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A study of the Shamong Township School District's Middle School Program at the Indian Mills Memorial School

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A Study of the Shamong Township School District's

Middle School Program at the Indian

Mills Memorial School

by
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A Master's Thesis

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Professor

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Abstract

Caroline Elizabeth Kerfoot
A Study of a Middle School Program of the
Indian Mills Memorial School, Shamong
Township, New Jersey
May, 1999
Dr. Theodore Johnson
Educational Administration

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the present middle school program at the Indian Mills Memorial School, and create a new program. The program was based on research that enumerated the best practices in exemplary middle schools and the needs and characteristics of young adolescents.

The sample was the 51 teachers of the IMMS, five administrators, parents, and one class each from fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grades.

The survey used was Middle Grades Assessment Program from the Center for Early Adolescence, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. There were different surveys for students, parents, teachers, and administrators. The participants were to mark their level of agreement with statements concerning our present program. The statements correlated to the best practices for middle school students. The data was then converted into percentages that revealed how satisfied different groups were with the present program.

Conclusions

Results based on the survey revealed areas of weakness and areas of strengths existing in the present middle school program when compared to the new proposal. Recommendations based on the results included more site based management, greater participation of teachers in decision-making, an increase in higher-level thinking skills, and a stronger focus on improving curriculum.

Mini-Abstract

Caroline Elizabeth Kerfoot
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The purpose of this study was to research best practices in effective middle school

programs, and to create a program for the Indian Mills Memorial School.

This study found that adolescents need hands-on activities and cooperative work.

Curriculum should be interdisciplinary with authentic learning. Assessment should be on

going and authentic.

Acknowledgments

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Chapter 1

Introduction: Focus of the study

Shamong Township Schools are in a unique position. The Indian Mills School (IMS) houses grades kindergarten through third. Indian Mills Memorial School (IMMS) houses grades four through eight. The introduction of grade four into IMMS was a hindrance to the development of a true middle school. The district now plans to study the characteristics of effective middle schools. This study will result in the creating of a school within a school. Grades five through eight will be designated the middle school, while grade four will function independently. The report will eventuate in recommendations to the principal setting out standards and programs that are desirable for grades five, six, seven, and eight.

A committee consisting of teachers, the school nurse, the counselor, a member of the child study team, and the intern was set up last year. The committee met several times. Research materials were distributed to be read by committee members. The only decision finalized was the use of a daily planner for each child in the district. The purpose for the committee this year is to finalize a plan detailing desirable characteristics for the Shamong Township Middle School.

This study is of interest to the students, parents, teachers, and administrators of the Shamong Township School District. The district established this committee to evaluate the present program and outline changes necessary to ensure the needs of middle school students are met. The intern will present research that proves the needs and characteristics of middle school students are unique. The introduction of grade four into the school should not preclude the meeting of those unique needs.

Purpose of the study

The intern wants to determine effective practices of a middle school through research on characteristics and needs of young adolescents.

The purpose of this study is to discover the practices that would best meet the needs of the middle school aged children of the Indian Mills Memorial School in the Shamong Township School District using a school-based action research design. The study will result in a report used to guide the administration in evaluating and changing Indian Mills Memorial School's present program.

Definitions

1. A middle school program means providing for teachers and students of the middle school the best practices that will take into account the unique needs of the middle school student providing an atmosphere that allows them to grow to their maximum potential.

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2. <u>Adolescence</u> is the period from ages ten to fifteen that mark the beginning and end of a set of physical, socioemotional, and cognitive changes.

3. <u>Adolescent</u> is the child who is in the adolescence period of life.

4. <u>Puberty</u> is the stage of life when humans acquire the ability to reproduce.

5. <u>Concrete operational thought</u> is a stage of learning development where children need to think logically about specific objects and experiences, require manipulatives to learn better, and perform better with visual clues than verbal ones.

6. In <u>formal operational thought</u> children are more adept at dealing with abstractions, forming hypotheses, and following chains of reasoning.

7. <u>Socioemotional growth</u> of an adolescent is a combination of his social and emotional growth. This can be affected greatly by the rate of physical maturation of an adolescent.

Limitations of the study

The study will be limited to the middle school program for grades five, six, seven, and eight of the Indian Mills Memorial School of the Shamong Township School District.

The study is limited by size, as all teachers cannot serve on the committee. All committee members volunteered to serve. The committee is composed of the following staff of the Indian Mills Memorial School: twelve teachers, the nurse, the counselor, the learning disabilities specialist, and the intern.

Setting of the study

Shamong Township is located within the Pinelands Preservation area and development is highly regulated. The community's population has grown slightly, but the businesses have not. Therefore, there has been an increase in property taxes to support the school system. At present, there is no local purpose tax for the community.

Housing development is expected to continue for those areas already designated on the Master Plan. There is a need to attract some business and industry to broaden the tax base and give some relief to the homeowners. Shamong is a stable bedroom community and a desired place to reside.

Shamong Township School District consists of two school buildings, Indian Mills School and Indian Mills Memorial School. Indian Mills houses grades Pre-Kindergarten through third, while Indian Mills Memorial houses grades four through eight.

Shamong Township School District provides a full range of educational services appropriate to grade levels Pre-Kindergarten through eighth grades. These include regular education as well as special education for handicapped youngsters. The following details the changes in student enrollment over the last seven years.

Year	Student Enrollment	Change
• 1997-98	964	+2.1%
• 1996-97	945	-1.7%
• 1995-96	961	+3.3%

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- 1994-95   930   +5.9%

- 1993-94   878   -1.3%

- 1992-93   887   +1.6

- 1991-92   873   -

Funding for the district is provided by three sources: Local sources - 46.52%, State sources - 52.33%, and Federal sources - 1.15%.

Significance of the study

This is an important study because it will make a contribution to the concerns of parents and teachers of middle school students, the middle school students, the administration, and the Board of Education of the Shamong Township School District. During the last ten years, much research has been conducted in the area of characteristics of adolescents and effective programs for teaching them.

Organization of the study

The remaining chapters of the paper will be organized in the following manner.

- Chapter 2 will present research on the topics of characteristics and needs of adolescents and effective middle school programs.

- Chapter 3 is the design of the study. Areas included are a description of the research design, a description of the development and design of the research instruments used, a description of the sample and sampling techniques used, a

description of the data collection approach, and a description of the data

analysis plan.

- The research findings are presented in Chapter 4. Two major questions are

   answered in this section: "What information was found?" and "What did it

   mean?"

- Chapter 5 describes the study's major conclusions and their implications. The

   conclusions and implications of the intern's leadership skills are also

   highlighted.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

History of Young Adolescents

Until the mid to late 1800s in Europe and the United States, people did not

generally recognize adolescence as a separate stage of life. The reason behind this was

most children did not go to school; they worked as soon as they were physically able.

Since people died in their twenties and thirties, marriages at age ten, twelve, or fourteen

were not uncommon (Scales, 1996).

During the last half of the nineteenth century a distinct developmental stage

between childhood and adulthood was recognized. The reasons for this were four-fold;

economists were reporting a connection between prolonged schooling and higher earnings;

schools were beginning to be organized by age groups; the field of pediatrics

focused attention on children's health; and the field of psychology began to influence

understanding of human development (Scales, 1996).

Psychologist G. Stanley Hall, often called the "father of adolescence," labeled

adolescence as a period of turbulence(Scales, 1996). Scales points to Hall's writing of the

"storm and stress" characteristics of "normal" development during the teenage years.

Though Hall's theories were later disproved, his writings and data suggesting a positive

value for more years in school helped separate adolescence from adulthood both in concept and in practice (Kett, 1993).

In 1997, Joan Lipsitz (Scales, 1996) concluded that early adolescence was the most "severely neglected" stage of adolescence, being "hardly studied and ....underserved." These conclusions led her to found the Center for Early Adolescence at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill to heighten national awareness among educators, youth workers, and others about the issues affecting young adolescents in their families, schools, and communities (Scales). Lipsitz's work documented the limited research, attention, and advocacy focused on young adolescents (Lounsbury). Since that time, there has been an explosion of research about adolescence.

Growing Up Forgotten, the landmark study by Joan Lipsitz, was published in 1977. The study was instrumental in bringing recognition to early adolescence as a distinct stage of human development (Lounsbury). Prior to Lipsitz's study, the beliefs generally held about early adolescence had been largely negative and were more myths than reality (Lounsbury).

Characteristics and Needs of Young Adolescence

Young adolescence is defined in the Search Institute's report, *Boxed in and Bored* (Scales, 1996, p. 6), as "... the period from ages ten to fifteen because those ages roughly mark the beginning and end of a set of physical, socioemotional, and cognitive changes." Scales states these ages are approximate, because the changes occur at different times among young people. It is important to define adolescence, for at any given time from

now to the early years of the twenty-first century, roughly one in twelve people in the United States will be a young adolescent (Scales).

Black (1995) believes that pubescence and puberty coincide with changes in the way youngsters think and perceive their world. Pubescence, according to Black, occurs two years before the onset of puberty. Puberty arrives at around 10 1/2 years for girls and 12 1/2 for boys. Puberty is the stage when boys and girls first acquire the ability to reproduce.

Scales (1996) states that girls generally grow up physically faster than boys. However, there are tremendous timing variations even amongst girls. Boys, in general, mature about two years later than girls. Lounsbury (1991) adds to this by stating:

> The dramatic physical changes do not occur at the same time or at the same rate. The fact that girls mature a year and a half to two years ahead of boys is widely recognized, but the tremendous variation in the rate and timing of the developmental processes of both boys and girls is not so well known. Some boys have achieved puberty before some girls have started. And what one child accomplishes in growth in 18 months may take up to three or more years in another. As a result, a seventh grade class is likely to include men, women, and children. It is virtually impossible for young adolescents to keep their chronological age in conformity with their social age, physical age, intellectual age, and/or social/sexual age.

Crockett, in his article "Creating Successful Schools For *All* Early Adolescent Learners," (1995, p.43) quotes Epstein.

As students develop, they become more diverse in their styles and rates of learning. As students change, their education and socializing environments need to change with them.

Susan Black, in her article "Caught in the Middle", reminds educators to keep the following developmental factors in mind when designing school programs for preteens and teens:

- *The young adolescents' self-consciousness about their changing bodies.* Because their bodies are maturing at different rates, irregular growth spurts are often accompanied by restlessness, listlessness, and ravenous appetites.

- *Their intellectual curiosity and developing thought processes.* Children at this age prefer active over passive learning. They relate to real-life situations that allow them to get involved, and they're starting to develop the ability to analyze complex thought processes.

