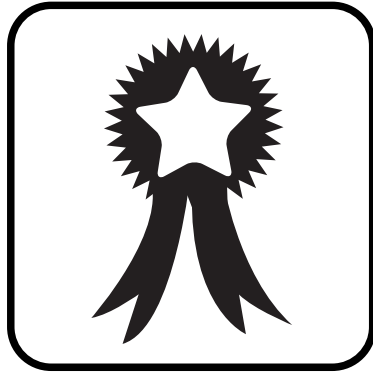


THIS WE BELIEVE

Keys To Educating Young Adolescents



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16 Characteristics Identified in

This We Believe - Keys to Educating Young Adolescents

Created by National Middle School Association | Association for Middle Level Education

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Characteristics

- » Educators value young adolescents and are prepared to teach them
- » Students and teachers are engaged in active, purposeful learning
- » Curriculum is challenging, exploratory, integrative, and relevant
- » Educators use multiple learning and teaching approaches
- » Varied and ongoing assessments advance learning as well as measure it

Leadership and Organization

- » A shared vision developed by all stakeholders guide every decision
- » Leaders are committed to and knowledgeable about this age group, educational research, and best practices
- » Leaders demonstrate courage and collaboration
- » Ongoing professional development reflects best educational practices
- » Organizational structures foster purposeful learning and meaningful relationships

Culture and Community

- » The school environment is inviting, safe, inclusive, and supportive of all
- » Every student's academic and personal development is guided by an adult advocate
- » Comprehensive guidance and support services meet the needs of young adolescents
- » Health and wellness are supported in curricula, school-wide programs, and related policies
- » The school actively involves families in the education of their children
- » The school includes community and business partners

Ideas and Overview

Educators value young adolescents and are prepared to teach them

- » Stay connected to young adolescent fads, fashion, music, trends, and slang
- » Understanding of current movies, television, and music and how they access those pieces of entertainment
- » Keep aware of technology trends
- » Use of humor and patience
- » DRAMA or real life drama
- » We are in many cases the most stable person in an adolescent's life
- » Student ownership and choice
- » Current certification laws
- » Teacher training for middle level
- » Understanding adolescent development
- » No longer accepting K-12 training—must have middle level focus
- » Pushing departments of education and higher learning to offer more middle level programs

Students and teachers are engaged in active, purposeful learning

ACTIVITY:

- » How would someone witness active and engaged learning in your school?
List 5-7 examples.
- » Define active and engaged learning.
- » Is this really happening in our middle schools?
- » How often are students placed in the role of being the teacher?

Ideas and Overview, cont.

Students and teachers are engaged in active, purposeful learning

ACTIVITY:

- » Why are we as middle level educators apprehensive about hands on learning and differentiated instruction?
- » Describe a typical professional development opportunity offered by your school or school district.
- » What three reasons prevent middle level educators from embracing technology in the classroom?

Curriculum is challenging, exploratory, integrative, and relevant

- » Middle schools are seeing a decrease in the exploratory offering for young adolescents
- » Adolescents have a high desire to participate in clubs, interest groups, music, sports, student government, and drama productions
- » Taking away electives and exploratory classes does not increase student morale and motivation
- » Most middle schools could add mini courses to their school programs at little or no cost to students of the community
- » Teachers sometimes use the “Shield of Standards” as a prevention to be creative with their curriculum
- » In many exemplary middle schools, curriculum is often carried out in units of study or projects
- » Parallel teaching is a great middle level teaching strategy
- » Great middle school curriculum challenges middle school students to be creative and innovative while increasing their need for independence

Ideas and Overview, cont.

Leaders are committed to and knowledgeable about this age group, educational research, and best practices

ACTIVITY:

- » Are we faced with a shortage of qualified middle level leaders?
- » What is your school or school district doing to make sure that middle level leaders become principals?
- » Do school districts still promote principals to middle level without any middle level experience? Is that fair to the principal, the school or staff?

Ongoing professional development reflects the best educational practices

- » Middle level teachers want professional development that is delivered by those who understand and can relate to young adolescents
- » Professional development should be long term and job embedded, not based on current fad or trend that has no bearing on the lives of young adolescents
- » Middle level teachers appreciate presenters who provide practical ideas, a solid research base, and humor

ACTIVITY:

- » Create the perfect professional development day for your school.

An adult advocate guides every student's academic and personal development

- » It is all about building appropriate relationships within the school
- » If students have someone at the school who appreciates them, understands them, and cares for them, their academic achievement will increase
- » Middle schools have walked away from advisory
- » Student advocacy happens everyday

Ideas and Overview, cont.

An adult advocate guides every student's academic and personal development

- » Every middle school student needs to have one adult in the building who will be their advocate
- » Creating teacher advisors is one method to maintain an advocacy role within the school

ACTIVITY:

- » What are other ways to maintain an advocacy program within your school?
- » How would you rate your school in the area of student advocacy?

Health and wellness are supported in curricula, school-wide programs and related policies

- » Federal pressure to change school meals and vending machines
- » Better choices in school cafeteria
- » Teachers banning candy as a reward—try animal crackers, middle school kids love biting the legs off the animals and then eating the cracker
- » Gold fish as a snack
- » Water breaks and water bottles
- » Coordinated health programs
- » Prevention programs—bullying, anger management, and conflict resolution
- » Role of the guidance counselor needs to change

Sections taken from *This We Believe—Keys to Educating Young Adolescents*—some ideas are not mentioned in the publication.



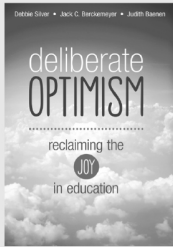
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Contact Jack directly for special pricing!



A nationally-recognized presenter, author, and humorist, Jack Berckemeyer began his career as a middle school teacher in Denver, Colorado. After two years of teaching, he was named an outstanding educator at his school, and shortly thereafter, he was identified as one of the outstanding educators in the district. In 2003, he received the Outstanding Alumni Award from Falcon School District. Jack brings his energy, humor and expertise to all staff development as he helps teachers and administrators remember why their jobs make a difference.

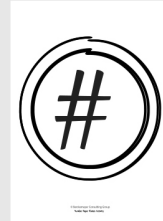
Jack Berckemeyer is known for his motivational, practical ideas that bring hope, laughter, and insight about the nature of young adolescents. Jack lives in Denver, Colorado and has no pets or plants.



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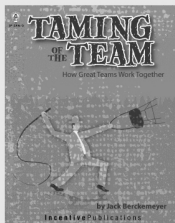
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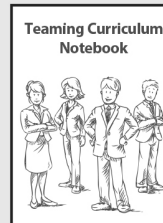
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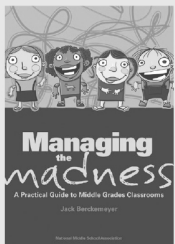
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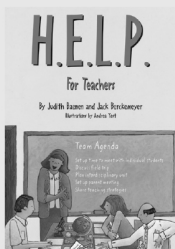
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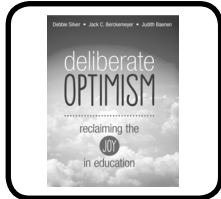
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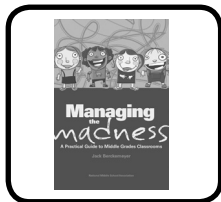
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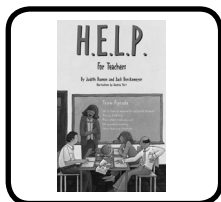
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