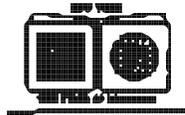


**DEVELOPING A
MISSION STATEMENT
FOR
A MIDDLE-LEVEL
SCHOOL**

**A
Resource for
Middle-Level Educators**



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The State Education Department

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Middle-level educational reform remains a priority of the New York State Board of Regents and the State Education Department. This document, *Developing a Mission Statement for a Middle-Level School*, is intended to help schools with middle-level grades develop and articulate their educational purpose in clear, concise, understandable terms. It represents the hard work of many people. Members of the **Statewide Network of Middle-Level Education Liaisons** and the **New York State Middle School Association** conceived of the idea of the publication and provided much of the content. Special recognition goes to David Pearlman, Principal of the Cooperstown Middle School, and Edward Hanlon, Principal of the A.A. Kingston Middle School (Potsdam), for the time and effort they took to conduct a through review and critique of the document.

INTRODUCTION

Schools at all levels are under constant pressure from various sources to assume new or expanded—and in some cases conflicting—responsibilities. Middle-level schools in particular are now being pushed to broaden their role and address many of the larger, societal concerns that previously were the purview of the community, church, or family. Pressures are escalating on middle-level schools to assume responsibilities they historically have not had.

Unfortunately, middle-level schools have never had—and do not now have—the capacity to embrace additional responsibilities. They cannot be “all things to all people.” Now more than ever schools with middle-level grades need to be purposeful, focused, and directed by a clear sense of mission. They need to decide on what they will concentrate their limited resources and then target their efforts and resources to achieve the desired ends. Without a clearly defined mission or purpose that has the support of the extended school community, middle-level schools will be without long-term direction, constantly reacting and responding to external pressures from various and often competing special interest groups. Middle-level schools, if they are to function effectively and provide their students with the best education possible, need a clear statement of mission.

**Middle-level schools need to develop
a *MISSION STATEMENT*
that is**

- clear
- commonly understood
- pertinent to individuals
 - widely endorsed
 - constantly pursued
- periodically reaffirmed

A well-written **MISSION STATEMENT** describes both a vision (an educational ideal) and a mission (the means to achieve the vision) of a middle-level school.

Where there is no vision, the people perish.¹

If you don't know where you are going, it doesn't much matter what you do.²

VISIONS, MISSIONS, AND MISSION STATEMENTS

Although “vision” and “mission” are often used interchangeably and often viewed as the same, they are not synonymous terms. A vision describes an end, a perfect future, an idealized state. A mission describes a process or means for achieving a vision.

Webster’s 3rd New Unabridged International Dictionary defines “vision” as:

Something seen otherwise than by the ordinary sight; a vivid concept or object of imaginative contemplation; a mode or way of seeing; unusual discernment or foresight.

In short, a vision can be described as **a picture formed in the mind**. A vision depicts clearly an ideal or desired future state, the ultimate, a final destination. According to Roland Barth:

A school with a vigorous soaring vision of what it might become is more likely to become that; without a vision, a school is unlikely to improve. . . . For me, a vision is a kind of moral imagination which gives school people, individually and collectively, the ability to see their school not only as it is, but as they would like it to become.³

Webster’s 3rd New Unabridged International Dictionary defines “mission” as follows:

A continuing task or responsibility that one is destined or fitted to do or specifically called upon to undertake; a specific task with which a person or group is charged; the chief function or responsibility of an organization or institution; specific task with which a person or group is charged.

A mission might be described as **an aim in life arising from a conviction or sense of calling**. It reflects action and process, tasks, a journey to a destination, the means to an end.

The National Association of Secondary School Principals, in its 1987 publication, *Developing a Mission Statement for the Middle Level*, explains “mission” the following way:

A mission is the special task or purpose established for a person or an institution. In personal terms, it is often referred to as a “calling.” For institutions, it is their special reason for existing; it is the thing to which they are most committed. It is the ordering of thoughts that underlie the entire operational practices of the school as an institution.⁴

A **Mission Statement**—which technically should only reflect an organization’s tasks and purposes — more often than not is a hybrid that includes references to both the “mission” of an institution and the “vision” that is directing the mission. For purposes of this publication, a **Mission Statement** will be viewed in the broader, more common context—a mix of “vision” and “mission.”

Thomas E. Hart writes in *LONG RANGE PLANNING: School Districts Prepare for the Future*:

The mission statement defines in broad terms what the [school] hopes to accomplish at some specified time in the future. It is the overall blueprint from which comprehensive plans can be made for moving toward the future that is envisioned. . . . This statement will be the basis for more specific goal-setting, timeline development, and monitoring in identified areas. . . .

What form do such mission statements take? They range from short, broad statements about the [school] as a whole to a series of mini-statements about various areas that need consideration. They may be taken from the literature and modified, or they may be developed by the [school]. . . .

No matter what form the mission statement takes, it serves as a guide for setting more specific goals and judging their appropriateness. . . .⁵

ATTRIBUTES OF A MISSION STATEMENT

A **Mission Statement** is short, concise, and simply worded—often a short statement of one or two sentences. It is an understandable and workable statement of purpose. It is easily remembered. It has broad support and commitment. It should be agreed upon through shared decision making, and be known and understood by all stakeholders in the organization. It serves as a screen to evaluate school goals and programs. It provides a context for planning. It must apply to all students in a middle-level school regardless of their experiential background, capabilities, developmental and learning differences, interests, or ambitions. The National Association of Secondary School Principals contend that Mission Statements have four common elements:⁶

1. A Statement of Purpose

Mission statements address explicitly the purpose of the institution or organization.

2. An Indication of Uniqueness

Mission statements indicate that the institution's efforts are somewhat unique and that the organization is distinguished from other institutions with similar purposes.

3. An Explicit Statement of Commitment

Mission statements make clear the commitment is shared among faculty, students, parents, and the wider school community.

4. A Clear Value Position

Mission statements reflect the school's core values.

Bill Rauhauser makes the point that:

The mission statement must emphasize the uniqueness, the distinctiveness, the singularity of the organization. Essentially it represents the

commitment of the organization's resources to [a] purpose.⁷

Mission Statements provide an overarching educational purpose that allows everyone connected with the school to:

1. agree on the journey
2. decide what they want to spend—in time, resources, and effort—to get there.
3. set their contribution “compasses” to enable them, individually and together, to steer towards that common goal.
4. evaluate the extent to which they are progressing, and arrive at a shared result.⁸

Richard Lodish writes in “Here’s How”, a publication of the National Association of Elementary School Principals, about developing a Mission Statement:

The mission statement defines the overall purpose of the school, incorporating the beliefs, concepts, and values on which the school’s programs are based and the goals toward which the school’s efforts are directed. It should be brief—a few paragraphs on a single page, simply worded, and easily understood—and serve as a framework for everything the school does. All program objectives, action plans, and curriculum strategies should support the mission, and certainly not conflict with it.⁹

Mission Statements serve several important functions in a middle-level school. In particular, they are used to:

- a. review programs, policies, and practices.
- b. make daily decisions.
- c. set goals and priorities.
- d. reward and reinforce people in the school.

According to Rauhauser, a well-written **Mission Statement** has four sections or components: product, process, purpose, and motto. The **Mission Statement** of the Liberty Middle School is an example:

The mission of the Liberty Middle School is to provide a stimulating environment that promotes learning, cooperation, and responsibility. An integrated curriculum relevant to student needs delivered by a knowledgeable and dedicated staff will produce competent and confident students who are capable of current and future educational success.¹⁰

DEVELOPING A MISSION STATEMENT

Lodish recommends a three-step approach to developing a **Mission Statement**:

1. Organize a steering committee of five to ten people, representing various branches of the school community. Any decisions should be made by consensus.
2. Collect information on those things people want to continue, those things people want to change, and what things are currently occurring in the school. Develop an initial draft that reflects those areas of greatest consensus agreement.
3. Reconcile those areas where there are divergent views. Develop a more refined draft to be presented to and discussed with all groups in the school community.¹¹

The approach advocated by the National Association of Secondary School Principals, while consistent with Lodish's, is much more detailed and prescriptive. The NASSP also recommends that the development of a **Mission Statement** be guided by a set of operating principles.

- a. Identify the school's major stakeholder groups and formulate a plan that includes them in the development of the mission statement.
- b. Develop a plan that includes these stakeholder groups in defining the mission statement.
- c. Use a process that permits the group actually charged with drafting the statement to check frequently with the stakeholder groups to be sure that they are not drifting from the group's understanding of the school's purpose.
- d. Create a process that focuses on agreements, not disagreements.
- e. Draft a statement that is short, direct, and easy to remember.
- f. Once the mission statement is drafted, refer to it frequently and acknowledge its use in decision making.
- g. Discuss the mission statement from time to time, and review it on a regular basis to be sure it is still appropriate in view of the population served by the school, changes in curriculum mandates, new

community or social expectations, and emerging knowledge about academic subjects and the nature of young adolescent learners.

- h. Assure that the mission statement is disseminated widely in the school, the school system, and the community.¹²

The specific process advocated by the NASSP includes the following steps:

1. Solicit commitment from the school community to develop a mission statement.

It is never too early to involve the various constituencies that comprise the school community. Soliciting broad support for the development of a mission statement early in the process increases the likelihood the final result will reflect the beliefs of all affected parties and thus have strong support inside and outside the school.

2. Assemble a working group.

Again, the working group should represent the diversity of the larger school community. It should have a clear purpose, specific responsibilities, and definite timelines.

3. Gather data and information from constituent groups about their beliefs, values, and purposes of the school.

It is at this point in the development of the mission statement that the working group collects information on what people believe is the purpose of the middle-level school. Why does it exist? What should its primary responsibility be? How should "success" be judged? How is the middle-level school unique, special? How does it differ from the elementary school and the high school? What are the needs of the middle-level student? What role should the middle-level school play in meeting these needs?

4. Analyze preliminary data to focus discussions on purposes (ends).

Now is when the working group takes the information gathered from the larger school

community and begins to organize it into general categories, separating “single issue” or short-term concerns from the broader, more long-term considerations that will be the basis for the development of the mission statement.

5. Create an instrument to seek consensus and points of agreement.

Once the working committee has categorized the information, it is necessary to share the results with the larger school community and to determine where there is strong agreement and where there are points of contention. This is the time to assess what people believe and how strongly they believe. Working committees often use Likert scales (strongly agree to strongly disagree) or forced choice matrices to gather opinions systematically from a large number of respondents.

6. Draft the mission statement.

The working committee, armed with information from the larger school community, now drafts a preliminary mission statement that will be shared for review and comment.

7. Solicit agreement on the statement:

- Present the draft statement.
- Explore implications.
- Encourage reflective consideration.

The draft mission statement is distributed widely for review and comment. Often this review is done by a survey. In other instances the working committee conducts a series of hearings or forums where people have an opportunity to discuss and debate the draft statement. This is an excellent time to strengthen commitment to and support for the final mission statement within the larger school community.

8. Prepare a final draft.

Based on the comments the working committee prepares a final mission statement.

9. Disseminate the final draft.

Once final, the mission statement is disseminated widely and used to guide planning and decision making in the school.

10. Assess impact and review the statement.

Periodically, the mission statement is reviewed and revised, if necessary, to reflect new or changed circumstances.¹³

The Erie 1 BOCES, in collaboration with the State Education Department and *Key Solutions*, has developed an educational software package that includes a guided process for developing a mission statement.¹⁴ It includes a process for involving various constituencies:

Moving Towards a Mission Statement

This activity takes approximately 45 minutes of meeting time with a further 30 minutes of senior management time for the preparation of the final statement. This activity should involve all staff, initially working in small groups, but later coming together to share their ideas. The senior management team will have the responsibility for preparing the final statement, taking into account the views expressed by staff. This consultation is important as this statement provides the context within which all development takes place and there will be greater success with whatever is attempted if all share a common purpose. This activity can be used with groups of parents and/or educators.

