

RESEARCH IN SUPPORT OF HIGH QUALITY MIDDLE LEVEL TEACHERS

CURRENT RESEARCH FINDINGS

National Middle School Association strongly believes that:

- Teachers have the single greatest impact on student learning.
- Educators in middle level schools need preparation and training specific to those grades.
- Distinctive middle grades licensure should be mandatory in all states.

Research supports what effective middle level teachers and principals already know:

- Specialized teacher preparation is critical to student success.
- Students learn more when their teachers have high academic and instructional skills¹.
- Middle level teachers give the highest ratings to teacher education programs that have the most courses specifically related to working with young adolescents.

In an extensive study of middle grades teachers in a large midwestern state, researchers established a positive relationship between middle level teacher certification and student achievement².

- 1) Elementary and middle level certified teachers use what research concludes are **best instructional practices**, such as interdisciplinary teaming, interactive lessons, and authentic assessment, much more frequently than secondary certified teachers.
- 2) Middle level certified teachers whose schools have **adopted interdisciplinary teaming** with high levels of common planning time (minimum 4 meetings per week, 30 minutes or more per meeting) use these best practices most often.
- 3) Schools engaged in interdisciplinary teaming with high levels of common planning have **greater gains in student achievement** over time.

The results of this study suggest that improvements in student achievement can occur when schools serving young adolescents...

- Hire middle grades certified teachers;
- Provide resources and supports, such as interdisciplinary teaming and common planning time; and
- Adopt research-based best practices, including interactive instruction and critical-thinking exercises.



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1. National Center for Education Statistics (2000). *Monitoring School Quality: An Indicators Report*, U.S. Department of Education Office of Educational Research and Improvement. NCES 2001-030.

2. Mertens, S., Flowers, N., & Mulhall, P. (2002). The relationship between middle grades teacher certification and teaching practices. In V. A. Anfara, Jr. & S. L. Stacki (Eds.), *Middle School Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment* (pp. 119-138). Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing.