



"It's all about learning!"

## The New England League of Middle Schools

### *Position Statement on Middle Level Teacher Licensure*

The New England League of Middle Schools (NELMS) believes that the adoption of a consistently recognized middle level teacher's license is critically important for the proper education of young adolescents. We also believe that students aged ten to fourteen present educators with a unique set of challenges not found at other age levels. To address these needs, middle level teachers should receive appropriate preparation as well as certification and licensure reflecting this comprehensive preparation.

Ten to fourteen year olds comprise fully one third of the entire K-12 student population. These years comprise a time of tremendous personal, physical, and intellectual development. NELMS believes that educators working with this unique population should receive preparation specifically designed to address age appropriate needs and therefore earn licensure that denotes this unique preparation.

Most states have teacher licensure specifically designed for high school and the elementary levels of schooling. Most have specific certification requirements for early childhood education as well as a wide array of other special areas. While some do have endorsements specifically for middle level educators, no New England state has a specific, exclusive, and required license for all individuals teaching at this level.

NELMS believes that the result is, at best, a disappointing assortment of inadequate regulations and less than desirable practices in many classrooms for students in grades five to eight. Despite over thirty-five years of professional research, literature, and discussion relative to the needs of early adolescent students, the present licensure is not informed by such research or recognized best educational practices.

The purpose of this position paper is to bring clarity, reason, research, and practitioner-based experience to this issue in an effort to better prepare middle level educators and thus improve learning for our ten to fourteen year old students.

The New England League of Middle Schools endorses and supports the position statements of the National Middle School Association and the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform. While not addressing licensure directly, both statements represent the current research and best practices upon which NELMS believes middle level licensure should be based.\*

NELMS believes each New England state should have teacher licensure that:

- is specifically required for educators who work with ten to fourteen year olds in any grade five, six, seven, or eight school configuration.
- includes preparation that focuses on the nature of young adolescent development, curricular planning, teaching, and assessment, and middle level concepts, philosophy, and organization.
- is a comprehensive, separate, and distinct licensure or certification with no "overlapping" of grades with other levels.
- includes at least sixteen weeks of successful field experience educating young adolescents.
- encompasses two or more standards based content areas of mathematics, language arts, science, social studies, and/or interdisciplinary/integrative curriculum and pedagogy within course requirements associated with a teaching degree.
- requires those teaching in the unified arts areas, such as physical education, art, health, music, family and consumer science, technology education, etc. or special education areas, be required to successfully complete at least three university level courses (Nature and Needs of Young Adolescents, Middle Level School Organization, and Curriculum and Instruction at the Middle Level) as well as at least one successful eight week field experience educating young adolescents.
- incorporates the concepts and ideas contained in this position statement as the basis for licensure renewal.

The New England League of Middle Schools believes that these basic tenants must be adopted by each state. We further believe that this clear statement will assist states to better define and develop middle level teacher licensure inevitably leading to improved learning for the ten to fourteen years old students in our schools.

(\* The National Middle School Association and the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform statements are available on line at nelms.org.)