Equity & Middle Grades Organizational Structures: Echoes of the Past, Influences on the Present, Hopes for the Future

Gayle Andrews
University of Georgia, gandrews@uga.edu

Equity & Middle Grades Organizational Structures:
Echoes of the Past, Influences on the Present, Hopes for the Future

Gayle Andrews, *University of Georgia*

Introduction

Many large middle grade schools function as mills that contain and process endless streams of students. Within them are **masses of anonymous youth…. Such** *settings virtually guarantee that the intellectual and emotional needs of youth will go unmet. Consider what is asked of these students: Every 50 minutes, perhaps 6 or 7 times each day, assemble with 30 or so of your peers, each time in a different group, sit silently in a chair in neat, frozen rows, and try to catch hold of knowledge as it whizzes by you in the words of an adult you met only at the beginning of the school year. The subject of one class has nothing to do with the subject of the next class. If a* **concept is confusing, don't ask for help, there isn't time to explain.** (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development [CCAD], 1989, p. 37)

This vivid description of middle grades schools is drawn from the landmark 1989 report describing the middle school concept: *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century* (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development [CCAD]). Based on two years of work by the educators, policymakers, and **researchers who served on CCAD's Task Force** on the Education of Young Adolescents, the original *Turning Points* report described several recommendations to improve schooling for young adolescents. The authors recommend that middle grades educators create small communities for learning as the foundation for organizational structures that resist the rapid fire and dehumanizing existence in schools that treat students as anonymous and passive recipients of learning and teachers as compliant cogs in the machine. Small communities for learning make time and space for a more humanizing approach to middle grades education and include organizational structures like interdisciplinary teams of teachers who share a group of students, common planning time for those teaching teams, flexible instructional schedules, detracked and heterogeneous groups of students for learning, and advisory programs that assign an adult advisor to every student. This essay focuses on organizational structures related to small communities for learning in middle grades schools, including historical and current influences on those organizational structures and how those structures may support, advance, and/or inhibit equity.

More than three decades after the publication of *Turning Points* (CCAD, 1989), I am struck by the eerie, contemporary, and haunting familiarity of **the report's description of anonymous youth in** the middle grades schooling version of an industrial factory. As Alverson et al. (2021) substantiate in their survey of over 1600 educators regarding the current status and characteristics of middle grades schools, **America's middle schools continue to fall short** of fully implementing the middle school concept that includes small communities for learning characterized by interdisciplinary teams, flexible scheduling, heterogeneous grouping, and advisory (e.g., Bishop & Harrison, 2021; CCAD, 1989; Jackson & Davis, 2000; National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform, 1998; National Middle School Association [NMSA], 1982, 1992, 1995, 2003, 2010).

Fostering a sense of belonging and cultivating and sustaining relationships are fundamental to recommended organizational structures in middle grades schools that support equity. In this essay, I argue that middle grades educators must ensure that organizational structures support a sense of belonging and also **problematize the very idea of "belonging,"** actively countering and disrupting the White supremacy culture (Okun, 1999, 2021) and colonizing forces (Patel, 2016) that can make **"belonging" conditional and available only for** those who accept systemic oppressive forces without question or complaint.

Cultural and Historical Locations: Echoes and Implications for Middle grades Organizational Structures

In a 1992 speech, John Lounsbury, a founding father of the middle school movement, displayed a list of the purposes and aims for the junior high school model (Briggs, 1920; Eliot, 1888; Koos, 1927) side-by-side with a list of the aims of the middle school concept (CCAD, 1989; NMSA, 1982). Both lists included designing separate and specialized schools that respond to the unique developmental needs of young adolescents, providing adult guidance to help students make appropriate choices, reducing the number of dropouts, and easing the transition between elementary school and high school (Davis, 1996; Lounsbury, 1992). As I listened to Dr. Lounsbury's keynote from the back of a ballroom in San Diego, California, the similarities between the two lists were numerous, striking, and, ultimately, puzzling. What happened to turn the humanizing junior high school model into a parody of its original intentions, a parody that seemed to treat students as anonymous widgets to be processed, smaller and younger high school students marching through academic content in lock step? I designed my dissertation research (Davis, 1996) to examine the puzzle of the side-by-side lists, comparing the evolution of the junior high school to the evolution of the middle school and pursuing the question: Would history repeat itself? Would the middle school follow the junior high's path to mimic high schools?

