



"It's all about learning!"

Middle Level Administrator Licensure

A Position Paper

of the

New England League of Middle Schools

The New England League of Middle Schools (NELMS) believes that the adoption of a consistently recognized middle level license for middle level administrators is critically important for the proper education of young adolescents. We also believe that students aged ten to fourteen present school leaders with a unique set of challenges not found at other ages.

Ten to fourteen year olds comprise fully one third of the entire K-12 student population. These critical years are a time of tremendous personal, physical, and intellectual development. 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 to provide a strong academic program that is developmentally responsive and academically vigorous.

NELMS believes that the pervasive lack of attention and recognition for effective teaching, learning environments, and research based practices, results in an ineffective array of less than desirable practices in too 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 for either teachers or administrators is not informed by research or recognized effective educational practices.

NELMS believes that educational leaders who work with this unique population should receive preparation specifically designed to provide effective leadership based on a deep understanding of age appropriate instructional and organizational research based practices. Therefore, educational leaders who work with young adolescents should earn licensure that certifies this unique preparation. Most states have teacher licensure specifically designed for high school and the elementary levels of schooling. While some do have endorsements specifically for middle level educators, no New England state has a specific, exclusive, and required license for either teachers or administrators at this level.

NELMS believes each New England state should have building level administrative licensure that:

- Is specifically required for administrators who lead in schools with ten to fourteen year olds in any grade five, six, seven, or eight school configuration.
- Includes a deep understanding of middle level concepts, philosophy, and organization that enhance student learning for young adolescents and supports meaningful relationships.
- Includes preparation for effective leadership based on the needs of young adolescent learners that are reflected in school, grade level, and team based curriculum planning, instruction, and assessment, that is vigorous, integrative, exploratory and relevant and reflects a knowledge of differentiation, learning style and modality.
- Includes effective teaming practices and other appropriate middle level school organizational practices.
- Includes a field experience of at least sixteen weeks in a school or schools that educate young adolescents and adheres to middle level concepts, philosophy, organization and practices.
- Develops the necessary skills of effective leadership for a team environment and the development of a shared vision that guides decisions for the community of learners includes administrators, teachers, students, and parents.
- Develops communication skills that can build understanding for middle level strategies to every member of the learning community as advocate for effective middle level practices and schools.

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 administrative licensure that will inevitably lead to improved learning for the ten to fourteen years old students in our schools.

New England League of Middle Schools