

PROPOSAL FOR A GENERAL EVALUATION OF  
A MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAM  
North Salem Middle School

by

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## PROPOSAL FOR A GENERAL EVALUATION OF A MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAM

In New York State, middle schools are defined as those serving students in fifth (or sixth) through eighth grade, with ages ranging from 10 to 14. As described in a Regents policy document on the middle grades, these children “are undergoing personal transformations- physical, intellectual, emotional, social and psychological... the time these student spend in the middle grades... is critical to both their personal growth and development and their success in high school” (2003). First organized in the early 1950-s, middle schools have become an integral part of education in the United States. Over the years, New York State (NYS) has continued to re-visit the theory and research behind middle schools. The Seven Essential Elements (see Appendix D) communicates and clarifies the NYS’s ideas pertaining to what the Regents believes “must be in place in standards-focused schools with middle-level grades if young adolescents are to succeed academically and develop as individuals” (2003).

**Comment [b1]:** The first appendix you mention in the text should be labeled Appendix A. The next appendix is Appendix B, etc.

Officially, the North Salem Middle School was organized in 1981. Internal documents reflect that the endeavor encompassed “sixth graders from one building, and the seventh and eighth from another, had just been formed and had no philosophy upon which to form a sound educational program” (Gross, 1986). A philosophy was later drafted, and most recently updated in 2006 (see Appendix C).

**Comment [b2]:** See note above.

North Salem Middle School houses grades ~~six-6~~ through ~~eight+8~~. Students in each grade share a common set of core teachers (English, math, social studies, foreign language, science and special education). These teachers meet twice weekly to plan,

share concerns, solve problems, and communicate. “Specials” teachers (home and careers, technology, enrichment, art, and music) teach students spanning all three grade levels, and are officially assigned to one grade-level team for meeting purposes.

Historically, the North Salem district administration has been highly supportive of the middle school formation and philosophy. Although the principal and assistant principal are also responsible for overseeing the high school (housing grades ~~nine-9~~ through ~~twelve~~12, located in the same physical building as the middle school), they demonstrate commitment to the middle school program by maintaining specific scheduling and budgetary priorities. These include designating one teacher as middle school coordinator (released from one-fifth of his/her teaching duties), scheduling support of advisories and assemblies, allotting funds for assemblies and field trips, assignment of summer payment for curriculum work, and much more.

### **Statement of Purpose**

The North Salem Middle School has twice (2007 and 2010) been awarded the highest recognition of middle school excellence: Essential Elements School to Watch. This award, co-sponsored by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform and NYS Department of Education, recognizes middle schools that are “academically excellent... developmentally responsive... and socially equitable” (National Forum, 2010). The middle school regularly achieves high scores on all tests required by the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. It is frequent host to visitors looking for models of special education co-teaching, gifted and talented services, use of technology in the classroom, and so forth.

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In the midst of all these accolades and evidence of competence there has never been a systematic evaluation of the middle school in North Salem. Statements of philosophy have been written and re-written without any formal reflection upon whether those ideals are met or maintained. Test scores are used for individual student placement in special education classes or Academic Intervention Services (AIS) classes, but the data are not aligned with specific schools goals. Teams continue to meet bi-weekly, but agendas and topics of discussion are not logged or examined. In general, the school continues to progress through the ever-changing waters of education without rigorous or systematic examination.

Over the past summer, the North Salem school district formed a Mission Committee composed of staff and parents representing grades K-12. After three solid days of work, the end result was a new district mission and beliefs: “Engage students to continuously learn, question, define and solve problems through critical and creative thinking” (see Appendix B, 2010). It is fitting that the middle school should now undergo a summative program evaluation to examine current programs and their alignment with the current middle school philosophy, as well as the new district mission and beliefs.

### **Evaluation Rationale**

Accountability in education is more than simply a buzzword. As the national government begins to re-authorize (or re-imagine) legislations such as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and NCLB, it is important to have a complete and accurate portrait of the current programs and capabilities of the middle school. In light of these legal educational requirements, a clear and well-structured program evaluation

**Comment [b3]:** Very good. We often forget that the best time to conduct a program evaluation is when things are going well!

could provide data regarding existing service gaps, identify areas in need of improvement, as well as recognize those exemplary items that could serve as future models.

In addition to the issues raised by federal/state educational mandates and guidelines, it is difficult to ignore the reality of the current economic climate; organizing students and staff as a middle school is more expensive than other alternatives. A program evaluation will be able to provide validation for the choice the district has made to invest in the idea of a specialized school educationally and emotionally serving young adolescents.

