

**Rubrics for the
Essential Elements of Standards-Focused Middle-Level Schools and Programs**
(Summer 2004)

developed by:
The New York State Education Department's Middle-Level Education Program
in collaboration with
The New York State Middle School Association & The Statewide Network of Middle-Level Education Liaisons

The *Essential Elements of Standards Focused Middle Schools and Programs* describe the expectations for middle level programs in New York State. There are seven elements; the entire *Essential Elements* document is available as a Microsoft Word document at nysmsa.org:

- A philosophy and mission that reflect the intellectual and developmental needs and characteristics of young adolescents (youth 10-14 years of age).
- An educational program that is comprehensive, challenging, purposeful, integrated, relevant, and standards-based.
- An organization and structure that support both academic excellence and personal development.
- Classroom instruction appropriate to the needs and characteristics of young adolescents provided by skilled and knowledgeable teachers.
- Strong educational leadership and a building administration that encourage, facilitate, and sustain involvement, participation, and partnerships.
- A network of academic and personal support available for all students.
- Professional learning and staff development for all staff that are ongoing, planned, purposeful, and collaboratively developed.

The *Essential Elements* were developed as a coherent set of guidelines for middle schools. The *Essential Elements* are more than guidelines, however. They are research-based and increased student achievement has been connected to greater implementation of the *Essential Elements*. These rubrics are intended as a resource to schools that want to assess their implementation of the *Essential Elements*. Behavior manifestations are being collected for each component of the rubric; future iterations of the rubrics will include these behavior manifestations.

1. A philosophy and mission that reflect the intellectual and developmental needs and characteristics of young adolescents.				
Criteria	1	2	3	4
1.a The degree to which the shared beliefs of the school and staff reflect developing the whole child, intellectually, academically, personally, socially, physically, emotionally and ethically.	School and staff operate with an apparent lack of regard for the development of the whole child.	School and staff operate inconsistently regarding the development of the whole child. Certain aspects of child development are emphasized more than others.	School and staff act on their shared beliefs of the development of the whole child by highlighting adolescents' intellectual, academic, social, physical, emotional and ethical development.	School and staff actively promote and advocate the development of the whole child within and outside the school. The larger school community shares and supports these beliefs.
1.b The degree to which the school and staff work together to ensure that all students achieve at high levels and develop as individuals.	There are no collaborative efforts to ensure that all students achieve at high levels and/or develop as individuals.	School and staff work with each other on occasion to help selected students achieve at high levels and/or develop as individuals.	School and staff regularly work together to promote students' achievement and individual development. These efforts favor some students more than others.	School and staff purposefully promote all students' achievement and success and individual development.
1.c The degree to which the school and staff accept – individually and collectively – responsibility for the educational and personal development of each and every student.	School and staff– individually and collectively – do not assume responsibility for the educational and personal development of each and every student.	School and staff– individually and collectively – accept responsibility for enacting policies and programs, but not for their effectiveness in promoting students' success.	School and staff– individually and collectively – understand the direct link between their programs and practices and students' learning. These efforts favor some students more than others.	School and staff implement programs, policies and practices based on their success in promoting each student's learning. Individually and collectively, they accept responsibility for the educational and personal development of each and every student.

1. A philosophy and mission that reflect the intellectual and developmental needs and characteristics of young adolescents (con't).

Criteria	1	2	3	4
1.d The degree to which the school ensures each student a safe, inviting, trusting and mutually respectful learning environment that offers both physical and psychological safety.	The school environment is unsafe and threatening for staff and students..	The school environment focuses primarily on discipline and student management issues.	The school environment primarily focuses on learning with occasional disruptions by behavior management issues.	The environment of the school is safe, inviting and trusting promoting the focus to be on learning. Staff and students are mutually respectful. - Misbehaviors are primarily minor and minimally disruptive.
1.e The degree to which the school community models caring and respectful interactions with students and with other adults.	The school community does not encourage caring and respectful interactions.	The school community encourages students to be respectful and caring of each other and of other adults.	The school community creates a respectful, caring sense of community in the students and other adults with whom they interact.	The school community operates in a culture where respect and caring for one another are pervasive.
1.f The degree to which the school and staff accept responsibility for providing a successful transition from the elementary grades to the middle grades to the high school grades and from childhood to adolescence.	Organized efforts to assist young adolescents in making these transitions are nonexistent.	Organized efforts by the school and staff to assist young adolescents in making these transitions are sporadic and generally initiated by a few staff members, an individual team, or a single department.	Organized efforts by the school and staff to assist young adolescents in making these transitions, while thoughtfully planned and implemented by the whole school, reflect an unequal emphasis on either the grade-to-grade transitions or the transition from childhood to adolescence.	Organized efforts by the school and staff to assist young adolescents in making these transitions are purposefully planned and implemented by the whole school and provide balanced attention to both the grade to grade transitions and the transition from childhood to adolescence.

