



The Community School

A Position Paper of the New England League of Middle Schools

New England League of Middle Schools believes that all within the community have a responsibility to support student learning. The community must be a part of the school entity and conversely the school must be a part of the community. If learning is valued and necessary for all, a community of learners is established, developed and nurtured by all. The community school is a safe place for students and facilities and is shared by all.

NELMS recognizes that the extended team in the middle level school is comprised of teachers, students, parents, and representative community members. Parents and community members should be involved in school planning, the development of a mission statement, and the implementation of school curriculum. Parents and educators should be mutually supportive in helping each student develop individual learning goals. Clearly, then, parents and community can become active, dynamic partners in enhancing the educational experiences of students.

The community benefits from an effective learning place and a strong school. If the youth from the community are better prepared to be active, respectful members of a greater community, then positive connections to service and the common good are created. Young adolescents, who see themselves connected, go beyond group loyalties see the relationships of connectedness that make a community a special place. Communities and schools that effectively prepare students for the future will have in the future, a plethora of citizens willing to help and participate in the affairs of the community.

NELMS advocates the development of:

- An expanded knowledge base so that teachers, students and administrators may see more clearly the value of community schooling and take a leadership role in its development.
- Sustained relationships with business and industry so that they may become mutually engaged as dynamic partners in the community school.
- School improvement which involves teams and members from the community when appropriate in the planning and implementation processes.
- Partnerships with other community organizations that foster the implementation of the vision of an effective middle school.
- Students who learn about the community through observation, study, service and meaningful work in agencies, business, government and educational facilities.
- Appropriate training for staff, parents, and community members to enable them to work cooperatively and to ensure productive work which results in significant student learning.

Many tasks can be accomplished by active participation of the community in the school environment. This occurs when community members collaborate with educators to provide quality learning experiences for learners.

Ways that educators and communities can increase student learning include:

- advising students
- arranging for guest presentations
- assisting in the assessment of student learning
- attending school functions
- hosting student study and research
- learning alongside students
- mentoring students
- participating in parent education programs
- participating in the school planning process
- participating in training sessions to serve on steering committees
- providing financial resources
- providing human resources
- teaching in teams
- tutoring
- sharing career experiences

Through conferences, seminars, publications, fieldwork and networking, the New England League of Middle Schools will serve as a catalyst for action so that these beliefs become a major part of effective middle level education.

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