A STUDY OF CHANGE: A DISTRICT'S TRANSITION FROM JUNIOR HIGHS TO MIDDLE SCHOOLS

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INTRODUCTION

Kuhn (1970) suggested that change is simply the process of moving away from one thing rather than moving towards a particular phenomenon. This is the premise from which this hermeneutic inquiry proceeds. This study attempts to examine globally and describe the nature of the change process through focusing on the experience of individuals in a specific school district as they seek to create meaning in the movement away from a junior high configuration for early adolescents. Interpretation of the results of inquiry will not attempt to predict the outcome of the change in this particular district, but will rather reflect back to the macro level congruencies or incongruencies of the change phenomenon and the bureaucratic educational setting within which changes in general are attempted. One cannot consider change in schools without considering the contemporary buzzword of "restructuring."

Restructuring

"Restructuring" has become commonly used as a synonym for the market mechanism of choice, or teacher professionalization and empowerment, or school site management, or decentralization, or greater involvement of parents in their children's education, or national standards in curriculum with tests to match, or

deregulation, or new forms of accountability, or basic changes in curriculum and instruction, or some or all of these in varying combinations (Tyack, 1990). In short, "restructuring" is a fashionable word pertaining to the United States educational system of the 1990's and is designed to be a cureall for the perceived ills of the present system.

A multitude of pressures is brought to bear upon the present educational system. Among these pressures are societal concerns about economic competitiveness, the failure to educate effectively the children of the poor, the inability to attract and retain quality teachers, and general disgruntlement with the mechanistic model of schooling (Tyack, 1990; Murphy, 1991). Restructuring has become a general label for new strategies of school reform designed to alleviate disillusionment with public schools.

Issues of Restructuring

The Purposes of Schooling

Sarason (1990, 4) stated that the usual aims of educational reform or restructuring include the following:

1. To lessen the wide gulf between the educational accomplishments of children of different social-class and racial backgrounds.

2. To get students to experience schooling as a process to which they are willingly attracted, not a compulsory one they see as confining and boring.

3. To enable students to acquire knowledge and skills that are not the consequences of rote learning or of memory of abstractions

devoid of personal experience but rather acquired in a way that interrelates and gives personal purpose to present and future.

4. To engender interest in and curiosity about human accomplishments, past and present. To get students to want to know how the present contains the past--that is, to want to know this as a way of enlarging a personal, social, and "citizen" identity.

5. To acquaint students with the domain of career options and how schooling relates to these options in a fast-changing world of work.

Despite all efforts of reform, these goals have generally not been met with the possible exception of isolated incidents. Educational reforms have frequently resulted in failure in part because the declared purposes of schooling are not connected with the social experiences of a large majority of students (Sarason, 1990).

The failure to link the purposes and the structure of education with culture has resulted in little change in the way schools function or in the way teachers and students behave. The present school structure grew out of a set of assumptions about the purpose of schooling that is said to be inconsistent with current social and economic realities (Schlecty, 1990). At its inception, the purpose of public education was to promote Protestant morality and to facilitate the acquisition of skills necessary to function as a responsible literate citizen. The U. S. population was primarily white, Anglo-Saxon with large numbers of people residing in rural areas.

After the Civil War, the United States saw an influx of immigrants who were not a part of the Protestant Anglo-Saxon

population. In addition, the society began to experience an occupational shift from farming to industry. With this economic shift, came the establishment of cities as opposed to small towns. The needs of society at this time dictated that schools "Americanize the immigrant child and select and sort children in terms of their potential for carrying out work roles in the urban industrial economy" (Schlecty, 1990, 5). Reformers of this period held efficiency, equity, accountability, and expertise in high regard. The educational requirement of the industrial society was the training of the masses for factory jobs while also producing a small well-educated elite. A differentiated curriculum was desired in order to match the supposed differences of ability and economic destiny of students. Accountability was not linked to student outcomes, but to the conformity of the structure with what the public had been taught to think was standard (Tyack, 1990).

The U. S. educational system continued to be organized on the assumptions of homogeneity of population and universal values agreement. Schools were viewed as an instrument of social reform during the 1960's and continuing through the mid 1970's. It was thought that the schools could remediate social inequities such as civil rights and respond to the challenges of international competition such as those perceived with the launching of the Russian satellite, Sputnik. As a result of this view regarding the purpose of schools, there was increased intervention in education by federal and state governments whereas decision making had previously been a primary function of the local government (Tyack, 1990).

By the 1980's, many political leaders had become convinced that the prognosis for the public schools was not good. Among numerous proposals for improvement was the call for "back to the basics", the demand for greater accountability, the need for increased testing, and the implementation of research defining effective schools (Tyack, 1990). Schools of the 1990's bear little outward resemblance to schools of colonial America and yet Sarason (1990) warns against confusing change in policy with change in practice.

The heart of the issue is addressed when one wonders about the possibility that the real problem of reform is the unquestioned, socially-historically determined view of what a school is and should be. The most important influence on the accepted conception of the purpose of schools is the socialization of individuals in our society (Sarason, 1982). He states further:

> The overarching aim of schooling should be to recognize, capitalize on and exploit the obvious fact that children come to school already possessed of the major psychological attributes crucial to productive learning. The educational reform movement, today and in the past, has not come to grips with this overarching aim. . . . if (reform) efforts are not powered by altered conceptions of what children are and what makes them tick and keeps them intellectually alive, willingly pursuing knowledge and growth, the results will be inconsequential (Sarason, 1990, 163).

The difference in the purposes of an Industrial Age education, that of tracking children based on ability and economic destiny, and those espoused by Sarason is vast.

Once appropriate, intentional purposes for schooling are established, Goodlad (1984, 92) proposes that:

> . . . far-reaching restructuring of our schools and indeed our system of education probably is required for us to come even close to the educational ideals we so regularly espouse

> for this nation and all its people. The restructuring involves maximization of the educational resources of entire communities, with schools playing a much more precisely defined role than is now the case.

At the core of the restructuring movement is an attempt to accomplish something other than tinkering with the system.

Restructuring Defined

The definition of restructuring may be as divergent as the individuals attempting to define the term. "Restructuring is a process, not a product. The process is dynamic" (Mojowski, 1991, 1). Keefe, (1992, 3), defines restructuring as "the reforming of school organizational interrelationships and processes to increase student learning and performance." According to Schlecty, (1990, xvi), "Restructuring means altering systems of rules, roles, and relationships so that schools can serve existing purposes more effectively or serve new purposes altogether." Additionally he states that participants of restructuring will be required to unlearn many things that have been taught in the past and to learn new skills. Leaders must learn new ways of leading and subordinates must learn new ways of following. Transformational leaders will operate from a power base that is consensual and facilitative, working "through" other people as opposed to "over" others (Leithwood, 1992). A transformational leader may be, but is not limited to, the person occupying the administrative role. Restructuring will result in a reorientation in transformed schools from control to empowerment (Murphy, 1991).

Adding to the complexity of restructuring, is the categorization of innovations into first- and second-order changes by Cuban (1988). First-order changes are those that contribute to the efficiency or effectiveness of the present system. Second-order changes seek to alter the system in some fundamental way: a change in the structure or culture of schools, the reorganization of responsibilities, and the restructuring of roles. Most changes of this century have been of the first-order variety, aiming to improve the quality of the existing structure. Cuban (1988) predicts that the challenge of the 1990's is to deal with more second-order changes.

Inherent in these definitions seems to be the underlying assumption that the restructuring of schools will involve a change or interaction between school culture or purpose and the operationalized practice in schools. The intangible force of change will come dramatically into play if these issues are to exhibit congruency.

Theoretical Framework

The consideration and overview of the general components and issues of the change phenomena will provide a contextual framework in which research will take place. After a discussion of the nature of change and the realities of change in global terms, the specific conceptual frame-work of change used for interpretation will be presented.

The Nature of Change

The implication of restructuring is that changes in the present

system of education would facilitate more readily the accomplishment of the school's purpose. Most often the discussion of needed change centers around structural issues, and therein lies the problem. Michael Fullan (1991, 65) states, "Educational change is technically simple and socially complex." Additionally,

> Social structures (schools) are embedded in systems of meaning, value, belief, and knowledge; such systems comprise the *culture* of an organization. To change an organization's structure, therefore, one must attend not only to rules, roles, and relationships but to systems of beliefs, values and knowledge as well. Structural change requires cultural change (Schlecty, 1990, xvi).

In other words, the problem of change is compounded by an ignorance or the lack of a critical attitude towards the underlying beliefs and assumptions on which the social institution is predicated. "If we wish to change the overt regularities, we have as our task to become clear about the covert principles and theories: those assumptions and conceptions that are so overlearned that one no longer questions or thinks about them" (Sarason, 1982, 232). Resolution of issues regarding the nature of learning and the learner, human nature, and the nature of teaching will provide more intentional direction to the purpose and mission of the school. Sarason (1982, 232) continues by saying that if these underlying assumptions are not questioned, then overt changes in practice are unlikely. "It would be so simple if one could legislate changes in thinking."

Furthermore, the culture of an organization is comprised of numerous subsystems. These subsystems include the goals, the environment, the formal system or structure, and the technology of the organization as well as the individuals and groups in an informal

system of relationships. Subsystems are related in systemic ways and a change in one forces a change in others (Baldridge and Deal, 1975; Hall, 1991). Structural change requires systems of authority to be altered, systems of reward to be redesigned, and the symbols of power and prestige to be rearranged (Schlecty, 1990). The interrelatedness of infinite variables contributes to the sometimes overwhelming complexity of the change phenomenon.

Stated more succinctly, the examination of change requires the understanding and consideration of two different arenas. The first arena involves the values, goals, and the consequences of a specific educational change, while the second arena calls for the comprehension of the dynamics between the individual, the classroom, the school, and the local, state, and national levels. These arenas are constantly interacting and reshaping each other. In order for meaningful change to occur, there must be an interface between individual meaning and collective meaning; there must be shared meaning (Fullan and Stieglebauer, 1991).

> Real change, whether desired or not, represents a serious personal and collective experience characterized by ambivalence and uncertainty; and if the change works out it can result in a sense of mastery, accomplishment, and professional growth. The anxieties of uncertainty and the joys of mastery are central to the subjective meaning of educational change, and to success or failure--facts that have not been recognized or appreciated in most attempts at reform (Fullan, 1991, 32).

The Realities of Change

Educational change is multidimensional; it cannot be considered as a single entity and responses to the phenomenon can vary within

individuals and within groups. There are three necessary components for the successful achievement of a specific educational change: (1) the possible use of new or revised materials, (2) the possible use of new teaching approaches, (3) the possible alteration of beliefs. The problem is whether one develops meaning in relation to all three components (Fullan, 1991). The traditional approach to change efforts for the educational system is to present new materials, or to conduct in-service sessions briefly regarding new teaching approaches, but to ignore the alteration of the belief system. Therefore, it would appear that many innovations are adopted on the surface but in practice never become a reality.

Due to the multivariate nature of change, the success or failure of a specific educational change cannot be predicted. Change requires a commitment of energy, time, and resources, and it creates an unstable world. There is an air of discomfort and uncertainty because change creates needs as well as satisfies them. Major change takes time (5-10 years); failure to take time in the beginning usually results in the need for corrective time in the middle of the process and may lead to eventual abandonment of the idea (Schlecty, 1990).

Resistance to change is one of the anticipated dynamics of the process. However, the proposed innovations are not necessarily threatening in themselves (Goodlad, 1984).

> But they may become threatening if they portend major displacement of what currently is deemed important--especially if what is deemed important already is perceived to be undervalued or in a state of erosion. Consequently, a proposed change taken in stride at one school may induce deep concern in another (Goodlad, 1984, 88).

Resistance need not always be viewed as a negative, but rather can provide a vehicle for desired outcomes. Resistance must not be viewed as a reaction to the quality of the proposed change; neither is resistance to change the response of uncaring people. "By forcing proponents of change to test and improve their ideas and provide enough specificity to adequately implement their ideas, resistance to apparently worthwhile and creative ideas can benefit teachers and students" (Margolis, 1991, 2).

The Conceptual Framework of Change

Fullan's conceptual framework of change (1991) is selected from among the multitudinous choices of change models as the basis for interpretation:

> There can be no one recipe for change, because unlike ingredients for a cake, people are not standard to begin with, and the damned thing is that they change as you work with them in response to their experiences and their perceptions . . . The administrator who tries to deal with innovations one at a time will soon despair or be victimized. The one who works over a five- or six-year period to develop the district's and schools' core capacity to process the demands of change, whether they arise internally or externally to the district, *may find change easier as time goes by* (Fullan, 1991, 214).

This theoretical view of change through individuals as opposed to change as a step-by-step procedure, is the basis for the appeal of Fullan's theory. The hermeneutic imagination seeks to explain and examine what is at work in particular ways of acting in order to facilitate an ever-deepening appreciation of wholeness and integrity of the world which must be present for thought and action to be possible at all (Smith, 1991). Fullan's conceptual model is in keeping with that imagination.

A simplified overview of Fullan's description of the change process in its entirety is presented so that the reader may make a personal judgment regarding the phase where the particular district used in this study is located. Fullan's theory includes Phase I-Initiation consisting of the process that leads up to and includes a decision to adopt, Phase II-Implementation including the first attempt at putting a reform into practice and extends from the initial year of use through the second or third year of use, and Phase III-Continuation referring to whether the change becomes an ongoing part of the system. Numerous factors operate at each phase. In addition, this is not a linear process, but allows events at one phase to feedback to alter previously made decisions. This results in a model that is continuously interactive. The time involved from initiation to institutionalization is lengthy. Moderately complex changes may take from three to five years, while major restructuring efforts may consume from five to ten years.

Initiation (Phase I). As previously stated, initiation is the process leading up to and including the decision to implement a specific innovation which may originate from many different sources and for many different reasons. Factors influencing the initiation of planned change include but are not limited to: (1) Existence and quality of innovations, (2) Access to innovations, (3) Advocacy from central administration, (4) Teacher advocacy, (5) External change agents, (6) Community/pressure/support/ apathy, (7) New policy-funds (federal/state/local), and (8) Problem-solving and bureaucratic orientations (Fullan, 1991, 50). These factors have different

consequences depending upon the combinations in which they occur.

The environment that best fosters a successful initiation process will attend to the three components of relevance, readiness, and resources. Relevance includes the interaction of need, clarity of the innovation, and utility, or what the change has to offer students and teachers. Readiness must be approached on both the individual and institutional levels and involves the practical and theoretical ability to initiate, develop, or adopt a given innovation. The concept of resources concerns the accumulation and continuance of support as a part of the change process. The process of initiation can create meaning or confusion, commitment or resistance, or simply ignorance on the part of participants.

Implementation (Phase II). Implementation (Phase II) occurs as people begin to put into practice the idea, program, or set of activities that constitutes the expected change. The change may be externally imposed or willingly desired; prescribed in detail or open-ended. The major contributing factor to the failure of proposed educational change is ignorance of the fact that what people do and do not do, regardless of the plans on paper, is the crucial variable. People are unpredictable and dealing with them is more difficult than dealing with inanimate objects. However, they are essential to success.

An interrelated system of variables, consisting of what Fullan refers to as factors and themes, interact to determine success or failure at the point of implementation. The potential problems of need, clarity, complexity, and quality/practicality carry over into

the implementation process from the initiation process. The fit between an innovation and the district needs is essential for successful implementation, but may not become evident until the implementation phase. The lack of clarity, if it exists, becomes evident as teachers begin to clarify in practice what was understood in theory. The amount of energy required for implementation is directly proportionate to the complexity of the change. The quality of the change is a determinant of success or failure because in practice the adoption of change is many times more important than the importance placed on preparation time or follow-up. Ambitious change requires time for individuals to struggle through the acquisition of a new vision, developing belief in the advantages of new ways of thinking and acting.

Local factors also come into play during the implementation of change. Multi-level, complex system-oriented innovations where the organizational culture is being changed, often are predominantly impacted by the local school system. The district, the school board and community, the principals, and the teachers all interact to impact the implementation of the adoption. Governmental agencies may likely contribute in some way to the failure or success of implementation.

Implementation Themes. Fullan identifies key themes in successful implementation of educational change. Vision-building, while elusive and difficult, is essential to successful reform. Evolutionary planning involves an integration of top-down and bottom-up participation. Developing collaborative work

cultures through initiative-taking and empowerment is a third theme in implementation. The fourth component is staff development and resource assistance. The essence of educational change is learning new ways of thinking and believing, and operationalizing those beliefs. "Implementation , whether it is voluntary or imposed, is nothing other than a process of *learning something new* " (Fullan, 1991, 85). Support for this new learning must be available through staff development and resource assistance.

