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PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**MIDDLE START SCHOOLS SHOW IMPROVED STUDENT TEST SCORES,  
EARNING MIDDLE START'S PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PARTNER  
A NATIONAL HONOR**

**Michigan Schools in the Middle Wins Christa McAuliffe Award for Excellence**

**New York, NY** — A long-time Middle Start partner delivering teacher development services has received a national award honoring exceptional achievements within the education field.

Michigan Schools in the Middle (MSIM) was awarded the 2003 Christa McAuliffe Award for Excellence in Teacher Education through the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. MSIM, housed at Central Michigan University, was recognized as an outstanding professional development program.

Each year the Christa McAuliffe award highlights the major role that state colleges and universities play in the preparation of teachers, recognizes excellence in teacher education programs, and identifies promising practices and critical issues related to measuring the relationship between teacher preparation and pupil learning.

“This award is the result of hard work undertaken by principals, teachers, Middle Start coaches, professional development facilitators and of course the students themselves. The program’s director, Pat Benson, never accepts the status quo and shows that even the lowest performing middle-grades schools can improve dramatically,” said Patrick Montesano, co-director of the Center for School and Community Services at the Academy for Educational Development.

Considered a groundbreaking program for the state, Michigan Schools in the Middle provides support for new and veteran teachers of middle-level students. Educators, however, are not the only beneficiaries of the program’s resources — all stakeholders in middle-level education are part of its targeted outreach.

MSIM currently serves 16 Middle Start schools with low-performing student populations in urban and rural areas across the state.

"The primary criterion for selection of the Christa McAuliffe Award is the impact on student achievement," said MSIM director Patricia Benson. "Michigan Schools in the Middle has always remained focused on improving the lives of Michigan's most at-risk 10- to 14-year-olds, and we are gratified that this award has validated our efforts on the behalf of students."

MSIM used MEAP data from Middle Start CSR schools to support its application. Analysis of the data indicated that students' scores on the 2002 MEAP from MSIM's Middle Start schools, when compared to scores from all other high-needs schools with seventh and eighth grade students, were higher in every tested area. Scores were particularly higher in the gate keeping areas of reading and math.

Benson said the award focuses national attention on the needs of 10- to 14-year-olds who are at a pivotal juncture in their intellectual, physical and emotional development.

### **About Middle Start**

The Middle Start initiative combines on-site coaching, professional development, and partner resources to strengthen student achievement in schools with middle grades. Guided by current research and practice emphasizing the developmental needs of young adolescents, Middle Start upholds the three goals that create the foundation for student success— academic excellence, developmental responsiveness, and social equity— through small learning communities, team structure, effective curriculum, student-centered instruction, student assessment; reflective review and self-assessment; and sustainable partnerships. The Middle Start National Center at the Academy for Educational Development provides leadership and support to regional Middle Start partnerships and school networks. For more information visit [www.middlestart.org](http://www.middlestart.org) or contact Lea Williams Rose (lwilliam@aed.org).

### **About the Academy for Educational Development (AED)**

Founded in 1961, AED is an independent nonprofit organization committed to solving critical social problems in the United States and throughout the world. AED works with schools, school systems, families, and community-based organizations on comprehensive school and community improvement initiatives, as well as programs addressing specific education issues.

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