2. An educational program that is comprehensive, challenging, purposeful, relevant, integrated, and standards-based.

Criteria	1	2	3	4
2a. The degree to which the middle-level educational program emphasizes the intellectual, social, personal, physical, and ethical development of young adolescents	<p>i. The school program does not meet the intellectual, social, personal, physical, or ethical needs of the students.</p> <p>ii. Teachers' lessons do not meet the intellectual or the social/personal/physical/ ethical needs of students.</p>	<p>i. The school program emphasizes only one the needs: intellectual, social, personal, physical or ethical.</p> <p>ii. Teachers' lessons emphasize only one of the needs: intellectual or the social/personal/physical/ ethical needs of the students.</p>	<p>i. The school program addresses both intellectual and social/ personal/ physical/ethical needs of the students. One of these two areas is consistently emphasized over the other.</p> <p>ii. Most teachers' lessons address intellectual and social, personal, physical, and ethical needs of students.</p>	<p>i. A balanced comprehensive program that is intentionally designed to meet each student's intellectual and social/ personal/ physical/ ethical needs in the context of supporting his or her academic success.</p> <p>ii. Teachers regularly and intentionally design lessons that take into account each student's intellectual, social, personal, physical and ethical needs.</p>
2.b The degree to which the middle-level educational program is challenging, rigorous, and meaningful and reflective of the 28 Learning Standards	<p>i. Teachers design or plan lessons that lack rigor, engagement and meaningfulness and do not reflect the Standards.</p> <p>ii. Students perceive much of their learning in school as irrelevant, boring and meaningless.</p>	<p>i. Teachers design or plan lessons that are either rigorous and meaningful or are connected to the Learning Standards, but not both.</p> <p>ii. Students perceive their learning in school to be too difficult, too easy, insufficiently connected to their lives or unchallenging to their intellect.</p>	<p>i. Teachers design or plan lessons for their classes that are rigorous and meaningful and address their own content Learning Standards.</p> <p>ii. Most students perceive their learning to be relevant and meaningful to their lives and challenging to their intellect.</p>	<p>i. Teachers design or plan differentiated lessons to provide challenging, rigorous, and meaningful learning for all students and integrate all Learning Standards.</p> <p>ii. All students perceive their learning as both relevant and meaningful to their lives and challenging to their intellect.</p>

2. An educational program that is comprehensive, challenging, purposeful, relevant, integrated, and standards-based (con't).

Criteria	1	2	3	4
<p>2.c The degree to which the middle-level educational program includes common learning skills to increase student achievement across all grades and subjects (e.g. how to plan, study, conduct research and read for understanding)</p>	<p>i. Teachers' practices are isolated and individualistic. No set of common learning skills has been adopted.</p> <p>ii. Teachers do not instruct students in the use of common learning skills.</p> <p>iii. Students' work reflects teachers' isolated and individualistic behaviors.</p>	<p>i. Teams or other sets of teachers have adopted a set of common learning skills intended to increase students learning.</p> <p>ii. Teachers occasionally instruct students in the use of these common learning skills or emphasize them inconsistently in their assignments.</p> <p>iii. Students' work occasionally reflects the use of these common learning skills.</p>	<p>i. The faculty as a whole has adopted a set of common learning skills intended to increase students' learning.</p> <p>ii. Teachers instruct students in the use of common learning skills across assignments.</p> <p>iii. Students' work reflects their common learning skills.</p>	<p>i. The faculty as a whole routinely examines and refines the common learning skills in light of students' learning.</p> <p>ii. Teachers consistently instruct students in the use of common learning skills and reinforce their application.</p> <p>iii. Students independently apply these common learning skills on a consistent basis.</p>

2. An educational program that is comprehensive, challenging, purposeful, relevant, integrated, and standards-based (con't).

Criteria	1	2	3	4
<p>2.d The degree to which the middle-level educational program has common performance expectations across all grades and subject area (e.g. using complete sentences; using standard English in school; following directions without multiple prompts, note-taking, graphic organizers, reading for understanding, writing in the content areas, using agendas, etc.)</p>	<p>i. A set of common performance expectations has not been identified nor agreed upon by teachers.</p> <p>ii. Teachers instruct their students to meet what appears to be a wide range of performance expectations, some of which seem arbitrary.</p> <p>iii. Students depend exclusively on their teachers to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their own work.</p>	<p>i. Teams or other groups of teachers have adopted a limited set of common performance expectations for students.</p> <p>ii. Teachers emphasize these common expectations occasionally or inconsistently in their assignments.</p> <p>iii. Students analyze their own work in a cursory manner and depend primarily on their teachers to identify their strengths and weaknesses.</p>	<p>i. The faculty as a whole has adopted a set of common performance expectations for students.</p> <p>ii. Teachers instruct students in the use of these common expectations across assignments.</p> <p>iii. Students analyze their own work, reflect on their progress, and identify their strengths and weaknesses in a very limited context (i.e. math, PE)</p>	<p>i. The faculty as a whole routinely examines and refines a set of common performance expectations for students with student input.</p> <p>ii. Teachers consistently instruct students in the use of these expectations and reinforce their application through assignments.</p> <p>iii. Students routinely and independently analyze their own work in various subjects against the criteria, reflect on their progress and identify their own strengths and weaknesses.</p>

2. An educational program that is comprehensive, challenging, purposeful, relevant, integrated, and standards-based (con't).