A fifth theme impacting change implementation is that of monitoring/problem-coping. Monitoring provides access to good ideas during implementation as well as allows time for fine-tuning. Good change processes develop trust, relevance, and the desire to get better results. The final theme detailed by Fullan is that of restructuring. This concept refers to organizational arrangements that build in working conditions designed to support and encourage improvement. All key factors and themes denoted by Fullan impact implementation which is the big hurdle at the level of practice.

Continuation (Phase III). Phase III/continuation refers to whether an innovation becomes embedded in the system to the point of becoming institutionalized. In large part, lack of continuation results from a lack of interest or support, or from a lack of money for staff development or resource support. Continuation is dependent upon whether or not the change is built into policy and the budget, and whether or not a group of administrators and teachers become committed to the underlying beliefs and adept in the skills associated with the change.

Statement of the Problem

"These are not complacent times. The school reform movement--and its relative, the middle school movement--are in full swing" (Shimniok and Schmoker, 1992, 27). The problem involves seeking increased understanding of the complexity of both restructuring and the change process, and the way in which meaning is attached to these activities. "The number and dynamics of factors that interact and affect the process of educational change are too overwhelming to compute in anything resembling a fully determined way" (Fullan, 1991, 47). In addition, educators must succinctly and consciously identify the purposes of public schools in order to align educational theory, such as that underlying the middle school movement, and praxis. Once real change is recognized as an interaction on both the individual and cultural levels aimed at changing values, beliefs, and underlying assumptions, one begins to become aware of the complexity of the phenomena. There are no hard-and-fast rules regarding change, only a set of suggestions or implications (Fullan, 1991).

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine the congruencies or incongruencies of the change phenomenon and the bureaucratic educational setting within which changes in general are attempted through describing the nature of the change phenomenon as experienced by educators in a particular district as the district moves through the initiation phase of the change from the junior high concept toward implementation of the middle school concept. In order

to make sense of educational change, it is necessary to understand both the small and big pictures (Fullan, 1991). The small picture concerns the relative meaning or lack of meaning for individuals at all levels of the educational system. This study seeks to describe the ways in which individuals are attaching meaning to the change to the middle school concept in a particular school district. A look at the big picture views change as a sociopolitical process recognizing the collective components that influence the success or failure of a particular change. A narrative description of the school district history will provide a glimpse at the big picture. An examination of this particular educational change will provide insight into the complexity and interacting variables of the change phenomena at the macro level.

Problems to be Investigated

Through interviews, conversations, observations, and an examination of school board meeting minutes, school district newsletters, and other printed district information, the following research questions will be considered:

1. What is the sociopolitical context for this particular educational change?

2. What is the meaning of change for people in various roles within the educational system (including their experience and relationship to the process of educational change)?

3. What is the nature of the relationship between changes in behavior and changes in beliefs or understanding?

Design of the Study

This dissertation seeks to examine and describe the nature of the change process through the lives of several teachers and administrators as they attempt to construct realities of the change phenomenon as the Putnam City Schools move from a junior high model to a middle school model. Interpretation seeks to reflect the congruencies or incongruencies of the change phenomenon and the bureaucratic setting within which changes in general are attempted through this particular example of change. Hermeneutic inquiry is the perspective from which the study proceeds, which means that the focal point is the interest in the question of human meaning and how one might make sense of life. "The hermeneutic imagination works to rescue the specificities of our lives from the burden of their everydayness to show how they reverberate within grander schemes of things" (Smith, 1991, 200). In this case, the specificity of life revolves around the change from junior high schools to middle schools as it relates to the grander scheme of change.

Data was collected through interviews, conversations, observations, and examination of specific district documents. The interpretation of the data seeks to key on three themes of hermeneutic inquiry; "namely, the inherent creativity of interpretation, the pivotal role of language in human understanding, and the interplay of part and whole in the process of interpretation" (Smith, 1991, 190).

Statement of Integrity

The emergent themes of hermeneutic inquiry are in large part

dependent upon the researcher's background, philosophical perspective, and biases. In order for the reader to judge critically the meaning or underlying assumptions upon which the researcher's statements are based, provision must be made to present autobiographic data regarding the researcher. That is the purpose of this statement.

I have a total of seven years of educational experience. Five of those years were spent in the classroom: two years in an elementary setting, and three years in a middle school setting. In addition, I have two years administrative experience at the elementary level. My undergraduate work was done in child development, while my graduate work was done in reading. Additional graduate work has been done in educational administration. I spent time one summer as an intern in the particular district being used as an example of change. In addition, I attended a middle school conference with a delegation from the district, and I am a supportive patron of the district.

I have a bias regarding the inherent possibilities of the middle school setting as opposed to the junior high setting. It is my bias that the middle school setting fosters a child-centered environment while the junior high model seeks to establish content as the driving force. While I realize that many junior high teachers address the needs of the whole child, and many middle school teachers are content oriented, the literature regarding middle schools confirms that theoretically the model sets the stage to facilitate the endeavor of meeting the adolescent's needs.

Another researcher bias is that regarding the existence of multiple realities. I view reality as subjective, multi-faceted, and as an open system that varies from individual to individual. This view of reality is in contradiction to the bureaucratic models of many educational settings.

Scope and Limitations

Much of the change literature deals with the phenomenon from the implementation standpoint which focuses on procedures and checklists, and views change as linear, sequential, and developmental (Hord, et al., 1987). Much of what is proposed as educational reform is primarily concerned with programs as opposed to the critical analysis of underlying assumptions of issues. This study seeks to examine and describe the ways in which teachers and administrators attempt to attach meaning to the change in focus from the junior high to the middle school through the use of interviews, conversations, and the examination of written documents. This example of change will be used to reflect back to macro level congruencies or incongruencies of the change phenomenon and the bureaucratic setting within which educational changes in general are attempted.

One of the criticisms leveled at phenomenological studies is the lack of replicability. It is recognized that the people and situations change, and this study seeks only to describe the nature of change in this environment at this brief moment in time. This study does not attempt to identify common steps in the change process, but rather offers insight into the created meaning of the

change phenomenon as experienced by these teachers and administrators. If done well and completely, it could add understanding and even provide assistance to others who find themselves in a similar professional position.

Significance of the Study

Change is a natural part of living; life is impossible apart from this phenomenon. Schools, being bureaucratic entities, mandate changes and provide for implementation in a linear, sequential fashion. However, whether these mandates result in change is dependent upon variables at both the individual and the sociopolitical levels (Fullan, 1991). This is to be the study of the congruencies or incongruencies of the change phenomenon and the bureaucratic setting within which educational changes in general are attempted. The specific example of change will focus on several individuals who are affected by the change process and their endeavor to create meaning from the situation in which they find themselves. The thoughts and actions of these individuals are worthy of recording, not solely as an historical record, but also to assist others with similar circumstances as they seek to understand and implement change.

Summary

The remaining chapters will examine in detail the change from the junior high concept to the middle school concept in Putnam City Schools as an example of educational change. Chapter II will include

a review of the literature defining both the junior high and middle school concept, detailing the history of the middle school movement, describing the characteristics of the early adolescent learner and the implications for the middle school, and denoting the organizational components of the effective middle school. Chapter III will delineate varying aspects of qualitative research, hermeneutic inquiry, and describe the design of the study including the procedures, data collection strategies, and a report of the data interpretation strategy. Chapter IV will include the presentation of the data in a descriptive, narrative form. The study will conclude with research interpretation and commentary as discussed in Chapter V.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

While it is arguable whether the middle school movement had it's beginning in the 1960's, or whether it's origin is in the junior high movement, it is evident that it is a movement of significant growth (George, 1988). As inadequacies of the junior high model have been noted, acceptance and promotion of the middle school model has occurred. The stated goals of the middle school are similar to the goals that were espoused by proponents of the junior high in the early 1900's. "These goals are to provide a transitional school between the elementary school and the high school and to help students bridge the gap in their development between childhood and adolescence" (Wiles and Bondi, 1981, 1).

The stated definition and aims of the *junior high* were adopted by the North Central Association in 1918:

> The junior high school shall normally include the 7th, 8th, and 9th years of public-school work. The junior-high-school organization and administration shall realize the following aims and purposes:
>
> 1. To continue through its instructional program the aims of public education in a democracy.
>
> 2. To reduce to the minimum the elimination of pupils by offering types of work best suited to their interests, needs and capacities.
>
> 3. To give the pupil an opportunity under systematic educational guidance to discover his dominant interests, capacities, and limitations with reference

to his future vocational activities or the continuance of his education in higher schools.

4. To economize time through such organization and administration of subjects and courses both for those who will continue their education in higher schools and for those who will enter immediately into life's activities (Briggs, 1920, 51).

The *middle school* combines into one organization grades 5-8 or grades 6-8. "It is a school providing a program planned for a range of older children, preadolescents, and early adolescents that builds upon the elementary school program for earlier childhood and in turn is built upon by the high school's program for adolescence" (Alexander, Williams, Compton, Hines, and Prescott, 1968, 5). This organization results in a less homogeneous population based on the criterion of developmental level as the onset of puberty occurs before or after the middle school period depending upon the individual. The middle school attempts to bridge the gap between childhood and adolescent programs.

While historically the aims of both early adolescent programs may have been similar, in practice there has been a disparity between the stated purpose and implementation. Throughout this review, the terms will be defined as follows:

Junior high - schools commonly related to the traditional system offering a program that is an imitation of the high school program (Hough, 1989).

Middle School - school organizations based on a philosophy of education that is specifically designed to meet the needs of the individual learner through the establishment of unique curricula to affect the transition between the elementary

school and the high school (Hough, 1989).

Middle Level Education - a neutral term indicative of the movement which allows for global discussion of issues rather than specific reference to the junior high or the middle school (Hough, 1989).

"What becomes increasingly apparent is the association of curriculum reforms to *programs*, transecent needs to the *philosophy*, and the restructuring/redefinition of middle level schools to the *movement*" (Hough, 1989, 2).

History of Middle Level Movements

History of the Junior High School

There was rapid growth of the high school after the Civil War with the 8-4 plan becoming increasingly popular; eight years of elementary schooling were offered, and four years of high school. Elementary education was intended to be preparation for high school experiences, while high school was a college preparatory function. This organizational plan meant that many of the eighth grade graduates exited public schooling at the age of fourteen to pursue vocational endeavors. There were three groups of students for whom elementary education must provide at the end of compulsory education:
1) those who can and will persist through secondary education,
2) those who will leave school for work as soon as law allows,
3) those whose length of stay in schools is uncertain (Briggs, 1920).

In the late 1800s, Charles Eliot, president of Harvard, articulated concern about the age and status of incoming freshmen in addresses before the National Education Association (NEA). His concern was that students were entering the university unprepared, and he suggested that perhaps the curriculum for the last two years of elementary school (7-8) should include components from the areas of algebra, geometry, and foreign language (Hough, 1989). The end result would be that the high school curriculum would be driven down into the elementary schools.

The NEA appointed national committees whose challenge it was to study the direction of education. These committees became the catalysts for reform with the resulting recommendation that elementary school should consist of six grades and secondary schools should consist of six grades (6-6 plan), with secondary being divided into junior (7-9) grades and senior (10-12) grades (Briggs, 1920; Eichhorn, 1991; Hough, 1989; Wiles and Bondi, 1981). Thus, the groundwork was laid for the establishment of the junior high school.

The first active junior high school was established circa 1910. There are varying reports as to the existence of the first junior high school: in 1909 the first district to use the term junior high in regard to the 7-8-9 grade configuration was Columbus, Ohio; junior highs and introductory schools became operational in Berkeley, California, in 1910 and in Los Angeles, California, about the same time (Briggs, 1920; Hough, 1989; Wiles and Bondi, 1981). By 1920 there were approximately 400 junior highs in existence with growth continuing until approximately 6,500 junior highs were operational by

the mid-1950s (Wiles and Bondi, 1981). Contributing factors to this rapid growth were westward movement across the United States, increased industrialization and urbanization, a growing demand for secondary education, and a desire for schools that could provide "Americanization" for immigrants (McEwin, 1983).

Junior high schools were organized intentionally to imitate the curriculum and organization of the high school with a focus on mastery of the subject matter through departmentalization. Three major conceptions of the purpose of the junior high are:

1. It should afford an earlier beginning of a more or less conventional secondary education.
2. It should furnish training for those who will soon enter work.
3. It should explore the interest, aptitudes, and capacities of pupils and start each on studies leading to a suitable goal (Briggs, 1920, 35).

By the mid-1950s, there was major criticism of the junior high school. "The one 'merit' of the junior high unit cited in early works that has lasted through the years is a bitter heritage for this institution: secondary education is begun earlier, in a watered down version" (Lipsitz, 1977, 92). There existed an obvious incongruence between the institution and its clients. By the early 1960's the stage was set for the emergence of the middle school movement.

Evolution of the Middle School

It was William M. Alexander, father of the American middle school, who first proposed a change in the organization of schools for early adolescents at a conference at Cornell University in 1963

(McEwin, 1992). He proposed that the middle school be established, in part, to make a smooth transition or to bridge the years between elementary and secondary schools. He also recommended the retention of the positive characteristics of the junior high while improving on deficient areas. Recommendations were made to move the ninth grade to the high school, to include grades five through eight in the middle school, and to establish programs based on the developmental needs of the ten to fourteen year old (Alexander, 1984).

The organization of middle schools basically grew as local districts sought to remedy deficiencies in the junior high model. In addition, the growth of middle schools was in many cases aided by practical issues (Merenbloom, 1984). For example, district leaders found that with minimal movement of the school population, compliance with desegregation orders could be met with the establishment of middle schools. In many cases, this practice required only the movement of a limited number of sixth through ninth graders.

Another factor fostering growth of the middle school movement was the existence of an enrollment which was either increasing or decreasing. Increasing elementary enrollments would indicate the necessity of moving sixth graders to the middle school, or decreasing enrollments might mean that ninth graders were transferred from the high school to the middle school. In either case, the number of middle school students has increased and continues to increase due to enrollment fluctuations.

Studies conducted by Alexander and McEwin (1989) in both 1968 and 1988 concerning the status of middle schools across the nation

contain findings regarding the reasons or motivators for the establishment of middle schools. An analysis of the data shows

> The respondents' indications of reasons for establishment of their schools tended to be similar in 1968 and 1988, but several rankings by percents are interesting. 'To eliminate crowded conditions' was the most frequent reason checked in 1968, but occupied third place in 1988. The reason middle school educators would want to predominate, 'to provide a program specifically designed for children in this age group,' was number one in 1988, but second to the expedient one just cited in 1968. In 1968 the argument that grades 5 and 6 students would be provided more specialization was higher ranked (fourth place) than in 1988 (eighth place) (1989, 11).

The rank order of reasons reported in 1988 for the establishment of middle schools is as follows: (1) "Provide Program Designed for Age Group", (2) "Bridge Elementary/High School", (3) "Eliminate Crowded Conditions", (4) "Remedy Weakness of Junior High School", (5) "Try Out Innovations", (6) "Utilize New Building", (7) "Remedy Weakness of Two-Level Organization", (8) "More Specialization in Grades 5-6", (9) "Use Plans Successful Elsewhere", and (10) "Aid Desegregation". He also found that problems encountered in the establishment of middle schools were numerous. Typical problems cited were:

> Staff opposed, resistant, inflexible; Lack of special training of teachers; Middle school considered elementary; Establishing teacher advisory plan; Too little staff development; Scheduling; No middle level supervisor; Confusion between middle and junior high schools ; Middle school in name, junior high in concept; Teaming; Establishing a true middle school; Insufficient money to do anything; Selling the concept; Overcoming the public's desire to have competitive athletics; Teachers subject-oriented instead of student-oriented; and Quality inservice education for staff (1989, 45).

Alexander displayed encouragement that the primary reported reason for the establishment of middle schools was to provide an appropriate

program for the early adolescent, but suggested that middle schools established for administrative reasons are not necessarily excluded from becoming exemplary schools.

The middle school movement has experienced rapid growth since its introduction by William Alexander. The number of schools organized in a grade six through eight configuration grew from 1,663 schools in 1970-71 to 4,329 in 1986-87 (an increase of 160%) while the number of schools using the grade seven through nine configuration declined 53 percent from 4,711 schools in 1970-71 to only 2,191 in 1986-87 (Alexander and McEwin, 1989). A more in-depth look at the characteristics of the learner which dictate the organizational pattern of the middle school will describe the philosophical base of the middle school movement.

