



National Organizations Applaud Release of New ACT Report *Middle Level is Turning Point for College and Career Readiness*

On behalf of the 20 million young adolescents who enter school every day with the hopes and dreams of succeeding in the middle grades and becoming college-ready high school graduates, we applaud ACT's report, *The Forgotten Middle*, and its focus on students' academic achievement in the eighth grade as a critical measure in the continuum of preK-12 education.

The National Middle School Association (NMSA) and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) have long recognized the important role middle level education plays in preparing students for their future. *This We Believe* (NMSA) and *Breaking Ranks in the Middle* (NASSP) both call for middle level schools to hold high expectations for all students and provide them with a challenging curriculum, engaging instruction, and balanced assessment—all within the context of an environment personalized to meet the needs of young adolescents. *The Forgotten Middle* should serve as a call to action for national attention and a national initiative to support students in the middle grades.

“With the introduction of the Success in the Middle Act last year by President-Elect Barack Obama and Congressman Raul Grijalva, national policymakers began to turn their attention to the ‘missing middle’ in federal policy,” said NMSA Executive Director Betty Edwards. “ACT’s research demonstrates the importance of this legislation as educators face the challenge of only two in ten eighth graders being on target to be ready for college-level work by the time they graduate.”

The Forgotten Middle provides strong evidence of the critical role middle level schools play in college and career readiness, maps a clear set of nonnegotiable knowledge and skills needed by eighth graders, and directs us to “turn our attention to the students in the ‘Forgotten Middle’ to help ensure that they are prepared to benefit from the high school experience.” ACT’s research makes a significant contribution by identifying the most important factors for student success: academic achievement and academic discipline. Armed with this knowledge, our nation’s middle level principals and teachers must actively engage in raising standards, upgrading curriculum and assessments, and providing a preK-12 learning environment and supports that all students need to succeed.

“Middle grades principals and teachers have long recognized their important role in preparing students for their future,” said NASSP Executive Director Gerald N. Tirozzi. We believe that *The Forgotten Middle*, especially when coupled with the early identification and effective intervention research done at Johns Hopkins University (Balfanz, Herzog, & Mac Iver 2007), sends a clear and urgent message to policymakers that the middle level can no longer be ignored—If we want to improve the graduation rate in our nation, we cannot wait until high school to begin that work and we cannot do it alone.”

For many years, our nation has recognized the importance of giving students a good start in the early grades and recently, support has been targeted to improving high school education. *The Forgotten Middle* does an excellent job of drawing attention to the missing link—the middle level.