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PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Middle Start Applauds Mayors' Pledge to Increase Involvement in Public Schools and Commends Their Resolve to Provide Unprecedented Leadership for Middle Grades

New York, NY – Middle Start, a school improvement initiative for the middle grades, applauded the U.S. Conference of Mayors for pledging a more active role in improving public schools at their first Mayors' Education Summit today. In particular, Middle Start praised the mayors' recent call for enhanced local policy on behalf of young adolescents.

“Middle grades have been historically overlooked by policy makers at just about every level, so it's momentous when elected officials step up to the plate and provide some practical direction for this critical stage of learning,” said Patrick Montesano, Vice President and Director, Education Reform Programs at the Academy for Educational Development.

“We've been aware of the problems that middle-grades students face in getting an optimal public school education for some time and have developed a proven framework for change. It's been among our highest priorities to share our approach with policy makers so that best practices can be implemented on a wider scale,” he said.

More than two dozen mayors called on the Administration and Congress today to increase support for public education and pledged to increase mayoral leadership and involvement in enhanced learning for all students. Attending the Summit were Education Secretary Rod Paige; Eli Broad, founder of the Broad Foundation and public school reform advocate; and a number of other leading education experts.

Much of the day's activities involved building on the education platform that resulted from the mayors annual conference this past summer, including Resolution #38 entitled **Urgent Need for Changes in America's Middle and High Schools**. The resolution called on Congress to pass and fund an adolescent reading program to ensure that middle-grades students have the skills to complete high school, attend college, and become competitive in an information-based economy. The resolution also encouraged federal,

state and local governments to form partnerships in order to better address the academic and social needs of the more than six million children at risk of dropping out of school.

Additionally the nearly three dozen participating mayors from around the country discussed next steps regarding some of the other most pressing issues facing cities and school systems today, including mayoral control of school systems where appropriate, charter schools, school construction and implementation of the *No Child Left Behind Act*.

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 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.

For more info. about the Mayors resolution,
http://www.usmayors.org/uscm/resolutions/71st_conference/education_03.asp

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