Characteristics of the Learner

"A truly effective school program, regardless of the level of schooling at which it is directed, must be based on knowledge about the learner who is to be served by the school" (Lipsitz, 1977, 23). Middle school students are similar only in their diversity, and not only is there variation from student to student but within each student depending upon the time or day of the week (Eichhorn, 1966). The transitional period of development between childhood and adolescence is usually of a three- to five-year duration and is marked by (1) differences in physical maturity levels, (2) the gradual emergence of a more adult-like mode of intellectual functioning, and (3) psychological and social reorientation (Alexander et al., 1968). This growth spurt is second in rate of

change only to infants' growth (Lipsitz, 1966; Wiles and Bondi, 1981), and while the prime facets of this growth are physical and social, the impact upon the individual during this time is an emotional one (Epstein and Toepfer, 1978). Effective middle level programs are developed in response to these changing physical, mental, social, and emotional characteristics exhibited by the early adolescent. An examination of these characteristics followed by the implications for middle level program development follows.

Physical Characteristics and Development

An accelerated growth rate is experienced by all early adolescents, but the rate or speed of growth is dependent upon inherited family factors and is also influenced by environmental factors such as nutrition (Alexander et al., 1968). There is a variance of rate of growth between boys and girls. Girls tend to develop earlier and faster, while boys lag behind as much as two years (Thornburg, 1982; Alexander et al., 1968; Wiles and Bondi, 1981). The age of greatest variability in physical development and size is about age thirteen (Wiles and Bondi, 1981). Girls begin their growth spurt around age ten with boys lagging some eighteen months behind (Thornburg, 1981), but virtually all students in grades five through eight are in the period of transition with great variability.

These changes are brought about as a result of the physiological development of the individual. The anterior lobe of the pituitary gland, located in the head below the brain produces several hormones. The growth hormone stimulates overall growth of bones and tissue

bringing the individual to his/her maximum potential height (Alexander et al., 1968). Bone growth is faster than muscle development and this uneven development results in a lack of coordination and awkwardness (Wiles and Bondi, 1981).

The gonadotropic hormone initiates growth of the immature gonads causing the development of ovaries or testes. As the gonads grow, they produce hormones. In the female, the ovarian hormone stimulates growth of mammary glands, the female organs, and pubic hair. Menstruation begins for girls. The male gonadal hormone stimulates growth of the male organs and glands, which in turn stimulate the development of secondary male characteristics such as change of voice pitch and growth of facial hair.

The full function of the gonads seems to be the inhibiting factor which causes termination of the production of the growth-stimulating hormone. Accompanying results of the full production of gonadal hormone are changes in rate of energy production or metabolism, changes in blood pressure, and changes in pulse rate (Alexander et al., 1968). Fluctuations in basal metabolism may cause students to appear restless at some times and listless at others (Alexander et al., 1968; Wiles and Bondi, 1981).

Mental and Cognitive Characteristics and Development

Information regarding the nature and incidence of brain growth periodization is established scientific fact which has been organized by Herman Epstein, biophysicist, for presentation to the education community (Toepfer, 1979; Toepfer, 1980; Epstein and Toepfer, 1978).

These data support the need for change in educational structures which support a traditional mode of thinking. For years, schools have been organized on the assumption that the human brain grows on a continuum. Epstein established that, to the contrary, the brain, like other organs, grows in a stage-wise fashion and that periods of brain growth spurts are separated by periods of brain growth plateaus.

The brain growth spurt periods occur between ages 3-10 months, 2-4 years, 6-8 years, 10-12 years, and 14-16+ years. Growth occurs within the brain cells as the number of brain cells is established at birth, and the brain grows from 5 to 10 percent in size during these times. During these growth spurts, "the brain is going through a considerable extension of its circuitry and re-wiring of its associative neural networks" (Toepfer, 1980, 223). This increase in associative capacities means that it is relatively easy for children to initiate and develop new and higher level cognitive skills during growth periods.

Conversely, during the periods of time between the brain growth spurts, plateaus in brain growth, there is no growth in associative neural networks making it impossible for most children to initiate and develop new and higher level cognitive skills. While this plateau in brain growth does not occur continually for every individual from ages 12-14, it does mean that the majority of middle schoolers will pass through this phase in development at some time during grades seven and eight. It seems that the brain may be programmed to take on new capacities during a growth spurt followed by a span of time in which the focus is consolidation, refinement and

maturation of the thinking skills initiated in the preceding growth period (Toepfer, 1980). Responsive middle level programs are greatly impacted by this information in ways that subsequently will be discussed.

Social, Emotional, and Moral Characteristics and Development

"Changes in social characteristics during this critical period (early adolescence) have potential for dramatic consequences on self-concept, academic achievement and the kind of person the early adolescent finally becomes" (Manning and Allen, 1987, 172). Early adolescents strive for social interaction and exhibit a strong desire for peer approval (Thornburg, 1982). This desire for peer approval marks a shift from allegiance towards significant adults, parents and teachers, towards the peer group as the standard for behavior (Wiles and Bondi, 1981). However, occasional rebellion on the part of the child does not diminish the importance of parents for the continued development of values.

These significant changes in social behavior may cause early adolescents to reflect critically upon themselves in relation to others, and this critical reflection has great potential for impacting the self-concept (Manning and Allen, 1987). Constant examination and comparison of physical and social attributes with peers results in self-criticism of height, weight, and other differences. This serves only to heighten perceived inadequacies. Early adolescents tend to exaggerate simple occurrences and believe

that their individual problems are unique (Wiles and Bondi, 1981).

Friendship formations are critical at this stage and include shifts from same-sex friendships to cross-sex friendships. Despite the increased heterosexual interest, many early adolescents find that they tend to be most at ease with same-sex affiliations and they only appear to have interest in heterosexual friendships for the sake of peer approval (Wiles and Bondi, 1981). Boys tend to socialize in groups with a network of friends, while girls are much more selective, limiting their primary friendships to include one or two girls (Manning and Allen, 1987).

Moral development occurs in a similar pattern in all individuals with a uniform sequence of three stages: self, significant-other, and principled (Grinder and Nelsen, 1980). Self-oriented children conform to rules and expectations of society based on responses from others of praise or disapproval. These children still lack the capacity to relate to the needs of others or reason about the quality of moral conduct.

Between the ages of five and fourteen, children internalize the social structures (Grinder and Nelsen, 1980). This means that children learn to conduct behavior based on intrinsic motivation to stay within acceptable norms which have been established by significant others. Early adolescents are capable of abstracting general rules and reintegrating dispositions based upon the accelerated development of the cognitive structures (Grinder and Nelsen, 1980). Early adolescence is a transition between the child who is externally controlled and the more mature, principled person

who is capable of exercising good judgment in a majority of situations.

Principled orientation is predicated by "the intellectual ability to make rational, objective decisions about moral issues" (Grinder and Nelsen, 1980, 231). Compliance with rules is based on mutual consent instead of coercion as the individual's judgmental capacity is expanded. Moral decisions may be made in spite of emotional bias or allegiance to social relations.

Just as is true with the physical, cognitive, and social/emotional development of young adolescents, there is extreme variance among individuals as to their judgmental capabilities. "Moral growth encompasses capacities to develop emotional commitments to fundamental moral principles and to transcend self-interest in moral decision making and action" (Grinder and Nelsen, 1980, 232). The differences among individuals will mean that the moral development of each early adolescent will fall along the continuum from significant-others to principled.

General Implications for Middle Level Programs

An appropriate middle level program is built around the developmental needs of the early adolescent learner.

> It (middle level education movement) is grounded in the reality that the nurture and education of young adolescents must be an integrated venture; physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development are inexorably woven together in the fabric of early adolescent life. This is a foundational concept of the middle level education movement (Alexander and McEwin, 1989, 1).

Middle level education should be conceptually different, being student-centered rather than teacher-centered (Thornburg, 1982). This means that the diversity among middle level learners requires the teacher to respond to individual needs rather than the student adjusting to the teaching style of the teacher. Since early adolescence is a time of physical, intellectual, social, and behavioral transition, the educational environment should be transitional as well (Thornburg, 1982). The transitional school minimizes the pressure of the typical senior-junior high school environment which is social as well as academic.

Physical changes occurring during this period demand teacher reassurance and understanding to help students realize that many body changes such as skin problems, voice changes, and cowlicks are temporary (Wiles and Bondi, 1981). The curriculum needs to emphasize self-understanding about body changes, and the physical education curriculum needs to take into account the fact that many young adolescents are experiencing a stage of physical awkwardness (Wiles and Bondi, 1981). The fluctuation in the students' rate of metabolism dictates the need for daily exercise and a place where students can be children by playing and being noisy for short periods of time. Additionally, students should be engaged in special interest classes and hands-on activities. Classroom structure should allow for physical movement and the avoidance of long periods of passive work.

Awareness of the fact that most middle grade learners are experiencing a brain growth plateau should influence expectations regarding cognitive performance. Toepfer (1979) hypothesizes that

the large degree of overchallenge to middle level learners not having the readiness for formal operations thinking during the years from 12-14 might result in a shut-off of cognitive learning during the middle school years. Therefore, the planning of middle grades learning strategies should focus on the development of learning activities which help the learner consolidate the thinking skills initiated during the previous periods of brain growth. Learners should not be frustrated by placing them in learning situations in which there is increased demand for new and higher level thinking skills which they cannot attain during their individual plateau periods (Toepfer, 1979). This impetus for instruction holds the potential for higher achievement and a substantial improvement in self-concept and self-esteem (Toepfer, 1980).

Middle school educators must take into consideration the critical social aspects of the early adolescent. The organization must incorporate the teaching of social skills, the encouragement of friendships and social interactions through activities, and the provision for small group work within the classroom (Manning and Allen, 1987). Middle school educators can involve students in mini-courses, advisor-advisee groups, exploratory programs, and community service projects. In addition, middle level educators must understand the adolescents' need for autonomy and independence and attempt to channel this characteristic in a constructive direction. Allowing students a measure of independence in their learning, within reasonable limits, communicates understanding and acceptance to the learner (Manning and Allen, 1987).

Thornburg (1982) suggests a reevaluation of school sponsored social events that are not a natural extension of the school day, and proposes that early adolescents do not need adult pressure to be socially accelerated. Both the school program and the school day can be structured in a such a way that this concern can be minimized. Large group activities rather than boy-girl events should be scheduled (Wiles and Bondi, 1981).

Middle school philosophy hinges on the needs of the individual learner. An examination of effective middle schools, their organizational characteristics and curriculum will demonstrate how research about the early adolescent learner is operationalized in the educational setting.

Effective Middle Schools

The most popular grade configuration for middle schools is grades 6-8, but there also exist some middle schools that have a grade pattern of 5-8 (McEwin, 1983). However, effective middle schools entail more than a particular grade configuration. Middle level educational programs today seek to operate from a different set of principles than did such schools a few decades ago (Doda, George, and McEwin, 1987).

The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development was established in 1986 by the Carnegie Corporation of New York for the purpose of "examining new approaches to fostering education and healthy development of young adolescents" (Carnegie Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents, 1989, 13). The work of this Task Force along

with its recommendations is documented in report form. The Carnegie Task Force identified eight essential principles involved in the transformation of the education of young adolescents:

- Large middle grade schools are divided into smaller communities for learning.
- Middle grade schools transmit a core of common knowledge to all students.
- Middle grade schools are organized to ensure success for all students.
- Teachers and principals have the major responsibility and power to transform middle grade schools.
- Teachers for the middle grade are specifically prepared to teach young adolescents.
- Schools promote good health; the education and health of young adolescents are inextricably linked.
- Families are allied with school staff through mutual respect, trust, and communication.
- Schools and communities are partners in educating young adolescents (1989, 37).

These recommendations were based upon the needs and characteristics of the young adolescent.

The most common approach for a practitioner attempting to carry out the Carnegie recommendations is to add the necessary components to address unmet needs (Quattrone, 1990). The result of this approach might be a more comprehensive school, but one that lacks an integrated mission. The possibility exists that programs within the school may compete with rather than complement each other. "The ideal integration of all these needs suggests a kind of interactive network that clearly links each program component to the others; the dynamics would be smooth and continuous, marked by the absence of friction" (Quattrone, 1990, 58). The goal of the integrated program is to address the needs of the "whole" adolescent in a holistic manner.

Current truths or thoughts about effective middle schools are based on cumulative experience and research data generated in the last several decades (Doda, George, and McEwin, 1987). While these truths may be temporary or eternal, consideration of these perspectives "might lead to effective practice for a specific generation of students during a specific time period in the society in which they live" (Doda, George, and McEwin, 1987, 3).

1. Effective middle level schools work hard to reduce the size of the group to which students belong.

2. Effective middle level schools are more like elementary schools in climate and tone, than they are like high schools.

3. Effective middle level schools make it possible for students and teachers to spend time together in non-instructional ways.

4. Effective middle level schools have broad and varied rewards and award systems.

5. Effective middle level schools foster teacher fellowship, interdependence, and staff consensus.

6. Effective middle level teachers do not sit down while they teach.

7. Effective middle level teachers work to create lessons which bring students as close to the real thing as possible.

8. Effective middle level teachers have a sense of humor.

9. Effective middle level teachers think big but teach small.

10. Effective middle school teachers work to weasel their way into the hearts of the young adolescents they teach.

Lipsitz (1984, 167) found that the most striking feature of successful middle schools was "their willingness and ability to adapt

all school practices to the individual differences in intellectual, biological, and social maturation of their students." In addition, successful schools set out to be positive environments for early adolescents, with a belief in positive school climate as a goal. Since there is not a single model for success, each school must forge it's own individuality (Lipsitz, 1984). However, while middle schools exhibit individuality, there are commonalities of organization.

Organizational Characteristics

Middle schools which receive a reputation as highly effective are very similar in the components of the program (George and Oldaker, 1985). The programs common to exemplary middle schools tend to conform to the recommendations in the literature of middle level education in the last half century and are distinctly different from those programs common to the elementary or the high school (George and Oldaker, 1985).

Interdisciplinary Teaming

One of the major components of middle schools is the interdisciplinary team. The team has been heralded as the best way to bridge the gap between the self-contained organization of the elementary and the departmentalized classrooms of the high school (Erb, 1987). Alexander and McEwin (1989) found that thirty-eight percent of middle schools utilized an interdiciplinary team organization at Grade 6; twenty-eight percent of the 7th Grades were

organized in this manner; and twenty-four percent of the 8th Grades utilized this organizational pattern.

> The interdisciplinary team, as its name suggests, is a combination of teachers from different subject areas who plan and conduct the instruction in these areas for particular groups of pupils. The aim of the inter-disciplinary team approach is to promote communication, coordination, and cooperation among subject matter specialists so that students benefit from instruction planned by specialists, but lacking the fragmentation which characterizes many departmentalized plans (Alexander, 1968, 107-108).

Essential elements of the interdisciplinary team are common planning time and shared students. Two additional elements which facilitate the functioning of the team, but are not essential, are a common block-of-time teaching schedule and common team space with adjacent classrooms (Erb, 1987).

Teaming is an organizational structure that has the potential for affecting the way in which instruction is delivered and for restructuring interactions among teachers and students in order for the school to become a collection of smaller, cohesive groups (Arhar, Johnston, and Markle, 1989). This is in keeping with the Carnegie (1989) recommendation that students be divided into smaller communities for learning. Teaming creates the opportunity for things to be done differently, and ultimately the success of teaming rests upon the motivation and expertise of the teachers who work on the team (Arhar, Johnston, and Markle, 1989).

The strengths of interdisciplinary teaming may include more individualized teacher response to individual students, reduction of the isolation felt by teachers by providing a group of colleagues with whom to work and discuss, and more effective teaching in that

the teachers on a team can plan thematic units which allow students to make connections among disciplines and between the school and the real world (MacIver, 1990). Teaming also reduces isolation and anonymity of students, allows teachers to know their students well, encourages teachers to deal collectively with their students, and possesses the capacity to emphasize both the academic and the psycho-social needs of the early adolescent (Arhar, Johnston, and Markle, 1989).

Benefits of interdisciplinary teaming exist not only for students, but for educators as well. Teachers who are organized into teams report greater satisfaction with the conditions of teaching (Erb, 1987). They are more likely to feel supported and to have input into decisions on school-wide discipline, evaluation of students, student orientation, and the flexible grouping and scheduling of students.

Flexible Block Scheduling

Inherent in the teaming component, is the potential to provide flexible scheduling which facilitates heterogeneous grouping and allows individual instruction for select students.

> Scheduling should be a clear reflection of a school's philosophy and its beliefs about the nature of learning and the needs of youth. It ought to be the final step in a process of taking objectives based on a careful evaluation of human growth and development, society's expectation, and educational principles, and converting them into educational experiences and opportunities (Lounsbury, 1981, 15).

McEwin (1983) points out that flexible schedules place the responsibility for the use of time, group size, and other variables

on the teachers who know the students best. Flexible scheduling means that teachers are not required to give equal time to unequal subjects. The teachers make decisions about scheduling based on curriculum goals rather than the schedule driving the curriculum and content of each subject. Alexander (1981) cited the use of flexible scheduling by a team where the first half of every day for an entire week is dedicated to a review of basic math skills prior to an upcoming standardized test. A thematic unit planned cooperatively by a team may require a unique schedule for as long as four to six weeks. The possibilities for scheduling are endless and are dictated by the needs of the group of students and the teachers' goals for them.