With the push for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills ([see Appendix E](#)), there is also an increased emphasis upon preparing students for an unknown future. It is hoped that this evaluation will also cast an eye upon changes need to occur to best equip present and future students to meet challenges they will face long after leaving eighth grade. Middle school researcher M. L. Manning (2000) states emphatically that:

The middle school movement is beyond its infancy. Middle school educators know what kinds of educational experiences are needed by young adolescents. Now, they should move forward with renewed commitment to refine practices and to fend off attacks of the skeptics... Now is the time for educators to renew the effort to provide middle schools that genuinely meet young adolescents' developmental and academic needs. (p. 191)

### Definition of Key Terms

**Comment [b4]:** You included strong references for your definitions. This is very important but often overlooked.

1. **Middle schools** house specific student grade levels (typically fifth or sixth through eighth), focusing on student social/emotional needs, as well as academic. As stated by the NYS Regents “The challenge to middle-level education is to make the change from childhood to adolescence and from the elementary grades to the high school a positive period of intellectual and personal development” (2003). Proponents believe that adolescence presents unique opportunities for success, as well as distinct areas of concern that require specialized programming and philosophies.
2. **Focus group** refers to the use of a group interview as a means of gathering data. Structure of the interview format and use of specific questions varies with regard to the interviewer, the group members, and the topic (Fontana & Frey, 2005).
3. **21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills** is a term used to refer to those skills, knowledge, and types of learning required to be successful in the unknown future. These areas are seen as different from the typical rote learning and concrete knowledge historically emphasize by schools. The organization, Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, has identified three general areas of pertinence: life and career skills; learning and innovation skills; and information, media, and technology skills (2009).
4. **Teacher Teams** refers to a group of teachers that share a common set of students and common planning time. Frequency and use of planning times vary, as does the number of team members. Although the team’s teachers come from different disciplines, they often share curricular and assessment philosophies (Warren & Payne, 1997). Critical to this idea is that “teaming is intended to create a better



context that enables students and teachers to know one another better and allows teachers to better support and understand the educational needs of students” (Flowers, Mertens & Mulhall, 1999, p. 2).

5. **Common Planning Time (CPT)** is a period of time, shared by all members of the interdisciplinary team, used to conduct such group business as “creating coordinated lesson plans, share and discuss student progress, problems and issues...” (Flowers, Mertens & Mulhall, 1999, p. 2). This meeting period is held regularly (at least once a week), and is separate and distinct from individual teacher planning/preparation periods.

#### **Research/Evaluation Questions**

Using a multi-faceted approach, this middle school program evaluation seeks to answer the questions found below. Methods will include the collection of various artifacts (produced by staff and students), the use of focus groups held with team teachers and parents, interviews with district administrators, examination of NYS testing data from the past five years, and analysis of official state and local policy documents.

1. Does the current North Salem Middle School structure and organization meet the academic and social/emotional needs of students according to the tenets of NCLB and the NYS Essential Elements of Standards-Focused Middle Level Schools and Programs ([see Appendix E](#))?
2. Is the current North Salem Middle School Philosophy ([see Appendix C](#)) aligned with the district’s new Mission and Beliefs ([see Appendix B](#))?
3. What are the gaps or areas needing improvement in order to meet the demands of evaluation questions numbers one and two?

4. What areas/programs should serve as exemplars? How can these ideas and techniques be shared with district staff, as well as other middle schools?

### **Review of Related Literature**

#### **History of the Middle School Movement**

Manning (2000) traces the advent of middle schools to the early twentieth century. The first junior highs were organized in 1909 in Ohio. Prior to this time, schools were typically arranged in two fashions: those serving grades K-8 and high schools. Although junior high schools did serve only two or three grades, the curricular focus remained predominantly on two things: career/vocational training and pre-college studies. No mention was made of specific adolescent emotional or social needs. It was not until 1950 that that first true middle school was organized in Bay City, Michigan. More schools began to organize themselves in similar fashion, adding such elements as team teaching and interdisciplinary learning experiences.

As the decades closing the twentieth century rolled on, this “fundamental reform movement” (Lounsbury, 2000, p. 193) continued to grow. Miles and Valentine report that between 1971 and 2001, the number of middle schools soared by more than 400% (2005). Middle schools continued to emphasize strong academic preparation for high school while also maintaining a focus on stresses unique to the age level. Lounsbury lauds the mission as middle schools “seek to establish a climate of caring... involves students actively in the life of the school, building its curriculum at least partially on student concerns” (p. 193).

As the pressures of NCLB shift and expand, the drive to test and measure students shows no signs of abating. While this is useful, in fact even necessary, it costs a lot of

money. Preparing, printing, scoring, assessing... the costs associated with NCLB are limitless. This does not even address changes to curriculum and staff development that may be needed. While schools also struggle to meet unfunded special education mandates as well, the extra costs incurred by arranging schools in a middle school format cannot be ignored. Rottier observes that, "As budgets become tighter, it will imperative to demonstrate ... a positive effect on student achievement and student welfare... schools districts cannot afford the luxury..." (2000, p. 214). It is expensive to provide all the extra services associated with middle schools without a clear return on the investment.

