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Being betwix and between is well-known as a hard place to find oneself. Think of the devil and the deep blue sea or a rock and a hard place. Recall the Argonauts, and Jason's experience with Scylla and Charybdis. These are just a few famous examples of being caught between—readers can probably add some of their own difficult middles.

## About the Students

For young people, there is not a more difficult middle than one of the first they encounter: that of moving from being a child to being an adolescent. Young people between 10 and 14 years of age are swamped by between—those psychological, emotional, physical, and intellectual transitions. Their abilities, attitudes, problems, and maturity range over large differences, described vividly by Atwell: "My kids are boys who play tag at recess, and boys who grow mustaches. They're girls who slip and call me Mom in class, and girls who come to school wearing more eye shadow than I'd thought humanly possible and holler 'Yo, Nancie!' when they see me in town on Saturday" (Atwell, 1987, p. 27). Atwell also recaps their fluctuating behaviors: "Physically and emotionally, adolescence can be a pretty unsubtle time of life. Physically, junior high students are antsy. They tap pens, jerk their legs and feet, squirm, gaze around the room and into space. . . . Emotionally, junior high students experience wide swings of mood and deep extremes. When they like something they love it; when they dislike something they hate it. And the loves and hates are transient—best friends speak only to each other or don't speak to each other at all, romances last two days, obsessions are fiercely defended until they give way to new obsessions" (1987, pp. 29-30).

## About the Teachers

The middle transitional period's plethora of dynamic tensions challenge middle level educators as well as the young. Educators have to create a balanced result to accomplish, according to George, Stevenson, Thomason, and Beane, the high-quality middle school: "High-quality middle schools result from the creative balance between elementary and secondary perspectives, between specialization and generalization, between curriculum and community, between equity and excellence, between teaching the mind and touching the heart" (1992, p. 2).

Note the central importance of educators in producing an environment that accommodates dichotomous goals. It is the dedicated, prepared middle school teacher who accommodates the uniqueness of middle level students and blends disciplines to provide the distinctiveness of the middle school classroom. It is this middle level teacher who—one on one—models respect, trustworthiness, and fairness; promises safety for the students' learning experiences; leavens learning with positive emotional interactions; and challenges students with thoughtful, significant goals.

# INTRODUCTION



# INTRODUCTION to Philosophy: The Foundation

## Introduction to Philosophy: The Foundation

In the selection in this section, Fogarty pinpoints the key to quality middle schools—the individual classroom teacher. As the major influence in the classroom, teachers set the tone and course for students' learning experiences. Because of the teacher's leading position in students' educational experience, teacher quality forms the foundation of the effective middle school educational philosophy. Teacher quality directly affects students' learning and achievement. High-quality teachers are an essential part of the classroom that produces high-achieving students.

Middle school teachers especially are critical to the success of their students. The middle school students are struggling with many facets of their lives—personalities, relationships, values, goals, and last but not least, physical changes. In many ways, these life matters are more important to students than academic matters. Because life and school are intertwined to an especially strong degree in middle school students, middle school philosophy focuses on the whole student, rather than addressing only students' academic performances. In this view, teacher quality looks like teachers with a special set of proficiencies: energy and enthusiasm, a clear understanding of adolescence and its characteristics, strong instructional skills, and a pronounced commitment to lifelong learning and development as the harbinger of professional excellence.

Fogarty's discussion of the value of teacher quality focuses on establishing a framework for teaching performance. She defines a research-based framework that supports creative flexibility in the classroom. Classroom climate, learning skills, structures of interaction, and metacognition represent a vision of quality that sets the stage for educators to fulfill their mission of educational achievement. She challenges educators who know that teachers make a difference to help develop teachers that make the difference.



# Teachers Make a the Difference: A Framework for Quality

## The Research

It's time we stopped pretending not to know. We know. Teachers make *the* difference, not a difference in the academic success of the learner. The verdict is in. The quality of the teacher is inextricably linked to student achievement. There is abundant and overwhelmingly consistent testimony from the experts:

Teacher quality is on the national agenda as never before. Finally, there is widespread recognition of the fact that the teacher is the single most important school-based determinant of student learning. That fact accords not only with every parent's common sense, but also, with research.

Arthur E. Wise  
President, National Council  
for Accreditation of Teacher  
Education (1999, p. 68)

The best way to increase student academic achievement is to put qualified and quality-minded teachers in classrooms... California policymakers and educators have determined that investing in teachers, and providing a tool to examine teaching over time, is the path to increase success for students and teachers alike.

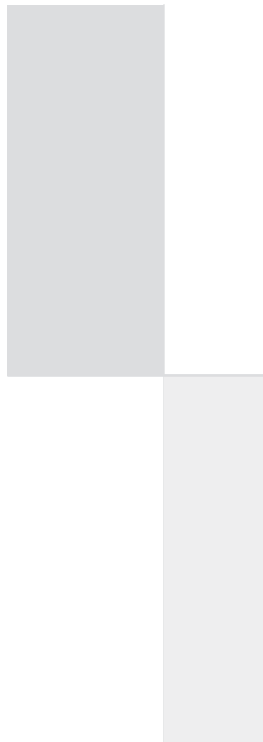
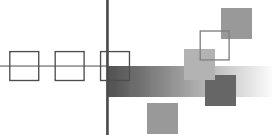
Olebe, Jackson and  
Danielson Consultants,  
California Formative  
Assessment and Support  
System for Teachers (1999,  
p. 44)

The evidence is just so overwhelming. When kids have very ineffective teachers—especially if they catch multiple (poor teachers)—they never recover.

W. L. Sanders Director, Value  
Added Research and  
Assessment Center,  
University of Tennessee at  
Knoxville (quoted in Bradley,  
1999, p. 47)

## The Mission

The case for teacher quality is astonishingly clear. An imperative is on the educational agenda! It dictates investment in the recruitment, preparation,



professional development, recognition and appreciation of the career teacher (see Figure 1). Investment involves the need to focus on recruiting the best and the brightest with inviting career paths and substantial compensation packages. Investment means on-going career incentives and systems that recognize and reward quality work. Investment encompasses pre-service reform in the schools of education and mentoring programs that provide novices in the field with meaningful, on-going support.



**Figure 1. Educational Agenda Imperative: Teacher Quality**

Investment is about professional development opportunities that encourage the career teacher to stay in the classroom and flourish as a professional. It means developing the concept of a community of learners for faculty and structuring on-going peer coaching efforts. Investment in teacher quality involves recognition policies that use the talent and expertise of faculty for leadership positions in teaching. Investment means appreciation packages, such as long-term leave, that provide opportunities for career teachers to replenish their energies, hone their skills and renew their spirits. Investment means time, money and energy. It is a mission of commitment.

Although the mission of ensuring quality teaching for all students in the nation's schools is a daunting one, its promise is compelling. It is commonly estimated in the literature that over 2 million new teachers will enter the profession by 2010. What better time to focus on the mission of investing in teacher quality? What better time to bring the various elements of this mission together and to begin the conversation with the imperative for real, substantive change in mind?

**The public clearly sees teachers as the most important factor in bringing about improvements in the schools.**

Lowell C. Rose and Alec M. Gallup, Executive Director, Emeritus, Phi Delta Kappan International and Co-Chair with George Gallup, Jr. Gallup Organization (1999, p. 49)

## The Vision

The vision for teacher quality must be real. It must ring true for all involved. A well-publicized fiasco accusing teachers and principals of inappropriately helping students on tests echoes the confusion that results when a well-intentioned vision turns into a poorly implemented one. The standards