Alexander (1989) found that despite the twenty year support (1968-1988) for flexible scheduling in the middle school research, in more than four out of five middle schools the uniform period day still prevailed in grades seven and eight. Uniform periods were evident in grade six in more than two out of three schools. In 1988, flexible scheduling was being used in twenty percent to thirty-one percent of the schools. He concluded that there was no decline in the use of inflexible uniform class periods in the middle school from 1968-1988.

Scheduling is a high level instructional task. It is a task which requires understanding of human growth and development, agreed-upon school objectives and purposes, and available human and physical resources. Ideally it is a phenomenon which reflects the needs of the students more than those of the bureaucracy or system (Lounsbury, 1981).

The Advisor-Advisee Program

A strong guidance program is needed in the middle school to help early adolescents adjust to their changing bodies, cope with self-doubt and peer status, and to wisely handle emerging independence (Wiles and Bondi, 1981). The goal of the group advisory period is to provide students with the social and emotional support which they need to succeed (MacIver, 1990).

The advisor-advisee program, or homebase, is a time during which a small group of students has the opportunity to interact with a single adult over an extended period of time. The homebase teacher works with students in school-wide activities and serves as a teacher-advisor to students. The teacher-advisor may be any adult in the school who functions in an advisory role. Both structured and unstructured activities take place within the group and between individuals. The focus is on social and emotional aspects of student development (Wiles and Bondi, 1981).

One of the goals of the middle level guidance program is for each student to have at least one adult in the building who is an advocate. Caring adults are significant role models for the early adolescent. In addition, helping students become effective decisionmakers is another of the common goals of the guidance program (Bergmann, 1991). Other goals of the advisory program include assisting students in the development of a healthy self-concept and respect for others, the development of interpersonal skills, and the promotion of an understanding of behavior and values (Shockley, Schumacher, and Smith, 1984).

Curriculum

Curriculum is planned for groups based on assumptions about the commonality of the needs and interests of each group. It is inevitable that systemwide curriculum planning and the materials necessary to support it can never be fully effective because, ultimately, students make individual and personal decisions about "their" curriculum. Students do not always learn what the teacher teaches or thinks is being taught nor can appropriate learning experiences be planned for students in advance of personal knowledge of the individual student (Lounsbury, 1991). Variable aspects of the curriculum must be balanced in order to provide the students with maximum benefit from the educational experience. Aspects of the curriculum demanding consideration include preparation for society, the needs of early adolescents, the integrated nature of knowledge, and the provision of learning opportunities for all (Compton, 1984).

The Basic Program

The basic program is composed of the academics: language arts and reading, mathematics, social studies, and science. This component of the curriculum is sometimes referred to as the continuous progress component (Lounsbury and Vars, 1978), a concept that champions a set of continuous nongraded learning experiences for those skills and concepts that have a sequential organization. While the foundation of this approach rests on the demand for specialization of knowledge, it also incorporates the

understanding of individual differences including variable rates of growth among students.

The Exploratory Program

The second curriculum component is the exploratory program. It most usually includes, but is not necessarily limited to, art, music, home economics, and industrial arts provided in a required cycle. In addition, there may be offerings of short-term programs for exploration such as computer literacy, drama and speech, health education, general business, foreign language, and other supplemental mini-courses. This component most nearly aligns with the developmental needs of the early adolescent (Lounsbury, 1991).

Instructional Organization and Strategies

Homogeneous ability grouping has been founded on the belief that learning is increased when teachers can focus on a common ability level (Toepfer, 1991). However, as has been demonstrated by the literature regarding cognitive development of the early adolescent, even when educators presume that a group of students has been intentionally selected on the basis of homogeneous abilities, there still exists a range of multitudinous abilities.

The belief in ability grouping has not been substantiated by practice, and the challenge is to move away from this pattern (Toepfer, 1991). The need to move away from tracking and homogeneous ability grouping is endorsed by the Carnegie Report (1989). A move

to heterogeneous grouping is also based on the belief that:

> Democratic society requires that people be able to function in the least restrictive environments possible. More heterogeneous grouping provides opportunities to learn in widening developmental ranges. This is more natural and lifelike than limiting learning opportunities within homogeneously grouped frames (Lounsbury, 1991, 27).

Students locked into upper tracks many times endure educational experiences that simply demand more work of a repetitive nature, while students placed in lower academic tracks may be exposed to dull, repetitive tasks which greatly inhibit the development of a positive self-concept.

Cooperative learning is an instructional strategy that maximizes learning in heterogeneously grouped classes. With proper implementation, cooperative learning fosters interdependence among peers towards constructive learning. Collaboration replaces competition as small group activities within the class provide opportunities for content mastery. Positive outcomes are evident as students work together and become responsible for individual growth as well as for each other (Toepfer, 1991).

Summary

The history of the middle school movement documents that middle schools have developed in response to the recognized need to bridge the gap between childhood and adolescent programs. Middle level programs attempt to bridge this gap by providing programs built around the developmental needs of the early adolescent learner. These needs dictate a program which is very different than the traditional program found in the junior high school setting.

This study seeks to focus on the change from the junior high to the middle school in the Putnam City School District as it relates to restructuring and change issues addressed in the previous chapter. This particular experience of the change to middle schools has implications regarding the middle school knowledge base of participants involved, the meaning of this change for participants both individually and collectively, as well as more global implications for the educational community at large as it relates to restructuring and reform.

CHAPTER III

ISSUES OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Paradigmatic Assumptions

Underlying the practice of social research are assumptions about society. These assumptions refer to the nature of social order, control, and responsibility. Human inquiry is far from neutral; it is an activity which involves hopes, values, and unresolved questions about social affairs (Popkewitz, 1984). The cumulative effect of these assumptions constitutes the establishment of a paradigm. A paradigm is a world view, a general perspective, a way of breaking down the complexity of the real world (Patton, 1982).

Kuhn (1970) described a paradigm as a way of looking at the world and cited examples of the ways in which paradigms are in conflict within the world of scientific disciplines. The Newtonian or traditional paradigm is prevalent and accepted by scientists in many fields of study. This paradigm operates on the assumption that research is predictive and deterministic, and these scientists set forth to validate hypotheses with "objective" data. However, Kuhn points out that in various scientific fields this approach fails to provide explanation for all phenomena. This has led to dissatisfaction on the part of some scientists with this particular paradigm and has set the stage for the transition to a new worldview.

Kuhn suggests that this transition is in progress, but is not easily accomplished, and the result is conflict between the traditional and the emergent paradigm.

The naturalist paradigm upon which the inquiry of this study is based is described by Lincoln and Guba (1985, 37) in the following five axioms. These five parameters serve as the underlying assumptions of, or the framework for inquiry.

1. There are multiple constructed realities that can be studied only holistically; inquiry into these multiple realities will inevitably diverge (each inquiry raises more questions than it answers) so that prediction and control are unlikely outcomes although some level of understanding can be achieved.

2. The inquirer and the "object" of inquiry interact to influence one another; knower and known are inseparable.

3. The aim of inquiry is to develop an idiographic body of knowledge in the form of "working hypotheses" that describe the individual case.

4. All entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping so that it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects.

5. The inquiry is value-bound because: the inquirer's values influence the choice, framing, and focusing of the problem; the choice of paradigm guides the direction of the inquiry; the substantive theory guides the collection and analysis of data and the interpretation of the findings; and, the context of the inquiry has inherent values.

Further, inquiry can be viewed as metalanguage in which the

narrative creates a style or a form for thought. This metalanguage contains assumptions which are unconscious but cause sense and plausibility to be made by the content and procedures of inquiry (Popkewitz, 1984).

Qualitative designs are naturalistic in that the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the research setting. The research setting is a naturally occurring event, program, relationship, or interaction that has no predetermined course established by or for the researcher. The point of using qualitative methods is to understand naturally occurring phenomena in their natural states (Patton, 1982). Qualitative studies usually attempt to consider both observed characteristics and specific qualities perceived as personal forms of meaning. The inquirer tends to see the world as indeterminate and problematic; its qualities are seen as functions of the perceptions and personal meanings the inquirer brings to the situation (Willis, 1978).

Qualitative evaluation aims at particular understanding. Specific characteristics which are perceived as significant by the researcher generate a variety of insights of limitless kind and number about these particulars (Willis, 1978). These characteristics would undoubtedly vary as specifics chosen for interpretation from researcher to researcher. Thus, the human instrument is the focal point of qualitative research. Since context is so heavily implicated in meaning, inquiry demands a human instrument, one fully adaptive to the indeterminate situation that will be encountered (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The human inquirer builds upon tacit

knowledge and uses methods that are appropriate to human inquiry: interviews, observations, document analysis, and unobtrusive clues. This is an emergent design in which the on-going inductive analysis of the data guides the development of theory which in turn projects the next steps in the study. The final report is of the nature of a case report which is an interpretive instrument used to report what was found in the naturalistic inquiry.

The ethnographer seeks to describe and analyze all or part of a culture or community. Culture is used to refer to patterns of behavior and patterns for behavior (Jacob, 1987). The holistic ethnographer assumes that the various parts of a culture form a unified whole. The primary interest is in analyzing and describing a culture or part of a culture as a whole, usually with the goal of describing a unique way of life and showing how the parts fit together into an integrated whole. The evaluand's attitude is frequently one of exploration and learning rather than one of testing. Under the umbrella of ethnography, but taking inquiry a step beyond analyzing and describing, is the methodology of hermeneutic inquiry.

Hermeneutic Inquiry

Hermeneutics has its roots and long history within the context of German and European philosophy. Gadamer (1976, 18) stated

> Philosophical hermeneutics takes as its task the opening up of the hermeneutical dimension in its full scope, showing its fundamental significance for our entire understanding of the world and thus for all the various forms in which this understanding manifests itself: from interhuman communication to manipulation of society; from

> personal experience by the individual in society to the way in which he encounters society; and from the tradition as it is built of religion and law, art and philosophy, to the revolutionary consciousness that unhinges the tradition from emancipatory reflection.

In Smith's (1991, 197) view, "The hermeneutic imagination con-stantly asks for what is at work in particular ways of speaking and acting in order to facilitate an ever-deepening appreciation of that wholeness and integrity of the world which must be present for thought and action to be possible at all". Additionally, the fundamental human quest is the search for meaning and the basic human capacity for this search is experienced in the hermeneutic process, the process of interpretation of the text (whether artifact, natural world, or human action). This is the search (or research) for greater understanding that motivates and satisfies us (MacDonald, 105).

The hermeneutic tradition seeks to examine the way in which all understanding takes place within an articulation of the part and whole. Meaning is negotiated both referentially and relationally rather than absolutely. "The final authority of concepts, constructs, or categories does not reside in the concepts themselves but within the dialogically arrived at agreement of people to consent to them" (Smith, 1991, 197).

Smith (1991) delineates the requirements of the hermeneutic imagination. Hermeneutics requires the development of a deep attentiveness to the use of language by the individual and others because language says much about who we are. Secondly, hermeneutics requires the deepening of one's sense of the interpretability of life

and the taking up of the interpretation for oneself as opposed to the acceptance of someone else's interpretation as being "truth". Essential to hermeneutics is the overall interest in the question of human meaning and how sense might be made out of lives. Constantly engaged in interpretation, the hermeneutic imagination is not limited by hermeneutic tradition but rather is liberated by it to bring to bear any concepts that may assist in the development of understanding of that which is being investigated. "This means that the mark of good interpretive research is not in the degree to which it follows a specified methodological agenda, but in the degree to which it can show understanding of what it is that is being investigated" (Smith, 1991, 201). This is a multidimensional enterprise which focuses not on the mere reporting of meaning, but on the creation of it. The purpose is to deepen our collective understanding of the world.

Design of the Study

Based on the aforementioned paradigmatic assumptions and the nature of hermeneutic inquiry, this study seeks to reflect on the congruencies or incongruencies of the change phenomenon and the bureaucratic educational setting within which changes are generally attempted through the examination, description, and interpretation of the ways in which teachers and administrators experience and attach meaning to the change in focus from the junior high model to the middle school concept in the Putnam City Public Schools. It was the intent of the researcher to examine concepts that may assist in the development of an understanding of this phenomenon. According to

Lincoln and Guba (1985), the design must be emergent rather than preordinate based on the following reasons: because meaning is determined by context to such a great extent; because the existence of multiple realities constrains the development of a design based on only one construction; because what will be learned at a site is always dependent on the interaction between investigator and context, and the interaction is also not fully predictable; and because the nature of mutual shapings cannot be known until they are witnessed.

This study seeks to construct meaning and create understanding of the issues noted in the following research questions:

1. What is the sociopolitical context for this particular educational change?

2. What is the meaning of change for people in various roles within the educational system (including their experience and relationship to the process of educational change)?

3. What is the nature of the relationship between changes in behavior and changes in beliefs or understanding?

Data collected as a result of this investigation came from multiple sources: interviews, documents, observations, and conversations. Formal semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers and administrators. The starting points for these interviews were questions and dialogue centering on the change process and the meaning that it has for each individual. Subsequent questions and topics of conversation evolved from interaction between the researcher and interviewee.

Primary Sources

The assumption was made that the Putnam City Schools were in the initiation phase of the change process according to Fullan's change theory. During this phase, the chief district administrator and central district staff are reported by Fullan (1991) to be an extremely important source of advocacy, support, and initiation of new programs. Further, the culture or climate of the school can shape an individual's psychological state for better or worse (Fullan, 1991). For this reason, observations were made within the central office and each of the four existing junior high schools during the fall of 1991. Interviews were conducted with the chief administrator; the superintendent; central office administrators including the Director of Middle Schools, the Director of Elementary Schools, and the Administrative Assistant; and building level principals and teachers from each of the four junior highs. Teachers were initially selected for interviews based upon the administrator's decision that a particular teacher was typical or representative of the teachers within the building. Conversations and interviews with various participants were recorded on a legal pad, and later transferred to notecards. Purposive sampling has been utilized to increase the likelihood of discovering multiple realities and to take advantage of local mutual shapings between the inquirer and the subjects of inquiry.

Secondary Sources

Additionally, secondary sources include data collected from

documents detailing the history of the Putnam City School District. "Since introducing innovations is a way of life in most school systems, districts build up track records in managing change. Whatever the track record at a given point in time, it represents a significant precondition relative to the next new initiative" (Fullan, 1991, 73). It is important to know past history in order to understand responses to the present. People carry meanings from one experience to the next, and a look at the history of the district provided insight into commonly held assumptions. The documents examined included school district board notes, school district newsletters, a published history of the Putnam City Schools, and dictated forms of information that had previously existed as oral history.

Data Presentation and Interpretation

Presentation of the data is in narrative form with concepts and meanings gleaned from all sources. Particular attention was paid to language as inherent meanings and assumptions may be communicated in this manner. The interpretation of the data, which was an ongoing process, sought to key on three themes of hermeneutic inquiry; "namely, the inherent creativity of interpretation, the pivotal role of language in human understanding, and the interplay of part and whole in the process of interpretation" (Smith, 1991, 190). It is the aim of this inquiry to provide an interpretation in the hermeneutic tradition of this example of change which addresses the

meaning both individually and collectively of the change from junior highs to middle schools in a particular school district.

> Everywhere there seemed to be a need for a language of 'understanding' that could take up 'difference' not as a problem to be solved but as an invitation to consider the boundaries and limits of one's own understanding . . . . identity means nothing without a set of relations, and that the real work of our time may be defined by an ability to mediate meaning across boundaries and differences, whether those boundaries and differences be concerned with gender, race, or ideas. And somehow it seems to me that the hermeneutic imagination has an important contribution to make to that task, not to settle everything once and for all by assigning people and things to their 'essential' places, but for the profound pedagogical purpose of affirming the way in which present arrangements always border on and open on the space of an Other whose existence contains part of the story of our shared future. And whether there will be a future indeed depends on the full power of creative interpretation (Smith, 1991, 203).

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF DATA

Interview Settings

Central office personnel were interviewed individually on different days, one-on-one. All interviews took place in the administrator's respective office located within the central administration building. There were four persons in this group of administrators; three male and one female. Upon arrival, the interviewer was warmly received with offers of refreshment and drink while waiting. Reading materials abounded, varying from office to office but always including current literature regarding middle schools, effective schools, or publications of the various schools within the district. A display of printed materials regarding the district was just within the door of the building's main entrance. Middle School Updates, Board Notes, and other miscellaneous materials provided information about the schools. They supported a feeling that this was a professional setting and that there was a certain pride in the activities which took place here.

