



June 26, 2009

The Honorable Jack Reed  
728 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Reed:

On behalf of students in grades 5 through 8 who are currently struggling to achieve in underperforming middle grades schools across the country, we are writing to thank you for your commitment to reintroducing the *Success in the Middle Act* (S. 1362). We believe there is a good deal of support for this bill to build on in the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress as demonstrated by the six Senators who cosponsored the legislation when President Obama introduced it in the last Congress.

The undersigned organizations strongly support the *Success in the Middle Act*, which would provide grants to states to help ensure that *all* students exit the middle grades prepared for success and on track to graduate from high school prepared for college and work. We are also pleased that the bill would help states and districts provide leadership, intensive intervention, and technical assistance to improve low-performing schools that contain middle grades.

Every day 15 million young adolescents enter school searching for what we know will help them excel in school: challenging and engaging instruction, teachers and principals who are invested in their success and know how to provide supportive learning environments; and intensive interventions to help them meet the high expectations we have for them and they have for themselves.

According to ACT, the level of academic achievement that students attain by eighth grade has a larger impact on the students' college and career readiness upon graduation from high school than anything that happens academically in high school.

We know that sixth graders who do not attend school regularly, exhibit poor behavior, or fail math or English are very likely to drop out before graduation from high school (Balfanz and Herzog, 2006). If these "early warning signs" go unheeded, students often become discouraged and begin to think of themselves as dropouts long before they actually leave school. By eighth grade, many students have decided whether they will drop out or graduate from high school, whether they will take algebra and other "gatekeeper" courses that predict success in college and whether they will engage in risky behaviors such as drug use and unprotected sex (Jackson, Davis 2000).

S. 1362 provides targeted resources and interventions to remedy this crisis in the middle grades by:

- Authorizing \$1 billion a year for formula grants to States to provide grants to local school districts to improve low performing schools that contain middle grades.
- Requiring states to develop a detailed plan to improve student achievement in the middle grades utilizing existing research and promising practices. These state plans:
  - Will describe what students are required to know and do to successfully complete the middle grades and make the transition to succeed in an academically rigorous high school, and what supports are available for meeting those goals; and
  - Will be evaluated by a peer review process at Department of Education to determine: the effectiveness of the plan based on the best available research and if applicable, the appropriate resources needed to improve the plan.
- Developing and utilizing early warning identification and intervention systems to identify those students most at-risk of dropping out, and to assist school districts in providing proven interventions to help all middle grades students succeed.
- Investing in proven strategies at the State and district level such as:
  - providing professional development and coaching to school leaders, teachers and other school personnel in how to address the needs of diverse learners and in using challenging and relevant research-based best practices and curriculum; and
  - developing and implementing comprehensive, school-wide improvement efforts and student supports such as personal academic plans, mentoring, intensive reading and math instruction and extended learning time that enables all students to stay on the path to graduation.
- Authorizing an additional \$100 million under Title II of the Act to generate and disseminate the results of research to identify and implement effective practices that lead to student learning and success at the middle level.

Again, we thank you for your leadership and for recognizing how critical the middle grades are to student success in high school, postsecondary education and the workforce.

Sincerely,

*Middle Grades Coalition on ESEA Original Members:*

Academy for Educational Development

ACT

Alliance for Excellent Education

The College Board

International Reading Association

National Association of Secondary School Principals

National Council of Teachers of English

National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform

National Middle School Association

*Other Supporting National Organizations:*

American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

American School Counselor Association

ASCD

Collegiate Middle Level Association

Communities in Schools, Inc.

Cuban American National Council, Inc.

ETS

Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities

International Center for Leadership in Education

Knowledge Alliance

League of United Latin American Citizens

Learning Disabilities Association of America

National Association of Elementary School Principals

National Association of Professors of Middle Level Education

National Association of School Psychologists

National Association of State Directors of Special Education

National Education Association

National Staff Development Council

Project Grad, USA

School Social Work Association of America

Success for All Foundation

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc.

