

Organization Name



The Academy for Educational Development (AED) Partnership Support Organization

Overview

AED believes that a child's pathway to high school completion and life-long success is established in the middle grades (grades 5-8). For more than a decade, AED's Middle Start program has been helping middle-grades schools, particularly those located in high-poverty areas, transform into high-performing learning environments that are academically challenging and responsive to the unique cognitive, social, emotional, and physical characteristics of young adolescents. Based on this proven approach, the AED PSO empowers schools to provide high expectations and high supports for ALL students by customizing professional development and coaching to the needs and interests of the principal and the entire school community.

The principals in the AED PSO are a close-knit network of colleagues who are determined to help each student make at least one year of academic progress every year. Working together as a true professional learning community, the AED PSO principals focus on continuously improving engagement and academic achievement for ALL students by examining evidence of student learning, addressing challenges, and exploring promising practices.

AED PSO provides a tiered strategy of professional development and support services – from principal-only network meetings and events to professional development for teachers and other school-based educators. Our onsite coaching and technical support helps schools put into practice the knowledge and skills that have been acquired in network-wide workshops. And, because the AED PSO is part of the national Middle Start project (www.middlestart.org), our network schools benefit from grant-funded research, technical support, and specialized learning opportunities.

How We Support Schools*

• The AED PSO Team

Calvin Hastings, the Director of the AED PSO, provides the educational vision and acts as a liaison with the DOE. The AED PSO staff includes experienced educational leaders and support providers who are passionate about young adolescents and who focus on professional development, data and accountability, youth engagement and college readiness, school-based coaching, research and evaluation, and grant writing, among other areas of specialty. Learn more about the [AED PSO team](#).

• A Professional Learning Community of Middle Grades Leaders

Each year, the principals in the AED PSO work with AED staff to set priorities for the network-wide professional development plan and design a calendar of professional development that includes participation in national conferences,

* This SSO is supported by a Dedicated Service Team at the ISC. This is an innovative pilot program designed to align and maximize support services to participating PSO schools based on their individual PSO models. The Dedicated Service Team at the ISC will provide participating PSO schools with the range of expertise available through the ISCs with high level customized service and school accountability. Under this pilot program, all schools in a PSO network affiliated with Replications, CUNY, Fordham and AED will be served by a single dedicated ISC team, consisting of budget, human resources, payroll and applications support. Other ISC services such as Special Education and Youth Development will work in close partnership with the members of the Dedicated Service Team and the PSO staff to maximize support for schools.

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network-wide workshops and institutes, professional learning groups, site visits to model schools outside the district, technical support, and coaching. The AED network identifies experts in the field to extend our work. In the past, our school leaders have learned from such authorities as the National School Reform Faculty, J. Otis Smith, Lucy West, John Schoener, Dr. Robert Brooks, Johns Hopkins University (<http://web.jhu.edu/csos>), Harvard Principals' Center, Rutgers Institute for Improving Student Achievement (RIISA), The Center for Creative Leadership and Logon for Learning.

Instructional support:

Successful middle-grades schools have high expectations for all their students, prepare them well for rigorous high school work, and help them aspire to postsecondary education. Because teachers have the most direct impact on students' achievement and healthy development, our instructional support focuses on:

- Coaching and professional development on academic rigor and differentiated instruction so ALL students experience an engaging and challenging curriculum (opportunities for administrators, coaches, and teachers).
- Tools and coaching that support instructional practices that encourage critical thinking in students.
- Support for administrators to help them become stronger instructional leaders.
- Inter-visitations and lessons studies that enable teachers in and across schools to work together on defining best practices and developing a common language and understanding of academically rigorous curriculum, instruction and assessment.
- Guidance and coaching to establish interdisciplinary, grade-level teams where each student is taught by a common set of teachers.
- Technical support to strengthen collaborative inquiry and assist teacher teams in forming critical friends groups to discuss practice, examine data and student work, determine how best to support individual students, etc.