Each principal of the four existing junior highs was interviewed one-on-one, in his respective office. All of the principals are male. Each building had its own unique feel or climate as experienced intuitively by the inquirer, but each principal was very

willing to share his thoughts regarding this change. Teachers were interviewed in their respective classrooms or, in the case of two teachers, the interviews were conducted in the teacher workroom.

Description of the Interview Data

Categories for the interpretation of the interview data were determined as they naturally emerged as themes. Responses focused on four areas that serve as sub-headings for the data: (1) the socio-political/historical context for this particular change, (2) ideas regarding the nature of middle school philosophy, (3) the meaning of change for the individuals involved as well as the collective meaning of change, and (4) the relationship between changes in behavior and changes in beliefs or understanding. Interview responses which were tied to issues of the socio-political context for this change have been integrated with the historical information in the following section and are cited as such. Data presented under the subheadings of Knowledge Base of Middle School Philosophy, The Meaning of Change, and The Relationship Between Beliefs and Practices were collected solely through the individual interview process.

The Sociopolitical/Historical Context for Change

The following historical information regarding the development of the Putnam City School District as well as the development of the idea for the transition from the junior high model to the middle school model was synthesized from information yielded by the

following sources:

1. District publications including The Communicator and The Middle School Update edited by Connie Blaney, Public Information Officer;

2. Board Hi-Lites, a summary of Board Meeting events compiled by Connie Blaney, Public Information Officer;

3. Putnam City Schools: 1914-1989, a booklet of district history edited by Gloria Quaid;

4. Oral histories which have been recorded by the "Early Students of Putnam City School", a group of Putnam City graduates who sponsor reunions complete with minutes which are documented; and

5. Personal interviews conducted by the researcher

From State Capitol to School District

Israel Mercer Putnam, founder of Putnam City schools, was a real estate developer who had become a millionaire by the age of thirty. He was also a representative from Oklahoma City to the first state legislature. In 1910, he sought the removal of the state capitol from Guthrie, Oklahoma to a site of eighty donated acres of land within Putnam City. He offered to build a permanent capitol building personally bearing the cost of one and one half million dollars plus expenses himself. In return, Mr. Putnam expected to deed two thousand acres of suburban lands located northwest of Oklahoma City to the state in order to secure payment of the one and one half million dollars. This offer was not accepted.

A special election for the purpose of determining the location

of the capitol was then held. Any location in the state could become a potential capitol site by securing a petition with the signatures of five thousand voters requesting that town be considered at the special election. An additional requirement for consideration was the ability of the town to provide the state with a two thousand acre tract to be subdivided and sold at a profit in order to provide funds for building the capitol.

Mr. Putnam submitted an offer of two thousand acres of land for one dollar, with the provision that the state keep eighty acres as a capitol site and sell the remainder of the land to cover the expenses of building the capitol. The election, held on June 11th, determined Mr. Putnam's offer to be the best.

The great seal of the state was moved to it's new location during the night of June 11th, 1910, as Guthrie officials threatened legal action against the removal of the capitol from that site. The Governor and the Capitol Commission officially selected the offer made by Mr. Putnam once the land was appraised and financing was verified. However, other parties interested in the capitol development plan requested inclusion in Mr. Putnam's plans. After much negotiation, a new plan was formulated and submitted for approval to the Governor and the Capitol Commission. This new plan required relocating the capitol building a mile and one quarter west of the original site, to Main and 39th Streets in Putnam City. When this amended plan and alternate site was approved, a large flagpole was erected at Main and 39th designating the spot where the permanent Capitol Building was to be built.

A suit was then filed by those wishing to retain the State Capitol in Guthrie. Consequently, no lots were sold to provide funding for the capitol, and the suit was eventually won by the parties in Guthrie. A special session of the legislature voted to establish the capitol at it's present site in northeast Oklahoma City in December, 1910. The capitol site thus had a tenure of approximately six months in Putnam City. During this time, Putnam built the Arnett Building, to serve as the capitol complex.

With resolution of the conflict concerning the location of the State Capitol, I. M. Putnam pursued another dream: that of providing an institution whose primary focus was on education. He had an elaborate vision for the establishment of a "Self-Employment University." Out of that dream, the Putnam Schools became a reality.

Consolidated School District #1

In 1914, the consolidation of four one-room schools resulted in the birth of Consolidated School District #1. Central School located at N.W. 23rd and Rockwell, Ozmun School at N.W. 23rd and Portland, Goff School whose site was N.W. 63rd and Rockwell, and County Line School at Wilshire and Canadian County Line consolidated to form the Putnam City School District. Classes were first held in the rented Arnett Building located at N.W. 39th and Wall Streets. Ophelia Overstreet presided as the first superintendent of the district. Ms. Overstreet's tenure as superintendent was followed by that of Darwin T. Styles who served as the district's second superintendent.

Construction was finished on the district's first school building, located at 40th and Grove, in 1915. This building was located on the present day Student Services Building site and was the only building in the district for approximately ten years. Elementary classes were housed in the basement, junior high classes were conducted on the first floor, and high school classes met on the second floor. The building also contained space for administrative offices, but there was no cafeteria. Four horse-drawn vans with coal-oil heaters and canvas curtains provided transportation for students who resided far away, while other students rode their own horses. There were ten graduates of the eighth grade class in 1915.

In 1917, G. D. Moss assumed the superintendency of the district and at that time Freda Matthews organized the first track team and both girls and boys basketball teams. These were the first of many extracurricular activities to be offered by the district. The year 1919 saw the first three seniors graduated from Putnam City High School. Today this same high school has an enrollment of approximately one thousand four hundred, and a graduating class of almost five hundred.

During the years 1920-1923, P. A. Tankersley served as the superintendent of Putnam City Schools. It was during this time that the district first received state accreditation. Graduating classes remained small with only one graduating senior in the class of 1921, while the classes of 1922 and 1923, each had four graduates.

The years 1924-1926 saw the service of another woman, Cathryn Simpson, in the capacity of superintendent. She also organized and

coached the first football team. During this time period, the Pirates were adopted as the official mascot of the district. Ms. Simpson taught English, as well as coaching and serving as superintendent, and initiated the publication of the first yearbook. There were six members of the graduating class of 1926, and the student population totalled approximately four hundred with thirteen faculty in the district. It was during this time span that a new high school building was constructed across the street from the Arnett Building. This was the first additional construction since the completion of the original building in 1915.

By the 1930's, the district had employed three other superintendents and was continuing to experience substantial growth. In 1930, Central Elementary School was opened. In addition, that same year, Central Junior High was opened. Currently, Central Elementary houses approximately seven hundred and fifty students, and Central Junior High has an enrollment of one thousand five hundred and twenty.

The early 1940s saw two devastating fires sweep through the district. On December 16, 1940, fire destroyed the original school building, and on January 4, 1942, another fire swept the high school destroying the building and auditorium and damaging a recently constructed gymnasium. The source of the high school fire was a gas radiant heater. School records and athletic equipment were salvaged undamaged from the fire, and approximately four hundred and fifty senior high school students who welcomed an extended holiday due to the 1942 fire.

Putnam City's student population surpassed the two thousand mark in 1947 and, with Denver D. Kirkland as superintendent in 1950, the district began to see incredible growth. Mr. Kirkland served as superintendent until 1964. In the early 1950s, the Putnam City campus spread between Ann Arbor and MacArthur from 39th Street to 40th Street. It was in 1957, that D. D. Kirkland Elementary School opened with the distinction of being the first Putnam City school to be built away from the main campus site. Growth continued to influence building needs and, in 1958, a new high school was opened at 50th and Ann Arbor. The old high school building became Central Junior High, while the junior high became Central Intermediate School for grades four through six. The district opened two new elementary schools in 1959: Coronado Heights Elementary School opened along with Hilldale Elementary. The year 1961 saw the opening of still two more elementary schools: Western Oaks Elementary and Windsor Hills Elementary. Rollingwood Elementary and Western Oaks Junior High both opened in 1963 at which time the district had 9,733 students and 349 teachers. The district sustained growth of almost 8,000 students in sixteen years.

Leo C. Mayfield was superintendent of Putnam City Schools from 1964-1978. The district continued to sustain a tremendous growth rate during his tenure. In fact, from the years 1964-1973 the student population increased by almost 1,000 new students each year. Additional schools were filled almost before construction could be completed. In 1966, Hefner Junior High opened, and in 1967 two elementary schools, Lake Park and Tulakes, opened. Tulakes

Elementary contains one of the first libraries housed in a Putnam City elementary school. The Putnam City student population in 1966 reached 14,000 students and the district employed 555 teachers. A second high school, Putnam City West, opened in 1968 with the student body composed of only sophomore and juniors. Seniors remained at Putnam City High School to be graduated as members of the Class of 1969. Fifty years had passed since the first Putnam City graduating class of three members.

The decade of the 1970s was exemplified by sustained growth and the construction of additional facilities to house the ever-growing student population. Apollo Elementary opened in 1970, the first of the "open concept" schools. Plans were approved and construction began on Mayfield Junior High during the 1972-73 school year. Wiley Post Elementary, the second "open concept" school, opened in the fall of 1973. The 1975-76 school year brought the opening of Harvest Hills Elementary, the last of the "open concept" schools, and plans to build a third high school, Putnam City North. Both Putnam City North High School and James L. Dennis Elementary School opened in the fall of 1979. Ralph Downs was named superintendent in 1978 and continued as chief officer until his retirement in June, 1992. Dr. Randy Dewar became superintendent effective August 1, 1992.

As economic growth came to a standstill during the 1980s, growth in the student population of the Putnam City Schools was severely curtailed as well. In 1980, construction of Northridge Elementary School as well as a new Administration Building was completed. The only other school built and opened within the district during the 1980's was Will Rogers Elementary School in 1983.

The year 1990 brought about the opening of one additional elementary school, Ralph Downs. The Putnam City School District had come a long way from it's beginnings as Consolidated School District #1 to a district covering a forty-nine square mile area; containing nineteen elementary schools, four junior highs (and one middle school under construction), three high schools; and possessing a student population in excess of 18,000.

Figure 1 shows the enrollment of Putnam City Schools to be 400 in 1923; 9,733 students in 1963; 20,040 in 1973; 19,061 students in 1983; and 17,946 students in 1990. The enrollment of the district more than doubled during the ten year period between 1963 and 1973.

From Junior Highs to Middle Schools

When the idea of middle schools came along years ago, Mr. Downs, then Superintendent, felt that it was supported for the wrong reasons. It is his view that middle schools were initially implemented nationally for the purpose of more efficiently housing children without a change in philosophy. It is his further belief that being on the cutting edge in education is not of primary importance because changes are sometimes made without consideration of the consequences and kids end up being hurt. Mr. Downs prefers to observe and reflect in order to determine the benefits of a proposed innovation (interview).

In the spring of 1990, discussion of the middle school concept and its underlying philosophical implications again began to take

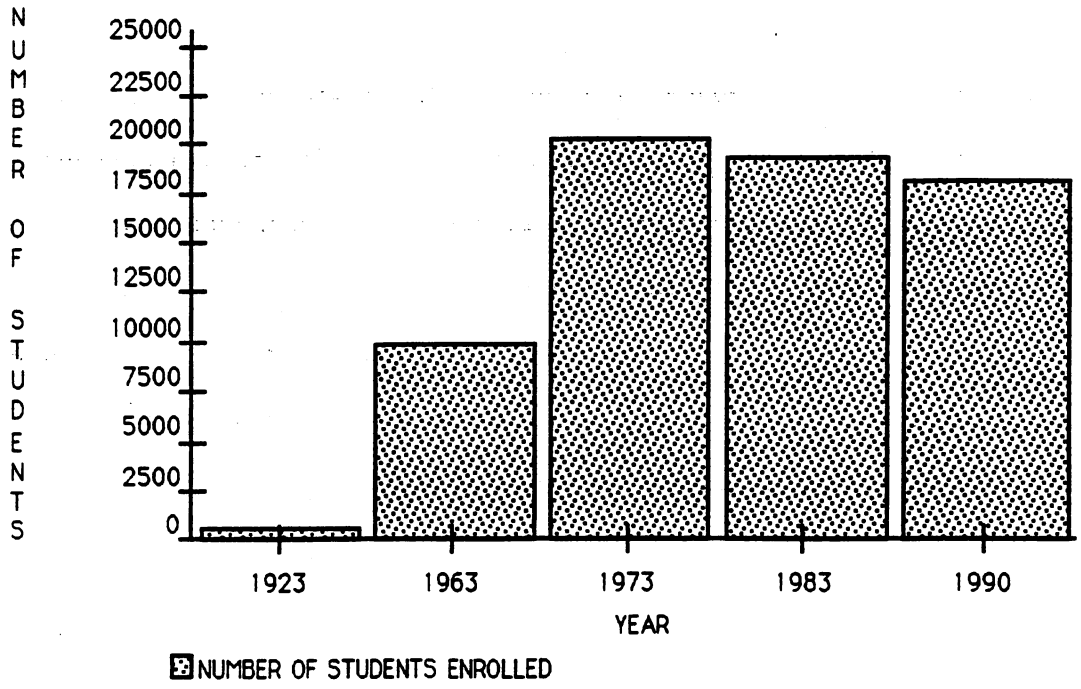

Figure 1: Putnam City Enrollment Data

place among district leaders (interview). There was the imminent need to construct a new facility for the early adolescent age group in Putnam City whether it be a junior high school or a middle school. When mention was first made of a change from the junior high to the middle school concept, both the school board and the community felt that it was not necessary because there was nothing wrong with the present system. However, the Superintendent wanted to implement the middle school concept before his retirement because he had come to believe that the movement was based on a sound philosophical stance (interview).

An effort was made to create community awareness about the potentially positive impact that middle schools could have on the early adolescent learner. A district administrator, accompanied by board members, made an out-of-state site visit to an exemplary middle school in order to become more knowledgeable about middle school philosophy. This trip occurred approximately one and one-half years in advance of the consideration of the middle school concept as a school board agenda item (interview).

In June, 1990, the district held an informational meeting for parents to disseminate information concerning middle school philosophy, concept, and organization. On September 25, 1990, 3500 Putnam City patrons approved a bond issue for numerous capital improvements within the district including the construction of a new junior high/middle school facility. At this point, the decision had made to build a new facility and the general public had been made aware of the consideration of junior high versus middle school.

After much deliberation at its meeting on February 5, 1991, the school board agreed to table the decision as to whether to build and operate the new school as a junior high or middle school. The board members, several administrators, and the superintendent had been studying the pros and cons of middle schools for several months at this point. However, it was determined that more input from the community would be appropriate before a decision of this magnitude would be made. The board decided to set open forum meetings during the following thirty days for the purpose of further discussion of the issue of junior high versus middle school. The Board was also interested in information regarding the future growth of the district and in particular was seeking projected high school enrollment figures for the next seven years. At the end of thirty days, Board members would determine if they were ready to make a decision on the issue.

During the remainder of February and the beginning of March, meetings and public forums were held to provide patrons with information about the middle school concept and to encourage discussion of the pros and cons of this philosophic stance. Forum topics included the characteristics and the desirability of the middle school concept, and what one might expect of a middle school. Putnam City Schools leaders continued to study the middle school concept which is, according to Spaeth (1991, 2), "a movement which is one of the largest and most comprehensive efforts at educational reorganization in the history of American public education". On March 12, 1991, a public forum for parents provided the opportunity

for patrons to voice opinions regarding the educational opportunities afforded the early adolescent student within the district. The majority of the speakers was in favor of the middle school concept with a grade configuration of sixth, seventh, and eighth versus the traditional junior high configuration of seventh, eighth, and ninth grades.

On March 14, 1991, the Putnam City School Board voted unanimously to change from the junior high to middle school concept by the fall of 1993. At that time, elementary schools will house kindergarten through fifth grade; middle schools will include grades six, seven, and eight; and high school will consist of grades nine through twelve. Putnam City leaders had a total of more than two years, at this point, to plan, study, and prepare for the change to middle schools, and administrators were confident that this would provide time to affect a positive change. The Board's decision to change from junior high school to middle school was touted as progressive and was predicted to make a difference in the lives of students.

> The middle school is a school for students who are changing from childhood to adolescence. Students in sixth, seventh, and eighth grades are rapidly changing physically, emotionally, mentally, and socially. The middle school will be designed to meet their particular needs (Blaney, 1991, 1).

There will be a domino effect on the total district population as the result of this change from junior high to middle school. By the fall of 1993, there will be a total of five middle schools. The new school will alleviate overcrowding at the existing Central Junior High and Hefner Junior High. Sixth graders will be moved into middle

schools leaving the elementaries less crowded. Ninth graders will be moved into the three existing high schools. Putnam City West is currently large enough to accommodate the additional students, but Putnam City and Putnam City North will require additional classrooms in order to provide adequate space for the increased student populations.