### **The Importance of Teaming**

What makes a middle school effective? One critical element is the arrangement of teachers in teams that share a common set of students and a common planning time (CPT). Many studies support the worth of this crucial element. Warren and Payne (1997) conducted descriptive research utilizing a causal-comparative design. The researchers administered two different surveys: the Teacher Efficacy Scale (Gibson & Dembo, 1984) and the Teacher Opinion Questionnaire (Rosenholtz, Hoover-Dempsey, & Bassler, 1985) to eighth grade teachers from 12 separate schools that comprised three different organizational structures of teaching teams. Among the sample schools, four had teams that shared a CPT, four schools had teacher teams but no CPT, and four schools had no teacher teams or CPT (staff was arranged by departments according to academic disciplines). With regards to the sample and participants, the researchers controlled for such variables as student socio-economic status, school type (rural, urban, suburban), teacher experience, and student grade level. Using an ANOVA, results of survey analysis showed that organizational structure had a significant positive impact

upon personal teacher efficacy and six (out of ten) factors pertaining to environmental perceptions.

Further research conducted by Mertens, Flowers, and Mulhall (1998) supports other links between several qualitative and quantitative measures and middle schools containing interdisciplinary teacher teams that share CPT. Data were collected from 155 middle schools in Michigan over a period of four years. Sample schools varied widely in terms of size, type of location (rural, suburban, urban), student socio-economic status, and grade configurations. Types of data gathered included: self-reported measures of work climate and job satisfaction, frequency and type of parent communication, state achievement test scores (reading and math), and information gathered via telephone interviews.

On all factors measured, positive correlations were found between the specific variables and middle school teams that had a CPT. Whether it was self-reported data from a survey, qualitative information from a phone interview, or statistical data from student test scores, each variable rose significantly when compared with the amount of CPT. More impressive than these preliminary findings is the fact that the initial scores (on all measures) only increased over time as the teams continued to work together. On items as diverse as teacher job satisfaction and student achievement scores, positive correlations were found between the variable and the length of time team a worked with one another (Mertens, Flowers, & Mulhall, 1998).

In addition to these positive findings, another study also “provides further evidence that structured use of cross-curricular academic teams can lead to improved integration of subject matter and to deeper understanding of content and pedagogy related

to state standards” (Reed & Groth, 2009, p. 17). The middle school being studied was located in an urban setting, served an ethnically diverse pool of students (67% white), of whom approximately 50% were eligible for free or reduced lunch.

In this study a team of veteran sixth grade teachers was followed over the course of one school year as staff development was embedded into their team meetings (Reed & Groth, 2009). The teacher team examined state standards and collaboratively developed research-supported teaching and assessment strategies. The team also discussed changes to make to these lessons following their implementation. An external researcher met with the team monthly: facilitating, generating field notes, and examining artifacts from the teachers’ work. The researcher also interviewed participants individually. Interestingly, it was not until eight months into the study that concrete results were seen. The team had “finally begun to use their... time to analyze student work for information on how to improve their instruction and to plan better lessons” (p. 15). Their perceptions of students also began to shift as teachers saw more direct links between their actions and positive student results. By the end of the year, students demonstrated greater improvement on state tests, in all subject areas, when compared to other schools in the district. The students also exceeded state testing requirements as well.

**Comment [KB5]:** Amy, This is an excellent review of the literature. Well done! The transition from one research study to another is one area that will improve this section. Overall, it is very well done.

## Methodology

### Participants and Subjects

North Salem Middle School is located in a small, suburban district located approximately 60 miles north of New York City. The middle school houses 327 students in grades ~~six-6~~ through ~~eight8~~. Less than 2% of the student body qualifies for free or reduced lunch and 93% are white. Students range in age from 10 to 14 years.

**Comment [KB6]:** Check APA regarding grade numbers.

Thirty-four teachers serve the three middle school grades. This includes separate teams of core subject areas teachers (English, math, social studies, science and foreign language), as well as an array of special and support areas (special education, home and careers, gifted, ESL, art, music, and technology). Length of time of district employment ranges from less than one year to 36 years. The principal and assistant principal have held their respective posts more than 23 years. All staff members are highly-qualified, as designated by NCLB, and certified according to NYS law.

The district administrative structure includes one superintendent and three assistant superintendents of: pupil personnel, curriculum/personnel, and business. The middle school principal and assistant principal also serve in those capacities for the high school. Further demographic information pertaining to such topics as student suspension rates and specific teacher certification areas can be found on the school's annual NYS Report Card.

### **Instrumentation**

As a means of gathering the most varied and nuanced data pertaining to all facets of the middle school, this program evaluation seeks to gather information from a wide range of sources: teachers, parents, and administrators. At a later time, students may be interviewed; but due to the time and budgetary limitations, only student work artifacts will be used to gather information for this evaluation. Through the use of such diverse members of the middle school community, from staff to parents, it is hoped that such data triangulation will provide the most accurate and detailed portrait of the middle school programs and student accomplishments.