Criteria	1	2	3	4
2.e The degree to which the middle-level educational program emphasizes reading, writing and mathematics (literacy and numeracy) across all subject areas	<p>i. Literacy and numeracy are considered to be the sole responsibility of the content specialists.</p> <p>ii. Content area teachers do not understand literacy as it relates to their content areas.</p> <p>iii. Reading and writing instruction occurs only in ELA/reading classes.</p> <p>iv. Content area teachers do not understand numeracy as it relates to their content areas.</p> <p>v. Numeracy instruction occurs only in mathematics classes.</p>	<p>i. Teachers across content areas minimize their responsibility for the development of literacy and numeracy skills in their students.</p> <p>ii. Content area teachers' understanding of literacy is limited to a narrow band of skills (e.g. mechanics).</p> <p>iii. Literacy instruction by content area teachers is limited to a narrow band of skills (e.g. sounding out words, writing in complete sentences).</p> <p>iv. Content area teachers have limited understanding of numeracy as it related to their content areas.</p> <p>v. Application of numeracy skills is isolated and individualistic in content areas other than math.</p>	<p>i. Teachers across all content areas understand their responsibility for the development of literacy and numeracy skills in their students.</p> <p>ii. Content area teachers understand the nature of literacy in their content areas.</p> <p>iii. Content area teachers instruct students in literacy skills for their content area (e.g. strategies for reading science text; strategies for writing word problems in mathematics).</p> <p>iv. Content area teachers understand numeracy skills as they relate to their content areas (mathematical reasoning, problem solving, ordering, patterns, etc.).</p> <p>v. Content area teachers apply numeracy skills and connect them to their lessons (e.g. applying the numeracy skill of ordering to the creation of a time line in social studies).</p>	<p>i. Teachers across all content areas share responsibility for the development of literacy and numeracy skills in their students.</p> <p>ii. Content area teachers understand the nature of literacy in their content areas, as defined by best practice.</p> <p>iii. Content area teachers explicitly instruct students in literacy skills for their content area and routinely embed these skills in their lessons.</p> <p>iv. Content area teachers understand numeracy skills and concepts to be an integral part of their content area.</p> <p>v. Content area teachers apply numeracy skills and concepts and explicitly connect them meaningful real world experiences.</p>

2. An educational program that is comprehensive, challenging, purposeful, relevant, integrated, and standards-based (con't).

Criteria	1	2	3	4
<p>2.f The degree to which the middle-level educational program includes ongoing Standards-based assessments</p>	<p>i. Program includes assessments that are not based on the State Learning Standards.</p> <p>ii. School/classroom assessments are based on teachers' own individual criteria or standards and are not based on the demands of the NYS assessments.</p> <p>iii. Teachers rely heavily on traditional summative testing.</p> <p>iv. Assessment data are not utilized to inform program or instructional decisions.</p>	<p>i. Program includes limited summative assessments in one or more disciplines that address the State Learning Standards.</p> <p>ii. Few school/classroom assessments are based on the demands of the NYS assessments.</p> <p>iii. Teachers rely on traditional testing for their summative measures but may include isolated performances, products and processes as well.</p> <p>iv. Teachers rely on one form of assessment data to make program and instructional decisions.</p>	<p>i. Program includes summative assessments in all core disciplines that address the State Learning Standards.</p> <p>ii. Some school/classroom assessments reflect selected NYS assessment demands, through the use of parallel forms of the test and test simulations.</p> <p>iii. Teachers use a variety of assessment measures, including processes, performances and products, although some emphasize testing more than other measures.</p> <p>iv. Teachers use diagnostic measures selectively to improve program and instruction.</p>	<p>i. The middle-level program includes assessments in all disciplines that address the State Learning Standards.</p> <p>ii. School/classroom assessments have been designed to reflect the demands and support students' attainment of the NYS assessments.</p> <p>iii. Teachers use a variety of diagnostic, formative and summative assessment measures that address varied students' learning styles and needs.</p> <p>iv. Standards-based assessment data are used routinely to make program and instructional decisions</p>

2. An educational program that is comprehensive, challenging, purposeful, relevant, integrated, and standards-based (con't).

Criteria	1	2	3	4
2.g The degree to which content areas are integrated and articulated vertically and horizontally within and across various curricular areas, Learning Standards and grade levels	Each discipline or content area is viewed completely independent from other disciplines and content areas and grade levels.	Occasionally, deliberate connections are made between disciplines, subject areas and grade levels.	Teachers regularly design and implement interdisciplinary assignments or they use approaches that allow students to see content connections across subject areas and grade levels.	Content areas and Learning Standards are consistently integrated vertically and horizontally so that knowledge and the acquisition of skills and knowledge are the natural focus of instruction or program rather than specific subjects or disciplines.

2. An educational program that is comprehensive, challenging, purposeful, relevant, integrated, and standards-based (con't).