Examining middle grades organizational structures and their potential to support and sustain equity requires a look at the cultural and historical locations (Jones & Woglom, 2016) from which those structures originated. In my dissertation study, I used a combination of historical research and interviews with contemporary middle school educators, district leaders, state policymakers, researchers, and other stakeholders to explore those cultural and historical locations for both the junior high school and the middle school. I described the evolution of the junior high school, tracing its path from those who advocated for pushing rigorous studies of academic disciplines down into earlier grades (e.g., Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education, 1918; Eliot, 1888) through more progressive depictions of the junior high model that called for attending to students' individual and diverse needs and promoting democratic values (e.g., Briggs, 1920; Koos, 1927; Van Til et al., 1961).

In his landmark 1888 speech, then-Harvard President Charles Eliot proposed "shortening and enriching the grammar school course." Eliot suggested starting the study of academic disciplines earlier – including algebra, the hard sciences, and "foreign" languages – which would require "decreasing the amount of time spent in elementary school and revamping secondary education to better meet the demands of college-bound youth" (Davis, 1996, p. 10). Eliot wanted first-year college students to begin their post-secondary journeys at a younger age, more in keeping with European trajectories. In Europe in the late 19th century, those pursuing post-secondary education tended to start their university careers at around age 18, thus entering the workforce, degree in hand, in their early 20s. In the US, the affluent White males allowed and resourced to pursue post-secondary education were entering the university at an older age, typically not until their early 20s, which meant they entered the workforce, degree in hand, around age 26 or 27. Eliot wanted Americans to start college at a younger age so that they could contribute to the capitalist engine of progress sooner and for a longer period. Of course, Eliot paid little or no attention to women or people of color in his advocacy for a path to a college education. Women's post-secondary paths generally were limited to teaching and nursing, and people of color were given no support and were often literally blocked out of pursuing a post-secondary path at all (e.g., Davis; Eisenmann, 2006; Yosso et al., 2004).

It is worth noting that Eliot later chaired the National Education Association's Committee on Secondary School Studies, often known as the Committee of Ten. The NEA Committee's 1894 report focused on improving preparation for college, recommending both reducing and improving elementary school curriculum, beginning rigorous study of academic subjects in the upper elementary grades, thus lengthening the time devoted to the study of the disciplines and making that study more intense (Gruhn & Douglass, 1947).

As further illustration of organizational structures culturally and historically located in the realm of the White male affluent elite, Eliot was joined in 1906 by other college presidents (e.g., Woodrow Wilson of Princeton) in an effort funded by the industrialist/steel baron Andrew Carnegie to discuss how to define readiness for college admission. "The requirements, they decided, should include four years of high school preparation, divided into standard units of time and credit in each of several different academic

disciplines" (Davis, 1996, p. 26). The standardized "Carnegie units" required 40-60 minutes of "seat time" each day in core academic subjects over four years in high school to meet college entrance requirements (Tyack & Tobin, 1993). Perhaps unsurprisingly given that most junior high schools included ninth grade, the first of the four high school Carnegie-unit years, junior high schools generally followed the Carnegie unit-based inflexible 40–60-minute class periods to drive daily instructional schedules. We can hear the echoes of the Carnegie unit in modern middle schools, quite literally, when the chimes or bells sound to mark the beginning or end of a class period.

Taken together, the influential efforts of Eliot and like-minded compatriots to meet the demands of college-bound youth created largely impermeable boundaries between academic disciplines, leading to departmentalized organizational structures. Rather than speak across the divides between content areas, departmentalized school structures ignored the reality that mathematics, language arts, social studies, and science are not vacuum sealed separately in everyday life. In the rush to "cover" voluminous piles of discipline-specific content knowledge, building conceptual bridges often fell by the wayside. Inflexible daily instructional schedules can be traced from universities through high schools, to "mini-me" junior high schools, and, according to Alverson and colleagues' 2021 study, into modern-day American middle schools, where only 8% of respondents reported implementing flexible schedules in their middle grades schools.