Each individual grade-level team will participate in a focus group led by the primary researcher. Suggested questions can be found in Appendix A. It is hoped that this focus group data will provide information about beliefs the teams hold regarding their inter-related work habits and styles; as well as beliefs they hold regarding students, teams, teachers, school structure, curriculum, and instruction. Team focus groups can occur during one of their weekly meetings and should last for approximately 40 minutes.

Focus groups will also be held with small groups of parents. These will number no more than 10 adults, and shall include parent representation from all three grade levels. It is hoped that at least two focus groups can be conducted, each to last approximately 30 minutes in length. Parent volunteers will be chosen by the district administration or local Parent-Teacher Association leadership. Although this non-random method of sampling may produce a biased pool of subjects, it is also the most expedient means of gathering a ready pool of volunteers: ~~(See see Appendix G for focus group questions to be used with parents.)~~

Individual administrators will also be interviewed. This will include the principal, assistant principal, and district superintendent. Again, semi-structure questions (see Appendix F) will be used to provide form and direction for these sessions. Each interview will be conducted for a period of approximately 30 minutes.

Data from all focus groups and interviews will be transcribed and coded to identify common themes. These will be used to provide qualitative data pertaining perceptions and perspectives on district programming, as well as provide examples of artifacts to be examined in support of the views expressed.

The NYS Essential Elements Rubric Self Review Ratings with Evidence ([see Appendix H](#)) will also be used to gather information pertaining to programs at North Salem Middle School. This document was created by the State in 2004 to mirror the NYS Middle School Essential Elements. It provides a means of structuring a program evaluation. The rubric asks for specific evidence, delineated by topic and area, demonstrating how a school adheres to the NYS tenets. When using this instrument it is important to make sure concrete examples and documentation are listed in support of each specific item on the rubric's scale.

### **Procedures**

It is recommended that data be gathered over a period of two weeks. During this time the primary researcher will conduct focus groups and interviews, informally observe classes, and examine artifacts (both those provided by the staff and those requested by the researcher). The following procedures below describe the proposed methodology:

**Interview procedures.-** All interviews and focus groups will take place in an informal and comfortable setting, such as a school conference room or library classroom. Participants should be arranged in a circle, with each member having a clear view of the others. It is important that the researcher assure all participants that there is no right or wrong answer to any of the questions; that all data shall remain confidential. The researcher should state that the purpose of the evaluation is to see how well current services meet the need of the middle school students, and how well current programs reflect the district mission and middle school philosophy.

During the interviews/focus groups, the interviewer may diverge from the order and specific wording of the questions ([see Appendices A, F, & G](#)). If the conversation is



flowing well, there is no need to interrupt by posing a new question. The object is to gather information about the perspectives and perceptions of the middle school programs. Morgan describes the role of a researcher in creating a flexible environment in which the researcher gently steers, yet does not inhibit, the conversation (2001). The goal is to facilitate a natural flow of conversation amongst participants while keeping the group on topic/task (Morgan, 2001).

**Testing data.-** Use the past five years' student scores from the NYS ELA, math, social studies, science and foreign language proficiency tests to create a composite picture of student achievement. Create both a tables and graphs of all data. Examine mastery, as well as passing rates.

**Artifacts.-** Prior to visit, ask staff and administrators to provide any and all artifacts supporting those items and topics delineated by the NYS Essential Elements Rubric Self Review Ratings with Evidence. This may include copies of lesson plans, student projects, memos, district documents, flyers, meeting agendas/notes, and so forth. After conducting the parent and teacher focus groups the researcher may also request documentation and other artifacts pertaining to specific items mentioned by participants. For ease of process, it is recommended that a small area of the school (storage closet, unused classroom, conference room) be used to store these items throughout the duration of the program evaluation. If an item exists in digital format, artifacts may be stored on a common flash drive.

**Classroom Observations.-** The primary researcher should also informally observe different classes during the two week visit period. It is important that all three grade levels, as well as a wide variety of subject areas, are observed in order to provide

**Comment [KB7]:** Excellent recommendation. It seems minor but it is often forgotten.

further documentation of district programming. The building principal must ensure prior consent of the staff, especially union officials, and assure teachers that these visits will not be used to criticize or analyze any one individual or teaching technique. The purpose of the visits is to gather more data to support information provided by the focus groups and artifacts. As Corbin and Strauss (2008) note:

Observation is so important... it is not unusual for persons to say that they are doing one thing but in reality they are doing something else. The only way to know this is through observation. Also, persons may not be consciously aware of, or be able to articulate, the subtleties of what goes on in interactions between themselves and others. Observations put researchers right where the action is, in a place where they can see what is going on. (pp. 29-30)

**Comment [KB8]:** Interesting reference.

The point is not to “catch” the teachers doing something right or wrong, but to substantiate and validate ideas found in district artifacts and expressed during focus groups/interviews.