- *The young adolescent's need for acceptance.* Young adolescents might be rebellious, confused, aggressive, argumentative, and fiercely loyal to their peer group, but they still need frequent affirmation of love from adults.

- *Adolescent mood swings.* Young adolescents can be optimistic and hopeful, but they're also erratic, restless, and highly sensitive to criticism.

- *The idealism of youth.* Middle schoolers confront big issues thoughtfully, with a strong sense of fairness. They will, at this age, ask large, ambiguous questions about the meaning of life.

According to McCown, Driscoll, and Roop (1996) another important developmental factor to keep in mind when planning is that middle-school students are, for the most part, in transition between what Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget called "concrete operational thought" and "formal operational thought." In the concrete stage, children need to think logically about specific objects and experiences, require manipulatives to learn better, and perform better with visual clues than verbal ones. Children who have moved to the formal stage are more adept at dealing with abstractions, forming hypotheses, and following chains of reasoning (McCown et al.).

Scales (1996, p. 15) begins his chapter on young adolescents' developmental characteristics stating:

> Young adolescents are experiencing a period of change more rapid than at any time other than infancy. The onset of puberty and related changes in young adolescents' physical, socioemotional, and cognitive development produce at times dramatic differences in how these young people feel, think, and act....Young adolescents are highly variable.

Given the uneven development of young adolescents, the adults who work with them need to posses understanding and flexibility (Scales, 1996). John Van Hoose and David Strahan, writers for the National Middle School Association, are quoted as saying "kids at this age all need security, support, and success (Black, 1995, p. 31). Black goes on to state schools that try to break the youngsters' spirit and force them to act older than their years do a terrible injustice to their natural development.

The National Middle School Association's (NASA) Research Summary #5, *Young Adolescents' Developmental Needs*, listed seven key developmental needs, stating the uniqueness of the phase of early adolescence stems from a variety of developmental needs, variations in the maturation rate, and complexity due to their simultaneous occurrence. They are:

- positive social interaction with adults and peers

- structure and clear limits

- physical activity

- creative expression

- competence and achievement

- meaningful participation in families, school and communities

- opportunities for self-definition

NASA quotes Stevenson in his article *Teaching Ten to Fourteen Year Olds* (1992), "Every child wants to believe in himself or herself as a successful person; every youngster wants to be liked and respected; every youngster wants physical exercises and freedom to move; and youngsters want life to be just." NASA strongly states that not meeting these needs often results in alienation from school, loss of general self-esteem and a sense of belonging, and destructive methods of coping, including delinquency and drugs.

Characteristics of Successful Middle Schools

Scales (1996) states that when junior high schools emerged, the intent of the earliest pioneers was to create a school that responded to the developmental realities of

young adolescents. Contrary to that philosophy, the junior highs familiar to most Americans remained a miniature version of the high school.

In 1989, the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development published *Turning Points: Preparing America's Youth for the 21st Century*. The report identified a developmental mismatch between what young adolescents need and what most schools provide. This has led to schools reorganizing. But, as many as one-third to one-half of middle schools have not changed much from the junior highs of the 1960s and 1970s. This has resulted in too many ten- to fifteen- year-olds who are neither academically nor socially prepared to achieve at high levels in school and ready to lead healthy lifestyles (Scales, 1996).

Turning Points endorsed eight recommendations for successful middle schools.

- Create small communities for learning where stable, close, mutually respectful relationships with adults and peers are considered fundamental for intellectual development and personal growth.

- Teach a core academic program that results in students who are literate, including the sciences, and who know how to think critically, lead a healthy life, behave ethically, and assume the responsibilities of citizenship in a pluralistic society. Youth service to promote values for citizenship is an essential part of the core academic program.

- Ensure success for all students through elimination of tracking and promotion of cooperative learning, flexibility in arranging instructional time, and adequate resources (time, space, equipment and materials) for teachers.

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- Empower teachers and administrators to make decisions about the experiences of middle grade students through creative control over the instructional program linked to greater responsibilities for students' performance, governance committees that assist the principal in designing and coordinating school-wide programs, and autonomy and leadership with sub-schools or houses to create environments tailored to enhance the intellectual and emotional development of all youth.

- Staff middle schools with teachers who are expert at teaching young adolescents and who have been specifically prepared for assignment to the middle grades.

- Improve academic performance through fostering the health and fitness of young adolescents, by providing a health coordinator in every middle school, access to health care and counseling services, and a health-promoting school environment.

- Re-engage families in the education of young adolescents by giving families meaningful roles in school governance, communicating with families about the school program and student's progress, and offering families opportunities to support the learning process at home and at school.

- Connect schools with communities, which together share responsibility for each middle grade student's success, through identifying service opportunities in the community, establishing community resources to enrich the instructional program and opportunities for constructive after-school activities.

Based on a study by Search Institute of more than 250,000 sixth- through twelfth-graders in more than 460 urban, rural, and suburban U.S. communities, Scales (1996) has developed a framework of essential building blocks that youth need to become healthy, caring, and productive adults based on the work of (Benson (1996); Benson, Galbraith, and Espeland (1995); and Benson (1993). In this framework developed by Scales, external assets are the relationships and opportunities adults provide that help young people develop internal assets, the values and skills they will need to guide themselves for the rest of their lives (see Appendixes A and B for complete frameworks). Scales (1996) continues that in order to unleash the power of young adolescents to be active learners, school need to tap into young adolescents' potential excitement about learning, their sense of exploration and discovery, their new capacity to see the needs of others, and their desire to make a contribution to society. Schools who are successful, according to Scales, build on young adolescents assets in order to promote school success. Scales states that those young adolescents are more likely to succeed at school and thrive in other positive ways if they:

- are challenged and empowered to use their newly emerging cognitive skills to really think, and not just to parrot back facts.

- are exposed to thematic, team-taught interdisciplinary curricula that help them meaningfully connect content that has relevance in the real world beyond school.

- have families and teachers who set high expectations for achievement and personal behavior from them; have opportunities to serve and help others, offering their time and talents to make their communities better places in which to live.

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- go to schools that strengthen their motivation to learn, not for the end of getting good grades, but for the end of experiencing joy, growth in capacity, and increased understanding of their worlds through learning.

- live in communities where schools, families, and other community resources work together to unleash the power of young adolescent idealism and energy, through such efforts as providing after-school opportunities, programs and activities that help parents with raising their children, and explicit efforts to develop a common vision, language, and values about nurturing children and youth.

Williamson and Johnston, in their article *Through the Looking Glass* recommend the following changes be made to implement a true middle school program that meets the needs of its clients:

- develop effective learning communities around groups of students and teachers who work collaboratively to address the instructional and curricular program

- restructure adult-student relationships characterized by large amounts of time in the company of adults, without an intervening curriculum

- provide time as a resource which includes looking at alternative plans to block scheduling

- implement rigorous and authentic curriculum, instruction, and assessment that ensures that students are engaged in the production and use of knowledge, that production is for a specific and meaningful purpose, and that permits project-based learning accompanied by formal instruction as necessary.

- include parents as active partners based on mutual understanding, respect, support, compassion, and an unquestioned commitment to the welfare of each child in the school

- focus accountability and program evaluation to move away from norm referenced tests as the measure of their effectiveness and embrace increased accountability and commitment to routine program evaluation

Caskey with Johnston (1996) feel that schools are kid-friendly, have improved the quality of life through student advocacy and advisement programs, and are now giving young people the chance to explore and cultivate emerging talents in arts, athletics, and other fields. They feel, however, that the same advances have not been made in the middle level school curriculum. A middle school curriculum, according to Caskey and Johnston, is one that focuses on the highest levels of student academic achievement while attending to adolescents' social, emotional, and physiological needs. They advocate asking four essential questions, posed by Ralph Tyler in 1949, before planning an authentic curriculum (Caskey and Johnston). These four essential questions are:

1. What educational purposes should the school seek to attain?

2. What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes?

3. How can these educational experiences be effectively organized?

4. How can we determine whether these purposes are being attained?

Caskey and Johnston feel that Tyler's questions remain relevant and applicable for making decisions about curriculum today. He recognized the importance of meeting student needs and interests when designing curriculum and planning units of instruction.

Caskey and Johnston (1996, p. 14) also reported on the following ideas.

- D.N. Perkins - Thematic models that serve as a lens for student thinking and understanding. This integrative thinking should serve the goal of teaching thinking to engage students in thoughtful controversy, foster levels of abstraction in thinking, and give students a powerful strategy for inquiry, analysis and understanding.

- James Beane - His model advocates an integrated curriculum based on theories of learning and thinking and suggests that students be afforded opportunities to integrate their knowledge into schemes of meaning that are presented in unforgettable learning experiences.

Caskey and Johnston (1996) emphasize how an authentic curriculum meets the individual interests of students, motivates students to learn because what they are being taught satisfies their needs and interests, and expands the concept of inclusion to extend to all learners-learners who possess varied abilities, learning styles, and cultural differences.

Heidi Hayes Jacobs (1989), in her article on integrated unit of studies, developed a Concept Model that goes beyond interdisciplinary units and describes a systematic method to connect discipline perspectives and focus them on the investigation of a target theme, issue, or problem. Four major steps compose the concept model:

1. Identifying an organizing center that will be the focus for the study.

2. Brainstorming associations for each discipline that connect to the organizing center.

3. Composing a set of guiding or essential questions that will be used to direct the investigations of the organizing center.

4. Selecting and developing activities and assessments that students will use throughout the unit of study to guide them.

Jacobs (1989) further recommends using a wide range of authentic experiences and cautions against forced, superfluous, or artificially constructed connections among the disciplines.

Excellent middle level school articulate the purpose of high academic achievement in the mission, vision, and goal statements (Caskey and Johnston, 1996). The curricular agenda that best serves young adolescents in middle level schools is one that:

- Values the highest levels of academic achievement

- Conveys a message of quality and excellence

- Provides opportunities for success for all students

- Meets the varied needs and interest of diverse students

Responsive middle level schools embrace a range of organizational and learning models, monitor and adjust their programs, and comfortably challenge the orthodoxies of the middle level movement (Williamson and Johnston, 1996).

Six themes emerge from the examination of middle level practice and serve as the basis for a new look at middle level education. Each of the themes examines practices

widely embraced as characteristic of effective middle level schools (Williamson and Johnston, 1996).

