

# MIDDLE SCHOOL **SUCCESS**

## Building Pathways to

### Middle School: Building Pathways to Success Articles and References

Research studies and articles from school districts across the nation have validated that course failures and low attendance in middle school are the strongest predictors of high school failure and dropout rates. These studies magnify the need for middle-level strategies that build the path to graduation. Please review the following resources and join the initiative to increase middle school achievement and build pathways to success.

#### JOURNAL ARTICLES, REPORTS, POLICY BRIEFS

Allensworth, E. M., Gwynne, J. A., Moore, P., & de la Torre, M. (2014, November). *Looking forward to high school and college: Middle grade indicators of readiness*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research. Retrieved from <https://ccsr.uchicago.edu/publications/looking-forward-high-school-and-college-middle-grade-indicators-readiness-chicago>

From the Executive Summary: "Much of the pressure to improve educational attainment is on high schools, but focus has also turned to earlier grades. There is a very large population of students who struggle with the transition from the middle grades to high school, raising concerns that high school failures are partially a function of poor middle grade preparation. As a result, middle grade practitioners are grappling with questions about what skills students need to succeed in high school, which markers they should use to gauge whether students are ready to succeed in high school and beyond, and whether it is possible to identify in middle grades students who are likely to struggle in high school and college.

"This report is designed to provide a detailed picture of the relationship between students' performance in the middle grades (grades five through eight) and their subsequent performance in high school and college among students in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS)."

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Balfanz, R. (2009, June). *Putting middle grades students on the graduation path: A policy and practice brief*. Columbus, OH: National Middle School Association. Retrieved from <http://www.amle.org/BrowsebyTopic/WhatsNew/WNDet.aspx?ArtMID=888&ArticleID=314>

From the Introduction: "The middle grades will play a pivotal role in enabling the nation to reach President Obama's goal of graduating all students from high school prepared for college or advanced career training. In high-poverty neighborhoods, in particular, our research and school improvement work indicate that students' middle grades experiences have tremendous impact on the extent to which they will close achievement gaps, graduate from high school, and be prepared for college. Consequently, there is a need to reconceptualize the role the middle grades play in the public education system. The middle grades, broadly defined as fifth through eighth grade, need to be seen as the launching pad for a secondary and post-secondary education system that enables all students to obtain the schooling and/or career training they will need to fully experience the opportunities of 21st century America.

"This brief, drawing on our research and field work, illuminates key policy and practice implications of the middle grades playing a stronger role in achieving our national goal of graduating all students from high school prepared for college or career and civic life. The brief is based on more than a decade of research and development work at the Center for the Social Organization of Schools at Johns Hopkins University. It also draws on direct field experience in more than 30 middle schools implementing comprehensive reform and a longstanding collaboration with the Philadelphia Education Fund."

*"...there is a need to reconceptualize the role the middle grades play in the public education system."*

Dweck, C. S., Walton, G. M., & Cohen, G. L. (2014). *Academic tenacity: Mindsets and skills that promote long-term learning*. Seattle, WA: Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Retrieved from [http://web.stanford.edu/~gwalton/home/Welcome\\_files/DweckWaltonCohen\\_2014.pdf](http://web.stanford.edu/~gwalton/home/Welcome_files/DweckWaltonCohen_2014.pdf)

From the Introduction: "Most educational reforms focus on curriculum and pedagogy—*what* material is taught and *how* it is taught. However, curriculum and pedagogy have often been narrowly defined as the academic content and students' intellectual processing of that material. Research shows that this is insufficient. In our pursuit of educational reform, something essential has been missing: the psychology of the student. Psychological factors—often called *motivational* or *non-cognitive* factors—can matter even more than cognitive factors for students' academic performance. These may include students' beliefs about themselves, their feelings about school, or their habits of self-control. Educators, psychologists, and even economists recognize the importance of non-cognitive factors in achievement both in school and in the labor market. These factors also offer promising levers for raising the achievement of underprivileged children and, ultimately, closing achievement gaps based on race and income. The research reviewed in this paper shows that educational interventions and initiatives that target these psychological factors can transform students' experience and achievement in school, improving core academic outcomes such as GPA and test scores months and even years later."

King, S. A., Lemons, J., & Hill D. R. (2012). Response to intervention in secondary schools: Considerations for administrators. *NASSP Bulletin*, 96(1), 5–22. Retrieved from <https://rtitoolbox.wiki.farmington.k12.mi.us/file/view/RTI+IN+SECONDARY.pdf>

From the Abstract: "Secondary school administrators are increasingly finding themselves in the position of implementing Response to Intervention (RTI). This system of providing progressively intensive levels of intervention for the purposes of preventing academic failure and identifying children with learning disability may be useful at the secondary level. However, many aspects of RTI are based on research conducted in elementary schools. The purpose of this article is to provide a basic description of RTI, to summarize research conducted at the secondary level, and to provide a set of considerations for secondary administrators regarding RTI implementation."

Vaughn, S., Wanzek, J., Murray, C. S., & Roberts, G. (2012). *Intensive interventions for students struggling in reading and mathematics: A practice guide*. Portsmouth, NH: RMC Research Corporation, Center on Instruction. Retrieved from: <http://www.centeroninstruction.org/files/Intensive%20Interventions%20for%20Students%20Struggling%20in%20Reading%20%26%20Math.pdf>

From the Overview: "This publication provides research-based guidance for intensifying instruction in reading and mathematics for students with significant learning difficulties, including students with disabilities, in kindergarten through grade 12. The guide gives technical assistance providers and states information reflecting 'best practices' for implementing intensive interventions to improve education practices for struggling students, including those who receive special education. It can also be used as a resource for instructional specialists and special education teachers who are searching for broad guidelines on the design and delivery of intensive interventions."

Villavicencio, A. & Grayman, J. K. (2012, February). *Learning from "turnaround" middle schools: Strategies for success*. New York, NY: The Research Alliance for New York City Schools, New York University. Retrieved from [http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/research\\_alliance/publications/turnaround\\_middle\\_schools](http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/research_alliance/publications/turnaround_middle_schools)

From the Executive Summary: "In New York City and around the nation, there is intense interest in the question of what it takes to turn around a struggling school. The turnaround strategies that predominate in federal policy include school closure, conversion to a charter school, dismissal of the principal and a substantial proportion of teachers, and the reassignment of students to other schools. In contrast, the turnaround schools in this study substantially improved student performance without the infusion of extra resources or the wholesale reassignment of students, teachers and administrators. Rather, these schools have made improvements by drawing on existing resources and developing internal capacity to educate students effectively. Although this kind of transformation may not be possible for all low-performing schools, the experiences chronicled in this report suggest important lessons for educators and policymakers, both here in New York and around the country."

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