

EDUCATION REFORM INITIATIVE

Middle School Matters



GEORGE W. BUSH
INSTITUTE



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Increasing student achievement and improving the quality of our schools by using data and research-based education practices and policies with a focus on accountability and principal leadership.

BACKGROUND

Nationwide, one in five students fails to graduate from high school on time, with graduation rates significantly lower for low-income, African-American, and Hispanic students. Middle school is the last and best chance to prepare students for high school and postsecondary success, and research shows that students at-risk of dropping out can be identified as early as middle school. Middle School Matters works to provide educators with proven, research-based strategies to increase student achievement and prevent students from dropping out of school.

The Middle School Matters (MSM) initiative seeks to increase the number of middle school students who are prepared for high school and postsecondary success by providing middle school teachers and school leaders with 1) proven, research-based instructional strategies designed to increase student achievement and 2) strategies for identifying students at-risk of dropping out. Middle School Matters focuses on key issues that affect middle grade students, including reading, writing, and math instruction; dropout prevention strategies; school climate, culture and student supports; and advanced reasoning and cognitive strategies.

The goals of Middle School Matters are to:

- Use high-quality research to develop practical tools and support for school districts and middle school campuses to apply in their work; and
- Promote the importance of research-based strategies and practices with individuals making decisions for middle grade students.

“Middle school is the last and best chance to prepare students for a successful high school career.”

- Mrs. Laura Bush

PROGRAM IMPACT

To ensure the future success of their students, K-12 institutions must prepare all students to graduate from high school equipped for success in college and/or career. There is a vast and still growing body of knowledge on how this goal can be supported in the middle grades. Middle School Matters works with educators, researchers, and non-profits to encourage school districts to adopt key practices and core policies, backed by the highest-quality research in order to improve student achievement. The initiative helps school districts improve reading, writing and math instruction and use data systems to identify students who are at-risk of dropping out of school. When implemented in classrooms, these research-based strategies enable students to improve their performance, stay in school, and put themselves on a path to high school graduation and beyond.

Middle School Matters Field Guide and Tools

Developed by top researchers and practitioners across the country and directed by the Bush Institute, the Middle School Matters Research Field Guide and associated tools (lessons, videos, rubrics, etc.) detail the nine research- and evidence-based content dimensions that improve student achievement and classroom instruction in the middle grades. The Field Guide and tools are designed to be used by middle school teachers and principals, administrators, school board members, parents, and other stakeholders and is updated and augmented to reflect the most current research. The Field Guide and tools are available for free at www.greatmiddleschools.org.

Middle School Matters Institute

The Middle School Matters Institute (MSMI) was launched to translate research into practice and to study implementation by directly supporting districts and middle schools with coaching support and the Field Guide and tools. The Institute, a partnership between the Bush Institute and The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk at the University of Texas at Austin, has provided resources and support to more than 170 schools and districts.

“We have taken what we have learned from Middle School Matters and built it in district-wide. This initiative is reigniting our excitement for teaching and learning.”

**- Dr. Leticia Pena, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction,
Pharr-San Juan-Alamo Independent School District, Texas**

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