

## Middle School and Accountability-Based Reform

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### Abstract

The literature suggests that the potential for making a difference in the lives of children may lie in the educational experiences provided for the young adolescent—particularly for minority children and children in poverty. For the past 30 years middle schools have been making changes in their instructional programs—changes they believe will provide young adolescents with a learning environment that meets their intellectual, social, physical and psychological needs. During the past decade, there has been a push for higher standards and assessments linked to those standards. The demands for accountability can have one of two effects on middle schools: they can enhance instruction and student learning, and support the goals of a developmentally appropriate learning environment; or they can narrow the scope of learning to the content of the tests and deflect attention and resources from other developmental needs of the transitional adolescent. This presentation focuses on principals in Virginia’s middle schools and their perceptions of the outcomes of Virginia’s accountability-based reform in their schools.