The practice of tracking students into groups based on perceived ability to learn also connects to cultural and historical locations from the early days of the junior high school's origins. The junior high philosophy called for individualizing instruction to suit the needs of students, and early advocates like Thomas Briggs (1920) and Leonard Koos (1927) argued for child-centeredness in keeping with John Dewey's argument that children, not content, should be the focus of education (Dewey, 1938; Williams, 2017). However, the junior high school's criteria for sorting students onto the "track" or path (college, occupation) reflected society's class system such that those selected as "belonging" to the college-preparatory tracks tended to come from more affluent backgrounds (Perlstein & Tobin, 1988). Intelligence tests like the Stanford-Binet test of IQ were supposed to be "neutral" filters to sort and sift children and youth into the appropriate "leveled" classes to which they "belonged." However, as research has demonstrated repeatedly, not only do tests like Stanford-Binet reflect classism, they also have proven to be racially biased and fundamentally flawed assessments, a reality that is reflected in the demographics of students identified as "belonging" in special education, where Black and Brown children and youth are over-represented. At the same time, White students are substantially more likely to be identified as "belonging" in programs for "gifted" students where Black and Brown children and youth are decidedly under-represented (e.g., Kendi, 2020; Rosales & Walker, 2021; White, 2021). Jackson and Davis (2000) highlight tracking's metaphorical industrial factory connection in *Turning Points 2000: Educating Adolescents for the 21st Century*:

> Tracking may appear to be a rational way for a complex organization to deal with diverse "raw materials," in this case the students. In hopes of more efficiently accomplishing the goal of teaching all students, schools break up a large heterogeneous group into smaller, homogeneous groups... Schools then establish a structure in which teachers deal with each small group separately, in much the same way that factory managers would send steel through one machine for processing and rubber through another. (p. 65)

Fast forward from the early 20th century to the second decade of the 21st, and troubling patterns and parallels emerge in middle schools that can arguably be tied directly to the White, capitalist, and colonizing cultural and historical locations at the root of present-day schooling for young adolescents. In their research on the current status of the middle school concept in U.S. middle grades schools, Alverson and colleagues (2021) asked middle grades educators to consider key components of the middle school concept and rate each component on two dimensions: First, how important the component is to successful middle schools and second, the level of implementation of that component in their own middle schools.

Things get interesting and perhaps paradoxical at the intersections (or lack thereof) between components identified as important and components that were regularly implemented. Although the middle school concept clearly calls

for detracking resulting in heterogeneous groupings of students (e.g., Bishop & Harrison, 2021; Jackson & Davis, 2000), respondents noted two realities in their middle grades schools. More than three quarters of respondents reported tracking students by perceived ability. While the stark and disappointing reality of widespread tracking by perceived ability is disturbing enough, it might be easier to accept if educators surveyed seemed to recognize that tracking flies in the face of equity and social justice. However, many respondents did not see the absence of heterogeneous grouping as a challenge in their efforts toward "curricular rigor and clarity." As the researchers noted, "'Heterogeneous grouping' was the least selected challenging component, which suggested homogeneous grouping through tracking may be a deliberate intentional choice made by many middle schools" (Alverson et al., 2021, p. 15). So, despite decades of research on the negative impacts of tracking for all children and youth particularly those from marginalized populations (e.g., Boaler, 2006, 2011; Kendi, 2020; Loveless, 2013; Oakes, 1985, 1990; Tucker & Codding, 1998; Welner & Burris, 2013), survey respondents indicate their middle grades schools use tracking routinely, and they do not seem to see tracking as a problematic practice. In fact, with tracking as a common organizational structure, they are clearly implementing a practice that they *want* to enact. Of all the findings from the Alverson study, I find this widespread de facto support for tracking perhaps the most disheartening when I consider how organizational structures can inhibit equity.

