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October 2002

Month of the Young Adolescent:

Together We Can Make a Difference!

In October 2002, schools, communities, and organizations across the country and around the world will celebrate the sixth annual Month of the Young Adolescent, drawing attention to the unique needs and special qualities of 10- to 14-year-olds. Initiated by National Middle School Association (NMSA) in 1996, Month of the Young Adolescent represents a collaboration of 40 national education, health, and youth-oriented organizations and 57 NMSA affiliates focused on the challenges and opportunities of these young people.

Why the national attention on young adolescents? These kids are quite literally setting the direction of their futures now, through their academic growth and achievement in our schools and through the major decisions they are making about their values, standards, attitudes, and personal beliefs. Because early adolescence is such a critical time in our students' overall development, we are committed to supporting the implementation of middle level schools that are academically challenging and developmentally appropriate for every student. We believe that by working together we can forge stronger educational partnerships among schools, parents, students, and community members so that every young adolescent has the opportunity to become all he or she can and should become.

A Year-Round Effort

Although Month of the Young Adolescent is celebrated in October, it takes a consistent year-round commitment to truly make a difference in the lives of our middle level students. That's why we're asking you to join us not only in this important month-long celebration, but also in the critical ongoing work of providing opportunities that ensure a bright and successful future for every child.

Join us by supporting your local schools and working with middle level educators and policymakers to address the critical issues and implement the effective programs that truly make a difference for young adolescents. It's time that young adolescents and effective middle level education become a central focus of attention on federal and state education agendas so that high-performing middle level schools become the norm.

Research makes it clear that when middle schools implement—in curriculum and

instructional practices—what our knowledge of learning and human development supports, students achieve. Clearly, we have serious issues to address if we are to ensure every child achieves to his or her highest potential. Together we'll need to focus on implementing middle level schools that:

- Engage every student in meaningful and challenging curriculum and do so in an environment that fosters respectful and supportive relationships among students, faculty, families, and the community.
- Provide teachers and administrators who are specifically prepared and committed to teaching this age level.
- Offer ongoing professional development for all faculty and staff.
- Utilize accountability and evaluation strategies that promote quality student learning and inform instructional practices.
- Make learning decisions based on data that goes beyond single test results;
- Emphasize the key role parents and families play in building a positive attitude toward education and in supporting the work of the schools.
- Build connections between the community and school to expand and enhance the educational opportunities of all students.

Our common goal must be to provide our students a quality education that develops their unique skills and talents to the fullest. To do less is not acceptable.

Making a Difference

Working together we can make a difference by calling for high-performing middle level schools that focus on one thing: the healthy academic, social, and emotional growth of every single student. That's why

we're celebrating the Month of the Young Adolescent and why we're asking you to get involved!

Join us in this year's Month of the Young Adolescent celebration by visiting our Web site (www.nmsa.org). It lists a variety of ways for parents, community members, middle level educators, and students to get involved. Participate in National Middle Level Shadow Day on October 17th and see firsthand what's happening in middle level schools in your community. Look for ways to be a volunteer with young adolescents through tutoring or mentoring programs, career exploration opportunities, and after-school or youth sport programs.

Together we can make a difference and ensure a successful future for every young adolescent.

For more information on how your family, school, or community can become involved in celebrating the Month of the Young Adolescent contact NMSA at 1-800-528-NMSA or visit us online at www.nmsa.org.



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National Middle School Association is dedicated to improving the educational experiences of young adolescents by providing vision, knowledge, and resources to all who serve them in order to develop healthy, productive, and ethical citizens.