



# Blueprints

Minnesota Department of  
**Education**  
Volume 7, Issue 1

## ***Redesigning High Schools for the 21st Century***

### **Middle Level School Success**

*By: Angie Johnson, High School Specialist, Minnesota Department of Education*

The middle school years are critically important for both high school and postsecondary success. By addressing six, research-based, core components when designing school improvement initiatives, middle schools can increase student achievement. The Systemic Middle Level Redesign: Building a Minnesota Model Framework, available to all schools, provides research-based information and resources to support those components: rigorous and relevant curriculum for all students; personalized learning environment for each student; highly effective teachers and instruction; effective leadership; safe and healthy school environment; and data use for improvements in a timely and ongoing manner. During 2010-2012, three pilot sites reported positive outcomes through training and on-site bi-monthly assistance from MDE and North Central Comprehensive Center (NCCC) at Mid-continent Research in Education and Learning (McREL). [Email Angie Johnson](#) for information and a copy of the framework.

In 2012-2013, the Connecting for Middle Level School Success Initiative aims to increase middle level school student achievement by offering assistance to middle level school principals who are willing to attend five, free, half-day trainings and to support one another's work related to one of the core components identified in the Systemic Middle Level School Redesign: Building a Minnesota Model. Four regional groups have been formed: Southern, Metro, Northeast, and Central.

As you consider your school calendar and staff development plans for the 2013-2014 school year, we encourage you to consider the national 40th Annual Conference of the Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE), which will be held in Minneapolis on November 7-9, 2013, and take advantage of this opportunity to improve instruction and raise test scores. Hundreds of sessions for educators who work with students in grades 5-9 will be presented by practicing administrators and teachers. [Visit the AMLE website](#) for presenter applications in January 2013 and consider sharing promising practices with educators from all over the country!

Schools that administer ACT's EXPLORE test to their eighth graders will again have the opportunity to attend one of five regional "Using EXPLORE and PLAN Data for College and Career Readiness" workshops sponsored by the Minnesota Department of Education in January 2013. Educators will create an implementation plan, which includes strategies to utilize the data to help students and parents plan for postsecondary success. [Click here to register.](#)

*Your Choice - Your Future* informational flyers and posters are available to use in conjunction with the EXPLORE and/or registration. These materials encourage eighth-grade students to choose "more than the core" courses to better prepare for success in postsecondary coursework and in their future careers. For more information or to order posters or flyers, email: [YourChoice.YourFuture@state.mn.us](mailto:YourChoice.YourFuture@state.mn.us)

The Center for Postsecondary Success is committed to providing resources for the critically important middle school years.

***Blueprints is a publication of the Center for Postsecondary Success***

Jacqui McKenzie, Editor

Dan Smith, Career and Technical Education Supervisor

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## Redesigning High Schools for the 21st Century

### Designer Showcase

#### Working on closing the gap using Response to Instruction

By Gina Magnuson, RTI Coordinator, St. Louis Park Middle School

St. Louis Park Junior High, now St. Louis Park Middle School, began a framework for Response to Intervention/Instruction (Rti) in fall 2011. During our transition from a two-grade school to a three-grade school, we used the Minnesota Department of Education’s Systemic Middle Level Redesign framework to review the components of the middle school we wanted to become. Our journey brought us to implementing an intervention system to help close the gap for all students.

Due to high-stakes testing, our focus was on the content areas of math and language arts/reading. We began by building in time during the school day, one day a week, for math and language arts/reading teachers to provide additional time and instruction on skills. Students who did not need additional time were offered an enrichment opportunity during the re-teaching, which was offered by the teachers who did not teach math and/or language arts/reading. Additionally, we utilized this time period to reach students who qualify for level three gifted and talented. The Rti period also allows for Tier II, Zeros Aren’t Permitted (ZAP) for students who are identified as “wont’s” in assignment completion, and Tier III for a few students who would benefit from year-long courses such as Read 180, English Language Learners (ELL) support, and Read Naturally.

Teachers are committed to their instruction and the first tier of the Rti pyramid (Tier I), intended to provide high-quality instruction which will meet the needs of 80 percent of the students through content-based professional learning communities (PLCs). In further support of our Rti journey and student success, we coupled content PLCs with Academy PLCs, which meet weekly to discuss who is in need of the re-teaching block in math and language arts/reading and to problem-solve concerns.