1. From interdisciplinary teaming to learning communities

2. From adviser-advisee programs to restructured adult-student relationships

3. From block schedules to using time as a resource

4. From interdisciplinary units to rigorous and authentic curriculum, instruction, and assessment

5. From parent participation to parents as active partners

6. From testing to accountability and program evaluation

Middle level schools face a formidable task. They must meet the needs of a changing student population while attending to the historic mission of schools--to ensure student success. The challenge to all schools is to accept permission to examine every aspect of their program, to embrace those aspects of the middle level orthodoxy that serve their students, to reject and abandon those that don't work, and to be innovative and creative in the design of the programs(Williamson and Johnston, 1996).

Chapter 3

The Design of the Study

Description of the research design

The site of the study was the Indian Mills Memorial School (IMMS) in Shamong Township School District. A committee was formed with the intern placed in charge. The committee consisted of two fourth grade teachers, one fifth grade teacher, two sixth grade teachers, one seventh grade teacher, two eighth grade teachers, two special education teachers, one Spanish teacher, one physical education teacher, the school nurse, and the school counselor. All of these committee members were volunteers.

Development and design of the research instrument

The committee met in August to divide into subcommittees. The following areas were designated to be studied -- climate, instruction, structure, beyond the day, and beyond academics. The entire committee was given research to read before the subcommittees met. This research included a book, *Boxed in and Bored*, by the Search Institute, articles from professional magazines, articles downloaded from the website of the National Middle School Association, and the 1989 study by the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development entitled *Turning Points: Preparing America's Youth for the 21st Century*. After the research was read the committee met as a whole in September. Each subcommittee chose dates and locations for their meetings.

The intern then met and led each of these subcommittee meetings. At these meetings the participants discussed how we could improve our middle school based on the research read. Each subcommittee developed subtopics under their major heading. Under the subtopics specific recommendations were made answering the question "Based on research what are the best practices for middle school students of the Indian Mills Memorial School?" The subcommittees each met numerous times to discuss and refine their recommendations.

When all the subcommittees had completed their work, the full committee met again to begin the process of discussing each proposal for suggestions, improvements, and finally approval. At the conclusion of this series of meetings, all the subcommittees' reports were put together and handed to the principal as the Middle School Proposal for Indian Mills Memorial School.

The results of the research were developed into the following proposals and recommendations:

I. Climate

A. Extensive Co-curricular Program

    1. All intermural sports activities to be held four days a week, Monday through Thursday.

    2. Buses to be provided for transportation home two days a week when clubs meet.

3. Buses to be provided on major activity days, two or three times a year

B. Intermural and Intramural Athletics

    1. Intermural sports with no cuts, but all students must attend practices.

       Sports would include all sports teams now formed-girls: field hockey, lacrosse,

       softball, basketball; boys: basketball, baseball; both: soccer and track.

    2. Intramural sports that could include teachers and all grade levels in

       activities such as volleyball, basketball, Capture the Flag, touch football, relay

       races, exercising.

C. Clubs, Activities, Dances Socials

    1. Initiate more grade specific after-school activities (examples: sundae parties, line

       dancing) and continue to offer a full array of after school clubs for students 4-8

    2. Teachers would become "club advisor" (non-specific) and submit a summary of

       the offerings for the year.

    3. Hold adult classes in the afternoon or early evening with students as teachers-

       example-computer classes.

    4. Wellness groups for students and/or parents to meet three or four times a year

       on subjects such as age, sex, and eating disorders.

    5. Movie (video) days to be held immediately after school with popcorn supplied

       by school.

6. Survey to students for new ideas for activities such as exercise classes,

Yoga, Tai Chi, cooking, arts and crafts, dancing, photography.

D. Constructive Management of Student Behavior

1. Continue to emphasize teacher involvement in monitoring activities.

2. Continue to emphasize Codes of Conduct and Student Rights in all classrooms

and in all after school groups.

3. Involve parents and senior citizens from the community as instructors,

mentors, or to just take part.

4. Clear guidelines for behavior and expectations to be given to students before

each club or activity-example- a contract between teacher, student, and parent,

including an understanding that if students are to be picked up after the activity

or club, they will be picked up on time.

II. Instruction

A. Team Planning Time

1. Must include Basic Skills, Special Education, and special area teachers

2. Should not impact upon individual planning time

3. Will require more staff

4. Will require a different schedule

B. Music and Art Expansion

1. Music and art need to be expanded for all students - not limited to a half year

of each.

2. Eighth grade students have music

3. Students with a special interest in art or music should have additional time in exploratory to expand that interest

B. Gifted and Talented

1. Expand the number of students participating in the IMAGE program by grade level grouping

2. Enrichment teacher will keep the students for an entire marking period, every day, for a particular subject (i.e.: if a student is gifted in science, he goes to the IMAGE program during his science class for the whole marking period)

C. Exploratory Courses

1. Needs a rotation schedule to work properly

2. Needs more staff to work effectively

3. Special interests such as art, study skills, and music go to that exploratory class for the entire year

4. Other students would rotate between remaining courses offered by teachers who specialize in a specific area

5. Courses need to be subject related and meaningful

D. Staff Development

1. Professional courses in new teaching techniques held at IMMS for graduate credits

2. Inservices set up so teachers move from activity to activity

E. Frequent Feedback

      1. New interim procedure should address this area

      2. Electronic portfolio carried from year to year

      3. Select best work for Literature Magazine

III. Structure Committee

A. Flexible Scheduling

      1. Investigate flexible scheduling so class periods could be extended when

        necessary

      2.Teachers could work cooperatively to allow a colleague to extend a period

        when needed for the interdisciplinary projects

            a. eighth grade to try this the second half of the 1998-1999 school year or

            Sept. 1999-2000

B. Interdisciplinary Teaching Teams with Common Planning Time

      1. Explore restructuring schedule to include two preps a day (one prep time and

        one team planning time) for all subject area teachers

      2. Look at schedule in general to see if possible to give special area teachers a

        common planning time with classroom teachers

C. Learning Communities with Contiguous Classrooms and Unique Identities

      1. Each grade level in school is a learning community

      2. Classrooms are situated so they are contiguous

      3. Each grade level has activities that are unique to them

4. Continue to explore more activities across grade levels

D. Other

    1. To effectively implement a departmentalized fifth grade schedule an additional

       teacher should be added to create a fifth section

IV. Beyond the Day

A. Extensive Co-curricular Program

    1. All intermural sports activities to be held four days a week, Monday

       through Thursday.

    2. Buses to be provided for transportation home two days a week when clubs

       meet.

    3. Buses to be provided on major activity days, two or three times a year

B. Intermural and Intramural Athletics

    1. Intermural sports with no cuts, but all students must attend practices.

       Sports would include all sports teams now formed-girls: field hockey, lacrosse,

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    2. Intramural sports that could include teachers and all grade levels in

       activities such as volleyball, basketball, Capture the Flag, touch football,

       relay races, exercising.

C. Clubs, Activities, Dances Socials

    1. Initiate more grade specific after-school activities (examples: sundae parties, line

       dancing) and continue to offer a full array of after school clubs for students 4-8

2. Teachers would become "club advisor" (non-specific) and submit a summary of the offerings for the year.

3. Hold adult classes in the afternoon or early evening with students as teachers-example-computer classes.

4. Wellness groups for students and/or parents to meet three or four times a year on subjects such as age, sex, and eating disorders.

5. Movie (video) days to be held immediately after school with popcorn supplied by school.

6. Survey to students for new ideas for activities such as exercise classes, Yoga, Tai Chi, cooking, arts and crafts, dancing, photography.

D. Constructive Management of Student Behavior

4. Continue to emphasize teacher involvement in monitoring activities.

2. Continue to emphasize Codes of Conduct and Student Rights in all classrooms and in all after school groups.

5. Involve parents and senior citizens from the community as instructors, mentors, or to just take part.

4. Clear guidelines for behavior and expectations to be given to students before each club or activity-example- a contract between teacher, student, and parent, including an understanding that if students are to be picked up after the activity or club, they will be picked up on time.

V. Beyond Academics

A. Peer Leadership

    The training of the peer leaders will continue to be handled by the

    Guidance Counselor

B. Peer Counseling

    The training of the peer counselors will continue to be handled by the

    Guidance Counselor

C. Peer Tutoring

    1. The peer leaders will be trained to participate in tutoring

    2. Members of the National Junior Honor Society will participate in tutoring by

    request from teachers

    3. Teachers of sixth, seventh, and eighth grades may use students they feel are

    capable of tutoring when teachers in fourth and fifth grades request for tutors to

    be available during exploratory period.

D. Advisory Program

    1. Teachers are to be in the hallway and during class changes to interact with

    students.

    2. Exploratory classes will offer small group activities that will encourage

    closeness between teachers and students.

E. Coordinated Attention to "At-Risk" Students

    1. Another special education added so there is one per grade level.

2. At risk students are to excused from exploratory classes to be afforded time for extra help.

F. Clear Expectations and Rules

    1. Rules and regulations posted throughout the school and enforced consistently.

    2. In-school detention rather than out-of-school detention.

    3. Saturday detention for students after five in-school detentions.

    4. Rules and regulations stated in a positive manner whenever possible.

G. Student Recognition

    1. Student of the month chosen on the basis of positive characteristics each month.

    2. Continuation of STARR awards and BUG awards.

    3. Continued recognition of students who have succeeded academically and those who have shown improvement.

VI. Other Recommendations

A. Build stronger communication with the high school in order to achieve better transition between the middle school and high school.

B. Change the name of the Indian Mills Memorial School to avoid confusion between the two Shamong Township Schools - Indian Mills School and Indian Mills Memorial School.

C. Increase communication between third and fourth grade teachers and guidance counselors by offering opportunities to articulate.

D. Implement practices to assist transition between third and fourth grade

E. Continue to strengthen consistency in school-wide practices

Development and design of the research instrument

When the proposal was completed and presented to the administration, staff, and parents, the intern then surveyed those groups and the students to evaluate the effectiveness of our present program. The *Middle Grades Assessment Program* was used to survey the above groups. The *Middle Grades Assessment Program* (MGAP) was researched, written, and field tested by Gayle Dorman, the director of education and training at the Center for Early Adolescence, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, with the assistance of Center staff, in 1981. The edition used for this study was the third edition, published in 1995. In March 1993, the Center sent surveys to a sample of 300 educators who had purchased MGAP to gain information about their experiences with the assessment, as well as their ideas on improving the resource manuals. The responses helped them to reflect in the final edition the successes and concerns of those who had used or studied the program. Other valuable insights were gained from Max Thompson, Appalachian State University, based on his significant experience in the field using MGAP. Joan Lipsitz, the former director of the program, also made recommendations for the revision.