Activity: In 25 words or less write a statement which describes your organization in the following terms:

What kind of organization are we?

What do we do?

Where are we going?

Consider the following points:

1. Who is the statement for?
2. Can parents and educators understand it?

3. How will it be publicized? Is it suitable for posting as an eye-catching notice in the main entrance hall?
4. Should it be translated into languages other than English so that all involved are fully informed?
5. Does it reflect a purpose for all students in the middle-school?

[As a check, after the mission statement is developed, ask the following questions:]

1. What were the activities and procedures that were conducted to develop the mission statement?
2. Who was involved in the process?
3. Does the mission statement now have the support of those involved in its actual implementation?

[Periodically it is a good idea to review the status of the mission statement to determine if it needs to be reviewed, reexamined, and revised. The following questions might serve to guide such an assessment:]

1. Does the organization have a agreed-upon mission statement which expresses concisely and clearly what is the main purpose of the education service it provides for the community?
2. How did stakeholders in the community contribute to the aims and values expressed in this statement?
3. Can all who work in the organization understand and communicate the school's mission statement?
4. Do students, parents, and members of the community understand the school's mission?

5. Do all staff work to achieve the aims of the mission statement?
6. When was the mission statement last reviewed and revised. Who was involved?

An example of a specific developmental process followed by a middle-level school in developing a **Mission Statement** is that used by the Byron-Bergen Middle School. It consisted of the following:

We had a half-day conference day. Having collected some examples of mission statements, we gave them to people ahead of time so they could get an idea of what we would be doing.

When we assembled in the library (whole middle school staff) an overhead was used to look at some examples. We discussed the different types, such as one line or more complex. We also looked at the sorts of things that were important and then brainstormed the things we thought were important for our middle school.

The faculty was divided into groups of two. Each group wrote a mission statement. Groups of two were then combined into groups of four. This group came to consensus on one statement. This was repeated, with groups joining until there was only one left. As the groups got bigger, definitions and words became very important, with lots of discussion. In the end, we all agreed on one statement. It took the entire half day, but everyone felt like they had input and that they could live with the results. We did this the first year we started—four years ago.

The appendix contains additional examples of **Mission Statements** developed by local middle-level schools. While no two are exactly alike, each shares a common purpose—to provide direction and guidance to a school community to assure that everyone understands what the school is working to achieve and that each student receives the best possible educational experience.

A mission statement is a powerful tool for school improvement. Properly constructed, it empowers everyone in the school to assume responsibility for the school's ultimate direction. It is, at once, a commitment, a promise, a guide for decisions, and a set of criteria by which to measure the school's progress toward its defined purposes. Increasingly, the mission statement is indispensable for effective school leadership.¹⁵

APPENDIX

MISSION STATEMENTS from MIDDLE-LEVEL SCHOOLS

MIDDLE-LEVEL MISSION STATEMENTS

ALTON U. FARNSWORTH MIDDLE SCHOOL Guilderland Central School District

Farnsworth Middle School is an exciting learning community: thoughtful, stimulating, reflective, engaging, and engaged. The staff balances challenging curriculum goals with its understanding of the unique intellectual, social, emotional, and physical needs of 11-14 year olds. In partnership with families and the community, we support and nurture students in their development of a love for learning, strong habits of the mind and body, a commitment to high academic standards, an appreciation for the arts, an understanding of democratic principles, respect for self and others, and responsibility for their actions.

All members of the school community are continually involved in the active process of learning. Our heterogenous learning environment supports exploration, risk-taking, and experimenting with new skills and ideas. We function as teachers, coaches, mentors, advisors, and guides. We expect that all students learn and achieve to their fullest potential.

Houses and teaming are integral parts of our middle school. They ensure that students are known well, and that attention is given to each student, both individually and as a member of a group. Teams ensure that students will have experiences that encourage them to understand, appreciate, and connect the interdisciplinary nature of knowledge. The team structure fosters greater communication among staff members leading to increased awareness of an attention to individual student needs. This structure also builds connections and a sense of belonging for both students and staff. Collaboration and learning with and from each other are important educational components.

Farnsworth Middle School students successfully make the transition from elementary to high school. All students use their minds well, think critically and creatively, make informed and reasoned judgments, produce and invent, critique and analyze, develop personal responsibility and concern for others, and move toward greater independence as learners.

**BENJAMIN FRANKLIN MIDDLE SCHOOL
Kenmore Union Free School District**

VISION STATEMENT

Benjamin Franklin Middle School is a caring community. We believe that all students can learn and their diverse needs can be met. We are committed to academic improvement, positive personal interaction and social growth. All members of our school community will have a voice and be responsible for the fulfillment of this vision.

MISSION STATEMENT

As a result of monitoring during the 1994-95 school year, the School Planning Team identified the following needs:

- A dialogue to redefine our philosophy for Franklin Middle School which will focus on improving learning.
- An environment of mutual respect, honesty, support, consistency and shared decision making.

DESIGN TEAMS

To begin to address these needs, we have structured the following design teams for the 1995-96 school year:

- Focus on Learning.
- Focus on Environment.

**BROADWAY JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL
Elmira City School District**

It is the mission of Broadway Junior High School to create an atmosphere for learning and teaching which fosters high self-esteem, self-discipline, individual responsibility, respect for others and academic achievement in relation to the students ability.

Belief Statements

We believe all students can learn.

We believe learning is life-long.

We believe the purpose of Broadway Junior High School is to provide academic instruction, which fosters creative thinking skills, to enhance aesthetic awareness, and to encourage development of physical skills.

We believe that high self-esteem is critical to individual success in the learning process.