Criteria	1	2	3	4
<p>2.h The degree to which the middle-level educational program involves family, community, and the world outside the school in the development of young adolescents</p>	<p>i. Parents and community are uninvolved in and uninformed about the middle-level program.</p> <p>ii. Parents and community feel alienated or threatened when contacted by school.</p> <p>iii. Parents and community feel detached from their young adolescents.</p> <p>iv. All student learning occurs within the school building.</p>	<p>i. Parents and community have little involvement in the school program, limited to one or more isolated events.</p> <p>ii. Parents and community feel disconnected from the school “community”.</p> <p>iii. Parents and community have little investment in understanding and meeting the developmental needs of their young adolescents within their school.</p> <p>iv. Student formal learning outside the school building is limited to isolated assignments.</p>	<p>i. Parents and community are involved in the school program, but not necessarily in their students’ learning.</p> <p>ii. Parents and community are welcomed into the school when they are willing to assume selected roles or functions.</p> <p>iii. Parents and community seek assistance in understanding and meeting the developmental needs of their young adolescents.</p> <p>iv. Student formal learning takes place outside the school building through selected assignments and joint endeavors with the community.</p>	<p>i. Parents and community are integrally involved in students’ learning.</p> <p>ii. Parents and community are sought by the school as critical players and partners in the development of the whole child.</p> <p>iii. The school invests time and energy in involving parents and community members in formal and informal experiences that will help parents understand and meet the developmental needs of their young adolescents.</p> <p>iv. Student learning in school is consistently extended to the community.</p>

3. An organization and structure that supports both academic excellence and personal development.				
Criteria	1	2	3	4
3.a The degree to which middle level grades are configured to promote the Essential Elements of a middle level program (grades 5-8)	There is no deliberate configuration to support a middle level program.	The middle level program is limited to two grade levels.	The middle level program includes three of the four middle level grades.	There is a 5-8 middle grade configuration designed to promote a middle level program.
3.b The degree to which the middle level program is structured to promote a sense of belonging to reduce the feeling of anonymity and isolation among students.	<p>a. There are no interdisciplinary teams.</p> <p>b. A sense of self-contained communities, i.e. houses, is missing.</p> <p>c. Staff actions do not promote a sense of community or belonging.</p>	<p>a. The school program recognizes that teams should exist, but efforts to create effective interdisciplinary teams are minimal or ineffective.</p> <p>b. A sense of team community is based on cosmetic effects in the building.</p> <p>c. Students and staff share instructional space with other teams but there is little or no investment in creating a sense of community or meeting individual student needs.</p>	<p>a. The school program is organized with effective interdisciplinary teams.</p> <p>b. The layout of the school suggests the presence of a team community.</p> <p>c. The school organization promotes team unity and a group identity for all students and staff.</p>	<p>a. The school program is organized with students and staff playing active roles in effective interdisciplinary teams.</p> <p>b. The sense of team community is established through strategic layout and arrangement in the building.</p> <p>c. The school organization promotes a sense of family and ensures that students are viewed as individuals and receive personal attention. There is synergy between practices and behaviors and a clear sense of identity.</p>

3. An organization and structure that supports both academic excellence and personal development (con't).

Criteria	1	2	3	4
3.c The degree to which the teams in the school are structured to create close, sustained relationships between students and teachers.	<p>i. The school is not organized in teams that promote the academic, social and emotional development of the group as a whole.</p> <p>ii. The focus of the school organization is solely on the delivery of instruction to the exclusion of creating close sustained relationships.</p>	<p>i. The school is organized in teams and houses that don't function as teams.</p> <p>ii. The focus of the school organization is to provide academic support with the creation of close sustained relationships left to individual teachers/staff.</p>	<p>i. The school is organized in teams that function collaboratively for academic purposes.</p> <p>ii. The focus of the school organization is to provide academic support. Personal/social needs of adolescents are addressed but not purposefully linked.</p>	<p>i. The school is organized in teams that promote the academic, social and emotional development of the group as a whole.</p> <p>ii. The focus of the program/school organization is to connect adult staff to individual students and their needs in an effort to provide academic support and address the personal/social/academic needs of adolescents.</p>
3.d The degree to which the school provides, for those students needing additional help to meet the State's standards, opportunities for additional time, instruction, and personal support (e.g., after school, before school, summer school, reduced class size, tutoring, pupil personnel services)	<p>i. The school provides limited formal opportunities for additional instruction for those students needing additional help in meeting the State's standards.</p> <p>ii. There is no written plan for delivering additional services nor are such services based on student achievement data.</p>	<p>i. Non-assigned student time is scheduled with instructional and non-instructional staff other than team teachers for students who need additional help.</p> <p>ii. There is a written plan for providing additional services, which are offered at the expense of other classes such as exploratories or specials. These services function separately from class work and may or may not be taught by qualified staff.</p>	<p>i. Non-assigned student time is scheduled for all students with appropriately certified instructional staff and may or may not be the team teachers.</p> <p>ii. There is a written plan for providing additional services which are offered by qualified staff and based on individual needs as reflected in selected content areas, i.e. math, ELA.</p>	<p>i. Non-assigned student time is scheduled for all students with qualified and effective teachers for the purpose of enrichment and/or academic support.</p> <p>ii. There is a coherent plan for delivering additional services based on student achievement and personal data. These additional services are data-driven and consistent with current class work, targeted to the individual needs of the students and offered without sacrificing current programs.</p>

