25–28, 2010