Hope for the Arc toward Justice

Now that I have catalogued several connections between middle grades organizational structures and their cultural and historical locations dating back to the late 19th century, I turn toward the promise of middle grades organizational structures to support equity and justice, including detracking, interdisciplinary teaming, and flexible scheduling.

A growing body of research on and advocacy for detracking in mathematics could point the way to getting off the track and using heterogeneous grouping to support every student's learning and success. Heterogeneous groupings of students benefit from learning together and "off track," so to speak, and those benefits extend to all students (e.g., Boaler et al., 2000; Burris et al.,

2006). As White (2021) argues, detracking aligns with the equity principles woven throughout *The Successful Middle School: This We Believe* (Bishop & Harrison, 2021), including allowing for "creativity and discovery as well as...opportunities for divergent thinking" (White, p. 5).

In 2014, the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) moved to eliminate tracking in middle school mathematics. The pushback the district faced to offering mixed ability math courses in middle school seems to reflect the unstated but evident lingering effect of the pressure to complete a "college-prep" path through math content – Charles Eliot would be nodding at this – that includes Algebra in the 8th grade and in theory prepares students to take courses beyond Algebra II in high school on their way to calculus and beyond. The district created a fact sheet about the benefits of detracking to share with multiple constituencies (e.g., educators, families). In response to concerns about the possible downside of eliminating honors track math courses in middle school, the district's fact sheet shared research (Burris et al., 2006) demonstrating that the probability of completing advanced courses beyond Algebra II and mathematics achievement increased in all groups when middle school students were enrolled in mixed-ability math coursework. Burris and her colleagues conducted a study of six middle school math classes in New York, and they found that students who participated in mixed ability math classes in middle school were all more likely to complete advanced math classes beyond Algebra II in high school than those students who were in tracked middle school math. That means that even the highest achieving students were more likely to go beyond Algebra II if they had been in mixed ability math classes in middle school rather than accelerated or honors courses. The average test scores for high achieving students who were in heterogeneously grouped middle school math classes did not differ significantly from high achieving students who were in tracked math classes.

SFUSD also highlighted a critical study of over 1,000 students' perceptions and performance in mixed ability and tracked math courses in middle school. Boaler and her colleagues (2000) shared that their results showed *all* students were negatively affected by the tracked math courses whether they were in the low track or high tracks. Students in the so-called "high"

tracks felt disadvantaged by fast-paced lessons and pressure to achieve.

Relationships between and among students and educators are at the very heart of the middle school concept (e.g., Bishop & Harrison, 2021; Jackson & Davis, 2000). Interdisciplinary teams create small communities for learning where adults and young adolescents alike can do the work of fighting oppression in community with one another and in collaboration. Paris and colleagues (2017) point to the importance of relationships in culturally sustaining approaches to teaching and learning:

> Being and becoming a culturally sustaining educator is dynamic; it's about critically learning with community; it's about, together, sustaining who youth and communities are and want to be; and it's about doing all of that with respect and love.

For middle grades students and teachers, a sense of belonging that includes shared goals and values (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011, 2023) is foundational to middle grades organizational structures like interdisciplinary teaming (CCAD, 1989). When "belonging" is defined broadly – encompassing diverse identities and the complexities, flaws, and outright mistakes that come with being human – then the sense of belonging and relationships with others can form the warp and weave of resistance and ongoing individual and collaborative anti-oppressive and equity-oriented pursuits (Kleinrock, 2021; Love, 2019; Paris et al., 2017).

It seems that work around diversity, equity, and inclusion is also moving to include some notion of belonging (Miller, 2023; UNC-CH School of Education, 2023). In a *New York Times* article from spring 2023, Miller reported on the work of Inversity Solutions executive director, Karith Foster, with an aerospace company, Woodward:

> Paul Benson, the company's chief human resources officer, knew that creating a companywide diversity, equity and inclusion program would require a seismic shift. "Look at our org chart online, and we're a lily-white leadership team of old males," he said. But employees were eager for a more inclusive culture. "People want to feel like

they belong," Mr. Benson said. "They want to come to work and not feel like they have to check themselves at the door." ...a search led him to a Black comedian and former media personality named Karith Foster. She is the chief executive of Inversity Solutions, a consultancy that rethinks traditional diversity programming. Ms. Foster said companies must address racism, sexism, homophobia, and antisemitism in the workplace. But she believes that an overemphasis on identity groups and a tendency to reduce people to "victim or villain" can strip agency from and alienate everyone — including employees of color.