*State Organization Support:*

(Alabama) Alabama Association of Middle School Principals

(Alabama) Alabama Association of Secondary School Principals

(Alabama) Alabama Middle School Association

(Alabama) Council for Leaders in Alabama Schools

(Alaska) Alaska Association of Secondary School Principals

(Arizona) Arizona Middle Level Association

(Arizona) Arizona School Administrators

(Arkansas) Arkansas Association of Middle Level Educators

(California) California League of Middle Schools

(Colorado) Colorado Association of Middle Level Educators

(Connecticut) Connecticut Association of Schools

(Connecticut) Connecticut Association of Schools – Center for Early Adolescent Educators

(Delaware) Delaware Association of School Administrators

(District of Columbia) District of Columbia Association of Secondary School Principals

(Florida) Florida League of Middle Schools

(Georgia) Georgia Middle School Association

(Hawaii) Hawaii Association of Middle Schools

(Idaho) Idaho Middle Level Association

(Illinois) Association of Illinois Middle Level Schools

(Illinois) Illinois Principals Association

(Indiana) Indiana Association of School Principals

(Indiana) Indiana Middle Level Education Association

(Iowa) Iowa Association for Middle Level Education

(Iowa) School Administrators of Iowa

(Kansas) Kansas Association for Middle Level Education

(Kentucky) Kentucky Middle School Association

(Louisiana) Louisiana Middle School Association

(Maine) Maine Association for Middle Level Education

(Maine) Maine Principals' Association

(Maryland) Maryland Association of Secondary School Principals

(Maryland) Maryland Middle School Association

(Massachusetts) Commonwealth of Massachusetts Middle Level Educators

(Massachusetts) Massachusetts Secondary School Administrators' Association  
(Michigan) Michigan Association of Middle School Educators  
(Michigan) Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals  
(Minnesota) Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals  
(Minnesota) Minnesota Middle School Association  
(Mississippi) Mississippi Association for Middle Level Education  
(Missouri) Missouri Association of Secondary School Principals  
(Missouri) Missouri Middle School Association  
(Montana) Montana Association of Secondary School Principals  
(Nebraska) Nebraska Association for Middle Level Education  
(Nevada) Nevada Alliance for Middle Level Educators  
(Nevada) Nevada Association of School Administrators  
(New England) New England League of Middle Schools  
(New Hampshire) New Hampshire Association for Middle Level Educators  
(New Hampshire) New Hampshire Association of School Principals  
(New Jersey) New Jersey Middle School Association  
(New Jersey) New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association  
(New Mexico) New Mexico Middle Level Educators  
(New York) New York State Middle School Association  
(North Carolina) North Carolina Middle School Association  
(North Carolina) North Carolina Principals and Assistant Principals Association  
(North Dakota) Association of Middle Level Educators of North Dakota  
(North Dakota) North Dakota Association of Secondary School Principals  
(Ohio) Ohio Association of Secondary School Administrators  
(Oklahoma) Oklahoma Association of Secondary School Administrators  
(Oklahoma) Oklahoma Middle Level Education Association  
(Oregon) Oregon Middle Level Association  
(Pennsylvania) Pennsylvania Association of Elementary and Secondary School Principals  
(Pennsylvania) Pennsylvania Middle School Association  
(Rhode Island) Rhode Island Association of School Principals  
(Rhode Island) Rhode Island Middle Level Educators  
(South Carolina) South Carolina Association of School Administrators  
(South Carolina) South Carolina Middle School Association  
(South Dakota) South Dakota Association for Middle Level Educators  
(Tennessee) Tennessee Association of Middle Schools  
(Texas) Texas Association of Secondary School Principals  
(Texas) Texas Middle School Association  
(Utah) Utah Association of Secondary School Principals  
(Utah) Utah Middle Level Association  
(Vermont) Vermont Association for Middle Level Education  
(Vermont) Vermont Principals' Association  
(Virginia) Virginia Association of Secondary School Principals  
(Virginia) Virginia Middle School Association  
(Washington) Association of Washington School Principals  
(West Virginia) West Virginia Association for Middle Level Education  
(West Virginia) West Virginia Association of Secondary School Principals  
(Wisconsin) Association of Wisconsin School Administrators  
(Wisconsin) Wisconsin Association for Middle Level Education  
(Wyoming) Wyoming Association of Secondary School Principals