The revised instruments were field tested with three middle school/university collaboratives as part of the "Building Bridges" project: North Middle School, Godfrey, Illinois, and Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville; Redlands Middle School, and

Mesa State College, Grand Junction, Colorado; and LBJ Middle School and University of New Mexico at Albuquerque.

The MGAP included surveys for administrators, teachers, parents, and students.

Sampling and sample techniques

All five administrators, the Superintendent, the Supervisor of Curriculum, Planning and Instruction, the Business Administrator, and the building Principal were given surveys to fill out and return to the intern. The forty teachers in the school were also given surveys to complete and return.

The parents were surveyed at the meeting when the proposal was presented to them. There were only twelve parents present, so they were the ones surveyed.

One class each of fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grades were surveyed. That was a total of eighty-one students. There are approximately five hundred students in fifth through eighth grades.

Data analysis plan

When the surveys were completed, they were tabulated and graphed as percentages. The information was then studied to ascertain what components of our present middle school program the stakeholders of the school were satisfied with and those that they feel should change. These statistics were then used to further improve the present middle school program.

Chapter 4

Presentation of the Research Findings

<u>Presentation of the research findings</u>

Through the professional reading, the committee members discovered that the practices of the Indian Mills Memorial School were not the best practices to address the needs of the Indian Mills Memorial School students. The research emphasized that young adolescents need authentic, hands-on activities. Their learning must "make sense" to them. Their curriculum is meaningful when all subjects are integrated. The students at IMMS experienced a curriculum similar to that of a high school. They moved from one subject to the next with no coordination of the subjects. They sat in rows where they were lectured to for most of the period. There were little, if any, hands-on activities.

The results of the surveys were then analyzed to ascertain how the administration, teachers, parents, and students felt about our present junior high program. From these results it was clear to see areas of strengths and weaknesses in our present program. The results of the survey are as follows.

Safety

Ideal 1
Students and staff do not fear for their physical safety.
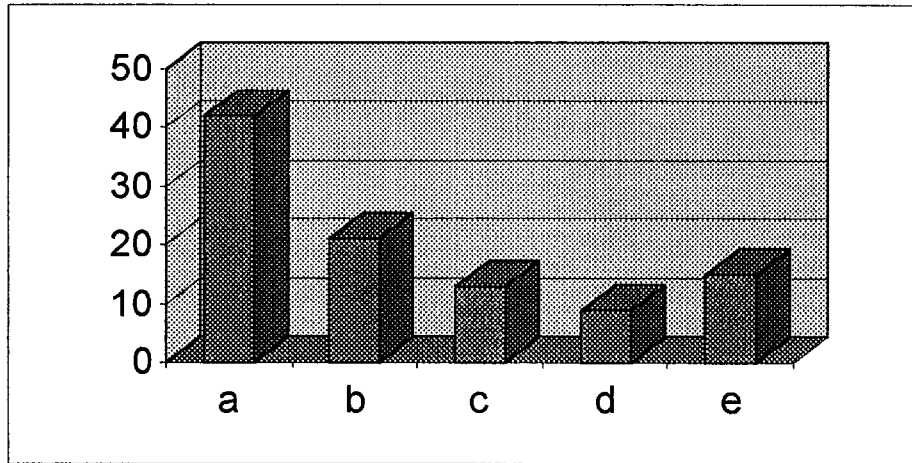
Level of Agreement
a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

Most parents, administrators, teachers, and students do feel safe in the school.

Ideal 2
Students and staff feel emotionally safe. They feel free to express their ideas, beliefs, and concerns without being ridiculed or embarrassed.
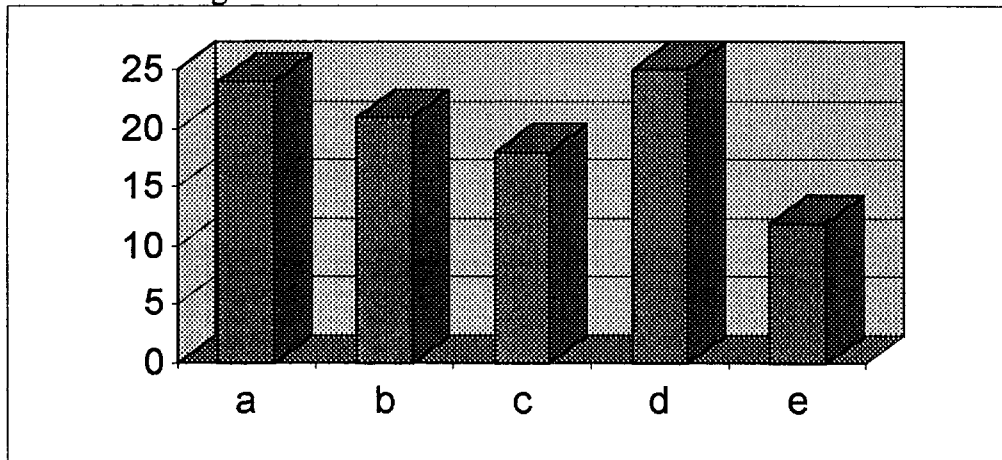

Level of Agreement
a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

There was not degree of consistency for this questions. Results show some of those surveyed feel that can safely express their views while some do not feel safe.

34

Ideal 1
There is a generally accepted school philosophy. Among the school community, there is a shared vision of the school's role in developing each young person's full potential for growth and achievement.
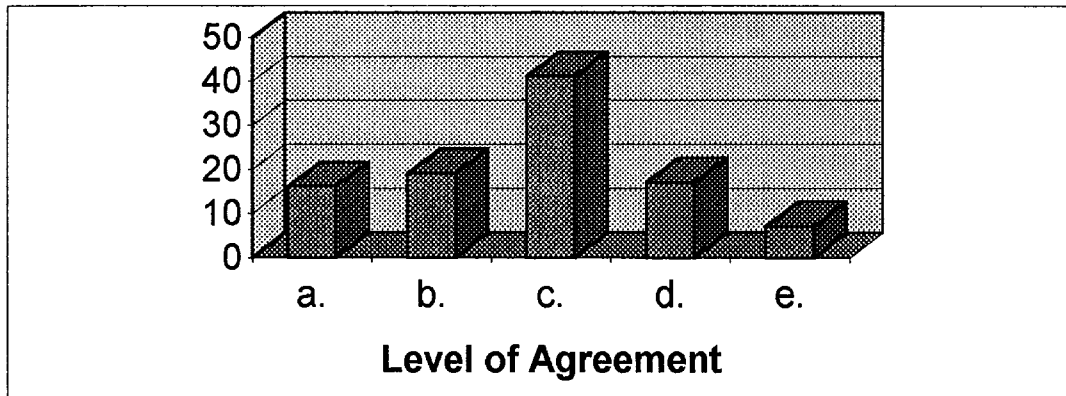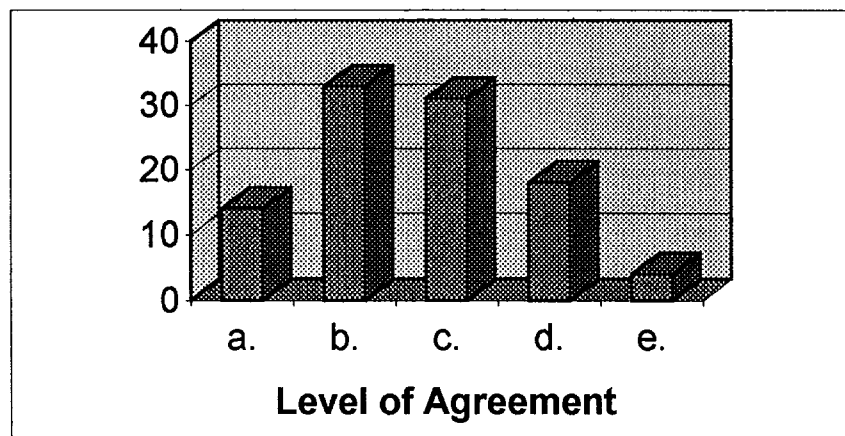

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

There was marginal agreement shown here.

Ideal 2
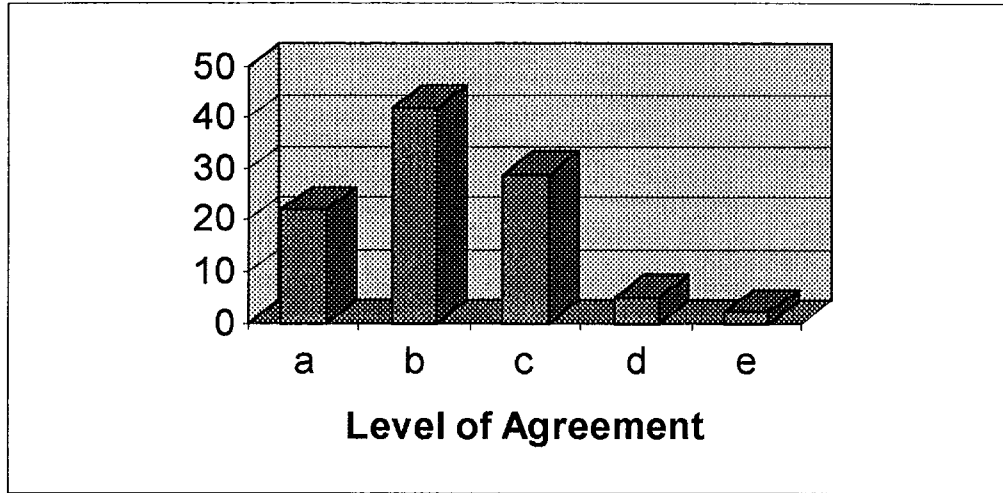The school community respects the backgrounds and abilities of students, parents, and staff.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

The majority of the constituents feel they are respected.

Ideal 3
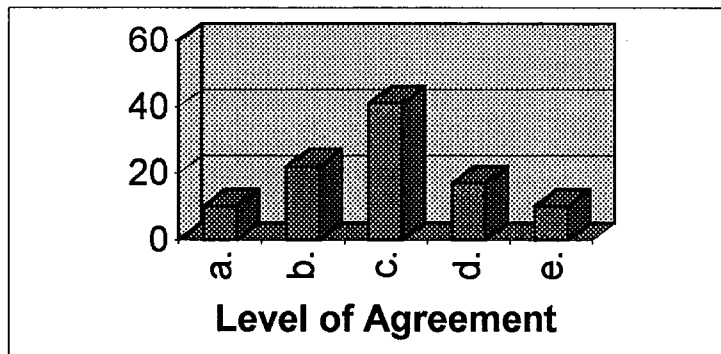Staff have high expectations of all students. They believe all children can learn.

a. very strongly agree b. strongly agree c. agree d. somewhat agree e. disagree

There was a high level of agreement that staff does believe all children can learn.