3. An organization and structure that supports both academic excellence and personal development (con't).

Criteria	1	2	3	4
<p>3.e The degree to which the school establishes ties with the school community that strengthens connections between school/education and career opportunities.</p>	<p>i. The school organization does not recognize the school-to-work connection.</p> <p>ii. The school is separate from the business world and formal learning is assumed to exist only within school walls.</p>	<p>i. The school organization informally acknowledges the school-to-work connection by using isolated assignments and activities that expose students to the world of work outside school.</p> <p>ii. The school invites participation of outside community through sporadic guest speakers and/or once a year field trips without integrating activities into the curriculum.</p>	<p>i. The school organization encourages and develops school-to-work connections through career exploration done by individuals, teams or departments.</p> <p>ii. Students participate in limited career development opportunities and understand the varied post high school learning experiences that include business, vocational and higher education.</p> <p>iii. Family and community members share talents and skills to enhance curriculum and instruction with real world experiences in selected subjects and for very specific purposes.</p>	<p>i. The school organization promotes and encourages school-to-work connections and career exploration through an integrated curriculum approach that identifies, recognizes and creates experiences that connect their schoolwork with possible career choices.</p> <p>ii. Students have full access to career development opportunities in a variety of post high school learning locations through coordinated school experiences.</p> <p>iii. The school utilizes the talents and skills of family, community and business partners to promote an education that routinely extends beyond the school.</p>

3. An organization and structure that supports both academic excellence and personal development (con't).

Criteria	1	2	3	4
<p>3.f The degree to which the school promotes and encourages appropriate participation of pupils with disabilities in all curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.</p>	<p>i. Most students with disabilities have access to the curriculum. Selected students with disabilities have little or no access due to the way their disability is ignored by the program.</p> <p>ii. Students with disabilities are grouped homogeneously by teams and in an isolated fashion.</p> <p>iii. Teachers rarely differentiate instruction as a means of meeting the needs of their students.</p> <p>iv. Students with disabilities do not participate in any curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.</p>	<p>i. All students with disabilities have formal access to the curriculum.</p> <p>ii. Students with disabilities are grouped homogeneously by team, but teachers may, at times, group students by interest, style or using other criteria.</p> <p>iii. Teachers differentiate assessments as a means of meeting the needs of their students by providing students with choices on how to present their work.</p> <p>iv. Few students with disabilities participate in curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.</p>	<p>i. Students access to the curriculum is facilitated by the use of heterogeneous classes or by the reconfiguring of teams or teachers to classes.</p> <p>ii. Students, including students with disabilities, are grouped primarily heterogeneously by team.</p> <p>iii. Teachers use various instructional and assessment strategies designed to meet the needs of different students.</p> <p>iv. A majority of students with disabilities actively participate in curricular, co-and extra-curricular activities.but only with the encouragement of the special ed. staff.</p>	<p>i. Students' access with the curriculum is maximized by flexible grouping and varied teaching and co-teaching arrangements.</p> <p>ii. All students are grouped heterogeneously by team.</p> <p>iii. Teachers tap students' varied strengths and styles using a variety of instructional and assessment strategies to meet the needs of all of their students including those with disabilities.</p> <p>iv. The school staff promotes and encourages the participation of all students in curricular, co-and extra-curricular activities regardless of their circumstances.</p>

4. Classroom instruction appropriate to the needs and characteristics of young adolescents provided by skilled and knowledgeable teachers.

Criteria	1	2	3	4
4.a The degree to which teachers' instructional techniques and process are purposeful and strategic	i. Course, unit, and lesson objectives and teachers' techniques and processes seem idiosyncratic and lack direction or purpose.	i. Course, unit, and lesson objectives are organized around in appropriate criteria. ii. Teachers' instructional techniques and processes reflect these criteria leading to minimal or superficial understanding.	i. Course, unit, and lesson objectives are purposefully organized around concepts, themes, issues and/or standards. ii. Teachers' instructional techniques and processes support students' learning of these objectives promoting basic understanding.	i. Objectives and goals are clearly and publicly derived from National Standards, NYS Learning Standards performance indicators, and local curricula. ii. Teachers' instruction is designed to promote depth of understanding rather than breadth; instruction is strategically implemented and designed to challenge and encourage.
4.b The degree to which teachers' instructional techniques and process reflect the developmental characteristics of young adolescents	Teachers fail to recognize the unique characteristics and concomitant needs of young adolescents.	The teachers recognize developmental differences of early adolescents but instructional techniques and processes fail to reflect these differences.	The teachers know and understand the needs and developmental characteristics of young adolescents and use this knowledge when planning students' learning experiences.	The teachers have a comprehensive understanding of the continuum of developmental characteristics within the range of early adolescence. They consistently and effectively apply this knowledge of, and experience with, developmental characteristics of students to their instruction of students in the middle grades.

4. Classroom instruction appropriate to the needs and characteristics of young adolescents provided by skilled and knowledgeable teachers (con't).

