



July 28, 2003

PRESS RELEASE

Contact: Lea Williams Rose
212-243-1110

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Middle Start Featured on NPR's *All Things Considered*
Innovations in Middle Grades Focus of National Story

New York, NY – Middle Start was featured as a noteworthy approach to middle grades improvement in a news story which aired on National Public Radio's 'All Things Considered' recently.

The story, introduced by host Michelle Norris on June 13, and entitled "Rethinking Middle Schools," outlined some of the ways educators are reshaping their approach to middle-grades education. Successful middle-grades schools recognize that the middle grade-span is a unique phase in learning and growth and therefore requires a focused and unique approach in order for effective teaching and learning to occur, according to the report.

Middle Start was showcased as a school improvement program that has long understood the particular needs and opportunities that exist in the middle grades.

The NPR news story included an interview with Patrick Montesano, Vice President and Director, Education Reform Programs at the Academy for Educational Development, where the Middle Start National Center is located.

"Recognition of the need for more support for focused approaches to the middle grades is gaining momentum," Montesano said. "What we know about effective approaches to improving student achievement in the middle grades is now being more widely viewed as critical to future success in high school and beyond."

"Rethinking Middle Grades" aired shortly after an editorial in the *New York Times* also called for more focused and sustained reform efforts in the middle grades.

The level and intensity of academic work needs to be higher in middle grades at the same time that teaching methods are developmentally responsive, the report concluded. "Even where the scores are good, the education of students in this age group is not yet what it needs to be," observed Montesano who was interviewed by Beth Fertig of NPR member station WNYC.

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.

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