At the conclusion of our first year, over 61 percent of our student population used the time set aside for math and/or language arts/reading re-teaching. Of the 61 percent of students who attended a re-teaching session, 70 percent of them felt that it was helpful. Eighty-five percent of the staff felt that the re-teaching block was beneficial to students. We are continuing to provide further staff development around a high-quality tier I and provide more support during the Rti block.

### Measuring Up

ACT research shows that, under current conditions, the level of academic achievement that students attain by eighth grade has a larger impact on their college and career readiness by the time they graduate from high school than anything that happens academically in high school.

#### 2011–2012 EXPLORE-Tested 8th Graders Meeting College Readiness Benchmarks

Year	English	Reading	Math	Science	All 4 areas
2012	67 percent	52 percent	45 percent	20 percent	18 percent
2011	68 percent	51 percent	50 percent	22 percent	18 percent

Source: *The Condition of College & Career Readiness (ACT 2012)* ; *The Forgotten Middle (ACT 2008)*

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## ***Redesigning High Schools for the 21st Century***

### **High School Toolbox – Strategies and Resources**

**Check it out!** [Ready, Set, Go website](#) is a great new Minnesota resource with ‘tools’ to help students, parents and educators prepare for high school and postsecondary success.

AMLE Executive Summary [This We Believe: Keys to Educating Young Adolescents](#) describes the nature of an educational program that reflects what research and vast experience have demonstrated to be best for middle level students.

ACTs report [The Forgotten Middle: Ensuring that All Students Are on Target for College and Career Readiness before High School](#) examines the specific factors that influence college and career readiness and how these factors can have their greatest impact during a student’s educational development.

National Association Secondary School Principals report [Breaking Ranks in the Middle](#) provides strategies for leading middle level reform.

The National Center on Response to Intervention publishes an [Instructional Intervention Tools Chart](#) reflecting the results of the third annual review of research studies of Instructional Programs by the Center's Technical Review Committee (TRC).

Minnesota Office of Higher Education’s Get Ready for College website, provides links to postsecondary applications and fee waiver information. [Visit Get Ready for College website.](#)

### **Help Desk**

[Association for Middle Level Education](#) dedicated exclusively to those in the middle grades.

[Minnesota Middle School Association](#) serves as an education resource for teachers, administrators, parents, and community members who are concerned about the developmental needs of young adolescents in grades five through nine.

[ACT: EXPLORE Resources for Educators](#) provides information about the college and career readiness information provided by the EXPLORE test results and how to use the data.

[The National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform](#) is an alliance committed to promoting the academic performance and healthy development of young adolescents.

The National Association of Secondary School Principals provides strategies for leading middle level reform in its publication, [Breaking Ranks in the Middle](#).

The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) Middle Grades Commission provides information about middle level reform in its report, [A New Mission for the Middle Grades](#).

Response to Intervention (RtI) is a framework that is used to improve outcomes for all students. For more information, [visit the Minnesota Department of Education website](#).

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## **On the Drawing Board - Calendar of Events**

*Events sponsored by MDE, unless otherwise noted*

[Minnesota Career Information System \(MCIS\) Jr. Workshops](#)

(Rochester) **September 26, 2012**

[Minnesota Programs of Study Technical Training Webinar](#)

(Webinar) **October 1, 2012**

[Perkins Law, Governing Documents and State Funding for 2012-2013](#)

(Webinar) **October 9, 2012**

[Perkins Requirements to Receive Funds, Local Distribution of Funds, and Uses of Funds](#)

(Webinar) **October 15, 2012**

[Minnesota Career Information System \(MCIS\) Jr. Workshops](#)

(Roseville) **October 29, 2012**

[Minnesota Career Information System \(MCIS\) Jr. Workshops](#)

(Cloquet) **October 31, 2012**

[Mathematics Informational Webinar](#)

(Online) **November 6, 2012**

[Annual Minnesota Fall Perkins Contacts and Coordinators Meeting](#)

(Roseville) **November 14, 2012**

[Career and Technical Education \(CTE\) Works!](#)

(Plymouth) **November 15, 2012**

[Minnesota Career Information System \(MCIS\) Jr. Workshops](#)

(Belle Plaine) **November 28, 2012**

[Minnesota Middle School Association Conference](#)

(Bloomington) **December 6-7, 2012**

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