The term "belonging" seems to be showing up in position and program titles more often as corporations and organizations like institutions of higher education move away from Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)[1] to Diversity, Equity, and Belonging. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's School of Education announced they had hired Anthony James as the inaugural director of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB). In describing his new role, James plans to "expand diversity, bolster belonging, and promote the highest standards for inclusive excellence." He remarked, "I want to make sure people feel they have a place, whether they're a student or faculty member or staff member because everyone wants to feel like they belong somewhere" (UNC-CH, 2023, p. 7). Middle grades organizational structures like teaming and advisory can support belonging in the sense of everyone feeling that they have a place. However, it is worth noting that there has been some criticism of "an abstract focus on belonging [that] allows companies to avoid the tough conversations about power" (Miller, 2023), with "belonging" potentially serving as a new, comfortable (to White people) label and a possible shield to obscure the systemic issues that bolster White supremacy culture (Okun, 1999, 2021), rather than bolstering belonging and inclusion in the way James seems to intend.

A classic AMLE t-shirt that I used to see at the annual conference each year included this slogan as a shout-out to the importance and benefits of teams: "Together Everyone Achieves More." I argue that the trusting and respectful

---

[1] The conservative strategy to use the term "Critical Race Theory" (CRT), as a blanket indictment of any mention of race, oppression, bias, or prejudice

(Sawchuk, 2021) seems to have expanded to include any initiative or program titled Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) (see for example, Butcher, 2023).

relationships and belonging seen as crucial to interdisciplinary teams of teachers and students (e.g., Arhar, 1990) could support the shared development of critical consciousness: critical awareness of oppressive systems, critical reflection and analysis, and critical action to disrupt injustice (Freire, 1970/2000; Jemal, 2017). In dynamic and thriving small communities for learning, developing, and enacting critical consciousness could take many forms because educators and young adolescents can bring to bear:

- Their care for one another and their community to design, for example, service-learning reciprocal partnerships *with* communities that address community needs and connect to curriculum in meaningful and substantive ways (Bishop & Harrison, 2021; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Mitchell, 2008; Poliner & Benson, 2017)
- Their passions and questions about themselves and the world to drive truly integrated curriculum that crosses, even obliterates, disciplinary boundaries to connect to authentic joys, problems, and puzzles (Beane, 1997; Muhammad, 2020, 2023; Pate et al., 1997; Springer, 1994, 2006)
- Individual and collective assets and strengths including funds of identity (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014) and *street data* that "provides street insight — a more robust picture; one that values experience, emotion, perspective, vision, embeddedness, and community over **anything else"** (Safir & Dugan, 2021)

According to self-determination theory (SDT) (Ryan & Deci, 2017), we all have three basic psychological needs: the need for autonomy, the need for belonging, and the need to be competent. In environments where those three basic needs are met, people experience high levels of well-being, motivation, and job/task satisfaction (Ryan & Deci). In keeping with the literature on self-determination theory and belonging, I posit that in dynamic and thriving small communities for learning, all three needs will be met for middle grades educators and students.

On interdisciplinary teams with daily common planning time (Mertens et al, 2013), teachers can collaborate to plan curriculum that demonstrates and allows students to discover the natural and authentic relationships between and among the content areas and the complicated reality beyond the walls of the classroom (Trinter & Hughes, 2021). Interdisciplinary teams can also discuss and plan for flexible instructional schedules within the degrees of freedom of the school day and **"fixed" timeframes like lunch. With a**ccordion-like wiggle room, middle grades teachers and students can expand and contract time and space to allow for those questions about the content that would have gone unanswered in the traditional junior high setting described in the opening vignette. Flexible scheduling and interdisciplinary teams make it possible for teachers and students to engage in service-learning, project-based learning, problem-based learning, and personalized learning (Bishop et al., 2019), all of which offer opportunities to orient teaching and learning toward equity and justice.