**Comment [KB9]:** YES! YES!

### **Research Design and Data Analysis**

This summative program evaluation uses qualitative techniques to create a portrait of current middle school programming in the North Salem Central School District. Using a wide variety of data gathered via interviews/focus groups, artifact examination, student state test scores, and classroom observations the researcher will gather as much evidence as possible to answer the four research questions guiding this investigation.

A final narrative analysis will be written, comprised of no more than four pages, identifying any gaps in programming that do not meet the goals stated in the district

mission, middle school philosophy, and the NYS Standards. Exemplary programs will be noted and ways in which they may be replicated will be suggested.

**Comment [KB10]:** It is always good to let the stakeholders know exactly what you will report in your final review. Good!

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### Limitations

There are several limitations to this program evaluation. First, due to time and budget constraints, data will be gathered by one person over one extremely brief period of time (two weeks). This will simply provide a snapshot of the middle school being examined. With regard to external validity, any findings cannot be generalized to the entire middle school or other time periods, much less any other schools.

As noted earlier, the direct input of students via focus group interviews would be an advantage to this evaluation, but cannot be conducted at this time. It would be best to gain data from those subjects the school most directly impacts, instead of gaining indirect information about them via artifacts, test scores, and adult testimony. In the future, direct interaction with students is recommended as a means of gathering more valid data.

There are many other threats to the internal validity of this study. History could disrupt the planned evaluation in many ways. In climate weather could lead to cancelations of interviews and observations. It is be important to schedule this evaluation during the fall or spring. State testing is also a concern. New York State has moved all tests to May through June; so again, a spring or fall evaluation would be recommended. Lastly, major holidays should be avoided. Traditionally, events such as Halloween, or the days preceding a major holiday break, are known to be more boisterous in middle schools and may not accurately reflect the true climate of the building.

**Comment [KB11]:** ? Do you mean inclement?

Selection of subjects is also a threat to the internal validity of this evaluation. As previously noted, the researcher is relying upon school administrators and local PTA leadership to identify parents for focus group participation. This method may produce a biased sample. Obviously, parents purposely chosen by administrators are more likely to be those who have had positive interactions with school leaders, as are those parents involved with PTA activities. While the researcher can encourage the administrators to choose a cross-section of parents, this threat cannot be completely controlled.

There is a danger when using focus groups that the ideas/opinions of one participant may unduly influence the group; but, the benefits of this technique outweigh that concern. Focus groups are a more expedient method of gathering data from a wider pool of subjects than interviewing each person separately. Given the financial and time constraints of this evaluation, the researcher must simply be aware of this threat and make sure that one member does not dominate the group interview process.

**Comment [KB12]:** This is a difficult aspect of interviewing.

There are also limitations with regard to the use of informal classroom observations. Researchers have long noted the tendency of those being observed to act differently due to the fact that they know they are being observed. While this is impossible to control for, observations are too valuable a source of immediate data to forego use due to this threat.

Any threats to validity due to testing are impossible to control for due to the fact that the researcher is not creating, nor administering, the examinations. Through the use of five years of data, it is hoped that such a range will help control for any threats to testing validity and reliability.

Lastly, there is a large threat of observer bias inherent in any evaluation guided primarily by one researcher. It is noted that the author of this study may unduly influence the results. Using triangulation of the wide variety of data gathered from the diverse pool of subjects (parents, students, teachers, administrators), the researcher will attempt to control for this limitation to the program evaluation.

### **Statement of Confidentiality**

This program evaluation, and all data gathered and analyzed, will be kept confidential and remain the property of the North Salem Central School District.

Findings will not be published nor disseminated in any manner.

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Comment [b13]: Excellent!

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## Appendices

## **Appendix A**

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### Focus Group Questions for a Middle School Team

Directions:

Time Period: 30-45 minutes; questions to be used as needed

Extra prompts: follow primary question, use as needed

Question order is not prescribed. You may ask them in any order.

1. Describe this team using an adjective, metaphor or symbol.

Further prompts (if needed)-

Tell me a story that captures the personality of this team.

What is the most important quality a middle school team needs?

2. Have any of you worked on other teams? How did they differ (from this one)?

3. Describe what effective teaching is or looks like.

Further prompts (if needed)-

Describe effective curriculum, effective lessons, etc.

4. Describe a typical (insert name of school here) middle school student. What are they like?

Further prompts (if needed)-

Describe student work habits, how they interact with teachers, typical personality traits, and so forth)

5. What should an ideal middle school look like (in terms of layout, physical structure, location of classrooms, lunch room, library, etc.)?

6. Describe the ideal middle school schedule.

Further prompts (if needed)-

What length should periods be? How many per day? What types of “specials” should be offered?

## **Appendix B**

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### North Salem District Mission and Beliefs

Engage students to continuously learn, question, define and solve problems through critical and creative thinking.