Ideal 4
The curriculum reflects a balance between higher-level learning and basic skills.
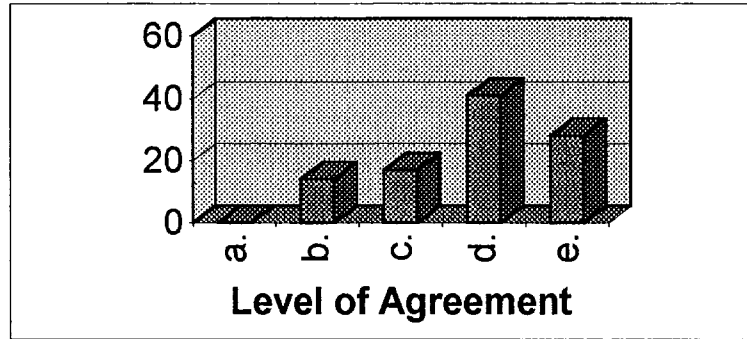

a. very strongly agree b. strongly agree c. agree d. somewhat agree e. disagree

This results showed only agreement with a balance between higher-level learning skills and basic skills.

Ideal 5
The school leadership provides a strong focus on improving curriculum and instruction.
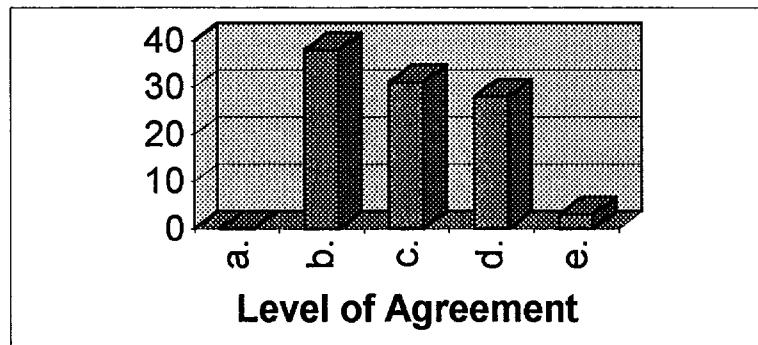

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

There was not much agreement shown for Ideal 5.

Ideal 6
Staff are open to change and use their freedom to experiment with new approaches to teaching.
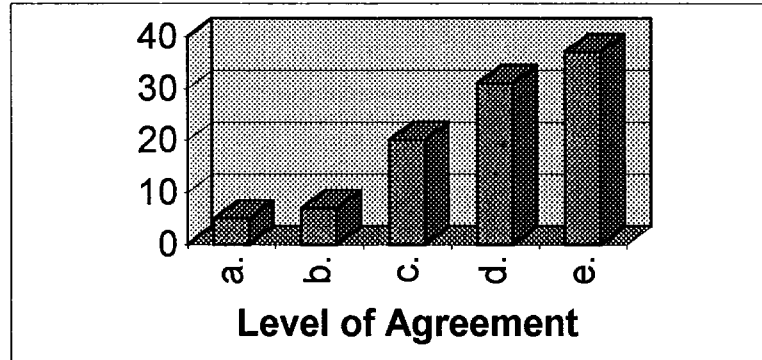

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

These results showed no strong consistency.

Ideal 7

The school community is involved in site-based decision making. Decision making is shared, with those closest to students significantly involved in the decision-making process.
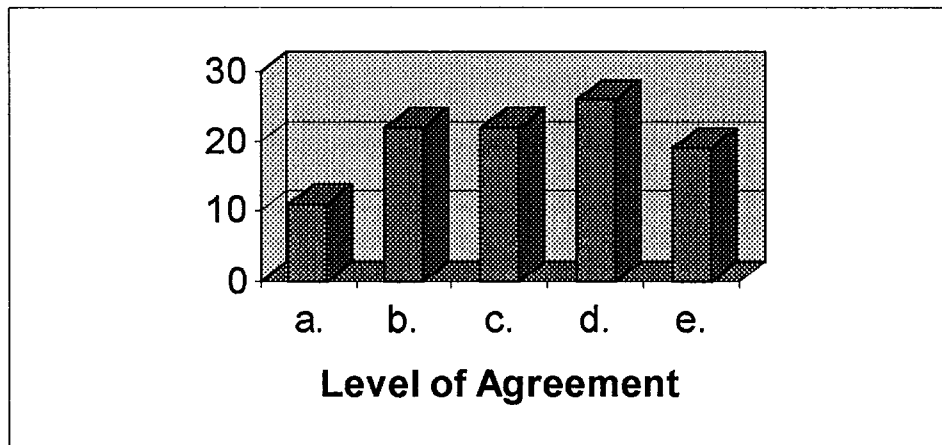

Level of Agreement

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

There was not much agreement shown for this ideal.

Ideal 8

Collaborative relationships exist to ensure success for all students.

Level of Agreement

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

This area showed no consistency. There needs to be more agreement for this to be considered an area of strength.

Ideal 9
The staff development program is ongoing and includes the study of early adolescent development and current research on teaching and learning. It is inseparable from curriculum development.
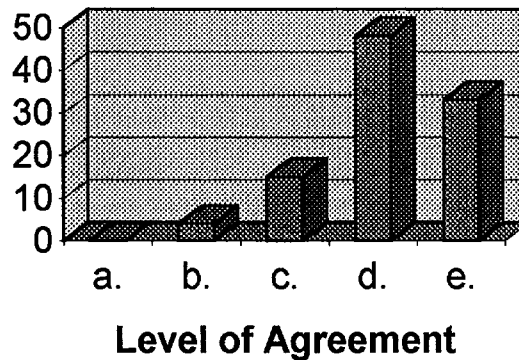

Level of Agreement
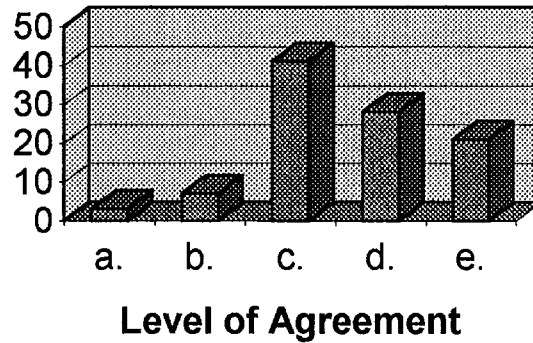
a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

The results pointed to the need for better staff development.

Ideal 10
The school community rewards effective teaching with praise and recognition.
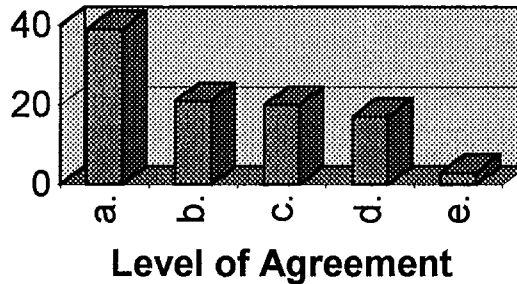

Level of Agreement

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

These results demonstrated that the school community needs to increase praise and recognition for effective teaching.

Ideal 1
The curriculum is a combination of challenging academic core courses, special interest and exploratory classes, and activities. A wide variety of special interest courses, clubs, and intramural activities is offered.
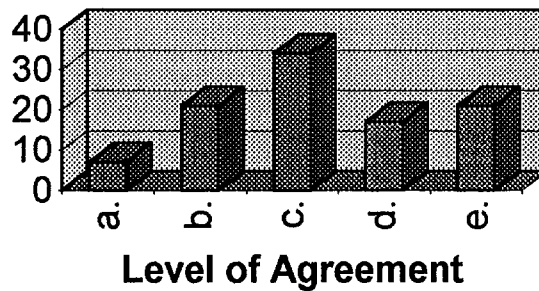

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

There was a strong level of agreement shown for this ideal.

Ideal 2
Curriculum and instruction are interdisciplinary. Teachers are not assigned to departments only. Teachers of the same students have joint planning time.
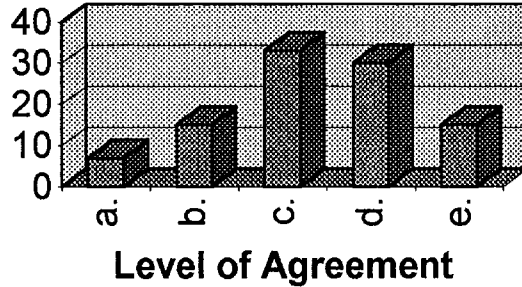

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

The results illustrated here show that there is not much very strong agreement or strong agreement with this ideal. There was about the same degree of lack of agreement . Most of the agreement was in the middle.

Ideal 3
The school recognizes that different students need varying degrees of structure, and it functions accordingly.

Level of Agreement

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

There was not much agreement shown for varying degrees of structure for different types of students.

Self-Definition

Ideal 1
A wide variety of special interest or exploratory courses and activities allows students opportunities to examine and explore new areas of interest.

Level of Agreement
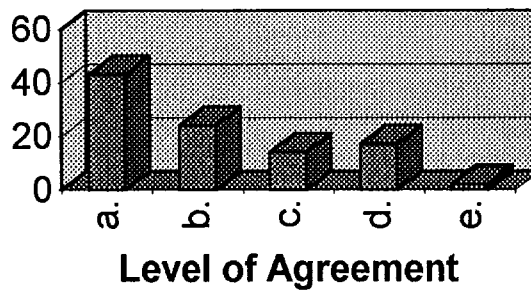
a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

The results point to this area as a strength for the school.

Ideal 2
Art, music, and drama are part of the regular curriculum

Level of Agreement

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

The results illustrate a need for more art, music, and drama.

Ideal 3
Students are encouraged to think for themselves. Imagination and questioning are expected and encouraged.

Level of Agreement
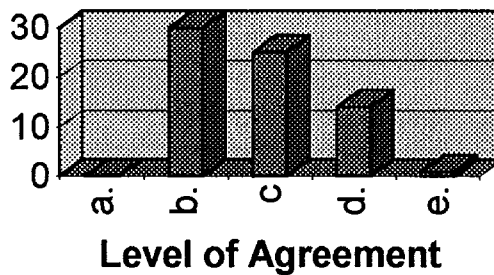
a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

These results demonstrate a need for some improvement in this area.