Criteria	1	2	3	4
4.c The degree to which teachers' instructional practices reflect content knowledge and pedagogy	Teachers lack the content knowledge and the knowledge of instructional practices necessary to insure students can meet the Intermediate Standards.	Teachers have a minimal understanding of their content area. Teacher-directed instruction is more common than learner-centered practices.	Teachers have a solid understanding of their content area and emphasize a variety of student-centered approaches to their learning.	Teachers have a deep understanding of their subject matter and its connection to other content areas. Teachers rely on student-centered teaching and assessment practices and revisit these practices by examining them in light of students' learning.
4.d The degree to which teachers know and understand, the Learning Standards	Teachers are unfamiliar with their content standards and have not formally used them in their planning or teaching.	Teachers know and understand NYS Learning Standards although there is little evidence of their presence in teachers' assessment. They either teach or assess the Standards.	Teachers know and understand the Learning Standards in their area and use them as a lens for deciding what to teach. They teach and assess the Standards.	Teachers consistently teach, assess and integrate the Standards during classroom discussions and other learning and assessment opportunities.
4.e The degree to which teachers utilize technology and other instructional technology	Teachers do not apply technology to instruction. If there are technologies in a classroom, it is exclusively for teacher use.	Teachers occasionally include technology as a part of instruction, but primarily as a special event.	Teachers use current technology to support and enhance teaching and learning through its use in selected teaching and assessment activities that are presentational in nature.	Teachers' application of current technology within instruction is seamless, learner-centered, and used as a tool or means to an end, rather than as an end in itself; technology is applied within the context of regular instruction rather than as a special event.

4. Classroom instruction appropriate to the needs and characteristics of young adolescents provided by skilled and knowledgeable teachers (con't).

Criteria	1	2	3	4
4.f The degree to which learning opportunities are rigorous and academically challenging	Instruction is focused almost exclusively on memorization of facts, terms, and algorithms.	Instruction is focused at the knowledge and comprehension levels, and students are rarely asked to apply or use what they learn.	Instruction is focused on thinking, reasoning, and problem solving as well as helping students acquire necessary content and skills.	Instruction demands that students search for in-depth understanding of what they are learning through systemic research and inquiry.
4.g The degree to which instructional groups are flexible	<p>i. Permanent homogeneous groups are used throughout the year.</p> <p>iv. Student grouping drives Master Schedule development</p>	<p>i. Students work in some homogeneous and some heterogeneous groups.</p> <p>ii. Group membership tends to remain the same throughout the year.</p> <p>iv. Students are primarily grouped by ability with some flexibility in changing group membership built into the Master Schedule.</p>	<p>i. Flexible grouping is used based upon student needs and interests.</p> <p>ii. Students change groups often, depending on their individual needs.</p> <p>iv. The Master Schedule provides opportunity for frequent re-grouping of students based on curriculum content, as well as, student needs and interests.</p>	<p>i. Instructional groups are productive and fully appropriate to the instructional goals of the lesson.</p> <p>ii. Groups change, depending on student progress, experience and individual needs and purposes of their program.</p> <p>iii. Students take the initiative to influence instructional groups to advance their learning.</p>

4. Classroom instruction appropriate to the needs and characteristics of young adolescents provided by skilled and knowledgeable teachers (con't).

Criteria	1	2	3	4
4.h The degree to which teachers exhibit a collaborative relationship and culture	Teachers plan and deliver learning experiences without regard for other content areas.	Teachers occasionally make deliberate interdisciplinary connections and/or collaborate on activities.	Teachers routinely make explicit interdisciplinary connections.	The content areas are integrated so seamlessly that students see and understand the interconnectedness of their learning.
4.i The degree to which teachers use student data, both personal and achievement, to make curricular and instructional decisions	<p>i. Teachers use only teacher-generated numerical data to make curricular and instructional decisions.</p> <p>ii. Accountability data are viewed as lacking usefulness and are disregarded by staff.</p> <p>iii. Curricular and instructional decisions are based on teacher preferences and past practice without reference to any data.</p>	<p>i. Teachers use multiple measures/data sources to make curricular and instructional decisions.</p> <p>ii. Accountability data are understood to be useful, but staff members don't know how to use them or don't know where to begin.</p> <p>iii. Curricular and instructional decisions tend to be based on teacher perception of need, as well as teacher preference and past practice.</p>	<p>i. Teachers use multiple measures/data sources to make curricular and instructional decisions. Instruction is designed to address groups of students' strengths and needs.</p> <p>ii. Accountability data are reviewed and used by teachers to ascertain program strengths and weaknesses.</p> <p>iii. Curricular and instructional decisions tend to be informed by a periodic review of program data.</p>	<p>i. Teachers' curricular and instructional decisions routinely reflect individual student interests, strengths, learning styles, and needs, as determined by the analysis of both personal and achievement data.</p> <p>ii. Multiple sources of data are used by staff on a regular basis to inform both instructional and program decisions.</p>

4. Classroom instruction appropriate to the needs and characteristics of young adolescents provided by skilled and knowledgeable teachers (con't).

Criteria	1	2	3	4
4.j The degree to the school communicates with the parents/guardians and community regarding student achievement	<p>i. There is an assessment process in place. Parents/guardians receive report cards at the end of each marking period. There is no process for conversations with parent/ guardians.</p> <p>ii. A yearly report is given to the community relating to school accountability information.</p>	<p>i. There is an assessment process in place. Parents receive reports cards and teachers communicate with parents/guardians regarding student achievement. Teachers provide opportunities for parent input regarding student progress.</p> <p>ii. School accountability information is discussed only at the faculty level.</p>	<p>i. The assessment process includes reporting student progress over time. Teachers seek parent input relating to student achievement.</p> <p>ii. There is a process for reporting school accountability information to a limited scope of stakeholders.</p>	<p>i. The assessment process includes reporting student progress over time, and teachers make suggestions for home-school collaboration.</p> <p>ii. There is an identifiable process for reporting school accountability information to all stakeholders.</p>

5. Strong educational leadership and a building administration that encourages, facilitates, and sustains involvement, participation, and partnerships.