Teachers on an interdisciplinary team share a group of students whom they all can get to know well (Poliner & Benson, 2017). In addition to curriculum and schedule planning in those regular common planning time meetings, **teachers share information about students'** progress, joys, needs, and struggles. Teachers on teams can collaborate to support and encourage one another as professionals and as human beings and also hold each other accountable for enacting critical consciousness in the everyday complexities of an inequitable world (Sealey-Ruiz, 2020).

As Bettina Love explains in her milestone book, *We Want To Do More Than Survive* (2019), **"Too often we think the work of fighting** oppression is just intellectual. The real work is **personal, emotional, spiritual, and communal."** Organizational structures in middle grades schools, grounded in trusting and respectful relationships, should be the launching pads for both fighting oppression and unearthing joy (Muhammad, 2023). If we know anything as middle grades educators, we know that our work and our joy are personal, emotional, spiritual, and communal. As DeRay McKesson (2018), noted organizer of Black Lives Matter, argues, **"Hope is not magic; hope is work. I a**m not certain that a new world, one of equity and justice, will emerge, but I am certain that it *can* **emerge" (p. 7). As middle grades educators, I** believe that we will take up the work and the joy of building and sustaining equity-oriented organizational structures, with the hope that we

can do our part to help bend the arc of the moral universe toward justice and with the full knowledge that hope is work.

References

Alverson, R., DiCicco, M., Faulkner, S.A., & **Cook, C. (2021). America's middle** schools: Examining constructs, organizational structures, and instructional practices. *Middle Grades Review, 7*(3). https://scholarworks.uvm.edu/mgreview/vol7/iss3/5

Arhar, J.M. (1990). The effects of interdisciplinary teaming on social bonding of middle level students. *Research in Middle Level Education, 14*(1), 1-10.

Beane, J.A. (1997). *Curriculum integration: Designing the core of democratic education.* Teachers College Press.

Bishop, P.A., & Harrison, L.M. (2021). *The successful middle school: This we believe.* Association for Middle Level Education.

Bishop, P.A., Downes, J.M., & Farber, K. (2019). *Personalized learning in the middle grades: A guide for classroom teachers and school leaders.* Harvard Education Press.

Boaler, J. (2006). How a detracked mathematics approach promoted respect, responsibility, and high achievement. *Theory Into Practice, 45*(1), 40-46.

Boaler, J. (2011). Changing students' lives through the de-tracking of urban mathematics classrooms. *Journal of Urban Mathematics Education, 4*(1), 7-14.

Boaler, J., William, D., & Brown, M. (2000). **Students' experiences of ability** grouping: Disaffection, polarization, and construction of failure. *British Educational Research Journal, 26*(5), 631-648.

Briggs, T. (1920). *The junior high school.* Houghton Mifflin.

Burris, C.C., Heubert, J.P., & Levin, H.M. (2006). Accelerating mathematics achievement using heterogeneous grouping. *American Educational Research Journal, 43*(1), 137-154.

Butcher, J. (2023, May 23). How America's great philanthropic foundations are corrupting their missions under DEI pressures. The Heritage Foundation. https://www.heritage.org/education/report/how-americas-great-philanthropic-foundations-are-corrupting-their-missions-under

Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development. (1989). *Turning points: Preparing American youth for the 21st century.* Author.

Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education. (1918). Cardinal principles of secondary education. *Bulletin 1918, No. 35.* U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Education.

Davis, G.A. (1996). *Is everything old new again? Influences on the evolution of the junior high school and the middle school* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Dewey. J. (1938). *Experience and education.* Macmillan.

Eisenmann, L. (2006). *The impact of historical **expectations on women's higher** education.* Forum on Public Policy.

Eliot, C. (1888). *Shortening and enriching the grammar school course.* Address to the National Education **Association's annual** convention.

