



NEW ENGLAND LEAGUE OF MIDDLE SCHOOLS 36th Annual Conference Conference Strands

Conference Strands are designed to connect with current middle level best practices and Common Core State Standards.

A - 21st Century Skills

Middle level students must have the opportunity to develop the skills they need to be successful in the 21st century. Readiness skills such as problem solving, critical thinking, and analysis must be included in all academic areas and provided in an innovative, creative, and challenging manner.

Topics in this strand may include, but are not limited to:

- Learning and innovation skills
- Information, media, and technology skills
- Life and career skills
- Critical thinking
- Problem solving
- Communication
- Collaboration
- College and career readiness

B - Advisory and Personalized Learning

Middle level educators have been advocates for effective advisory programs for decades. Advisory combined with personalized learning plans; provide support for all students as they meet the challenges of academic and social development for the future.

Topics in this strand may include, but are not limited to:

- Advisory programs
- Developing student learning plans
- Community involvement opportunities
- Student success plans
- Student engagement
- Teaming and collaboration
- Student voice

C - Assessment

Assessment in today's classroom provides a continuous, purposeful, and appropriate way of reviewing evidence of student learning. This information provides data to guide and determine specific teaching and learning strategies, that support and increase, not just monitor student progress.

Topics in this strand may include, but are not limited to:

- Designing and using effective formative and summative assessments
- Authentic and alternative assessments
- Portfolios
- Providing effective feedback to students
- Student-led conferences
- Response to Intervention (RTI)
- Standards-based assessment
- Connecting classroom assessments to State Standards
- Data teams
- Differentiated Assessment

D - Effective Leadership

Effective middle level leaders are, first and foremost, knowledgeable and skilled at meeting the unique needs of young adolescents and implementing the appropriate and effective programs and practices. They set high standards, are collaborative, and provide leadership.

Topics in this strand may include, but are not limited to:

- Instructional leadership
- Leadership best practices & skills
- Data driven decision-making
- Organizing schools for success
- Professional learning communities
- Building support and advocacy
- Developing teacher leaders
- Establishing a climate for student success
- Community partnerships
- Parent community support

E - Middle Grade Students and Support Services

Middle level education meets the educational and developmental needs of young adolescents by implementing research-based best practices presented in *This We Believe*, *Turning Points 2000*, and researched developmental aspects of young adolescents.

Topics in this strand may include, but are not limited to:

- Teaming
- Looping
- Multi-age teams
- Effective scheduling practices
- Creating physically/emotionally safe learning environments
- Prevention of bullying/harassment
- At-risk programs
- PBIS
- Effective behavioral intervention programs
- Developmental guidance

F - Rigorous and Relevant Curriculum

Developmentally responsive schools provide standards-based curriculum that is rigorous and relevant to students in all subject areas including unified arts and technology. Integrating unified arts and technology into content and relevant learning experiences are keys to student success and school improvement. Incorporating literacy across all content areas in an ongoing, systematic, and planned manner is critical.

Topics in this strand may include, but are not limited to:

- Vertical and horizontal curriculum alignment
- Cyber ethics
- 1:1 Technology
- Interdisciplinary curriculum
- Curriculum mapping
- Curriculum design/implementation/assessment
- Aligning curriculum to Common Core State Standards
- Service learning
- Instructional accommodations
- Standards-based curriculum

G - Safe and Healthy School Environment

A positive school climate and quality, developmentally appropriate learning environment provides the young adolescent an opportunity for growth and learning.

Topics in this strand may include, but are not limited to:

- Safety and security
- School climate and culture
- Health and wellness
- Social skills development
- Student leadership

H - Varied Instructional and Learning Strategies

Middle level educators design instruction that meets the broad range of interests, abilities, learning styles and skills of their students. They understand the importance of designing lessons that accommodate these differences by incorporating effective instructional approaches in their classrooms.

Topics in this strand may include, but are not limited to:

- Team based instruction
- Project-based learning
- Hands-on learning experiences
- Higher order thinking skills
- Using data to guide instructions
- Specific teaching/learning strategies
- Differentiated instruction
- Brain-based methodologies
- Inclusion
- Co-teaching
- Experiential learning
- Multiple intelligences
- Problem-based learning
- Second language learners
- Technology integration
- Standards-based curriculum

I – Leadership for Building and System Leaders

Middle level building and/or system leaders have wealth of experience in the area of leadership including, but not only effective teaching and learning strategies, practices, and the sustainability of high quality learning environments. They understand the rewards and challenges faced by leaders each day at the middle level.

Topics in this strand may include, but are not limited to:

- Building positive relationships with all stakeholders
- Using technology
- Creating a safe and supportive school culture
- Instructional leadership
- Developing and supporting teacher leaders
- Competency based learning
- Building leaders' role in literacy planning
- Creating and supporting effective teams
- RTI - implementing and sustaining effective practices