Ground for the new middle school was broken in the fall of 1991. A twenty-acre piece of land located in the western part of the district was purchased by Putnam City Schools for $350,000 with completion of the new middle school expected by fall 1993. The school was funded through a 1990 bond issue project and expected to house approximately 700-900 students.

A redistricting plan for elementary, middle school, and high school is scheduled to go into effect at the same time that the new middle school is to open. Due to population growth in the northwest portion of the district, the school district will need to shift school boundary lines. The purpose of redistricting is thus to increase student population at schools with declining enrollments and to reduce overcrowding in buildings with larger enrollments.

Committees involving teachers, administrators, and patrons were formed to examine various aspects of this transition. The duties of the committees were to collect data, study the specific concept, and devise a plan of action related to a particular task. There were seven committees: Facilities Committee, Staff Development Committee, Curriculum Committee, Co-Curricular Committee, Transition Committee, Staffing Committee, and the Public Relations Committee. In addition,

the Steering Committee was established as the governing body whose function it was to review and coordinate the plans of the seven other committees. The first priority of this committee was to develop a middle school philosophy and to establish middle school standards. This statement can be found in the "Middle School Update", September, 1991, and reads as follows:

> We, the staff, students, parents, and community are committed to creating middle schools that provide for the unique physical, social, emotional and intellectual needs of early adolescents. We believe that a student's self-esteem and academic growth can best be developed in a challenging, productive, purposeful environment. Working cooperatively with warmth, care and respect, we will prepare students to be productive in an ever-changing world.

Monthly in-service sessions were conducted for teachers and parents beginning in September, 1991, and continuing through April, 1992. This series featured speakers knowledgeable about the characteristics of the middle school student and about features of exemplary middle school programs including team organization, advisor-advisee programs, flexible scheduling, exploratory activities, varied instructional strategies, and school climate. A new position, the Director of Middle Schools, was established in June, 1991. The responsibilities of the Director are to coordinate and facilitate the transition and all activities related to the middle school.

Current junior high school teachers have been encouraged to identify their preferences for placement in the new middle schools or for placement at the high school. Elementary teachers wishing to move to the middle schools with the sixth graders have also been encouraged to identify themselves.

The consensus of both the central office administrators and building level principals regarding the motivation for this change is best reflected in the thoughts of one administrator:

> Putnam City began to examine the nationwide transition from the junior high concept to the middle school concept. The academics of the junior high are acceptable, but miss addressing the whole child. Middle school will make a significant difference for the lower third and save potential dropouts. The district felt that middle school philosophy represents what's best for kids (interview).

The need for facilities was a secondary factor cited by administrators as a catalyst for change. Some indicated that facility needs dictated the timing for this change as opposed to the nature of the change itself.

There was even less agreement regarding the motivation for the district change to middle schools among teachers. Many of the same factors precipitating this change were cited by teachers as were cited by administrators. The teachers responded however, with less certainty regarding the motivation for this change. Administrators, on the other hand, responded with confidence. The motivators for the district's change to middle school most commonly cited by teachers were: 1) "Perhaps the district wants to stay current"; 2) "Ninth graders need to be in the high school environment because of the issue of credits applying towards graduation"; 3) "Redistricting was the motivator at this time"; and 4) "The Middle School Director is trying to meet the needs of students".

Responses from virtually all interviewees, administrators and teachers, indicated that there were minimal concerns on the part of patrons regarding this change from junior high to middle school.

Initially, community response was one of questioning what was wrong since the district was considering a change. However, through the efforts of the district leaders to create awareness and educational opportunities for patrons regarding the middle school concept, this concern has subsided. The continuing concerns voiced by patrons seem to center around two narrowly focused areas. The first concern is described as "centering around competitive sports, cheerleading opportunities, pom pom squads, and activities which are generally in imitation of high school activities." The other concern is since interdisciplinary teams will be composed of heterogeneously grouped students, that "honors students will lose high academic standards of courses currently offered to them" (interviews).

Demographics of the Putnam City School District

An Analysis of Demographic Changes 1980-1990 and Projections of Secondary Enrollments for the Putnam City School District was compiled by demographer Stephen W. Tweedie on September 25, 1991. This information facilitated decisionmaking regarding the redistricting of school boundaries which will coincide with the implementation of the middle school concept and the opening of the new middle school.

Table I shows a comparison of the 1980 and 1990 Census of Population and Housing data for the Putnam City School District. General trends are indicated as well as several changes which have a direct bearing on the middle school-age group. The Putnam City

TABLE I

PUTNAM CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT: CENSUS DATA

Census Data	1980	1990	% CHANGE
Population	97,127	108,877	12%
Housing Units	42,172	52,985	26%
Occupied Housing Units	37,877	45,147	19%
Families	26,544	29,768	12%
Population per occupied housing unit	2.6	2.4	
Families as a percent of occupied units	70%	66%	-6%
Renters as a percent of occupied units	39%	43%	
Vacancy rate	10%	15%	
Children, ages 0-6	8,645	10,475	21%
Children, ages 5-11	9,777	10,811	11%
Children, ages 11-17	10,678	9,884	-7%
Children, age 0-6 per 100 occupied units	20	23	
Children, age 5-11 per 100 occupied units	23	24	
Children, age 11-17 per 100 occupied units	25	22	

Source: Stephen W. Tweedie, "Putnam City School District Analysis of Demographic Changes 1980-1990 and Projections of Secondary Enrollments, Oklahoma City, OK: September 25, 1991.

School District experienced a 12% growth in population during the decade of the 1980s. Among other trends are an increase in the number of housing units, an increase in the percentage of vacancies, and an increase in the proportion of rental units. There is however, a decrease in the percentage of family occupied units. For purposes of comparison, children were divided into three age groups: 0-6 years, 5-11 years, and 11-17 years. The data reveal an increase of 21% in the preschool age group, an 11% increase in the number of elementary students, and a 7% decrease in the secondary population. Tweedy (1991) used children per occupied housing unit as an indicator for predicting school enrollment.

Table II shows the population in the Putnam City School District by age categories used in the 1990 Census. These figures reveal a fairly consistent distribution of children in each category with a somewhat lower number for ages 14-17.

The data regarding the population by age category can be used to calculate the expected enrollment at each grade level. Expected enrollments can then be compared with actual enrollments. Table III shows this comparison with actual enrollment figures of March, 1991. Actual enrollment was 98% of the expected number for elementary K-6. Junior high schools had an enrollment which was 92% of the expected enrollment, while there was 83% of the expected population in senior high schools. Lower than expected enrollments at the senior high could be attributed to a number of factors including enrollment in schools out of district (private) or school dropouts.

TABLE II

POPULATION BY AGE CATEGORY--1990 CENSUS

Age Group	Population
0	1280
1-2	3046 (1523 average)
3-4	3030 (1515 average)
5	1587
6	1532
7-9	4642 (1547 average)
10-11	3050 (1525 average)
12-13	2826 (1413 average)
14	1362
15	1453
16	1357
17	1361

Source: Stephen W. Tweedie, "Putnam City School District Analysis of Demographic Changes 1980-1990 and Projections of Secondary Enrollments", Oklahoma City, OK: September 25, 1991.

TABLE III

ACTUAL ENROLLMENTS COMPARED WITH EXPECTED ENROLLMENT FROM 1990 CENSUS AGE DATA

	Districtwide	North	Central	West
K-6				
Actual:	10,539	3512	3754	3273
% of Expected:	98%	97%	93%	105%
7-9				
Actual:	3934	1307	1349	1285
% of Expected:	92%	88%	89%	101%
10-12				
Actual:	3473	1265	1220	991
% of Expected:	83%	84%	84%	81%

Source: Stephen W. Tweedie, "Putnam City School District Analysis of Demographic Changes 1980-1990 and Projections of Secondary Enrollments", Oklahoma City, OK: September 25, 1991.

Redistricting and Enrollment Projections

The population data in Table II show that each age group from 1-11 has over 1500 children. Assuming that these children progress through the system in a normal, sequential fashion, the 11-year-olds from April, 1990, would have reached seventh grade (junior high/ middle school) in the 1990-91 school year. Junior high enrollments should continue to increase for the next two years, leveling off in the 1992-93 school year. Given the 1990 data, enrollment at the middle school should remain fairly consistent through the 2001-02 school year with a 16% decrease then projected with the zero age group.

Tweedie (1991) established the age cohort data shown in Table IV to project expected enrollment from census age categories. There is the assumption of a stable population progressing through the school system in a normal fashion. The projections are compared with enrollment figures in September, 1991.

Tweedie (1991) noted that actual enrollments are consistent with the Census age cohort data in that enrollment declines after eighth grade. However, class size is not as consistent as Census age data would indicate and first grade enrollment is 11% larger than projected. Projections based on actual enrollment figures would differ from projections based on Census age data in that there would appear to be no leveling off of enrollment. Tweedie (1991) also questions the usefulness of the U. S. Census for projecting enrollment due to the discrepancy between the April 1990 census age

TABLE IV

ENROLLMENT COMPARED WITH CENSUS AGE DATA

Grade	Enrollment September 1991	Census Age Cohort April 1990
K	1448	1515
1	1729	1556
2	1529	1557
3	1547	1541
4	1487	1548
5	1504	1548
6	1400	1534
7	1496	1530
8	1422	1461
9	1308	1418
10	1358	1385
11	1152	1415
12	1122	1399

Source: Stephen W. Tweedie, "Putnam City School District Analysis of Demographic Changes 1980-1990 and Projections of Secondary Enrollments", Oklahoma City, OK: September 25, 1991.

data and the actual enrollment figures. However, fluctuations in enrollment from one year to the next also affect reliability of projections based on actual enrollment.

Table V shows the enrollment projections for proposed reconfiguration for middle school, Grades 6-8. Projections in the "no growth" column of Table V are based on actual enrollments as of September, 1991. Tweedie (1991) then combines these projections with the 3%, 5%, and 10% categories for future housing and population growth to predict middle school enrollment within each of the attendance zones. The capacity of existing junior high/middle school buildings are as follows:

Hefner Junior High--900-1,100

Central Junior High--900-1,100

Mayfield Junior High--600-700

Western Oaks Junior High--700-800

The middle school currently under construction will ideally house 700 students. Tweedie (1991) concludes that redistricting will be necessitated in order to balance student populations with the capacity of the respective buildings.

Knowledge Base of Middle School Philosophy

While this inquiry was guided predominantly by questions regarding the nature of the change experience from the junior high to the middle school, it was necessary to establish commonalities in understandings of the knowledge base by both the participants and the

TABLE V

PROPOSED RECONFIGURATION, MIDDLE SCHOOL
(GRADES 6-8)

Schools	Enrollment Projections for Senior High Attendance Zones (based on September 1991 enrollments)			
	No Growth	3% Growth	5% Growth	10% Growth
PC North (Hefner)				
91/92 (actual)	1450			
92/93	1510	1528	1538	1566
93/94	1482	1518	1538	1594
94/95	1555	1609	1639	1723
95/96	1536	1608	1648	1760
96/97	1632	1722	1772	1912
PC High (Central)				
91/92 (actual)	1511			
92/93	1553	1561	1566	1580
93/94	1578	1594	1604	1632
94/95	1658	1682	1697	1739
95/96	1661	1693	1713	1769
96/97	1725	1765	1790	1860
PC West (Mayfield & Western Oaks)				
91/92 (actual)	1351			
92/93	1335	1338	1339	1344
93/94	1331	1337	1339	1349
94/95	1325	1334	1337	1352
95/96	1366	1378	1382	1402
96/97	1448	1463	1468	1493

Source: Stephen W. Tweedie, "Putnam City School District Analysis of Demographic Changes 1980-1990 and Projections of Secondary Enrollments", Oklahoma City, OK: September 25, 1991.

researcher regarding middle school philosophy. The examination of these understandings was based on data collected through the use of the following interview questions: (1) What are important components of the middle school philosophy/model? (2) What do you view as the important needs and characteristics of the 10-14 year old? These questions were presented in a broad open-ended manner so as to create dialogue between the participants and the researcher.

Components of Middle School Philosophy

Interdisciplinary teaming, or the school within a school concept, was the dominant response by administrators and teachers when they were questioned about the important components of the middle school philosophy. Additionally, some respondents mentioned advisor-advisee programs, the exploratory block, interdisciplinary teaching, and intramurals as important components of the middle school program.

When asked about the important components of the middle school philosophy, one central office administrator responded:

> The most important component is that of the school within a school. This change in structure will make possible all the things that we want to do with kids. It will allow personal involvement with students on the part of teachers, and make it possible to deal with the whole child as opposed to only the area of academics. Secondary components of interdisciplinary teaching and advisor-advisee are just the icing on the cake.

Another central office administrator commented that:

> The important middle school components include the idea of teaming, or the school within a school concept. Junior highs are in reality a mini-high school, and teaming will allow teachers to deal with children differently.

Following are comments made by building level principals regarding the important components of the middle school:

> Teaming is the most important component of the middle school model and advisory is the second . . . . Teaming will be successful because teachers can consider their own little group of students, and will begin to realize the power that results from teaming.

> The configuration to make a large school smaller, as with teams creating the 'school within a school' concept, is an important component of the middle school model. It is equally important to have staff members who know, understand, and work in the middle school mode. It is important to recognize that middle school is different than elementary, junior high, or high school. The middle school philosophy is designed for the creature served.

Another principal responded:

> Teaming is a place where they (students) can be known by an adult. Advisor-advisee provides the students with a name instead of a number.

Following are some of the teachers' comments regarding important components of the middle school:

> The important components or advantages are teaming and flexibility within the schedule.

> The teaming aspect is the major component, but the problem is that seventh and eighth grade teachers have no knowledge of teaming. Teachers are in need of more planning time, and need to know the timeline of implementation.

> Teaming, block scheduling, and advisor-advisee are the important components for first year implementation.

> The middle school model is student-oriented with pods, groups, or teams providing a secure environment for the students. Some schools have retained the same team configurations for three years with teachers changing grade levels with their students. This is an interesting concept. The advisor-advisee program is another important component. Flexible scheduling is another change from the junior high.

Needs and Characteristics of the Learner

There appeared to be somewhat less consensus among respondents regarding the developmental needs and characteristics of the early adolescent learner. The following comments demonstrate the wide variety of thoughts regarding the nature of the learners. Central office administrators responded in the following ways:

> They (early adolescents) need to be treated less like high school students, and more like elementary.
>
> Social interaction is the primary need. These students also need structure and positive experiences. Teachers need to take charge and set the stage so that these needs will be met.
>
> The early adolescent has a unique combination of physical, social, emotional, and intellectual needs.
>
> They need to test limits of authority and they are volatile. They perceive themselves as adultlike, but are immature. They demand flexibility of the adults who work with them.

The thoughts of one building principal regarding the characteristics and needs of the early adolescent learner were as follows:

> This aged child is unorganized and it is the teacher's challenge to organize the student's learning. The child is also volatile, and more and more are coming from an unstructured home life. Teachers must teach the student to organize. These kids are also very social, but that trait is not used by the school as a benefit.

Another stated:

> The early adolescent is neither child nor adult, but rather a fish out of water. He has the need to fit, to explore, to expand, to test, to belong someplace with someone. There also exists the need to be guided, the need to be a part of the group, and to be an individual. He is searching for his identity, and is unsure, moody, but can be excited about learning.

From one teacher's perspective, the needs of the early adolescent learner are:

> These kids need a lot of reassurance. They also need social time that includes interaction with the teacher.

Another teacher stated:

> They need lots of attention. They have no notetaking or study skills. Seventh grade teachers are expecting students to come to the junior high with these skills, and the kids are unprepared. Also, kids today are video and audio oriented, and have no interest in a lecture oriented approach.

An additional teacher responded:

> These kids are 'squirrelly'. They have varied interests, are not adults, and do not possess the knowledge that adults commonly assume they do. They are eager to explore, and are dealing with changes resulting from puberty. They are also discovering the existence of the opposite sex.

The Meaning of Change

The issue of created meaning on the part of individuals regarding the change from the junior high to the middle school was addressed by the researcher through the broad question: In what significant ways will the resulting middle schools in Putnam City differ from the current junior highs? It seemed that the responses of the participants to this particular inquiry would convey what their individual perceptions were concerning the nature of this change. The variety of responses elicited did indeed support the notion of the existence of multiple realities.

The major difference in the current junior highs and the middle schools was a philosophical one for one central office administrator:

> The junior high deals in theory with only the intellectual needs, and even then it is not in an appropriate manner.