Esteban-Guitart, M., & Moll, L.C. (2014). Funds of identity: A new concept based on the funds of knowledge approach. *Culture & Psychology, 20*(1), 31-48.

Flowers, N., Mertens, S.B., & Mulhall, P. (1999). The impact of teaming: Five research-based outcomes of teaming. *Middle School Journal, 32*(2), 52-59.

Freire, P. (1970/2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed: 30th anniversary edition.* Continuum.

Gruhn, W.T., & Douglass, H.R. (1947). *The modern junior high school.* Ronald Press.

Jackson, A.W., & Davis, G.A. (2000). *Turning points 2000: Educating adolescents in the 21st century.* Teachers College Press.

Jemal, A. (2017). Critical consciousness: A critique and critical analysis of the literature. *Urban Review, 39*(4), 602-626. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-017-0411-3

Jones, S.R., & Woglom, J.F. (2016). From where do you read the world? A graphic expansion of literacies for teacher education. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, 59*(4), 443-473. doi:10.1002/jaal.472

Kendi, I.X. (2020, October). *Testimony in support of the Working Group recommendation to #SuspendTheTest.* Boston School Committee, Boston, MA.

Kleinrock, L. (2021). *Start here start now: A guide to antibias and antiracist work in your school community.* Heinemann.

Koos, L. (1927). *The junior high school.* Ginn and Company.

Lounsbury, J.H. (1992, October). *Keynote address: Junior high schools and middle schools.* Paper presented at the national workshop, Carnegie **Corporation of New York's Middle** Grade School State Policy Initiative. San Diego, CA.

Love, B.L. (2019). *We want to do more than survive: Abolitionist teaching and the pursuit of educational freedom.* Beacon Press.

Loveless, T. (2013). The resurgence of ability grouping and persistence of tracking. *Part II of the 2013 Brown Center Report on American Education, the Brookings Institution.* [2], 1 https://www.brookings.edu/artic les/the-resurgence-of-ability-grouping-and-persistence-of-tracking/

McKesson, D. (2018). *On the other side of freedom: The case for hope.* Viking.

Mertens, S.B., Anfara, V.A., Caskey, M.M., & Flowers, N. (Eds.). (2013). *Common planning time in middle level schools: **Research studies from the MLER SIG's** national project.* Information Age Publishers.

Miller, J. (2023, May 13). Why some companies **are saying "diversity and belonging"** instead of "diversity and inclusion." *The New York Times.* https://www.nytimes.com/2023/05/13/business/diversity-equity-inclusion-belonging.html

Mitchell, T.D. (2008). Traditional vs. critical service-learning: Engaging the literature to differentiate two models. *Michigan Journal of Community Service-Learning, 14*(2), 50-65.

Muhammad, G. (2020). *Cultivating genius: An equity framework for culturally and historically responsive literacy.* Scholastic.

Muhammad, G. (2023). *Unearthing joy: A guide to culturally and historically responsive teaching and learning.* Scholastic.

National Education Association. (1894). *Report of the Committee of Ten on secondary school studies.* American Book Company.

National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform. (1998). *Vision statement.* Education Development Center.

National Middle School Association. (1982). *This we believe.* Author.

National Middle School Association. (1992.) *This we believe.* Author.

National Middle School Association. (1995). *This we believe: Developmentally responsive middle level schools.* Author.

National Middle School Association. (2003). *This we believe: Successful schools for young adolescents.* Author.

National Middle School Association. (2010). *This we believe: Keys to educating young adolescents.* Author.

Oakes, J. (1985). *Keeping track: How schools structure inequality.* Yale University Press.

Oakes, J. (1990). *Multiplying inequalities: The effects of race, social class, and tracking on opportunities to learn mathematics and science.* RAND.

