

## 4. NATIONAL POLICY CONTEXT



Although education programs for the middle grades have historically received comparatively fewer federal dollars than have those for the early grades, national policymakers are increasingly paying greater attention to the critical importance of the middle years.

### NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

Students in the middle grades (5–8) make up 58 percent of the annual test takers under No Child Left Behind but receive only 10 percent of the funds through state allocation (Success in the Middle Act 2009).

### TITLE I

Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act is the largest federal program for funding schools that enrolls students from low-income families. Students in the middle and upper grades receive far fewer dollars than do those in the elementary grades. Between 1992 and 1997, students in grades 4–6 received 29 percent of Title I funds, and students in grades 7–9 received only 16 percent (McPartland and Jordan 1999). These proportions have not changed in the last decade (J. McPartland, personal communication, November 17, 2009).

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Middle schools represented only 15 percent of the schools that received funds via Title I but accounted for 32 percent of Title I-funded schools that were undergoing corrective action or restructuring during 2005–6 and 36 percent of schools that were experiencing such changes in 2004–5 (Success in the Middle Act 2009).

### SUCCESS IN THE MIDDLE ACT

The Success in the Middle Act of 2009 includes a competitive grant program for states with the purpose of ensuring that all students in the middle grades are taught an academically rigorous curriculum. Other goals include improving policies to support achievement and developing and implementing effective models for struggling students.

McPartland, J., and W. Jordan. 1999. Older students also need major federal compensatory education resources. In *Hard work for good schools: Facts not fads in Title I reform*, ed. G. Orfield and E. DeBray, 104–12. Cambridge, MA: The Civil Rights Project, Harvard University.

Success in the Middle Act. 2009. S. 1362 IS. [thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c111:S.1362](http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?c111:S.1362). Accessed November 24.