In pursuit of this, we believe that:

- All students are capable of learning
- All students are supported and challenged to continuously improve
- Academic, intra and interpersonal skills are essential for success
- The learning environment must be safe, ethical and respectful
- Everyone in the community shares responsibility for student development
- We must continue to hire and retain staff of the highest quality
- Collaboration, data and evidence guide decision-making.

## **Appendix C**

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### North Salem Middle School Philosophy

North Salem Middle School is committed to providing a high performing, standards-focused middle level program that successfully balances the intellectual development and academic achievement of all students and the personal and social development of each student.

## **Appendix D**

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### Essential Elements of Standards-Focused Middle Level Schools and Programs

Developed by:

The New York State Education Department's Middle-Level Education Program

The standards-focused middle level school or program is purposeful. It has two basic goals:

The intellectual development and academic achievement of all students, and the personal and social development of each student.

In a standards-focused middle-level school or program these two goals are not in conflict or competition; rather, they are compatible, complementary, mutually supportive, and inextricably linked.

The seven essential elements of standards-focused middle-level school programs are:

- A philosophy and mission that reflect the intellectual and developmental needs and characteristics of young adolescents (youth 10-14 years of age).
- An educational program that is comprehensive, challenging, purposeful, integrated, relevant, and standards-based.
- An organization and structure that support both academic excellence and personal development.
- Classroom instruction appropriate to the needs and characteristics of young adolescents provided by skilled and knowledgeable teachers.
- Strong educational leadership and a building administration that encourage, facilitate, and sustain involvement, participation, and partnerships.

- A network of academic and personal support available for all students.
- Professional learning and staff development for all staff that is ongoing, planned, purposeful, and collaboratively developed.



## **Appendix E**

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### 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills

#### **Core Subjects and 21st Century Themes**

Mastery of core subjects and 21st century themes is essential to student success. Core subjects include English, reading or language arts, world languages, arts, mathematics, economics, science, geography, history, government and civics.

In addition, schools must promote an understanding of academic content at much higher levels by weaving 21st century interdisciplinary themes into core subjects:

- Global Awareness
- Financial, Economic, Business and Entrepreneurial Literacy
- Civic Literacy
- Health Literacy
- Environmental Literacy

#### **Learning and Innovation Skills**

Learning and innovation skills are what separate students who are prepared for increasingly complex life and work environments in today's world and those who are not. They include:

- Creativity and Innovation
- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- Communication and Collaboration

#### **Information, Media and Technology Skills**

Today, we live in a technology and media-driven environment, marked by access to an abundance of information, rapid changes in technology tools and the ability to collaborate and make individual contributions on an unprecedented scale. Effective citizens and workers must be able to exhibit a range of functional and critical thinking skills, such as:

- Information Literacy
- Media Literacy
- ICT (Information, Communications and Technology) Literacy

#### **Life and Career Skills**

Today's life and work environments require far more than thinking skills and content knowledge. The ability to navigate the complex life and work environments in the globally competitive information age requires students to pay rigorous attention to developing adequate life and career skills, such as:

- Flexibility and Adaptability
- Initiative and Self-Direction
- Social and Cross-Cultural Skills
- Productivity and Accountability
- Leadership and Responsibility

## **Appendix F**

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### Interview Questions for Administrators

1. How long have you worked in your current capacity for this district?
2. Describe your role in the middle school?  
(This could pertain to specific programs, student relations, teacher supervision, curriculum development, or anything else that comes to mind. Prompt as needed and appropriate to the individual being interviewed.)
3. Can you tell me about the North Salem Middle School Philosophy?  
(Have a copy handy to provide.)
4. How do you see the district mission reflected in the work of the middle school?
5. What is the biggest challenge currently facing the middle school?
6. Of what should the middle school be most proud?
7. If money was no object, what would you like to see change or happen at/to the middle school in the future?  
(Funding is not an issue; this is a dream/hope question.)

## **Appendix G**

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### Focus Group Questions for Parents

1. Could you please each briefly describe the age and grade level of your child in the middle school?
2. How would you characterize their experiences here?
3. What has been a challenge for your student in the middle school?  
(You may need to prompt them to provide examples such as academic, social, co-curricular, and so forth.)
4. What has been one thing that has surprised you about the middle school?
5. Can you tell me about the North Salem Middle School Philosophy?  
(Have a copy handy to provide.)
6. How do you see the district mission reflected in the work of the middle school?
7. What is the biggest challenge currently facing the middle school?
8. Of what should the middle school be most proud?
9. If money was no object, what would you like to see change or happen at/to the middle school in the future?

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(Funding is not an issue; this is a dream/hope question.)