> There is also a lack of bonding between adults and students because scheduling does not allow enough time for teachers to really know students. The middle school scheduling will encourage this bonding. Due to a lack of personal relationships between student and teacher at the junior high, it becomes easy not to deal with discipline. Teachers have no vested interest in anything but the intellectual development of the child. They feel little ownership for other areas of growth . . . . There will be increased ability to address social and emotional needs, thereby assisting kids. The likelihood of students' dropping out intellectually will decrease. Hopefully, this new environment will produce lifelong learners by engaging students more fully. The affective area of development will become a priority.

Other responses from central office administrators include the following:

> There will be a major difference in the philosophy of addressing the whole child and in the curriculum.

> The junior high concept is the antithesis of what these kids need. Instruction methods need to use the strong need for social interaction as the catalyst for learning. This is not currently happening in many junior high classrooms. No one sees the whole child because the junior high structure prevents this from happening. The junior high provides no continuity from hour to hour, class to class, and the contrast and lack of consistency from teacher to teacher is bad . . . . there is high satisfaction with the elementary structure. Middle school will be an extension of the positive climate found in elementary school.

> It is my hope that the middle schools will adopt a student-centered philosophy. There will be the use of cooperative groups and student activities in the learning environment instead of strictly teacher lecture.

Perceptions of the building level administrators regarding the significance of the change from junior highs to middle schools are recorded in the following comments:

> The ninth graders will be gone, and with them go secondary requirements. Also with their departure will go the presence of young adults, and adult activity will be removed. Ninth graders present more serious problems,

> and their absence will have a positive effect on seventh and eighth graders.
>
> There will be interdisciplinary teaming with teachers working together for the benefit of students. Exploratory blocks will be offered.
>
> There will be immediate differences. The summer before the 1993-94 school year will see teams in place, and curriculum designed for teaming. Elective areas will be designed around more opportunities for students in a shorter time span. The time structure of the middle school day will be designed by the team to meet its objectives. Decisions currently made by administration will be made by the team. This change is a transitional process that will continue to develop.
>
> There will be a change in the types of activities with more opportunities for participation. There will be less structured athletics, band, cheerleading, and vocal music. Activities will be of a more exploratory nature.

Teachers in general seem to be less sure of what these changes mean than do administrators. This attitude was demonstrated through their comments regarding the significance of this change from the junior to the middle school. One teacher stated:

> I'm not certain what strain of middle school our school will become. Teaming and flexible scheduling are significant changes, but I have a concern about 'watering down' expectations.

Another teacher responded:

> The middle school will enhance coordination between all academic areas and kids will benefit from this interdisciplinary approach. Teachers will interrelate subject matter.

Additional teachers commented:

> We have forgotten that kids need hands-on experiences and the chance to explore. They should not be locked into specific subject areas. Teachers must deal with the whole child as opposed to subject matter only. The junior high is a mini-high school and does not address the variety of needs of this age. However, the middle school is child-oriented and will better serve these kids. Also, middle schools will have an incorporated correlation

> between subject areas, and will not be segmented as junior highs are. In the current junior high there is no connectedness between first hour and sixth hour. The middle school will address this through interdisciplinary teaming.
>
> Hallways will be quieter if teachers take advantage of flexible scheduling because not all students will be released to the hallways at fifty-five minute intervals. Middle schools will bring about teacher empowerment which will require more responsibility on the part of teachers. Discipline will fall to the teachers more than now. The focus of the junior high is on the curriculum; it is a mini-high school. Middle schools have a different focus.

Participants were questioned regarding their personal responses to this change and about their perceptions of the responses and comfort levels regarding this change demonstrated by other administrators and teachers. One central office administrator responded in this way:

> Elementary people are in favor of this change. Sixth grade teachers have always hated to see their students 'thrown' into the junior high. Junior high people, as expected, are against it. High school people are rather indifferent, but not really 'keen' on ninth graders coming.

Additional comments from other central office administrators include the following:

> Overall, the junior high administrators and teachers don't want to change. There are required in-service sessions each month, and some improvement is seen in attitude with each passing month. Some teachers have already decided that they will go to the high school as soon as they can. Others are excited about middle school, and many fall somewhere in-between these two opinions.
>
> I think that this is a positive change and I am hopeful that this will provide the needed environment for this age group.
>
> This is a positive change . . . . as I began to learn about the middle school concept, I began to see how it could be for all early adolescents, and am very excited about the implementation of middle schools.

> There is much anxiety because people are uncertain how this philosophy will be operationalized and what their role will be. Teachers want answers 'now', and have trouble waiting for the process to provide these answers.

Building principals unanimously conveyed their personal reactions as positive regarding the change from junior highs to middle schools. They perceived, however, a somewhat less comfortable response from some of the teachers. One building principal commented:

> Teachers were initially angry but are beginning to understand the reason for the change. The fact is that change is hard for teachers and they are trying to figure out 'Where do I fit?'. A lot of secondary trained people are wondering if they should stay in middle school or go to the high school . . . . Among the group of administrators, there is no one opposed, but some are less sure than others. There is difficulty in maintaining the current day-to-day operations of the junior high while planning for implementation of the middle school.

Another principal stated:

> Initially, having secondary experience, I was not in favor of this change. After being exposed to this new concept, however, I have come to see benefits from this change. It will be nice to have an environment that is structured specifically for this age group as opposed to an environment copied from elsewhere. I'm excited now!

Other comments from principals are as follows:

> All administrators are behind this 100%. Some teachers remain skeptical because they don't understand or fear change.

> Administrators view this change in a positive light, but the teachers in my building are somewhat negative.

> I am looking forward to the change to middle school philosophy. Schools are traditional and haven't changed much in 50 years, but kids have. Middle school will better serve kids.

> Administrators are beginning to buy into this change and are becoming more comfortable. Teachers are becoming more comfortable as well.

Teachers perceived that all administrators were supportive of and comfortable with this change. They reported, however, a lack of certainty and comfort among teachers in general about the change to middle schools. Their comments included the following:

> I'm not sure about this change. I teach both eighth graders and ninth graders and I will have to choose whether I want to go with the ninth graders to the high school, or to remain in the middle school.
>
> There is a resentment of the time demands placed on teachers for the in-service sessions provided by the district.
>
> There are many questions in the minds of teachers: How will teaming be done? Who will we team with? What will be expected of me? Some teachers feel this change hanging over their heads.
>
> I am in favor of this change, and as I learn more about it, I feel that it makes sense.
>
> Administrators and teachers here are more accepting of this change than other schools.
>
> Administrators are in favor of this change. Some teachers are learning and excited about the middle school and some are negative . A lot of the ninth grade teachers want to go to the high school. A lot of the seventh and eighth grade teachers want to go to it (middle school), but some don't.
>
> I didn't buy into this at all when it was first proposed, but now I want to learn more about it. I still have many concerns . . . . Perhaps this change will make me a better teacher . . . . Most teachers in my building want to move to the high school. The administration has a lot of selling to do if they intend to convince these people.

The Relationship Between Beliefs and Behaviors

The relationship between beliefs and practices of administrators and teachers will become more evident as full implementation of the

middle school concept occurs. At this point in the change process, many of those involved are still struggling with the acceptance of a new belief system. The acceptance or rejection of this belief system will have a direct impact on educational practices. Therefore, the following narrative will deal primarily with the development of the belief system, and only minimally with practice.

All of the central office respondents personally support this change to middle school and verbalized advocacy of this particular philosophical perspective. Some of them were key players in the initiation process of this change. They each have a positive vision of what the future holds for middle schools in the district.

When asked for predictions of what middle schools will be like five years from now, district administrators provided the following descriptions:

> Putnam City will eventually open an additional middle school within five years. Middle schools will be mature within five years with all components (teaming, advisory, intramurals, flexible scheduling) in place.
>
> In addition to teaming, advisor-advisee, intramurals, and exploratory, there will be commonplace use of interdisciplinary units. This approach adds practicality. We will be integrating 'life' in to the school. We will be addressing world issues, thus an issues based curriculum.
>
> Exemplary middle schools will be in operation, and there will be several positive results: (1) There will be a better handle on discipline (tardies, confrontations in hallways, kids coming to class prepared) because teachers will be more involved with individual students and will be better able to address these problems as opposed to administrators dealing with these issues on a one-shot basis. With flexible scheduling, not all students will be in the hallways at one time, and will cut down on the opportunity for difficulties there. (2) Achievement is expected to remain high, with no massive change in scores. (3) More kids will stay in school. There will be lower

> numbers of students in alternative schools. (4) There will be improved climate which is as important as test scores.
>
> The middle school components will be in place, but overall the district will still be in transition to the middle school philosophy. There will be a 'weeding out' process of ideas that are not congruent with middle school philosophy.

These administrators noted the ambivalence displayed by junior high administrators and teachers as the shift in belief systems is encouraged. Each district administrator seemed to support the recurrent theme that elementary people are supportive of this change, while junior high educators are somewhat less supportive. The following statement best describes the perceived reaction and comfort levels of both building level principals and teachers:

> Overall, the junior high administrators and teachers don't want to change and there is much discomfort. There are required in-service sessions each month, and some improvement in attitude is seen at each session. Teachers seem most affected and upset. Administrators are looked to for leadership, and the district mandated this so they are compliant. Teachers are on a continuum regarding the change: some are rah, rah; some are willing to change, but somewhat hesitant; some are waiting and will change only when forced to do so; others refuse to go through this change.

All building level principals indicated that they currently see middle school implementation in a positive light. One administrator reported that he was initially not in favor of this change but, as he has learned about middle school, his thinking has changed. Reasons for the positive regard of the middle school concept revolve around providing a child-centered environment to serve students better. Predictions for the future of middle schools within this district were all favorable. Examples of these predictions are as follows:

> Putnam City has innovative leadership interested in reform, and is, therefore, in good shape. The district remained in a traditional mode for too long, and there is a lot of catching up to do. People are in place to make things happen and the district is open to proven practices.

Another administrator had this prediction:

> In five years all staff not in agreement with middle school philosophy will be gone from middle school facilities. There will be a refined Advisor-Advisee program. Curriculum will differ both in structure and in the classroom implementation . . . . This change is a developmental process and will require years to be fully implemented.
>
> The middle school philosophy has been thoroughly examined through readings, in-service sessions, and meetings . . . . The middle school concept will be fully implemented and is here to stay.

The reaction and comfort levels of both administrators and teachers as reported by building principals are somewhat unstable. The general consensus seems to be that change is somewhat difficult for all parties involved, and that as time passes there is a greater sense of acceptance of this change. Among the principals, the perception is that there is no one opposed, but there are varying degrees of acceptance from individual to individual. Principals perceive that teachers remain, to a large degree, skeptical. This skepticism is attributed to a lack of understanding and a fear of change.

> Teachers felt threatened, but are beginning to come around . . . The fact is that change is very hard for teachers and they are trying to figure out, 'Where do I fit?'. A lot of secondary trained people are wondering if they should stay in middle school or go to the high school . . . There is difficulty (for both teachers and administrators) in maintaining the current day-to-day operations of the junior high while planning for implementation of the middle school.

It appears that all involved in this change have experienced ambivalence, but that progress is being made as each begins to feel more comfortable.

While looking for relationships between beliefs and practices from the teacher perspective, it became obvious that the same themes or patterns of thinking emerged with this group of teachers as with other groups interviewed. The major difference seemed to be that the teachers' descriptions of the discomfort experienced in connection with this change by both themselves and their colleagues was more pronounced.

While some of the teachers interviewed expressed a positive outlook regarding the middle school model, others were much more guarded or ambivalent in their response. One teacher expressed the attitude that while trying to remain open to new ideas, there were still major concerns with this philosophy. While willing to support the decision to change to middle schools, this teacher is unsure at this point as to how to operationalize this change. Another teacher described feelings of being forced to stay in middle school with a new philosophical stance, or go to the high school; neither of which seemed to be totally viable choices for this particular teacher.

In addition, teacher responses reflect less certainty regarding the future of the middle school. One teacher stated:

> I don't know what the outcome of this change will be. Maybe it will be like other educational changes that swing to the extreme and in time will be abandoned.

Another teacher commented:

> I am afraid that without appropriate training, schools will change to the middle school concept,

> and then revert. A focused administration will keep this endeavor on track. I hope that in five years there will be good, child-oriented, collaborative middle schools with advisor-advisee programs.

Further teacher comments include another perspective:

"Middle schools are here to stay."

All teachers reported that administrators, both central office and building principals, are totally supportive of and comfortable with this change. However, the teachers reported that their colleagues were experiencing a great amount of discomfort with this change. Teachers are reportedly resentful of the time demands of in-service sessions provided by the district. Others are concerned about content and wonder, "How will I cover what I need to?" Still others interpret the act of change as a reflection on past performance and feel since they are being asked to change, that must mean that they have done a less than desirable job in the past. There are many unanswered questions hanging over the heads of teachers regarding this change which creates a certain level of anxiety.

In summary, the initiation of the change from the junior high to the middle school concept in the Putnam City School District has provided the research data for this study. The description of the historical development and the socio-political climate of the district has been provided as well as the data from the interviews. The presentation of the data collected through the interviews centered around four major themes that emerged throughout the interview process with administrators and teachers. These themes

were: (1) the socio-political/historical context for this particular change, (2) ideas regarding the nature of middle school philosophy, (3) the meaning of change for the individuals involved as well as the collective meaning of change, and (4) the relationship between changes in beliefs or understanding.

The implications of these themes will be discussed in Chapter V. In addition, Chapter V will include an interpretation of the findings according to Fullan's Change Theory, and concluding remarks will once again focus on change and restructuring.

CHAPTER V

RESEARCH COMMENTARY

Hermeneutic inquiry led to the collection of information through interviews, observations, documents, and oral histories regarding the change from junior highs to middle schools in the Putnam City School District. The inquiry suggests the great need to understand the complex dynamics of the process of educational change. A previously quoted statement bears repeating at this point:

> There can be no one recipe for change, because unlike ingredients for a cake, people are not standard to begin with, and the damned thing is that they change as you work with them in response to their experiences and their perceptions . . . The administrator who tries to deal with innovations one at a time will soon despair or be victimized. The one who works over a five- or six-year period to develop the district's and schools' core capacity to process the demands of change, whether they arise internally or externally to the district, *may find change easier as time goes by* (Fullan, 1991, 214).

The interviews suggest that people are not standard to begin with and that they change personally and idiosyncratically as they experience change in accord with their experiences and their perceptions.

The goals of this chapter are threefold:

1. To examine the change from the junior high to the middle school

2. To interpret the findings according to Fullan's change theory

3. To attempt to create meaning through the examination of the congruency between Fullan's model and the bureaucratic educational setting within which the changes are generally attempted

The first and second goals will be pursued simultaneously.

The Socio-Political Context for Change

The history of the Putnam City Schools evokes a sense that the participants and individuals involved in this school district have a deep sense of pride and pursue excellence. The district has sustained tremendous growth over a period of approximately eighty years, with a great influx of students during the late 1960's and early 1970's. This was perhaps due in part to the desegregation activities of the nearby urban district which caused a number of patrons to move to the neighboring suburban district. It would seem that in order to do this, these individuals would have to have had adequate financial resources. This could have had an effect on the makeup of the student population of the district. If the district has had predominantly middle class patrons for a number of years, this would greatly affect the underlying values held by the community and the district itself.

The history of the district would also indicate the development of a fairly traditional environment. One administrator stated that there was no need to jump into change, but rather see if it, in fact, was worthy of implementation before action was taken. The gender and ethnicity of the group central office administrators provide another

slight indication of a traditional environment, with only one female and no minorities.

The change in the Putnam City School District from the junior high to the middle school was initiated by central office administrators and implementation has proceeded in a top-down fashion. School board members had considerable input into this decisionmaking process. The implementation of middle schools is being made against the backdrop of a public school system where, like all public school systems, there is a demand for accountability, the demand for increased testing as documentation of learning, and the application of the components designed to produce an effective school. These demands are in no way reflective of the quality of this particular district, but rather a reflection of the demands and expectations of public schools in general.

Administrators have planned well and worked towards implementation consistently and diligently. The motivation for the implementation of the middle school concept is the apparent desire to provide an appropriate environment for the early adolescent. Patrons, as well as teachers and administrators, are being asked to be supportive of a new concept, for them, and every attempt has been made through in-service sessions, professional development opportunities, and informational public forums to create an awareness among individuals of middle school philosophy and implementation. Administrators are all "team players" and verbalize support of this change. All of these factors are part of the socio-political arena

and, according to Fullan, they are important variables in the change process.

The Knowledge Base of Middle School Philosophy

One of the major components of middle schools is the interdisciplinary team. As previously cited, the team has been heralded as the best way to bridge the gap between the self-contained organization of the elementary and the departmentalized classrooms of the high school (Erb, 1987). It is evident that the administrators and teachers interviewed recognize teaming as one of the most significant middle school components. However, while virtually all respondents mentioned the importance of teaming, some of their perceptions of the inherent advantages of this approach were slightly limited.