Ideal 4
Culturally diverse materials are an important part of the curriculum for all students.
Materials and teaching methods represent various racial, ethnic, and linguistic groups in a
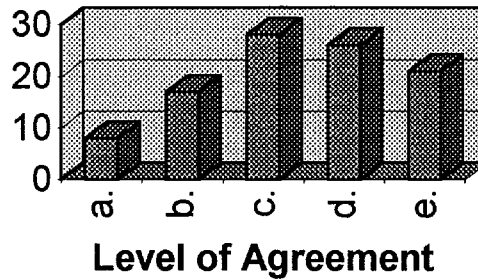sensitive and honest manner.
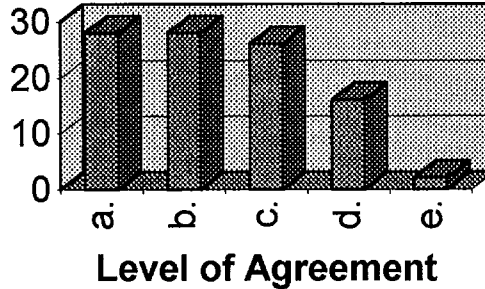
a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

These results show an area of strength for the school.

Participation

Ideal 1
There is an established mechanism through which students have meaningful input in
decision making.
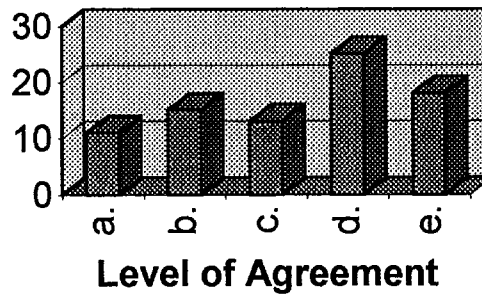
a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

These results pointed to a need for more input for students in decision making.

Ideal 2
Students are encouraged to initiate ideas and activities. All staff expect positive student initiative and structure opportunities for students to express, evaluate, and try out ideas.
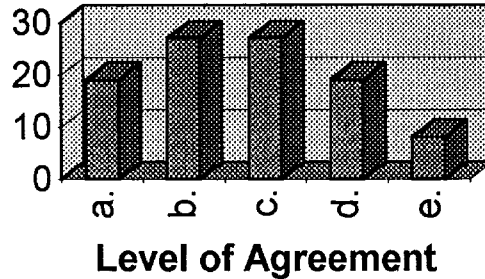
Level of Agreement

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

This illustrated and area of agreement.

Ideal 3
Guidelines exist that encourage the meaningful involvement of community resources in the life of the school. Students have opportunities to get out into the community and interested members of the community serve as resources within the school.

Level of Agreement
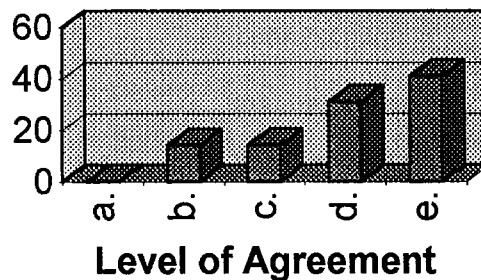
a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

These results clearly illustrated and area for growth in the school.

Ideal 4
Students participate in parent-teacher conferences.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

Students do not participate in most parent-teacher conferences. The results backed that up.

Ideal 5
Parents are meaningfully involved in the life of the school and in their children's learning.
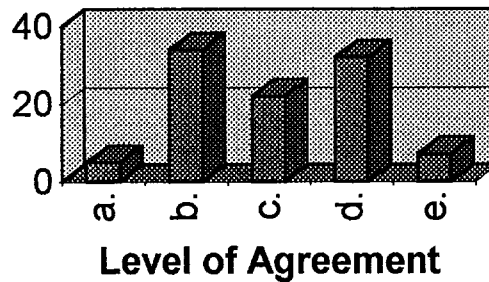
a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

The results demonstrated the school needs more parental involvement.

Ideal 1

Every student has a close and supportive relationship with at least one adult in the school. There is a structured mechanism for accomplishing this ideal.

Level of Agreement
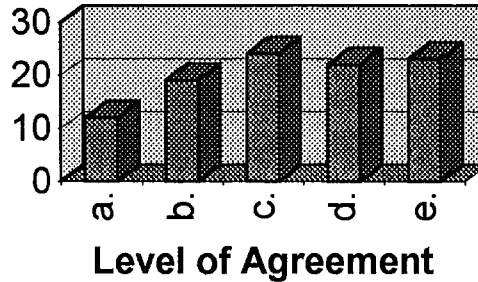
a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

The results illustrated here pointed to only some students having a close relationship with one adult in the school. This ideal needs to be addressed as an area of improvement.

Ideal 2

The school actively encourages improved race relations and racial understanding.

Level of Agreement
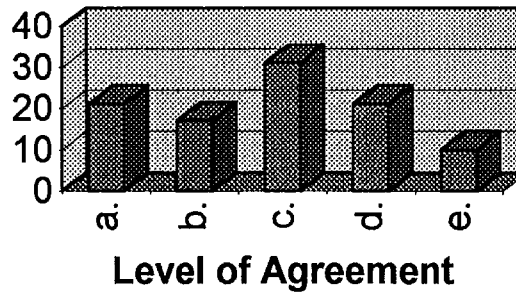
a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

The results did not show enough agreement to be considered an area of strength for the school. More growth is needed in this area.

Ideal 3
Guidance is seen as a shared responsibility.

Level of Agreement

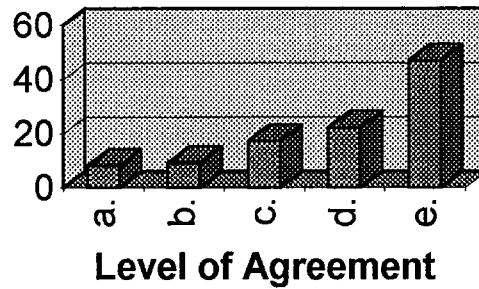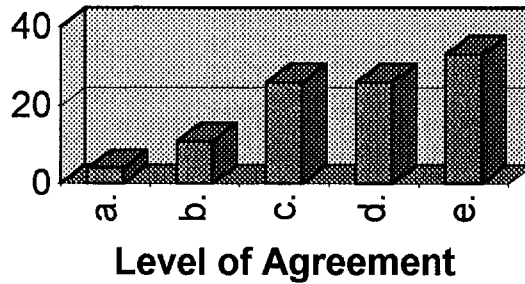a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

The results clearly demonstrate an need for change in the area of guidance.

Ideal 4
There is positive interaction among students and between students and adults outside the classrooms. Students know and talk to staff members other than their teachers.

Level of Agreement
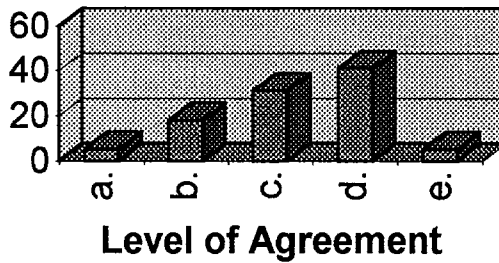
a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

The results demonstrated an area of weakness for the school. More positive interaction between students and students and staff and students needs to take place.

Ideal 1
Parents, students, and school staff like the school. They also have ideas about how to improve the school.
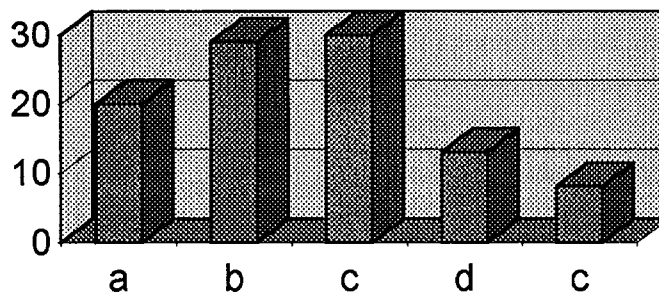
a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

The results illustrated a strong area for the school with some room for improvement.

Ideal 2
Teachers enjoy teaching young adolescents and exhibit understanding and sensitivity to the needs of the age group and of individual students.

Level of agreement
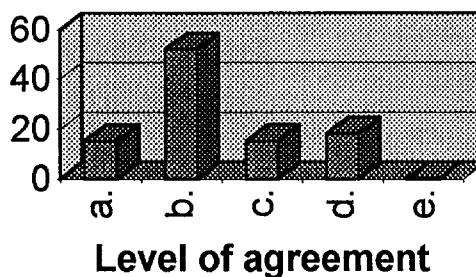
a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

These results demonstrated that most stakeholders felt that teachers do enjoy teaching young adolescents and are sensitive to their needs.

Ideal 3
All students have an opportunity to succeed at something. Student work (not only "A" work) is displayed throughout the school.

Level of Agreement
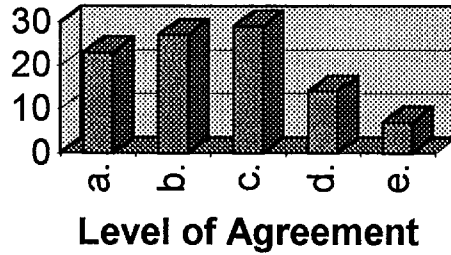
a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

The results show an area of strength for the school.

Ideal 4
Teaching of reading and writing skills is integrated across the curriculum.
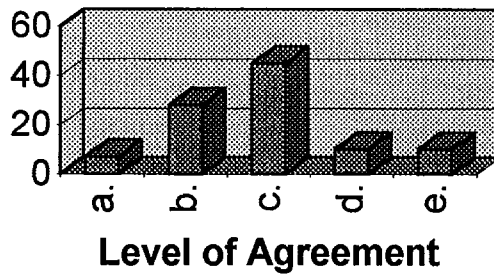
Level of Agreement

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

The results pointed to a need for improvement in this area.

Ideal 5
Help is available for students with special needs, but they are not segregated from other students for the whole day.

Level of Agreement

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

The results illustrated a high level of agreement for this ideal.

Ideal 6
Students who learn English as a second language receive intensive supports as they acquire English literacy skills and participate in grade level, content-area courses.

Level of Agreement
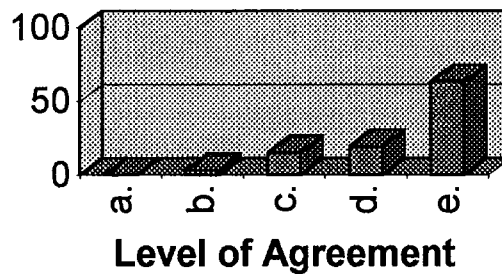
a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

These results strongly pointed to a need for improvement in the area of students who learn English as a second language.

Ideal 7
Student grouping is heterogeneous. Groups based on student productivity, ability, achievement, maturity, and interests are short-term and flexible.

