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News Release

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NMSA CALLS UPON POLICYMAKERS TO SUPPORT APPROPRIATE REFORM FOR MIDDLE SCHOOLS

WASHINGTON (DC)—National Middle School Association (NMSA), the nation's largest organization focusing exclusively on the education of young adolescents, ages 10 through 14, today announced a national campaign to build collaboration between educators, families, and policymakers at the national, state, and local levels.

The campaign is based on *Success in the Middle: A Policymaker's Guide to Achieving Quality Middle Level Education*, a report released this morning during a news briefing at The National Press Club.

"For any type of educational reform to happen and be lasting, it must be based on a shared vision between educators, policymakers, and family/community members," said Sue Swaim, NMSA executive director in announcing the report. "The United States still does not have a cohesive national policy for the middle grades, which represents one-third of a student's K-12 education. While policymakers have recently focused on important high school

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reform they have skipped over critical middle level reform, which is the gateway to successfully achieving high-performing schools at both the middle and high school levels.

“If No Child Left Behind legislation is to succeed, it must address the needs of these young adolescents and the educators who work with them. Middle level education policy can not be an add-on to either elementary or high school. The issues of middle level education are a distinct part and a crucial link of the K-12 continuum.”

The report sets five goals for policymakers and provides specific action steps at the federal, state, and local levels. The goals are:

- Ensure that all middle level students participate in challenging, standards-based curricula and engaging instruction, and that their progress is measured by appropriate assessments, resulting in continual learning and high achievement;
- Support the recruitment and hiring of teachers and administrators who have strong content knowledge and the ability to use research-based instructional strategies and assessment practices appropriate for middle level students;
- Support organizational structures and a school culture of high expectations that enable both middle level students and educators to succeed;

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- Develop ongoing family and community partnerships to provide a supportive and enriched learning environment for every middle level student; and
- Facilitate the generation, dissemination, and application of research needed to identify and implement effective practices that lead to continual student learning and high academic achievement at the middle level.

The campaign, which began yesterday with a number of meetings on Capitol Hill, includes NMSA members and other middle level educators taking this message directly to state legislators, departments of education, local school schools, governors, and other policymakers.

“The message in this report is essential for the 20 million young adolescents who attend our middle level schools every day,” said Patti Kinney, NMSA president and principal of Oregon’s Talent Middle School, during the briefing. “We know putting these recommendations on paper won’t do the job. We must put them in the minds and hearts of the policymakers who are impacting middle schools.”

NMSA has called upon its state and regional affiliates in the United States to schedule meetings with key policymakers at the state level and its more than 180,000 individual and institutional members to carry the message locally with school boards and school district leaders.

“Yesterday we met with 8 members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives and today 8 more meetings are scheduled,” Kinney said.

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“Much of the success of No Child Left Behind will depend upon the success of young adolescents,” Swaim pointed out. “Under the federal No Child Left Behind Act, 57 percent of the students tested annually are in grades 5 through 8. Policy must be complementary and supportive between the federal, state, and local levels,” Swaim continued. “When these three levels of governance work in congruence, reform has a much better chance to become real and lasting.”

A copy of *Success in the Middle: A Policymaker’s Guide to Achieving Quality Middle Level Education* is available on the NMSA web site, www.nmsa.org.

NMSA is the nation’s largest professional association focusing specifically on the education of young adolescents (10- to 15-year-olds). Its 180,000 individual and institutional members include teachers, principals, school administrators, parents, and others dealing with this age group.