This idea was best exemplified by the statement, "Middle school will enhance coordination between academic areas and kids will benefit from this interdisciplinary approach. Teachers will interrelate subject matter." While this statement is true regarding the potential of teaming, the focus is still on the academics. This lack of depth of understanding may be a result of the fact that teaming has yet to be operationalized within the junior high setting and educators have little direct experience with this practice. Another teacher pointed out that the significant differences between the junior high and the middle school were teaming and flexible scheduling. There was a concern, however, about the "watering

down" of the curriculum and expectations. Once again, the emphasis of concern seems to be on the academics, with less concern regarding the affective and social development of the early adolescent.

The clarity of focus regarding the developmental needs of the early adolescent upon which this philosophical stance is based was somewhat lacking. While one principal stated that "middle schools will provide a child-centered environment with a focus on what's best for the student", there seemed to be confusion on the parts of some others regarding developmental characteristics. One such reference to developmental needs included, "This aged child is unorganized and it is the teacher's challenge to organize the student's learning". While the teaching of organizational skills would seem a worthwhile endeavor for the middle school teacher, one wonders if this characteristic was generalized to the entire early adolescent population based upon inappropriate expectations for the middle school student's ability to organize. That is not to say that it is inappropriate to expect the middle school student to continuously refine organizational skills, but rather that the junior high environment relies heavily upon individual responsibility and organization which is just not developmentally appropriate for the vast majority of the early adolescent population.

Another teacher focused on the lack of notetaking and study skills when questioned about the developmental needs of the learner. While many early adolescents may not have acquired these particular skills, the literature would not support that they are necessarily related to the developmental needs of the early adolescent learner.

There were many other respondents who seemed to have a clear vision of the developmental stages of the typical 10-14 year old. Social needs were recognized as primary by more than one participant, while the uniqueness of this student was recognized by a majority. The advisor-advisee program was cited by a number of participants as addressing the social/emotional needs of the early adolescent.

The Meaning of Change

The meaning of this change from junior high to middle school concept has multiple realities for the individuals involved. Reactions on the part of the people involved varied from enthusiastic to ambivalent to unfavorable. These reactions were based upon the meaning attached to this change and there began to be emergent patterns of thought among various groups as they grappled to articulate the meaning of the change from their respective viewpoints.

Generally speaking, central office administrators viewed this change a bit differently than did building level principals, and teachers articulated feelings revealing the greatest uncertainty. According to Fullan, (1991, 198), for multiple-school innovations, district staff must lead a process that

1. tests out the need and priority of the change;

2. determines the potential appropriateness of the particular innovation for addressing the need;

3. clarifies, supports, and insists on the role of principals and other administrators as central to implementation;

4. ensures that direct implementation support is provided in the form of available quality materials, in-service training, one-to-one technical help, and opportunity for peer interaction;

5. allows for certain redefinition and adaptation of the innovation;

6. communicates with and maintains the support of parents and the school board;

7. sets up an information-gathering system to monitor and correct implementation problems; and

8. has a realistic time perspective.

Evidence of this process as the district moves from junior highs to middle schools included the informational meetings and public forums held for patrons prior to the decision to implement middle schools. The monthly in-service sessions for teachers and parents regarding the characteristics of the middle school student and exemplary middle school programs have also been an integral component of the process. The timeline for implementation allowed approximately two years and five months from the time the decision was made to the implementation of the philosophy. Central administrators have made every attempt to plan for, cope with, and manage this change.

Central administrators are key players in the initiation, implementation and eventual success or failure of educational change (Fullan, 1991).

> The chief executive officer and other key central administrators set the conditions for implementation to the extent that they show specific forms of support and active knowledge and understanding of the realities of attempting to put a change into practice. To state it more forcefully, district administrators affect the quality of

> implementation to the extent that they understand and help to manage sets of factors and processes (Fullan, 1991, 75).

Central office administrators who are responsible for providing staff development activities for other administrators and teachers regarding middle schools, focused in conversation on why they are involved in this change with their secondary priority being attention to the procedural details of implementation. The focal point of many of their responses was the provision of a child-centered environment for the early adolescent, based on clearly articulated developmental needs of this aged student. They consistently attempted to communicate a clearly stated vision.

While these individuals vary regarding the meaning that is attached to this philosophical concept, they are, as a group, positively embracing this change. Many of these administrators were key figures in the initiation of this change, and they have had more time to reflect, consider, and internalize this change in belief system. Research shows that the support of central office administrators is critical for change in district practice (Fullan, 1991). It appears that this critical component regarding change is in place.

It would seem that perhaps the group of central office administrators also may have greater flexibility in advocating a change in culture as a result of being farther removed from the point of implementation. While the success or failure of this change is ultimately their responsibility, they will not be the ones directly responsible for the change in culture between student and teacher

within the individual classroom. In general, this group of administrators seemed to exhibit the least discomfort regarding this educational change.

Building level principals appeared to be somewhat less certain regarding the nature and outcome of this change. However, both central administrators and site administrators communicated the feeling that they were attempting to present a united front regarding this change even though the personal meaning of the change varied from individual to individual. One sensed a true attempt at cohesiveness on the part of all administrators.

The responses of building principals focused more on programs and activities with lesser emphasis on a child-centered environment or other philosophical statements. The clarity of focus regarding the developmental needs of the early adolescent, upon which this philosophy is based, was lacking when compared to the understandings verbalized by the central office administrators. This might be supported by the fact that research shows that the principal strongly influences the likelihood of change, but most principals do not play change leadership roles (Fullan, 1991). Their main actions serve to legitimate whether a change is to be taken seriously and to support teachers as the move is made towards implementation (Fullan, 1991). The concerns of the principals that emerged through the interviews seemed to focus on the implementation of the components of the middle school model. This would indicate that perhaps principals are feeling pressured by the complex logistics and the multiple small decisions required to put all the designated parts of the model in

place. Managing change is a complex affair for a principal and, as one principal pointed out, there is great difficulty in maintaining the day-to-day operations of the junior high while planning for the implementation of the middle school.

There was a much lesser feeling of consensus among the teacher respondents, and at times it was evident that this change evoked major discomfort among their ranks. The majority of their responses focused on the academics as opposed to the statements by central administrators who viewed teaming as facilitating the development not only in intellectual areas, but also in the social and affective areas. Predictions for the future of middle schools within the district were not as positive from the teachers' perspectives. Responses were unlike administrative responses in that they lacked a clear vision of the implementation of middle schools. As a group, teachers seemed to have many more questions than answers, which is somewhat typical.

> Teachers have to have some understanding of the *operational meaning* of the change before they can make a judgment about it. To repeat . . . clear specification of an innovation at the outset does not seem to resolve the problem. Clarification is a process. Full understanding can come only after some experience with the change (Fullan, 1991, 128).

This would explain the rationale for the data revealing more questions than answers regarding the change; teachers have received clear specification of the innovation at this point, but have had limited operational experience. The clarification process is interactive and ongoing. Teachers have not yet had the opportunity for adequate experience with the change.

The Relationship Between Beliefs and Practices

As previously stated, at this point in the change process, many of those involved are still struggling with the acceptance of a new belief system. Fullan states that the working out of new behaviors may very well be an interactive process during implementation when individuals act on a certain belief, evaluate the action, and refine the belief. If this is so, the individuals interviewed have not as yet had the opportunity to engage fully in this interactive process, thus a clear relationship between beliefs and behaviors has not yet been established.

The issue which seems to be primary for the teachers is the concern with the curriculum or content. The shift from viewing the educational setting as content-centered, as a mini-high school, to child-centered has been made in varying degrees by individual teachers. The focus of the teachers seemed to be limited in scope. As a group, teachers verbalized the importance of teaming to the middle school concept. However, the observation was made that "teachers have no real knowledge of this, and much more time is needed to learn about it." It would seem that individuals can verbalize adequately the beliefs regarding middle school philosophy, but internalizing and operationalizing those beliefs are still causing a great deal of ambivalence.

Generally speaking, at this point in time, central office administrators as well as building level principals report that they fully embrace a new value system, while classroom teachers express

the most ambivalence about the internalization of this new perspective on the education of the early adolescent. However, it is interesting to note that, while all administrators profess complete support of middle school philosophy, it is not necessarily the perception of teachers that administrators are one hundred percent supportive; nor do central office administrators perceive that all of the building level principals are at the same degree of acceptance of this philosophical stance.

Generally, the challenge to the status quo (junior highs) has caused anxiety, uncertainty, and discomfort among the participants of this innovation within this district. "Changes in beliefs are difficult: they challenge core values held by individuals regarding the purposes of education; moreover, beliefs are often not explicit, discussed, or understood, but rather are buried at the level of unstated assumptions" (Fullan, 1991, 42). Real change involves loss, anxiety, and struggle, and ambivalence characterizes the transition (Fullan, 1991). These attitudes are evident throughout the data presented in this study.

Recommendations for Further Study

Due to the position of the district along the continuum from initiation towards implementation, it was not possible to address fully the research question regarding the nature of the relationship between changes in behavior and changes in beliefs and understanding. Fullan (1991) proposes that before change can be judged as a success or a failure by the individuals involved, there must be interaction

between specifications of the innovation and operational experiences. Participants in this particular change from junior highs to middle schools will gain many operational experiences as time passes. Since the accomplishment of major institutional change may take from five to ten years, it would seem natural to follow this study with additional inquiry as implementation has occurred. The focus of additional inquiry would be on the nature of the relationship between changes in behavior or practices and changes in beliefs and understanding. In addition, one might be in the position to interpret whether this innovation has been operationalized as a first-order or a second-order change.

Commentary

This study has attempted to describe aspects of the change from the junior high model to the middle school model in a particular school district as a subjective, multifaceted reality. This commentary is my personal interpretation as a result of hermeneutic inquiry into the nature of change through the specific example cited in this study. If the reader accepts this example of change as consisting of subjective, multiple realities, then the question arises, "Why do we (on the macro level) continue to deal with change in a top-down, linear, objective manner?" The meaning that emerges as one reflects on this issue comes from the recognition of the fact that there is a lack of congruency nationwide between the bureaucratic educational system and the nature of change as described

in this study. Smith (1991, 189) stated,

> . . . the hermeneutic imagination works from a commitment to generativity and rejuvenation and to the question of how we can go on together in the midst of constraints and difficulties that constantly threaten to foreclose on the future. The aim of interpretation, it could be said, is not just another interpretation but human freedom, which finds its light, identity, and dignity in those few brief moments when one's lived burdens can be shown to have their source in too limited a view of things.

The view of change allowed by a linear, top-down system is too limited a view of things as it assumes the existence of one objective reality. The system must be redesigned to recognize the multiple realities of the change phenomenon in particular, as well as all phenomena in general. This restructuring must allow for an emergent system which has fluid parameters rather than rigid, clearly defined boundaries. The system must have the capacity to interact with the environment in appropriate ways, because the reality of the system for this researcher lies in the subjective realities of the participants. The following issues must be considered in any attempt to create a new system.

Lack of Time. The limited resource of time must be addressed in the creation of a new system. Time is a resource which has not been used to it's fullest potential in the sense that educators are not given time for professional development. Changes of the magnitude presented in this study demand that time be given for dialogue among professional colleagues for the development for new beliefs and values. It requires time to consider reflectively the interactive learning process. Time is required to generate new thoughts and approaches regarding the construction of knowledge.

The routine approach to professional staff development is through the in-service session which commonly represents the view of professional knowledge as the dispensation of a hard, objective reality. If this knowledge is disseminated to educators, then the assumption is that professional development has occurred. True professional development requires time to think and discuss collaboratively, exploring new ideas and perceptions as opposed to unquestioningly perpetuating the old ones.

Time is also a required resource for the development of leadership. Leadership is not limited to, nor does it always include, administrators, but can emerge from teachers or students. Teachers have limited opportunities for leadership among other teachers, because of the limited contact that they have with each other. The major portion of the day is spent with students, and teachers can often feel isolated from colleagues. Time to engage in all of the aforementioned activities must intentionally and purposefully be built into the new educational system.

State Participation. Because education is traditionally a function of the state, state mandates have so deeply etched the current system into our society that it seems almost impossible to facilitate reform. Once again, accountability measures and certification requirements are well-grounded in an objective reality so that chances for restructuring the system to include multiple realities seem slim at best.

Therefore, it seems reasonable that the individual school should be the unit of change. This does mean total deregulation, but rather

support should come from the state and the central office at the periphery, with the individual school at the center of the change. Rather than mandating parent and community input into our schools as is done by state law, involvement could be invited through the local educational unit. The local unit is more capable of recognizing and responding to multiple realities of students, teachers, and patrons than is either the system or the state department. Student input many times is nonexistent in the improvement process. If the local unit were the center of focus, it would allow more responsiveness to students, as well as others.

University Collaboration with Districts. It seems that the university is an under-utilized resource regarding pre-service teacher education as well as regarding other educational issues. Once again, there must be the time set aside for dialogue and interaction between the university and the public schools. This will occur only if the benefit of this action is recognized and intentional plans are developed.

Recruitment of Personnel. If realities lie within each person, then it is necessary to encourage the recruitment of visionary personnel whose leadership skills go beyond management of the classroom or the building. It is imperative that we employ individuals who recognize multi-faceted aspects to problems and their solutions. Inherent in this recommendation is the assumption that those whose responsibility it is to hire, have an inkling of what the global perspective of multiple realities might be about.

While these issues are not intended to be an exhaustive list of considerations for the restructuring of our educational system, they are major recommendations. The interrelatedness of these concerns becomes apparent as one reflectively considers them. These global issues are interrelated in much the same way that change is described in the following statement by Fullan:

> First, change is multidimensional and can vary accordingly within the same person as well as within groups. Second, there are some deep changes at stake, once we realize that people's basic conceptions of education and skills are involved-that is, their occupational identity, their sense of competence, and their self-concept. The need and difficulty for individuals to develop a sense of meaning about change is manifest. Third, compounding the second lesson is the fact that change consists of a sophisticated and none-too-clear *dynamic interrelationship* of the three dimensions of change. Beliefs guide and are informed by teaching strategies and activities; the effective use of materials depends on their articulation with beliefs and teaching approaches and so on. Many innovations entail changes in some aspects of educational beliefs, teaching behavior, use of materials, and more. Whether or not people develop meaning in relation to all three aspects is fundamentally the problem (Fullan, 1991, 41).

It is apparent that this change experience is very personal and subjective, without regard for timelines and system mandates. The following statement aptly describes the nature of hermeneutic inquiry, the nature of restructuring, and the nature of change:

> . . . another aspect of conversation is that it is never finished. As in good improvisational jazz, one thing leads to another, but success has one foundational, definitional requirement which is that group members be committed to staying 'with' each other, constantly listening to subtle nuances of tempo and melody, with one person never stealing the show for the entire session (Smith, 1991, 198).

May we never assume that this educational conversation is finished.

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VITA

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Thesis: A STUDY OF CHANGE: A SCHOOL DISTRICT'S TRANSITION FROM JUNIOR HIGHS TO MIDDLE SCHOOLS

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Title of Study: A STUDY OF CHANGE: A DISTRICT'S TRANSITION FROM JUNIOR HIGHS TO MIDDLE SCHOOLS

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Major Field: Educational Administration

Scope of Study: This study is a hermeneutic inquiry into the nature of the change process as a particular school district moved from the junior high concept towards implementation of middle school philosophy. The purpose of the study is to examine the congruencies or incongruencies of the change phenomenon and the bureaucratic educational setting within which changes in general are attempted through the examination of this particular change. The nature of the inquiry provided a description of the multi-faceted meaning of change as well as the socio-political/historical context for change. The theoretical framework for this study rested on the espoused change theory of Michael Fullan which states that meaningful change is an interface between individual meaning and collective meaning. Data was collected through interviews with central office personnel, building level principals, and teachers. Additional data included conversations, observations, and the examination of specific district documents. Interpretation occurred as themes began to emerge from the data.

Conclusions: The data collected centered around four major themes which emerged: 1) the socio-political/historical context for this particular change, 2) ideas regarding the nature of middle school philosophy, 3) the meaning of change for the individuals involved as well as the collective meaning of change, and 4) the relationship between changes in beliefs or understanding and practice. The data collected documented the existence of the multiple realities of the individuals involved, as well as presented examples of the task involved as the attempt was made to construct a collective meaning regarding middle school philosophy and implementation. Further, the data indicated that the change experience was characterized by ambivalence and uncertainty. Central office administrators seemed to exhibit the least discomfort with this change, while building level principals appeared to be less certain regarding the nature and outcome of this change. Teachers displayed less consensus among themselves and more discomfort than administrators regarding this change.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL