



PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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Association for Middle Level Education, American Student Assistance Launch Digital Playbook for Career Exploration in the Middle Grades

Columbus, OH — July 12, 2021 — The Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE) and American Student Assistance (ASA) announced the launch of *Career Exploration in the Middle Grades: A Playbook for Educators*. The first of its kind specifically for middle schools, the digital playbook and its accompanying online resource center outline evidence-based best practices for successfully implementing career exploration with students aged 10-15. The playbook provides a beginning framework for a variety of career exploration programs, complete with implementation guides and case studies from schools around the United States.

“I am delighted to make this wonderful new resource available to middle grade educators,” said Stephanie Simpson, CEO of AMLE. “This project marries AMLE’s expertise in middle grades best practice with ASA’s extensive work supporting and studying effective career exploration programming to create a roadmap that any school can follow to kickstart their own initiatives. We truly believe that every student deserves the tools and opportunities to explore their future, and this playbook helps schools to accomplish that goal.”

Many of the included case studies feature schools that participated in the ASA Middle School Career Exploration Grant program, the findings from which were instrumental to the development of this playbook. “Based on our research, we know that middle schoolers experience stress when thinking about the future and choosing the right career. Through our collaboration with AMLE, we’ve developed this valuable resource to equip educators with a roadmap for creating highly effective and engaging career exploration experiences,” said ASA President and CEO Jean Eddy. “We are proud of the tremendous work of our grantees featured in case studies on whole-school implementation, counseling-centered programs, and STEM/STEAM programs, including those leveraging work-based learning and project-based learning practices to develop sustainable programs.”

A core aim of the playbook was usability, with practical and approachable resources schools can leverage regardless of their current level of programming. “As a principal for more than 20 years, I think this playbook should be in the hands of every middle grades team,” added Jim Barnes, Chair of the AMLE Board of Trustees. “Middle school students are naturally curious, so it’s important we take advantage of this critical developmental stage to encourage them to explore their interests and start to think about the future. In particular, I valued that the playbook provides a role for every member of the middle school team, from administrators to counselors and teachers.”

Career Exploration in the Middle Grades: A Playbook for Educators is available in print and digital formats through the accompanying online resource center at amle.org/playbook. Educators can also access the full complement of tools, including ASA’s digital Middle School Exploration curriculum.

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About the Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE)

The Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE) is an international membership organization that helps middle grades educators reach every student, grow professionally, and create great schools. To learn more, visit www.amle.org.

About American Student Assistance® (ASA)

American Student Assistance® (ASA) is a national nonprofit committed to helping kids know themselves, know their options, and make informed choices to achieve their education and career goals. ASA® has a 60-year legacy of working directly with students to increase their access to higher education through loans and financial education. ASA has turned its experience into impactful solutions for students in grades 6-12 to help them pursue their dreams. To learn more about ASA, visit www.asa.org/about-us.