We believe our goal is to encourage all students to achieve in relation to their ability.

We believe a long-term goal of education is to prepare students to make conscious, active decisions which reflect a spirit of cooperation and concern for the world.

We believe positive school and family experiences are critical to a child's educational development.

We believe high staff expectations foster high student achievement.

We believe our school is a complex unit which facilitates learning in an environment that is secure, clean, attractive, nurturing, consistent, and positive.

We believe that middle education should foster a smooth transition from elementary to senior high school that allows the student to develop high self-esteem, self-discipline, respect for others, and a heightened sense of responsibility.

We believe we must be receptive to change in order to better meet the needs of our students.

We believe in the cooperative approach to school improvement.

BYRON-BERGEN MIDDLE SCHOOL
Byron-Bergen Central School District

MISSION STATEMENT

Building our future in a learning environment where each individual can experience success.

OUR BELIEFS

1. Byron-Bergen Middle School provides a student centered environment designed to offer opportunities for learning and success by challenging the individual to participate in a variety of exploratory experiences.
2. The uniqueness of each student's intellectual, physical, psychological, and social development is the impetus of all instruction and guidance.
3. Our goal is to foster academic achievement, positive attitudes and values, growth of a strong self-image, and respect for others through the staff, curriculum, and extra-curricular program.
4. Students will be encouraged to learn the skills necessary to function both as an individual and as a member of a group.
5. Parents are recognized as partners in the process providing a valuable link between home and school.

CAMDEN MIDDLE SCHOOL
Camden Central School District

DISTRICT MISSION STATEMENT

At the August 11, 1992, Board of Education meeting, the following Mission Statement was adopted by the Board for the Camden Central School District.

The Camden Central Schools, in partnership with parents and community, will actively engage each student in the learning process. Each student will graduate with the knowledge and skills necessary for successful living. Our educational program will be based on the wisdom of the past, the realities of the present and the expectations of the future.

CAMDEN MIDDLE SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT

The Camden Middle School will provide a nurturing environment for each student to develop a positive self-image which will foster a willingness to explore ideas and attitudes while demonstrating significant growth in the acquisition of life-long abilities which facilitate continued success and growth toward excellence.

The students in a caring environment will explore, develop, and grow educationally for life.

E xplore
D evelop
G row
E ducationally for life.

In simple terms, Camden Middle School gives students an “EDGE”.

CHESTER JR./SR. HIGH SCHOOL Chester Union Free School District

Each Student will Achieve Mastery of
Basic Skills and Will Develop
Academically,
Socially,
Emotionally, and
Physically
in a
Safe,
Orderly, and
Positive Environment
Where
Learning is Valued

and
Differences Accepted

Motto: TEACHING EFFECTIVELY: LEARNING
SUCCESSFULLY

CLARY MATH-SCIENCE MAGNET MIDDLE SCHOOL
Syracuse City Schools

The mission of Clary Math-Science Magnet Middle School is to ensure that all students demonstrate mastery of defined academic and social skills and strategies for learning as they make the transition from elementary to high school and prepare for the challenges of the 21st Century; this will be accomplished through an integrated curriculum with emphasis on Math, Science, and Technology and through a partnership involving the entire Clary Community.

COOPERSTOWN MIDDLE SCHOOL
Cooperstown Central School District

The Cooperstown Central School District is a partnership of students, parents, teachers, staff and all other community members. The school's mission is to provide a caring environment that motivates students to pursue individual excellence and to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for continual growth. Education at Cooperstown Central School shall foster an active curiosity, self-discipline, a positive attitude and compassion.

Adopted by the Board of Education: 3/3/93

In order to contribute to the success of the District Mission, the Middle School pledges to reinforce strong elementary beginnings and encourage strong high school accomplishments. Students should emerge from the Middle School with high hopes and the will to achieve, fostered by a positive self-concept. The Middle School mission is to combine academic excellence with the personal and social development of its

students. This philosophy is embodied in the permanent Middle School motto, "Courage, Caring, and Cooperation."

**CRISPELL MIDDLE SCHOOL
Pine Bush Central School District**

The Crispell Family is committed to the GROWTH of each child's PERSONAL & ACADEMIC development while nurturing **SELF-ESTEEM**.

**EDWARD TOWN MIDDLE SCHOOL
Niagara-Wheatfield Central School District**

We believe the Edward Town Middle School community includes students, staff, parents, and all other district residents.

Our teaching and learning processes will prepare students to achieve the Standards of Excellence outcomes, while developing their positive self-esteem.

We teach our subject matter with passion: our students with compassion!

**EMERSON J. DILLON MIDDLE SCHOOL
Phoenix Central School District**

Our mission at E. J. D. Middle School is to make a successful transition from the elementary setting to the high school and beyond by using a variety of strategies and approaches that take into account the special needs and characteristics of the middle level student. We will provide an educational program which will help students develop:

- solid academic skills
- respect for self and others

- a zest for learning
- responsible citizenship
- physical and emotional well-being
- meaningful and challenging goals
- ability to deal with constant change

We will strive to ensure the continual growth and success of all students so they may achieve their full and unique potential.

**ERNIE DAVIS JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL
Elmira City School District**

The mission of Ernie Davis Junior High School is to provide a high quality of instruction so that students will be able to progress toward the extent of their abilities in a safe environment with emphasis on the development of self-respect and respect for the rights of others.

**ESTEE MIDDLE SCHOOL
Gloversville City School District**

Our mission is to challenge each student to reach his or her full potential through a quality education program. At Estee Middle School, all students will be given the opportunity to develop responsibility and to acquire knowledge and skills for lifelong success.

Each student will be given the choice to build a strong self-concept and learn to respect individual differences in an environment that is safe, orderly, positive and student-centered.

By achieving this mission, we will assist students in becoming productive citizens who value learning.

