

Mid South Middle Start

The Mid South Middle Start Initiative is a component of the Foundation for the Mid South's Educational program area. The *purpose* of Middle Start is to help build and foster a regional movement to improve middle-level education in the Mid South. It seeks to accomplish this through building the capacity of schools by following a research based middle level model of educational reform. The Foundation has developed a regional network of middle schools located in one-third of the school districts in the region.

The *outcome* for Middle Start is accessible middle grades schools that are academically excellent, developmentally responsive, and socially equitable serving all children in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. Middle Start is already accumulating evidence of its success. In Louisiana, on the 8th grade LEAP21 our comprehensive school improvement sites (CSI), located in the Delta, have outpaced the state's average in achievement by large margins as revealed in this data:

SUBJECT	2001 - 02			2002 - 03		
	STATE	CSI	DIFF	STATE	CSI	DIFF
English/Language Arts.....	45	57	+12	49	66	+17
Math.....	36	57	+21	41	56	+15
Science.....	49	61	+12	48	63	+15
Social Studies.....	52	63	+11	48	65	+17

Middle Start is designed to accomplish the following goals in practice, policy, and public support:

- 3 To *improve* the academic outcomes of middle grade students, particularly those who are at high risk of academic failure because of race and class;
- 3 To *encourage* changes in policies and practices at the school, district, state, and regional level that will improve teaching and learning for middle grades students;
- 3 To *build* capacity within the region for providing middle level schools with expert assistance;
- 3 To *improve* curriculum and instruction in areas that are critical to expanding the academic and work options of low-achieving students;
- 3 To *increase* public awareness at school, district, state, and regional levels about the academic and developmental needs of young adolescents and their schools; and
- 3 To *foster* schools' collaboration with the private sector and community agencies that provide important support to young adolescents and their families.

The *vision* for the Mid South Middle Start is to assist networks of schools in becoming high performers for students. We share a sense of urgency that high-performing schools become the norm, not the exception. We encourage you to join us in this critical endeavor.

for more information contact

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