Special-needs services:

The AED PSO is committed to increasing student engagement and improving academic achievement among ALL middle grades students. It is crucial that special needs students have high expectations set for them, have curriculum that is both inspiring and relevant, and believe that they can succeed. We help schools put structures and supports in place, at both the school and classroom level, that ensure teachers know the specific needs of their students and create an inclusive environment where ALL students thrive and meet their potential. We provide our schools with:

- Technical support for school administrators and special education teams in transitioning students into less restrictive environments and moving towards a more inclusive model of education.
- Direct coaching and support for CTT teachers to maximize this collaborative environment to support the needs of all students; professional development focused on effective practices for middle grades team teaching.
- Coaching for teachers in self-contained classrooms to improving their ability to provide differentiated instruction to meet the needs of individual learners.

Youth development support:

Understanding adolescent development is key to being an effective middle-grades educator. Young adolescent students are at a crossroads: the patterns and mindsets they establish during this period of development will determine their future direction. The AED PSO helps faculty and staff develop an appreciation for the needs and characteristics of young adolescent learners. By being in tune with the powerful transformation that early adolescents undergo, schools are better equipped to create environments in which all students thrive. We help our schools in the following ways:

- Support faculty and staff to develop a deep understanding of the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive needs of students to ensure a healthy and successful life and help students feel respected, safe, and engaged in learning.
- Professional development, coaching, and technical support to establish school/classroom environments and instructional strategies based on the needs and characteristics of young adolescents.

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- Create a cohort of guidance counselors, social workers, deans, and other support staff focused on issues around social/emotional and moral/ethical developmental, student behavior, classroom management, and attendance.
- Partner with organizations/experts specializing in social/emotional supports and opportunities for service learning.
- School-based support to help develop youth voice, and gather input on what students need to succeed.
- Develop a multifaceted coverage strategy to deal with the reality of students across the developmental spectrum.

Accountability/data support:

Effective middle grades schools devote resources and time to continuing and deepening school-wide inquiry and reflection into teaching and learning based on data. The AED PSO helps schools develop systems and practices to collect and analyze multiple data points to inform practice and support student success in high school and beyond, work that is informed by the research of Robert Balfanz and Doug Mac Iver from Johns Hopkins (<http://www.every1graduates.org/PDFs/Early%20Warning%20Systems.pdf>) (data includes annual and periodic assessments, class grades, student work, attendance, behavior, classroom observations, lesson plans, etc.).

- Technical support to implement a common set of strategies, tools, and resources to identify and intervene with students who are at risk of failure and get them back on the path to success.
- Disaggregate periodic assessment data at the classroom level so teachers can plan activities, student-grouping, and support based on individual student needs.
- Monthly Inquiry Team chairperson meetings.
- On-site technical support and coaching in the use of data to inform instruction.
- Professional development that helps teachers in doing ongoing formative assessment so that teachers use assessment to learn as well as an assessment of learning.
- Manage and refine systems for schools to track progress in meeting accountability measures.
- Conduct at least one mock SQR per year to provide schools with targeted feedback on their progress.

Best Fit

The AED PSO is designed to support the unique needs of middle grades schools focused on dramatically improving the experiences and outcomes of young adolescent learners. We are best organized to support schools and principals who are eager to learn together, demonstrate genuine commitment to continual improvement, and are dedicated to participating in deep, research-based professional development designed to challenge thinking and move instruction. Schools and principals who believe in distributed leadership and empowering all staff and faculty to engage in ongoing learning through protocol-driven professional learning communities are the best fit for joining the AED PSO.

Feedback from Principals

The AED PSO received a 100% satisfaction rating in the most recent Principal Satisfaction Survey.

"In this time of shrinking budgets and changing organizational structures, I have really appreciated being part of the AED PSO network because we can rely on the fact that we will get high quality professional development. We get support and development as principals, and we know there is regular, high-quality support for our leadership team and our teachers. And, all of the professional development is focused on creating and managing high quality middle schools."

- *Robert Mercedes, Principal of MS 390*

Price

The AED PSO has two pricing models:

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Tier 1: Includes the networking meetings and events, technical support, professional development, administrative coaching, and onsite instructional coaching. Price: **\$51,610**

Tier 2: includes all of the above except the onsite instructional coaching. Price: **\$36,974**

For More Information

To learn more about the AED PSO including professional development calendar and PSO Team, visit our website: http://middlestart.org/network/about/aed_pso/