Criteria	1	2	3	4
5.a The degree to which the educational leadership and building administration know and understand the Learning Standards and how they interrelate	The educational leadership and building administration operate with a lack of regard for the Standards.	The educational leadership and building administration explicitly promote a limited set of Standards (e.g. ELA, math) and/or promote the Standards with those staff who are “directly responsible” for teaching to them.	The educational leadership and building administration promote the integration of all 28 Learning Standards into other curricular areas.	The educational leadership and building administration promote and advocate the integration of the Standards into other curriculum areas, make reference to the Standards in classroom observation, actively promote cross-curricular reference to the Standards and provides schedules to support such integration.
5.b The degree to which the educational leadership and building administration know and understand the Essential Elements of a standards-focused, high performing middle-level school or middle-level program	The educational leadership and building administration operate with apparent disregard for the Essential Elements.	The educational leadership and building administration share and discuss the Essential Elements with faculty and community but lack implementation strategies.	The educational leadership and building administration are purposefully engaged in implementing the Essential Elements.	The educational leadership and building administration promote a culture that reflects the Essential Elements using them to continually self-assess, monitor progress, and make sound program decisions. The Essential Elements are used to provide a direction for continuous improvement.

5. Strong educational leadership and a building administration that encourages, facilitates, and sustains involvement, participation, and partnerships (con't).

Criteria	1	2	3	4
5.c The degree to which the educational leadership and building administration have an understanding of the subject matter in the middle grades and of the interconnections of different approaches to student learning and diverse teaching strategies	<p>i. The educational leadership and building administration know about the key concepts and skill areas of all of the curricular areas.</p> <p>ii. The educational leadership and building administration know and can use a limited base of instructional strategies.</p> <p>iii. The educational leadership and building administration possess a superficial and limited knowledge base of teaching strategies that are developmentally and cognitively appropriate but cannot match these techniques to students' varied learning styles and intelligences.</p>	<p>i. The educational leadership and building administration understand the key concepts and skill areas of all of the curricular areas.</p> <p>ii. The educational leadership and building administration recognize that students have different learning styles and seeks to have teachers utilize instructional strategies that are developmentally appropriate.</p> <p>iii. The educational leadership and building administration possess a knowledge base of a few teaching strategies that are developmentally and cognitively appropriate and can match these techniques to students' varied learning styles and intelligences on a limited basis.</p>	<p>i. The educational leadership and building administration understand the conceptual connections between and among the various curricular areas.</p> <p>ii. The educational leadership and building administration use their understanding and appreciation for multiple learning styles to promote research based best practices among teachers.</p> <p>iii. The educational leadership and building administration possess a strong knowledge base of successful teaching strategies. They can align that understanding with a range of successful research based instructional strategies that are cognitively and developmentally appropriate for meeting the needs of diverse learners.</p>	<p>i. The educational leadership and building administration promote systemic connections between and among the various curricular areas.</p> <p>ii. The educational leadership and building administration lead teachers in the development of lessons and the use of a wide range of research based instructional strategies to meet the learning needs of students.</p> <p>iii. The educational leadership and building administration possess an extensive knowledge base of successful research based teaching strategies that are developmentally and cognitively appropriate, matching instruction to the students' varied learning styles and intelligences.</p>

5. Strong educational leadership and a building administration that encourages, facilitates, and sustains involvement, participation, and partnerships (con't).

Criteria	1	2	3	4
5.d The degree to which the educational leadership and building administration involve staff and others in the operation of the school or program, empowering and encouraging them to contribute and to make decisions that benefit students	The educational leadership and building administration provide autonomous leadership.	The educational leadership and building administration accept input on an informal basis from select stakeholders regarding the operation of the school or the organization.	The educational leadership and building administration provide formal opportunities and processes for involvement of multiple stakeholders in decision-making.	The educational leadership and building administration create and foster a professional culture in which all stakeholders are involved in decision-making.
5.e The degree to which the educational leadership and building administration support and encourage teachers to take risks, to explore, to question, to try new instructional approaches, to continue as learners, and to grow	The educational leadership and building administration do not encourage teachers to experiment with new ideas and accept the current practice as the norm.	The educational leadership and building administration direct the changes in instructional strategies resulting in new instructional approaches with may or may not be sustained.	The educational leadership and building administration support and encourage teachers to engage in innovative practices that relate to specific needs or purposes.	The educational leadership and building administration empower teachers to continually engage in innovative practices that meet the needs of their students and school.

6. A network of academic and personal support available for students.

Criteria	1	2	3	4
6.a The degree to which academic and personal support include opportunities to examine, explore, discuss and understand the changes associated with early adolescence.	Opportunities for students to examine, explore, discuss and understand the changes associated with early adolescence do not exist or are limited to their own understanding, perceptions and experiences.	Opportunities for students to examine, explore, discuss or understand the changes associated with early adolescence are limited to a unit within a course or as a special event.	Opportunities for students to exam, explore, discuss or understand the changes associated with early adolescence are limited to a particular course or the guidance and counseling program.	Multiple and diverse opportunities exist within and across courses and programs for students to examine, explore, discuss and understand the changes associated with early adolescence.
6.b The degree to which academic and personal support include counseling and guidance services to assist students in making life, career, and educational choices.	Counseling and guidance services do not exist or are limited to a single individual.	Counseling and guidance services tend to reflect regulatory or management needs and often are conducted separately from the instructional program.	Counseling and guidance services are connected to the instructional program with planned collaboration among teachers and student support staff.	Counseling and guidance services are integrated in the whole school program with the staff sharing responsibility for the development of all students.

6. A network of academic and personal support available for students (con't).

Criteria	1	2	3	4
6.c The degree to which academic and personal support includes a network of trained professionals, special programs and community resources available to assist those who have extraordinary needs and require additional services to cope with the changes of early adolescence and/or the academic demands of middle level education	There is no network to meet the needs of the students.	Students receive services from a variety of trained professionals and resources but there is little or no coordination between school-based and community-based agencies.	A network of trained professionals, resources, and services between the school and the community-based agencies provides the necessary services to students needing them in a coordinated fashion.	A network of trained professionals, resources, and services provides the necessary prevention and intervention services to students and their families in a coordinated manner.
6.d The degree to which the support system promotes school/community partnerships and involves members of the community in school activities and initiatives, empowering and encouraging them to contribute and make decisions that benefit students.	There are no partnerships among community organizations and leaders. Every agency that works with the school works independently.	Existing partnerships with community organizations and leaders primary purpose is to provide monetary or material support to the school. These partnerships are often temporary and provide limited opportunity for students to contribute to their community through service learning.	In addition to providing monetary or materials support, some partnerships expand to include student learning and provide opportunities for students to contribute to their community.	A well established, collaborative network of local community organizations and leaders partner with the school to provide monetary or material support, expand student learning experiences and give students opportunities to contribute to the community through service learning, etc.

7. Professional learning and staff development for all staff that are ongoing, planned, purposeful, and collaboratively developed

Criteria	1	2	3	4
<p>7.a The degree to which the district and staff are committed to providing quality professional development</p>	<p>i. Professional learning opportunities are offered only on Superintendents' conference days.</p> <p>ii. Professional learning opportunities are offered with apparent disregard for any data and subsequent plans, strategies and decisions about professional development are missing.</p>	<p>i. Professional learning opportunities are offered on a very limited basis, other than Superintendents' Conference Day.</p> <p>ii. Professional learning opportunities are based on a single data source and subsequent plans, strategies and decisions about professional development are limited to current trends or fads or are not aligned with what the data reveals.</p>	<p>i. Professional learning opportunities are offered throughout the year.</p> <p>ii. Professional learning opportunities are based on standardized and state test data and subsequent plans, strategies and decisions about professional development are based on the analysis of data.</p>	<p>i. Professional learning opportunities are seamlessly woven into teachers' workdays and embedded in the school program.</p> <p>ii. Professional learning opportunities are grounded in multiple measures of teacher and student data and subsequent plans, strategies and decisions about professional development are based on the analysis of data and the knowledge of the characteristics of young adolescents. These plans are aligned with district, building and department goals.</p>
<p>7.b The degree to which professional learning is individualized and intrinsically motivated.</p>	<p>Individual staff members do not, even when encouraged by school leaders, engage in a program of personalized professional learning.</p>	<p>Individual staff members, when encouraged by school leaders, engage in a program of personalized professional learning.</p>	<p>Individual staff members occasionally engage in self-directed programs of personalized professional learning.</p>	<p>Individual staff members consistently engage in self-directed programs of personalized professional learning.</p>

7. Professional learning and staff development for all staff that are ongoing, planned, purposeful, and collaboratively developed (con't).				
Criteria	1	2	3	4
7.c The degree to which professional development learnings are integrated into classroom practice	Classroom practice is unaffected by professional development.	Classroom practice is minimally and superficially impacted by mandated components of professional development.	Classroom practice reflects individually selected components of professional development.	Classroom practice reflects clear and specific evidence of the language, spirit and content of professional development. This implementation cuts across subjects and grade levels.
7.d The degree to which continuous professional learning is an integral part of the school culture.	<p>i. Professional learning opportunities generally are district based, externally imposed, group oriented, informational in nature, and typically “one-time-only” presentations.</p> <p>ii. Individuals are responsible for their own professional development.</p>	<p>i. Professional learning opportunities generally are district based, group oriented, reflective of that which is of current interest to the educational community, with some staff input, but not an integral part of a school improvement plan.</p> <p>ii. Teachers find their own time to collaboratively reflect, discuss and share strategies and difficulties in implementing new information.</p>	<p>i. Professional learning opportunities generally are school based, initiated by staff based upon perceived school and/or staff needs, individualized, informational and engaging affecting some behavior change and are part of a school improvement plan.</p> <p>ii. Teachers within the same grade level/content area are provided with time to collaboratively reflect, discuss and share strategies and difficulties in implementing new information.</p>	<p>i. Professional learning opportunities generally are school based, initiated by staff based on research and staff needs, individualized, designed to change staff behavior and student learning, and aligned with a long-term plan of continuous improvement.</p> <p>ii. Teachers within the same grade level/ content areas and across grade levels/content areas are provided with ongoing time to collaboratively reflect, discuss and share strategies and difficulties in implementing new information.</p>