FULTON JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL
Fulton City School District

Fulton Junior High School, recognizing the unique transitional nature of the middle-level student, is committed to the development of a “total person” learning environment. This environment emphasizes an integration of:

- A. Personal Growth
- B. Social and Interpersonal Skills
- C. Academic Excellence

These three facets of student development are complementary, overlapping, and interdependent.

Adopted: June 1991

GENESEO MIDDLE SCHOOL
Geneseo Central School District

The mission of the Board of Education of the Geneseo Central School District is to provide the students a responsive, diversified, creative, high quality system of education.

GRAND AVENUE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL
Bellmore-Merrick Central High School District

In pursuit of excellence, Grand Avenue Junior High School seeks to provide a caring, respectful environment so that students can attain an appreciation for learning and develop self-esteem as well as a strong sense of community.

**GRANT MIDDLE SCHOOL
Syracuse City Schools**

The mission of Grant Middle School is to ensure that all students demonstrate the academic, social and emotional skills needed to be successful in tomorrow's world; this is accomplished in an environment that responds to the unique needs of each student through excellence in instruction, partnership between staff and parents and utilization of the community as a resource for meaningful learning experiences.

**HUNTINGTON SCHOOL
Syracuse City Schools**

The mission of Huntington School K-8 is to guarantee that all students will demonstrate problem solving techniques, methods of communication and acquisition of skills for lifelong learning; this is accomplished by excellence in teaching and learning in a spirit of cooperation through a partnership of students, staff, parents and community.

**ISAAC E. YOUNG MIDDLE SCHOOL
New Rochelle City School District**

The mission of I.E.Y. Middle School is to create opportunities for learning that are unique, interactive, and enhanced by state-of-the-art technology so as to foster an environment that promotes excellence in independent, critical and analytical reasoning for a diverse student population.

We pledge ourselves to:

- build on the student's individual talents.
- nurture the creative potential and natural curiosity of adolescents.

- provide learning experiences which promote a firm mathematical foundation for decision making and future learning opportunities and experiences.
- foster communications and writing skills.
- recognize that learning is multi-dimensional.
- cultivate a commitment to lifelong learning.
- strive for excellence through personal and group challenges.
- recognize and validate individual achievement which underwrites Goals 2000.

JOHN F. KENNEDY MIDDLE SCHOOL
Bethpage Union Free School District

The John F. Kennedy Middle School is committed to developing the fullest potential of our students and to facilitating the transition from child to young adult, and from dependent to independent learner in an environment that builds respect for self and others.

LAKELAND COPPER BEECH MIDDLE SCHOOL
Lakeland Central School District

The Mission of the Lakeland Copper Beech Middle School, in partnership with the community, is to provide a nurturing and supportive environment which facilitates learning and encourages discovery and decision making. This mission recognizes the special developmental needs of each child and respects each individual's worth.

LAKE PLACID MIDDLE SCHOOL
Lake Placid Central School District

After much study, the Lake Placid Middle School Committee believes a departure from the traditional structure of both

elementary and high school is necessary to provide the best environment for meeting the unique needs of students in the age range of 11-14 years old.

We believe that an effective middle school. . .

1. Provides a safe, and nurturing self-contained environment where the entire school community continually monitors and supports students' social and academic growth.
2. Offers courses in the areas of math, science, language arts, the social sciences, foreign language, music, and fine arts to meet established standards of academic skill development.
3. Recognizes that each student has unique needs and abilities, and provides accelerated and remedial programs where appropriate.
4. Provides time for teaching staff to work together to produce interdisciplinary project-oriented programs that are relevant to young adolescent interests and the issues of contemporary society.
5. Gives teaching staff greater freedom through flexible scheduling to shape individual and group instruction to best meet the needs of students.
6. Allows for physical activity and social interaction to be an integral part of all learning.

LEWISTON-PORTER MIDDLE SCHOOL
Lewiston-Porter Central School District

Recognizing the uniqueness of each student, Lewiston-Porter Middle School commits itself to provide an educational program in which each child can develop all of his natural capabilities to their fullest extent. Within this framework, both conventional and innovative learning activities of a wide

variety will be encouraged to meet the needs of these emerging adolescents, in an atmosphere of mutual understanding, respect and tolerance.

Lewiston-Porter Middle School agrees with the National Middle School Association, believing that:

- . . . the middle school is an educational response to the needs and characteristics of emerging adolescent youngsters, and, as such, deals with the full range of intellectual and developmental needs.
- . . . young people going through the rapid growth and extensive maturation that occurs in emerging adolescence need an educational program that is distinctively different from either the elementary or the secondary model.
- . . . programs for this age group will focus on their characteristics and needs.
- . . . educators, school board members, parents, and other community members need to become more cognizant of this age group and what an effective educational program for this group requires.
- . . . this age level is of enduring importance because the determinants of one's behavior as an adult, self-concept, learning interests and skills, and values largely are formed in this period of life.
- . . . the developmental diversity of this age group makes it essential to organize an educational program that adequately meets the needs of all.
- . . . the academic needs of middle school students are affected greatly by their physical, social, and emotional needs which also must be addressed directly in the school program.

The Lewiston-Porter Middle School will evidence the following essential elements:

1. Educators Knowledgeable About and Committed to the Emerging Adolescent

A prerequisite for working with emerging adolescents should be a genuine desire to teach this age group, and a thorough understanding of the human growth and development of the emerging adolescent, for herein is the foundation of all middle school practices.

2. A Balanced Curriculum Based on Emerging Adolescent Needs

The curriculum must emphasize both process and product. It must deal forth-rightfully with the basics, but not omit aesthetics and attitudes. It must seek to increase the fund of knowledge students possess, but also recognize that continued development of the basic skills needed to acquire that knowledge is essential. The balance of humane and academic factors, both of which are of equal value to the success of the program, makes the middle school curriculum distinctly different from either elementary or secondary programs.

3. A Range of Organizational Arrangements

Organization should be a tool, not a master. Block scheduling, multi-age grouping, developmental age grouping, alternate schedules, and other ways of organizing for instruction belong in the middle school. A school-within-a-school arrangement may be needed, as may, on occasion, a self-contained or core situation. Homogeneous grouping may be proper requisite for some instruction while heterogeneous grouping is best for most instruction.

4. Varied Instructional Strategies

The need for individual attention which is occasioned by diverse development requires such methods as committee work, simulation, and independent study. Emerging adolescents are curious, creative, and they like to experiment. Instructional strategies which take advantage of these desirable traits are more effective.

5. A Full Exploratory Program

The rapid physical, social, and intellectual development which occurs during emerging adolescence requires the inclusion of brief but intense interest-based activities. A short attention span, difficulty in concentration and the restlessness which accompanies changing physical bodies preclude learning modules which extend much beyond 15-20 minutes. Mini-courses, exploratory courses, service clubs, special interest activities and independent study projects are among the means of providing such activities.

A student may have difficulty making a choice between unknowns, therefore, controlled choices may be a necessary part of an exploratory program. However they may be organized, high interest, short-term activities with hands-on components are called for by the nature of emerging adolescence.

6. Comprehensive Advising and Counseling

Concern over body development, the desire for social acceptance, the seemingly inevitable conflict with adult norms and expectations, the desire to try out new ideas and beliefs and the desire to experiment with a heightened intellectual ability all point to the need for an intensive and an extensive guidance program.

7. Continuous Progress for Students

Since there are wide variations of development, each emerging adolescent must be helped to progress at his/her own rate and in accordance with the individual's preferred learning style. This requires careful and continuous assessment of learning styles and individual progress, with increasing student involvement in setting goals, determining methods of learning, and self-evaluation. Teachers' expectations of students must be responsive to individual stages of readiness during periods of growth, plateau and regression.

While each emerging adolescent grows according to his/her own timetable, continuing interaction with

peers and understanding adults is a major need. Emphasis on individual progress does not imply that students should be isolated from each other or denied continuous contact with a teacher.

8. Evaluation Procedures Compatible with Emerging Adolescent Needs

Since emerging adolescents are painfully self-conscious and sensitive to criticism, evaluation procedures must be tactful and focused on objective performance as opposed to generalizations that might reflect on the adequacy of the students as persons. Students should be involved in self-evaluation as it is another means of developing a fair and realistic self-concept.

Progress reports ought to reflect individual uniqueness through personal comments by both the teacher and the student, and provide opportunities for personal conferences. Both teachers and parents should emphasize those areas where growth is evident, perhaps in social, physical or emotional development, and not dwell unduly on any temporary slow-down in cognitive development. Evaluation needs to be viewed as an integral phase of the entire learning process, not just something done to the student by some outside authority.

9. Cooperative Planning

Interdisciplinary team planning, which includes teachers sharing the same students, and representing the academic areas of mathematics, English, social studies and science is central in this process. In a common planning period the interdisciplinary team can discuss the contribution each academic area will contribute to a group or to an individual student's educational program and plan accordingly. Parents will be actively involved in this process as well as in schoolwide functions. They can also combine their expertise and efforts in trying to assist individuals in adjusting to peers or meeting school demands.

The academic teams need to work cooperatively with the fine and practical arts team which is likely to

consist of physical education, home economics, industrial arts, music and art teachers, as well as with administrators, parents, and other specialized professional personnel within the district.

10. Positive School Climate

A good middle school is composed of persons of different ages, but all respected and all with particular roles and responsibilities.

4/9/86

LINCOLN MIDDLE SCHOOL
Syracuse City Schools

Our mission as the Lincoln Middle School family is to ensure that our diverse student population will demonstrate positive self-esteem combined with the skills and knowledge necessary to become lifelong learners and productive, responsible citizens through active student involvement and excellence in teaching and learning supported by innovative programming through a dynamic partnership with our community.

LOUIS ARMSTRONG MIDDLE SCHOOL (I.S. 227Q)
Community School District #33, Queens, NY

The mission of the Louis Armstrong Middle School is to bring together a group of culturally diverse children to help them grow academically, emotionally, physically and socially.

LOWRY MIDDLE SCHOOL
North Tonawanda City School District

OUR MISSION At Lowry, a Renaissance Middle School, is to promote academic excellence and to recognize and reward

academic achievement, responsible behavior and positive attitudes.

MARLBORO MIDDLE SCHOOL
Marlboro Central School District

As educators in the Marlboro Middle School, it is our professional responsibility and ethical obligation to service the unique individual needs of our adolescent students.

In the midst of a tumultuous transition from childhood to adulthood, our students require a stimulating, yet structured, environment in which to be challenged. In addition, they need the assurance of a positive school climate achieved through a balanced curriculum, responsive to the child's academic, social-emotional, physical, cultural and creative needs.

Middle-level education is a preparation for lifelong learning. Students must be ready for abstract thought, problem-solving in the outside world, good judgment and a civic and moral lifestyle. We must provide the students with the opportunity to increase their social awareness and to contribute productively to our school society through respect, responsibility and good citizenship.

In addition, students and staff have the right to a sound, healthful and risk-free environment. Therefore, we must provide a facility that meets the needs of our students and includes room for appropriate growth, flexibility, and development.

The school faculty must work with the parents and the community at large to foster students' self-esteem. This can be accomplished through creative curriculum presentation, appropriate special programming, and strong communication. As professionals, we will continue to improve our skills and raise our own awareness of the challenges of our rapidly changing world, while remaining positive role models for both students and colleagues.

**NORTH COUNTRY ROAD SCHOOL
Miller Place Union Free School District**

Mission: Striving for Excellence

- I. Basic Premises:
 - A. All kids can learn.
 - B. The major goal/issue is quality and equity.
 - C. There are only two kinds of schools: improving and declining. There is no such thing as a steady state.
 - D. The capacity for a school to improve resides in the school now—our task is to release the capacity.
 - E. What gets measured gets done (Corollary: Who gets measured gets noticed.)