**Comment [b14]:** Dream big!!!

## Appendix H

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### Essential Elements Rubric Self Review Ratings with Evidence

#### ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS RUBRIC SELF REVIEW RATINGS WITH EVIDENCE

Rating for *Essential Element #1: Philosophy and Mission: A philosophy and mission that reflect the intellectual and developmental needs and characteristics of young adolescents*

Criteria	Rating*	Evidence
1.a The degree to which the shared beliefs of the school and staff reflect developing the whole child, intellectually, academically, personally, socially, physically, emotionally and ethically.		
1.b The degree to which the school and staff work together to ensure that all students achieve at high levels and develop as individuals.		
1.c The degree to which the school and staff accept – individually and collectively – responsibility for the educational and personal development of each and every student.		
1.d The degree to which the school ensures each student a safe, inviting, trusting and mutually respectful learning environment that offers both physical and psychological safety.		
1.e The degree to which the school community models caring and respectful interactions with students and with other adults.		
1.f The degree to which the school and staff accept responsibility for providing a successful transition from the elementary grades to the middle grades to the high school grades and from childhood to adolescence.		

Overall Rating for Essential Element #1: \_\_\_\_\_

- \* Rate each criteria based on the degree of implementation that you believe is occurring in your school.

- This worksheet should be used in conjunction with the Rubrics for the Essential Elements of Standards-Focused Middle-Level Schools and Programs.

Rating for *Essential Element #2: Educational Program: an educational program that is comprehensive, challenging, purposeful, relevant, integrated and standards-based.*

Criteria	Rating	Evidence
2.a The degree to which the middle-level educational program emphasizes the intellectual, social, personal, physical, and ethical development of young adolescents		
2.b The degree to which the middle-level educational program is challenging, rigorous, and meaningful and reflective of the 28 Learning Standards		
2.c The degree to which the middle-level educational program includes common learning skills to increase student achievement across all grades and subjects (e.g. how to plan, study, conduct research and read for understanding)		
2.d The degree to which the middle-level educational program has common performance expectations across all grades and subject area (e.g. using complete sentences; using standard English in school; following directions without multiple prompts, note-taking, graphic organizers, reading for understanding, writing in the content areas, using agendas, etc.)		
2.e The degree to which the middle-level educational program emphasizes reading, writing and mathematics (literacy and numeracy) across all subject areas		
2.f The degree to which the middle-level educational program includes ongoing Standards-based assessments		
2.g The degree to which content areas are integrated and articulated vertically and horizontally within and across various curricular areas, Learning Standards and grade levels		
2.h The degree to which the middle-level educational program involves family, community, and the world outside the school in the development of young adolescents		

Overall Rating for Essential Element #2: \_\_\_\_\_

Rating for Essential Element #3: Organization and Structure: an organization and structure that supports both academic excellence and personal development

Criteria	Rating	Evidence
3.a The degree to which middle level grades are configured to promote the Essential Elements of a middle level program (grades 5-8)		
3.b The degree to which the middle level program is structured to promote a sense of belonging to reduce the feeling of anonymity and isolation among students.		
3.c The degree to which the teams in the school are structured to create close, sustained relationships between students and teachers.		
3.d The degree to which the school provides, for those students needing additional help to meet the State's standards, opportunities for additional time, instruction, and personal support (e.g., after school, before school, summer school, reduced class size, tutoring, pupil personnel services)		
3.e The degree to which the school establishes ties with the school community that strengthens connections between school/education and career opportunities.		
3.f The degree to which the school promotes and encourages appropriate participation of pupils with disabilities in all curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.		

Overall Rating for Essential Element #3: \_\_\_\_\_

Rating for *Essential Element #4: Classroom Instruction: classroom instruction appropriate to the needs and characteristics of young adolescents provided by skilled and knowledgeable teachers*

Criteria	Rating	Evidence
4.a The degree to which teachers' instructional techniques and process are purposeful and strategic		
4.b The degree to which teachers' instructional techniques and process reflect the developmental characteristics of young adolescents		
4.c The degree to which teachers' instructional practices reflect content knowledge and pedagogy		
4.d The degree to which teachers know and understand, the Learning Standards		
4.e The degree to which teachers utilize technology and other instructional technology		
4.f The degree to which learning opportunities are rigorous and academically challenging		
4.g The degree to which instructional groups are flexible		
4.h The degree to which teachers exhibit a collaborative relationship and culture		
4.i The degree to which teachers use student data, both personal and achievement, to make curricular and instructional decisions		
4.j The degree to the school communicates with the parents/guardians and community regarding student achievement		

Overall Rating for Essential Element #4: \_\_\_\_\_

Rating for Essential Element #5: Educational Leadership: strong educational leadership and a building administration that encourages, facilitates, and sustains involvement, participation, and partnerships.