Level of Agreement

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

The results here showed no strong level of agreement. The results did point toward a need for some improvement in this area.

Ideal 8

Teachers use frequent and varied assessments of student work to diagnose students' strengths and weaknesses. This diagnosis, not only a prescribed curriculum, directs instruction.

Level of Agreement
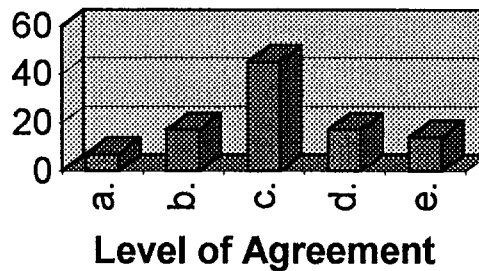
a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

The results pointed to agreement with the ideal, but a need for stronger agreement is demonstrated.

Ideal 9

Feedback to students is informative and timely. It includes positive comments that celebrate student growth and achievement.

Level of Agreement
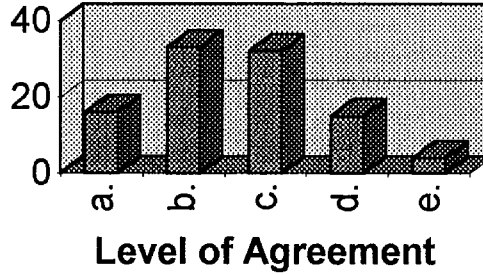
a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

These results illustrated agreement with this ideal with a little room for improvement.

Ideal 10

Students have opportunities to evaluate their own work, with the guidance of teachers.
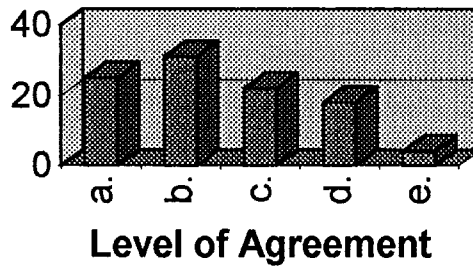
Level of Agreement

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

These results illustrated a strong level of agreement, but the need for more growth was also shown.

Ideal 1

There is an approach to discipline that is accepted by the school as a whole. Discipline is viewed as a part of the curriculum and is consistent with the developmental characteristics of young adolescents.
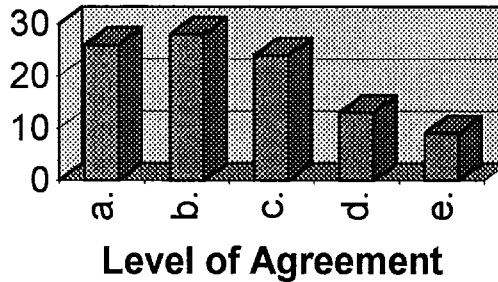
Level of Agreement

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

There was a strong level of agreement shown for this ideal.

Ideal 2

Most rules are stated positively rather than negatively. Rules are consistent, fair, and enforced.
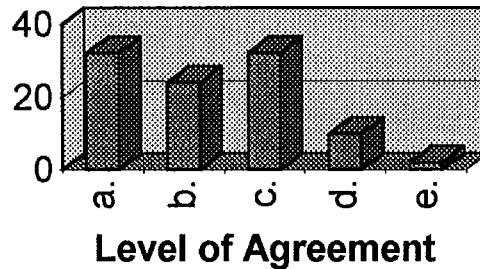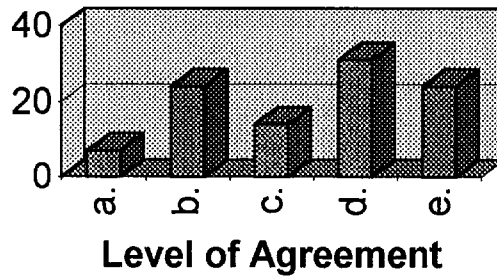

Level of Agreement
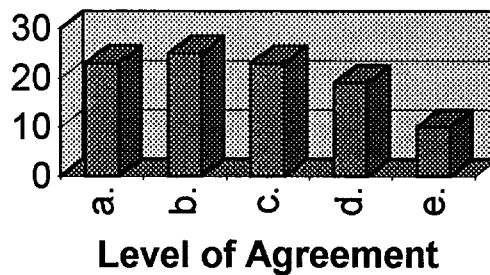
a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

These results pointed to agreement, but the need to improve was also demonstrated.

Chapter 5

Conclusions, Implications, and Further Study

<u>Conclusions</u>

The major conclusions that resulted from this study were the strengths and

weaknesses of our present program when compared with the ideals for an outstanding

middle school program.

The areas of strengths for our school were as follows:

- Students and staff do not fear for their physical safety.

- The school community respects the background and abilities of students, parents, and

  staff.

- The staff has high expectations for all students.

- The curriculum is a combination of challenging academic core courses, special

  interests and exploratory classes, and activities.

- Culturally diverse materials are an important part of the curriculum.

- The school actively encourages improved race relations and racial understanding.

- Parents, students, and staff like the school and have ideas how to improve it.

- Teachers enjoy teaching young adolescents and demonstrate an understanding of their

  needs.

- All students have an opportunity to succeed at something.

- Help is available for students with special needs. They are not segregated from other students all day.

- Feedback to students is informative and timely with positive comments included.

- Students have opportunities to evaluate their own work, with the guidance of teachers.

- Discipline is viewed as part of the curriculum and is consistent with the developmental characteristics of young adolescents.

The identified areas of strengths should be addressed during in-services. There is always room for improvement, even in a school's strongest areas.

The identified areas of weaknesses that show areas where much growth is needed are as follows:

- Students and staff feel emotionally safe and free to express their ideas, beliefs, and concerns without being ridiculed.

- There is an accepted school philosophy of the school's role in developing each young person's full potential for growth and achievement.

- There is a balance between higher-level learning and basic skills.

- The leadership provides a stronger focus on improving curriculum and instruction.

- The school community is involved in site-based decision making.

- There is collaboration between teachers to ensure success for all students.

- Staff development exists that includes the study of early adolescents and current research on teaching and learning.

- Guidelines exist that encourage the meaningful involvement of community resources in the live of the school.

- Praise and recognition is given for effective teaching.

- Curriculum and instruction are interdisciplinary with teachers of the same students have joint planning time.

- Art, music, and drama are part of the regular curriculum.

- There is an established mechanism through which students have meaningful input in decision making.

- Guidelines exist that encourage the meaningful involvement of community resources in the life of the school.

- Students participate in parent-teacher conferences.

- Every student has a close and supportive relationship with at least one adult in the school.

- Guidance is seen as a shared responsibility.

- There is positive interaction among students and students and between students and adults outside the classroom.

- Students who learn English as a second language receive intensive support.

- Teachers use frequent and varied assessments of students' work to diagnose students' strengths and weaknesses. This diagnoses, not just prescribed curriculum, directs the instruction.

The following conclusions can be made about the intern's leadership development. The intern has applied effective strategies for assessing school programs, created a school climate that encouraged optimal performance of students and adults, and communicated with groups in a positive manner.

<u>Implications</u>

By studying the results, it can be understood that the areas of strengths are fewer than the areas of weaknesses. In order to address those areas of weaknesses the following recommendations were made. The school's administration needs to be more open to the ideas of the staff and the students. They should provide a stronger focus on improving curriculum and instruction and be more open to site-based decision making. More time should be provided for staff development that includes the study of early adolescents and current research on teaching and learning. Teachers need to be provided training in interdisciplinary teaching with more team planning time provided. Art, music, and drama should be added to the regular curriculum. More resources need to be made available for students who learn English as a second language. Lastly, more praise and recognition should be forthcoming for effective teaching.

The teachers need to address the following areas. They need to accept a philosophy that the school's role should be in developing each young person's full potential for growth and achievement. A better balance between higher-level thinking skills and basic skills should be developed. A varying degree of structure needs to be provided for students with differing needs. Teachers should try to set up guidelines that encourage the meaningful involvement of community resources in the life of the school. Students should be included in parent-teacher conferences. Teachers should be accessible to students other than class time so social interaction may occur. This will facilitate a close and supporting relationship for each child in the school with an adult. Finally,

teachers should develop frequent and varied assessments of students' work to diagnose students' strengths and weaknesses.

The last area to be addressed is in the guidance area. Guidance should be a shared responsibility. Students should feel free to talk with any adult in the school with whom they have a close relationship.

In the area of leadership development, the intern developed the skills of communicating with faculty. The intern also honed skills in planning and running a meeting. One final area of interest for the intern was watching colleagues grow and change when they were given research to read. Colleagues who had joined the committee to argue against any changes were proponents of the new program after research was read and discussed.

Further study

At the conclusion of each school year, the faculty and administration should meet to ascertain the growth of the middle school program. The proposal should be assessed to decide if any changes should be made. New programs to further strengthen the middle school program should be added. Inservice training on planned areas of growth should be discussed. Finally, the *Middle Grades Assessment Program* should be administered every other year to pinpoint any continuing weaknesses in the program

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Appendix A

Administrator Survey

Administrator Survey

Could you please help me by filling out this survey on our middle school program. I am required to do the survey for my thesis. As you read through it, please base your answers on our program as it is now. Choose the answer that comes closest to how you feel about our present program. Circle the letter that corresponds to that answer.

When the survey is completed, please place it in my mailbox. If possible, I would like to have them all completed by Wednesday, March 17. I appreciate your help with this.

Thank you so much,
Lib Kerfoot

SHAMONG TOWNSHIP SCHOOL DISTRICT
Indian Mills Memorial School
295 Indian Mills Road
Shamong, New Jersey 08088

Caroline Kerfoot   Phone 268 -- 0440

Administrator Survey

1. Teachers enjoy teaching young adolescents and exhibit understanding and sensitivity to the needs of the age group and of individual students.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

2. Staff have high expectations of all students. They believe all children can learn.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

3. The school community respects the backgrounds and abilities of students, parents, and staff.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

4. The school actively encourages improved race relations and racial understanding.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

4. Parents, students, and school staff like the school. They also have ideas about how to improve the school.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

6. Students and staff do not fear for their physical safety.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

7. **Students and staff feel emotionally safe. They feel free to express their ideas, beliefs, and concerns without being ridiculed or embarrassed.**

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree e. disagree

8. **The school community respects the backgrounds and abilities of students, parents, and staff.**

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree e. disagree

9. **The school actively encourages improved race relations and racial understanding.**

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree e. disagree

10. **Parents are meaningfully involved in the life of the school and in their children's learning.**

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree e. disagree

11. **Guidelines exist that encourage the meaningful involvement of community resources in the life of the school. Students have opportunities to get out into the community and interested members of the community serve as resources within the school.**

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree e. disagree

12. **There is a generally accepted school philosophy. Among the school community, there is a shared vision of the school's role in developing each young person's full potential for growth and achievement.**

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree e. disagree

13. **Students and staff do not fear for their physical safety.**

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree e. disagree

14. **Students and staff feel emotionally safe. They feel free to express their ideas, beliefs, and concerns without being ridiculed or embarrassed.**

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

15. **Amount of money spent on vandalism repair is low.**

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

16. **Parents, students, and school staff like the school. They also have ideas about how to improve the school.**

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

17. **The schedule is flexible, including some block scheduling.**

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

18. **The curriculum is a combination of challenging academic core courses, special interest and exploratory classes, and activities. A wide variety of special interest courses, clubs, and intramural activities is offered.**

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

19. **The curriculum reflects a balance between higher-level learning and basic skills mastery.**

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

20. **Curriculum and instruction are interdisciplinary. Teachers are not assigned to departments only. Teachers of the same students have joint planning time.**

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

21. The school's achievement data demonstrate that all students, regardless of gender, ethnic, racial, and economic background, or prior achievement, are progressing at similar rates.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

22. Staff has high expectations of all students. They believe all children can learn.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

23. Teachers use frequent and varied assessments of student work to diagnose students' strengths and weaknesses. This diagnosis, not only a prescribed curriculum, directs instruction.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

24. Teaching of reading and writing skills is integrated across the curriculum.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

25. Help is available for students with special needs, but they are not segregated from other students for the whole day.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

26. Student grouping is heterogeneous. Groups based on student productivity, ability, achievement, maturity, and interests are short-term and flexible.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

27. Vocational education and home economics classes emphasize skills needed for greater self-sufficiency.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

28. Art, music, and drama are part of the regular curriculum.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

29. The physical education program recognizes the wide range of normal physical development among young adolescents and reflects an understanding of the concerns of young adolescents about their physical development. Physical education classes emphasize body coordination, lifelong sports, and noncompetitive sports.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

30. A comprehensive health education program is offered that focuses on early adolescent growth and development.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

Appendix B

Teacher Survey

Teacher Survey

Could you please help me by filling out this survey on our middle school program. I am required to do the survey for my thesis. As you read through it, please base your answers on our program as it is now. Choose the answer that comes closest to how you feel about our present program. Circle the letter that corresponds to that answer.

When the survey is completed, please place it in my mailbox. If possible, I would like to have them all completed by Wednesday, March 17. I appreciate your help with this.

Thank you so much,
Lib Kerfoot

SHAMONG TOWNSHIP SCHOOL DISTRICT
Indian Mills Memorial School
295 Indian Mills Road
Shamong, New Jersey 08088

Caroline Kerfoot   Phone 268 -- 0440

Teacher Survey

1. Teachers enjoy teaching young adolescents and exhibit understanding and sensitivity to the needs of the age group and of individual students.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

2. Staff has high expectations of all students. They believe all children can learn.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

3. The school community respects the backgrounds and abilities of students, parents, and staff.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

4. The school actively encourages improved race relations and racial understanding.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

5. Parents, students, and school staff like the school. They also have ideas about how to improve the school.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

6. Students and staff do not fear for their physical safety.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

7. Students and staff feel emotionally safe. They feel free to express their ideas, beliefs, and concerns without being ridiculed or embarrassed.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

8. **The school community is involved in site-based decision making. Decision making is shared, with those closest to students significantly involved in the decision-making process.**

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

9. **Collaborative relationships exist to ensure success for all students.**

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

10. **Staff is open to change and use their freedom to experiment with new approaches to teaching.**

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

10a. **Please check the teaching style you use most often.**

_____A. Lecture with students taking notes.
_____B. Some lecture with students taking notes and some group work.
_____C. Some lecture, some group work, hands on activities
_____D. Very little lecture, group work, and hands on activities
_____E. A lot of group work and hands on activities with a minimal amount of lecture

11. **The staff development program is ongoing and includes the of study of early adolescent development and current research on teaching and learning. It is inseparable from curriculum development.**

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

12. **The school community rewards effective teaching with praise and recognition.**

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

13. **The school leadership provides a strong focus on improving curriculum and instruction.**

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

14. **Curriculum and instruction are interdisciplinary. Teachers are not assigned to department only. Teachers of the same students have joint planning time.**

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

15. The curriculum reflects a balance between higher-level learning and basic skills mastery.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

16. Students are encouraged to think for themselves. Imagination and questioning are expected and encouraged.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

17. Teaching of reading and writing skills is integrated across the curriculum.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

18. Guidelines exist that encourage the meaningful involvement of community resources in the life of the school. Students have opportunities to get out into the community and interested members of the community serve as resources within the school.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

19. Parents are meaningfully involved in the life of the school and in their children's learning.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

20. Teachers use frequent and varied assessments of student work to diagnose students' strengths and weaknesses. This diagnosis, not only a prescribed curriculum, directs instruction.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

21. Feedback to students is informative and timely. It includes positive comments that celebrate student growth and achievement.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

22. The school recognizes that different students need varying degrees of structure, and it functions accordingly.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

23. Student grouping is heterogeneous. Groups based on student productivity, ability, achievement, maturity, and interests are short-term and flexible.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

24. Every student has a close and supportive relationship with at least one adult in the school. There is a structured mechanism for accomplishing this ideal.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

25. Guidance is seen as a shared responsibility.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

26. Help is available for students with special needs, but they are not segregated from other students for the whole day.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

27. Students who learn English as a second language receive intensive supports as they acquire English literacy skills and participate in grade-level, content-area courses.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

28. There is an approach to discipline that is accepted by the school as a whole. Discipline is viewed as a part of the curriculum and is consistent with the developmental characteristics of young adolescents.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

29. Most rules are stated positively rather than negatively. Rules are consistent, fair, and enforced.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

30. There is a generally accepted school philosophy. Among the school community, there is a shared vision of the school's role in developing each young person's full potential for growth and achievement.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

Appendix C

Parent Survey

Shamong Township School District
Indian Mills Memorial School
295 Indian Mills Road
Shamong, New Jersey 08088

Caroline Kerfoot   (609) 268-0440
Administrative Intern

Parent Survey

Please circle the letter that coincides the closest with your feelings about the statement.

1. **Parents, students, and school staff like the school. They also have ideas about how to improve the school.**

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

2. **There is a generally accepted school philosophy. Among the school community, there is a shared vision of the school's role in developing each young person's full potential for growth and achievement.**

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

3. **The school community is involved in site-based decision making. Decision making is shared, with those closest to students significantly involved in the decision-making process.**

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

4. **Parents are meaningfully involved in the life of the school and in their children's learning.**

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

5. **Students participate in parent-teacher-student conferences.**

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

6. **Feedback to students is informative and timely. It includes positive comments that celebrate student growth and achievement.**

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

7. **The curriculum is a combination of challenging academic core courses, special interest and exploratory classes, and activities. A wide variety of special interest courses, clubs, and intramural activities is offered.**

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

8. **The curriculum reflects a balance between higher-level learning and basic skills mastery.**

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

9. **The school community respects the backgrounds and abilities of students, parents, and staff.**

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

10. **Staff have high expectations of all students. They believe all children can learn.**

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

11. **Help is available for students with special needs, but they are not segregated from other students for the whole day.**

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

Appendix D

Student Survey

Student Survey

Some of you know that I have gone back to college to get my masters degree in administration. I hope to get a job as a principal next year. Part of the requirements for the degree is that I do a study of the school. I need to know for this study how you feel about our school. On the next two pages are twenty statements. After each statement are five categories of agreement. Please read the statements and circle the category that shows the closest to how you feel. If you do not understand the question, please ask your teacher to explain it to you.

I appreciate your help with this survey. When it is completed, hand it in to your teacher and she will give you a little something as thanks from me.

Mrs. Kerfoot

Student Survey

1. **There is positive interaction among students and between students and adults outside the classrooms. Students know and talk to staff members other than their teachers.**

   a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

2. **Every student has a close and supportive relationship with at least one adult in the school.**

   a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

3. **There is an approach to discipline that is accepted by the school as a whole. Discipline is viewed as a part of the curriculum and is consistent with your developmental characteristics.**

   a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

4. **Most rules are stated positively rather than negatively. Rules are consistent, fair, and enforced.**

   a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

5. **There is an established mechanism through which students have meaningful input in decision making.** (Do students have a voice in making decisions and establishing rules in the school?)

   a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

6. **Students and staff do not fear for their physical safety.**

   a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

7. **Students and staff feel emotionally safe. They feel free to express their ideas, beliefs, and concerns without being teased or embarrassed.**

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

8.   All students have an opportunity to succeed at something.   Student work (not only "A" work) is displayed throughout the school.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

9.   A wide variety of special interest or exploratory courses and activities allows students opportunities to examine and explore new areas of interest.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

10. Students are encouraged to think for themselves.   Imagination and questioning are expected and encouraged.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

11. Feedback to students is informative and timely.   It includes positive comments that celebrate student growth and achievement.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

12. Students have opportunities to evaluate their own work, with the guidance of teachers.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

13. Students participate in parent-teacher-student conferences.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

14. Culturally diverse materials are an important part of the curriculum for all students.   Materials and teaching methods represent various racial, ethnic, and linguistic groups in a sensitive and honest manner.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

15. There is a generally accepted school philosophy. Among the school community, there is a shared vision of the school's role in developing each young person's full potential for growth and achievement.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

16. Parents, students, and school staff like the school. They also have ideas about how to improve the school.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

17. The school community respects the backgrounds and abilities of students, parents, and staff.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

18. The curriculum is a combination of challenging academic core courses, special interest and exploratory courses, and activities. A wide variety of special interest courses, clubs, and intramural activities is offered.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

19. Art, music, and drama are part of the regular curriculum.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

20. Students are encouraged to initiate ideas and activities. All staff expect positive student initiative and structure opportunities for students to express, evaluate, and try out ideas.

a. very strongly agree   b. strongly agree   c. agree   d. somewhat agree   e. disagree

Biographical Data

Name	Caroline Elizabeth Kerfoot
High School	Audubon High School Audubon, NJ
Undergraduate	Bachelor of Arts Elementary Education Glassboro State College Glassboro, NJ
Graduate	Master of Arts School Administration Rowan University Glassboro, NJ
Present Occupation	Fourth Grade Teacher Indian Mills Memorial School Shamong, NJ