Okun, T. (1999). *White supremacy culture. Dismantling racism works.* https://www.dismantlingracism.org/uploads/4/3/5/7/43579015/okun_-_white_sup_culture.pdf

Okun, T. (2021). *White supremacy culture - Still here. White supremacy culture.* https://drive.google.com/file/d/1XR_7M_9ga64zZ00_JyFVTAjmjVU-uSz8/view

Paris, D., Alim, H.S., & Ferlazzo, L. (2017, July 6). **Author interview: "Culturally sustaining pedagogies."** *Education Week.* https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/opinion-author-interview-culturally-sustaining-pedagogies/2017/07

Pate, P.E., Homestead, E., & McGinnis, K. (1997). *Making integrated curriculum work: Teachers, students, and the quest for coherent curriculum.* Teachers College Press.

Patel, L. (2016). *Decolonizing educational research: From ownership to answerability.* Routledge.

Perlstein, D., & Tobin, W. (1988). *The history of the junior high school: A study of conflicting aims and institutional patterns.* A paper commissioned by the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

Poliner, R., & Benson, J. (2017). *Teaching the whole teen: Everyday practices that promote success and resilience in school and life.* Corwin.

Rosales, J., & Walker, T. (2021, March 3). The racist beginnings of standardized testing: From grade school to college, students of color have suffered from the effects of biased testing. *NEA Today.*

Ryan, R.M., & Deci, E.L. (2017). *Self-determination theory: Basic psychological needs in motivation, development, and wellness.* Guilford Press.

Safir, S., & Dugan, J. (2021). *Street data: A next-generation model for equity, pedagogy, and school transformation.* Corwin.

San Francisco Unified School District. (2014). *Quick facts about math & tracking.* Author.

Sawchuk, S. (2021, May 18). What is critical race theory and why is it under attack? *Education Week.* https://www.edweek.org/leadership/what-is-critical-race-theory-and-why-is-it-under-attack/2021/05

Sealey-Ruiz, Y. (2020, October). *Racial literacy in middle grades teacher education.* Paper presented at the annual networking meeting of the American Educational Research Association Middle Level Education Research Special Interest Group, Association for Middle Level Education annual conference, National Harbor, MD [Virtual].

Skaalvik, E.M., & Skaalvik, S. (2011). Teacher job satisfaction and motivation to leave the teaching profession: Relations with school context, feeling of belonging, and emotional exhaustion. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 27*(6), 1029-1038. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2011.04.001

Skaalvik, E.M., & Skaalvik, S. (2023). Shared goals and values in the teaching profession, job satisfaction and motivation to leave the teaching profession: The mediating role of psychological need satisfaction. *Social Psychology of Education.*

https://doi.org/10.1007/s11218-023-09787-x

Springer, M. (1994). *Watershed: A successful voyage into integrative learning.* National Middle School Association.

Springer, M. (2006). *Soundings: A democratic, student-centered education.* National Middle School Association.

Trinter, C.P., & Hughes, H.E. (2021). Teachers as curriculum designers: Inviting teachers into the productive struggle. *Research in Middle Level Education, 44*(3), 1-16. https://doi.org/10.1080/19404476.2021.1878417

Tucker, M.S., & Codding, J.B. (1998). *Standards for our schools: How to set them, measure them, and reach them.* Jossey-Bass.

Tyack, D., & Tobin, W. (1993). The "grammar" of schooling: Why has it been so hard to change? *American Educational Research Journal, 31*(3), 453-479.

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Education. (2023). James joins School to Lead DEIB efforts. *Carolina Education.*

Van Til, W., Vars, G.F., & Lounsbury, J.H. (1961). *Modern education for the junior high school years.* Bobbs-Merrill.

Welner, K.G., & Burris, C.C. (2013). The potential, process, and effects of detracking. In P.G. Andrews (Ed.), *Research to guide practice in middle grades education* (pp. 355-374). Association for Middle Level Education.

White, S. (2021). Overcoming barriers: De-tracking to teach for social justice. *Middle Grades Review, 7*(3), Art. 3.

Williams, M. (2017). Dewey in the 21st century. *Journal of Inquiry & Action in Education, 9*(1), 91-102.

Yosso, T.J., Parker, L., Solórzano, D.G., & Lynn, M. (2004). From Jim Crow to affirmative action and back again: A critical race discussion of racialized rationales and access to higher education. *Review of Educational Research, 28,* 1-25. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3568134