Criteria	Rating	Evidence
5.a The degree to which the educational leadership and building administration know and understand the Learning Standards and how they interrelate		
5.b The degree to which the educational leadership and building administration know and understand the Essential Elements of a standards-focused, high performing middle-level school or middle-level program		
5.c The degree to which the educational leadership and building administration have an understanding of the subject matter in the middle grades and of the interconnections of different approaches to student learning and diverse teaching strategies		
5.d The degree to which the educational leadership and building administration involve staff and others in the operation of the school or program, empowering and encouraging them to contribute and to make decisions that benefit students		
5.e The degree to which the educational leadership and building administration support and encourage teachers to take risks, to explore, to question, to try new instructional approaches, to continue as learners, and to grow		

Overall Rating for Essential Element #5: \_\_\_\_\_



Rating for Essential Element #6: Academic and Personal Support: a network of academic and personal support available to students.

Criteria	Rating	Evidence
6.a The degree to which academic and personal support include opportunities to examine, explore, discuss and understand the changes associated with early adolescence.		
6.b The degree to which academic and personal support include counseling and guidance services to assist students in making life, career, and educational choices.		
6.c The degree to which academic and personal support includes a network of trained professionals, special programs and community resources available to assist those who have extraordinary needs and require additional services to cope with the changes of early adolescence and/or the academic demands of middle level education		
6.d The degree to which the support system promotes school/community partnerships and involves members of the community in school activities and initiatives, empowering and encouraging them to contribute and make decisions that benefit students.		

Overall Rating for Essential Element #6: \_\_\_\_\_

Rating for *Essential Element #7: Professional Learning: professional training and staff development that are ongoing, planned, purposeful, and collaboratively developed.*

Criteria	Rating	Evidence
7.a The degree to which the district and staff are committed to providing quality professional development		
7.b The degree to which professional learning is individualized and intrinsically motivated.		
7.c The degree to which professional development learnings are integrated into classroom practice		
7.d The degree to which continuous professional learning is an integral part of the school culture.		

Overall Rating for Essential Element #7: \_\_\_\_\_

General Reactions and Comments:

<b>Assignment Two: Proposal 40%</b>			
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Possible Score (40)</b>	<b>Actual Score</b> <b><u>40/40</u></b>	<b>Revisions</b>
<p><b>Statement of purpose</b> for this evaluation proposal</p> <p>0= The component is not evident.</p> <p>1= Basic information is present, but some information is left out or is not related to the topic.</p> <p>2= Information is present, but is not presented in a clear manner.</p> <p>3= All information is present, the flow of writing could be improved.</p> <p>4= All information is present, the writing flows well and information relates to all the components.</p>	4	<u>4</u>	
<p>A <b>rationale</b> describing the reason for completing an evaluation in the chosen area.</p> <p>0= The component is not evident.</p> <p>1= Basic information is present, but some information is left out or is not related to the topic.</p> <p>2= Information is present, but is not presented in a clear manner.</p> <p>3= All information is present, the flow of writing could be improved.</p> <p>4= All information is present, the writing flows well and information relates to all the components.</p>	4	<u>4</u>	
<p>A <b>research question</b> or questions.</p> <p>0= The component is not evident.</p> <p>1= Basic information is present, but some information is left out or is not related to the topic.</p> <p>2= All information is present, the writing flows well and information relates to all the components.</p>	2	<u>2</u>	
<p><b>Definition of terms.</b></p> <p>0= The component is not evident.</p> <p>1= Basic information is present, but some information is left out or is not related to the topic.</p>	2	<u>2</u>	

2= All information is present, the writing flows well and information relates to all the components.			
<b>Review of Literature</b> to support the evaluation. 0= The component is not evident. 1= Basic information is present, but some information is left out or is not related to the topic. 2= Information is present, but is not presented in a clear manner. 3= All information is present, the flow of writing could be improved. 4= All information is present, the writing flows well and information relates to all the components.	4	<u>4+</u>	
Description of your <b>methodology</b> including the <u>evaluation design</u> , <u>setting and subjects</u> , <u>instrumentation</u> , and form of <u>analysis</u> . (4 points for each of the 4 components) 0= The component is not evident. 1= Basic information is present, but some information is left out or is not related to the topic. 2= Information is present, but is not presented in a clear manner. 3= All information is present, the flow of writing could be improved. 4= All information is present, the writing flows well and information relates to all the components.	16	<u>16</u>	
<b>Limitations</b> to the study. 0= The component is not evident. 1= Basic information is present, but some information is left out or is not related to the topic. 2= All information is present, the writing flows well and information relates to all the components.	2	<u>2</u>	
Completed <b>IRB</b> form 0= The component is not included. 1= Basic information is present, but some information is left out or is not related to the topic. 2= All information is present, the writing flows	2	<u>2</u>	

well and information relates to all the components.			
<b>Grammar/Syntax/APA</b> 1=The errors are so distracting that it is difficult to focus on the content. 2=Many errors are present, but the content is understandable. 3=Some errors are present. 4=There are so few errors, making the document easy to read and understand.	4	<u>4 (few errors)</u>	