



## *Position Statement on Middle Level Teacher Certification*

The Middle Level Division of Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS) believes that the adoption of a consistently recognized middle level teacher's certification is critically important for the proper education of young adolescents. We also believe that students aged ten to fourteen present educators with a unique set of challenges not found at other age levels. To address these needs, middle level teachers should receive appropriate preparation as well as certification and licensure reflecting this comprehensive preparation.

Ten to fourteen year olds comprise fully one third of the entire K-12 student population. These years comprise a time of tremendous social-emotional, physical, and intellectual development. CAS believes that educators working with this unique population should receive preparation specifically designed to address age appropriate needs and therefore earn certification that denotes this unique preparation.

Connecticut has teacher certification specifically designed for high, middle and the elementary levels of schooling. Furthermore, there are specific preparation requirements for early childhood education as well as a wide array of other special areas. While there is a middle grades certificate, due to overlapping grade level certificates, it is not generally advantageous for teachers to pursue it.

With over thirty-five years of professional research, literature, and discussion relative to the needs of early adolescent students, certification should be informed by such research and by recognized best educational practices. While contrary to both research and best practices, political pressures have maintained the current overlapping certifications.

The Middle Level Division of the Connecticut Association of Schools endorses and supports the position statements of the National Middle School Association, the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform and the New England League of Middle Schools. All three statements represent the current research and best practices upon which CAS believes middle level certification should be based.\*

The CAS Middle Level Division believes that Connecticut should have teacher certification that:

- is specifically required for educators who work with ten to fourteen year olds in any grade five, six, seven, or eight school configuration;
- includes preparation that focuses on the nature of young adolescent development, curricular planning, collaborative teaching, learning and assessment, and middle level concepts, philosophy, and organization;
- is comprehensive, separate, and distinct with no "overlapping" of grades with other levels;
- includes at least twelve weeks of successful student teaching experience educating young adolescents;
- encompasses two or more standards based content areas of mathematics, language arts, science, social studies, interdisciplinary/integrative curriculum and pedagogy within course requirements associated with a teaching degree;
- requires those teaching in k-12 areas, such as physical education, art, health, music, family and consumer science, technology education library/media and world languages, or special education areas, to successfully complete at least one university level course (Nature and Needs of Young Adolescents) as well as one successful field experience at the middle level;
- incorporates the concepts and ideas contained in this position statement as the basis for certificate renewal.

We further believe that this clear statement will assist Connecticut to better define and develop middle level teacher certification inevitably leading to improved teaching and learning for the ten to fourteen year old students in our schools.

(\*The New England League of Middle Schools, The National Middle School Association and the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform statements are available on line at nelms.org.)

This position statement is the result of a joint effort by members of the Middle Level Division of the Connecticut Association of Schools and the New England League of Middle Schools with assistance and consultation from the Connecticut State Department of Education.