- II. Characteristics of Effective Schools (research based):
 - 1. A safe, orderly, purposeful environment which is not oppressive, and is conducive to teaching and learning.
 - 2. High expectations for success—that students can obtain mastery of basic skills and that the faculty can help students achieve that mastery.
 - 3. Instructional leadership which understands and applies the characteristics of instructional effectiveness.
 - 4. A clear and focused mission that staff share and are committed to.
 - 5. Opportunity to learn.
 - 6. Frequent monitoring of student progress.
 - 7. Home-school relations where parents share in the mission of the school and help to achieve it.

**NORTH ROSE-WOLCOTT MIDDLE SCHOOL
North Rose-Wolcott Central School District**

Success is what we Earn, but First we have to Learn.

**OCEANSIDE MIDDLE SCHOOL
Oceanside Union Free School District**

Oceanside Middle School is a school in which:

- A warm, caring and respectful environment prevails in order to provide a supportive climate for learning.
- All students gain internal and social strengths and see themselves as valued citizens of the school.
- All students strive for academic excellence.
- The varied needs of all students are met through the application of appropriate instructional priorities.
- Learning is valued and a commitment to lifelong learning is made.

**ONONDAGA MIDDLE SCHOOL
Westhill Central School District**

The Middle School years are special, full of change, challenge, and adventure. We will guide our students from childhood to young adulthood by helping them develop self-respect and respect for others. We will encourage individually and socially responsible attitudes and behaviors.

We will provide the resources for students to grow intellectually in every way and stimulate students to be active participants in their learning. We will foster the joy of creative learning and teaching.

In a clean, safe, and secure setting, we will encourage our students to value and care for our shared environment.

We recognize that education is a continuing process involving home, school, and community. We will work together with students to promote pride in ourselves, each other, and our school, and strive to make the years at Onondaga Hill exciting and rewarding.

ROUNDOUT VALLEY JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL
Roundout Valley Central School District

To provide a safe and supportive environment where students can learn to develop their capabilities to the fullest potential through learning experiences, physical activities, and social interactions so they may become respectful and contributing members of society.

SHOREHAM-WADING RIVER MIDDLE SCHOOL
Shoreham-Wading River Central School District

We, the professional staff of the Shoreham-Wading River Middle School, believe our school is part of a larger community. Our students receive benefits from the neighborhood, their country and their world, from other cultures and other generations. These benefits entail corresponding responsibilities.

Our school is an educational community in which children and adults promote and exemplify respect, growth and awareness of self and others. Students are treated humanistically as physical, cognitive, psychological, and social beings. Similarly, teachers, support staff, administrators, and community members are treated with intelligence, sensitivity, and respect.

We believe that the education of all children, especially transescents,* requires emphasis on and development of the following humanistic concepts:

1. Learning is a balance of active exploration, interaction, and discovery. Therefore, we value a variety of strategies for the construction and acquisition of knowledge.
2. Learning cannot occur in isolation. Therefore, we value networks of communication for the flow of ideas, information and experiences among students, staff and community.

3. Teaching facilitates learning when it focuses on the needs of the learner. Therefore, we value a child-centered curriculum.
4. Learners vary in mode as well as speed of learning. Teachers exhibit varying styles and employ different methods to facilitate learning. Therefore, we value an educational atmosphere where individual differences are respected.

We believe this to be a dynamic philosophy capable of being adapted to meet the needs of our community in an ever-changing world.

Definitions and Examples

1. A variety of strategies for the construction and acquisition of knowledge may include: varied learning environments, computer activities, interactive learning experiences, field trips, “hands-on activities,” people-to-people exchanges, community service, role playing experiences, cooperative learning activities, simulation games.
2. Networks of communication include, among others: an advisory system, district committees, teaching teams, professional organizations, parent liaison groups.
3. A child-centered curriculum addresses the physical, cognitive, psychological, and social development of children.
 - a. To address physical needs we provide a varied physical education program of curricular and extra-curricular activities that deal with the full range of students’ physical abilities, as well as classroom activities which take into account the physical development of the transescent.
 - b. To address cognitive needs we provide a curriculum appropriate to a child’s changing level of ability to learn. That curriculum provides opportunities for the student to demonstrate and to apply what has been learned.

- c. To address social needs, we provide opportunities for students to interact positively with their peers and with adults, teaching them to be responsible members of a community. These social opportunities may emanate from curricular or extra-curricular experiences such as clubs, community service, field trips, advisory activities, lunch activity programs.

Further, we believe such a child-centered curriculum requires an ongoing program of staff development, such as workshops, conferences, inservice program.

- 4. By respecting individual differences we mean discerning students' learning modes, providing appropriate educational methods, and promoting acceptance of differences inherent in all individuals. Such individualization may include: individualized instruction, interage grouping, a testing program, special education programs, gifted and talented programs.

* transescents are pre- and early adolescents
Approved by Middle School Faculty, April 1988

SOUTH LEWIS MIDDLE SCHOOL
South Lewis Central School District

The purpose of the South Lewis Middle School is to establish the cornerstone of the student's appreciation for lifelong learning. To see that all students are academically prepared, self-reliant, curious, thoughtful of others and capable of applying their Middle School experiences so as to succeed in life and our interdependent world.

Our Mission is to develop:

R E S P E C T for
E D U C A T I O N so
S T U D E N T S and

PARENTS develop
ENTHUSIASM for learning throughout the
COMMUNITY in cooperation with
TEACHERS

**VALLEY CENTRAL MIDDLE SCHOOL
Valley Central School District (Montgomery)**

The mission of the Valley Central Middle School community is to:

- Continue student development towards adulthood.
- Create an atmosphere of educational excellence.
- Prepare students to be successful in high school.
- Instill the ability to create and positively adapt to change.
- Motivate students for a lifetime of service to family and community.

