**Appendix B**

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| **Code** | **Description** | **Frequency** |
| *Descriptors of big ideas from the participants’ stories* | *Additional detail about what the code means, including sample quotes* | *Number of times the label occurs* |
| Reasons for choosing middle school | Some teachers “fell into” middle school. Others knew they wanted to work with young adolescents because of previous experiences with that age group.  Regardless of the reason, the teachers found their place in middle school. “It really just felt like fate.” | 8 |
| In-between-ness | Young adolescents have characteristics of children with their desire to play, but they also can also do abstract reasoning. “They’re really starting to form their independence and their own identity, but they’re still young enough that they care about what you think.” | 7 |
| Unique age group | Young adolescents’ brains experience a greater restructuring than at any other developmental phase excepting infancy. “Middle schoolers deserve specific attention, and far too often those needs and supports aren’t acknowledged.” | 4 |
| Professional preparation | Each teacher in this study earned a credential through the Middle Level program, which focused on the specific needs of young adolescents. They felt this specialized preparation made them more prepared and more confident. “My favorite part of the program was when you taught us about adolescent brain development.” | 11 |
| Cognitive complexity | Middle school students can engage in tasks that require them to understand different perspectives; that do not have one correct answer. “They are not coming from a place of trying to necessarily challenge your authority, but they’re coming from a place of wanting to genuinely understand ‘why am I doing this, what is the purpose?’” | 9 |
| Knowledge of YAD | Eleven to fourteen-year-olds undergo substantive cognitive, social, and emotional changes as they move into adulthood. Knowing what these changes are allows teachers to respond more productively. “When something happens in class, I can say ‘okay, their brains aren’t fully formed yet. This is why they’re making these choices.’” | 17 |
| “where they are” | The changes that occur as youth move from childhood to young adolescence do not happen at the same time for every individual. “I have some kids who still play in the sandbox with their sisters on the weekend and other kids who are sneaking out to go see boys. In the same grade.” | 8 |
| Teacher-student interactions | The ways in which teachers interact students influences the learning environment and the relationships that are built. “Middle schoolers can smell inauthenticity. . . if I’m just trying to mimic somebody else and am not showing any passion, then they’re going to pick up on that.” | 9 |
| Social interactions | Middle school is about much more than learning content, and academic success is dependent upon the relationships students have with each other. “They are learning how to be people and how to interact with others.” | 6 |
| Unproductive behaviors | Because social interactions are so important and academics are sometimes not, young adolescents do not always make good behavioral choices. “The kids have individual bad days, and that doesn’t mean they are bad kids.” | 6 |
| Professional confidence | While the teachers appreciated everything about young adolescents from the beginning, their confidence in their abilities to work productively with their students grew over time. “It was my second or third year when I found my voice as a teacher.” | 23 |
| Professional interactions | I would love to see administrators as part of the classroom community. That would benefit teachers because then we would fee m ore open going to our administration. | 8 |
| Pedagogical decisions | I use all of these programs but supplement them for more current events. That’s what makes it applicable to the real world. The real world connection is huge. | 16 |
| Personal growth | We know as educators that autonomy is huge in academic development, in personal development, in social-emotional development. | 7 |
| Challenging authority or “testing” | With their new flowering independence and sense of self, they want to challenge. Right? It’s important to remember that they are not coming from a place of necessarily trying to challenge your authority, they’re coming from a place of wanting to genuinely understand as a human. | 2 |
| Life-long learning | Things are always changing in education, and it’s hard to stay on top of the next big thing. Sometimes, the next big thing isn’t the right thing. | 3 |
| Love for young adolescents | Middle school is the best thing that could have possibly ever fallen into my lap. I’m so grateful. | 7 |