The following goals were developed for the Valley Central Middle School:

- To provide a safe and orderly environment.
- To enhance academic excellence.
- To provide an appropriate academic program for all students.
- To improve communications at all levels.
- To create an environment to help meet the needs of the “whole” child.
- To provide a climate that encourages professional growth for our staff.
- To provide a Middle School experience for our students (transition from elementary to high school).
- To provide a critical thinking and problem solving approach to the Middle School experience (both academic and social).
- To provide opportunities for community interaction.

WANTAGH MIDDLE SCHOOL
Wantagh Union Free School District

Wantagh Middle School seeks to promote academic excellence, social skills, self-esteem, and respect for others through a cooperative effort.

WARWICK VALLEY MIDDLE SCHOOL
Warwick Valley Central School District

The teachers, parents and staff of the middle school in cooperation with the Warwick community are dedicated to understanding the unique developmental needs of the middle level child while facilitating and nurturing the transition from childhood to adolescence. We are committed to providing a variety of experiences where learning is valued and differences are accepted in order to ensure the development of each student's intellectual, physical and social growth.

WASHINGTONVILLE CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
Washingtonville Central School District

We are committed to the intellectual, physical and emotional growth of our children in a safe and supportive environment. We believe that our primary responsibility is to educate all students to reach their greatest potential. We desire to have our students acquire knowledge, understanding and appreciation of nature and civilization. We endeavor to teach students the skills to make choices and develop talents that build self-esteem. It is our challenge that the students of the Washingtonville Central School District become caring, contributing members of the community, the nation and the world.

**WILLIAM T. ROGERS MIDDLE SCHOOL
Kings Park Central School District**

Building on the basic skills acquired in elementary school, students will explore expanded curriculum while becoming more self-directed in preparation for high school and responsible entrance into the community. The William T. Rogers Middle School exists to provide a learning environment in which all individuals are afforded varied opportunities to develop their potential. Further, it is our mission to develop a student-centered program that addresses the intellectual, societal, emotional, and developmental needs of youth in transition in our democratic society.

**W. K. DOYLE MIDDLE SCHOOL
Troy City School District**

In keeping with the Motto of the Middle School “**Growing, Learning, Sharing**”:

The Middle School will offer a balanced, comprehensive and success-oriented curriculum. The Middle School will provide a sensitive, caring, supportive learning environment that will provide those experiences that will assist in making the transition from late childhood to adolescence, thereby helping each individual to bridge the gap between the self-contained structure of the elementary school and the departmental structure of the high school.

The Middle School curriculum will continue to be specialized in the curriculums that demand such in relation to the Regents Action Plan and exploration in the curriculums that lend themselves to exploration. Curriculum programs should emphasize the natural relationship among academic disciplines that facilitate cohesive learning experiences through interactive themes, topics and units.

The delivery system for curriculum and program will take place in the form of a team approach to instruction. Whereas six balanced teams will be established consisting of Math,

Social Studies, Science, Language Arts and Foreign Language. It is the intent to have three teams at each grade level (Grades 7 & 8). Courses of Physical Education, Health, Home & Careers, Technology, Music, Art, Band, Chorus will be delivered out of team. It is also the intent to house one Special Ed class in each of the six team clusters and to have the Special Ed program be part of team design where situations and topics permit. It is our intent to have each discipline maintain its individual integrity and become part and parcel of every team as situations permit.

The Middle School will be a program of planned learning experiences for the students. The three major components of the Middle School program are:

- 1) subject content
- 2) personal development
- 3) essential skills

Thus—**“Growing, Learning, Sharing”**

Mission Statement

The W. Kenneth Doyle Middle School exists as a learning environment that promotes harmony in the middle grades, with the understanding that the early adolescent has unique needs. This environment provides a student-centered program fostering the self-worth of each child by meeting his/her physical, academic, social-emotional, and organizational needs.

The school-within-a-school team approach to instruction assures that equal opportunity exists for each student to be challenged to the fullest extent of his/her ability. Upon leaving our middle school community, the young lady or gentleman will have bridged the gap between the protected and directed structure of the elementary school to the independent and self-reliant atmosphere of the high school.

February 14, 1996

Footnotes

- ¹ Proverbs xxix. 18
- ² Lewis Carroll. *Alice in Wonderland*, comments of the Cheshire Cat to Alice upon her request for directions after admitting she didn't know where she wanted to go.
- ³ Roland Barth. "Coming to a Vision." *Journal of Staff Development*. Volume 14; No. 1 (Winter 1993). pp. 6-9.
- ⁴ National Association of Secondary School Principals. *Developing a Mission Statement for the Middle-Level School*. Reston, VA: NASSP, 1987. p. 2.
- ⁵ Thomas E. Hart. *LONG RANGE PLANNING: School Districts Prepare for the Future*. Oregon School Study Council, Volume 31, No. 5 (January 1988). pp. 8-9.
- ⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 7-9.
- ⁷ William Rauhauser. *SDM Manual*. p. 46.
- ⁸ Roger Kaufman and Jerry Herman. *Strategic Planning in Education: rethinking, restructuring, revitalizing*. Technomic Publishing Company, Inc: Lancaster, PA. 1991. p. 113.
- ⁹ Richard Lodish. "Developing a Mission Statement," *Here's How*. National Association of Elementary School Principals: Alexandria, VA. Volume 10; No. 4 (February 1992). p. 1.
- ¹⁰ Rauhauser, *ibid.*
- ¹¹ Lodish, *ibid.*
- ¹² *Developing a Mission Statement for the Middle Level School, ibid.*
- ¹³ *Developing a Mission Statement for the Middle Level School, ibid.*
- ¹⁴ The Organization Development Planner from Key Solutions, designed for New York State Schools and Districts. Supported by a Goals 2000 grant to the Erie 1 BOCES.
- ¹⁵ *Developing a Mission Statement for the Middle Level School*, Preface.

