A HANDBOOK TO AID TEACHERS IN THE TRANSITION

TO A MIDDLE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

MASTER'S PROJECT

Submitted to the Department of Teacher Education

University of Dayton, in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Secondary Education

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April 1992

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ii

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

Background

In the near future there will be a great need in the Findlay City School District to understand the rational behind the middle school concept and the transition from a traditional junior high school to a middle school setting.

To make a successful transition, one must have the support of the community, teachers and students. To gain their support, an understanding of the benefits of a middle school and how the transition would proceed is of the utmost importance.

The success of any change depends on how successful the change agent is in linking ideas about what a good middle level school should be to concrete conditions that exist both inside and outside of school. Thus, it is the job of the educators to call for a change when one is needed.

To improve conditions in the Findlay City Schools, the researchers believe the middle school concept should be adopted by the administration, the board of education and the teachers. Class size, maturity level of students and the meeting of social needs of young adolescents are problems that exist and need to be rectified in the near future.

Review of Literature

To meet the educational demands of the twenty-first century, teachers must be willing to accept changes. In middle level education, the middle school concept offers shifts in education that would allow educators to meet these demands.

A middle school curriculum establishes inter-disciplinary units instead of being divided into separate subject areas. This permits the students to appreciate how subjects are integrated and better process the information to make it more useful and meaningful in the real world.

The heart of the middle school is the student. The child's uniqueness is of special interest to the staff members and parents. The atmosphere provides the opportunity to become self-directing and self-sustaining in a friendly, positive atmosphere. (Jones and Alexander, 1981)

Research has shown that how a person learns is connected to their right and left hemispheres of the brain. Thus, some students are alienated by traditional academic instruction and never progress to their full potential. Teachers in all grades need to include both effective and cognitive learning in their teaching, and the middle school concept is a proven way to do it. (Callahan, Clark, and Kellough, 1992)

Problem Statement

The purpose of this study is to design a handbook for the Findlay City School teachers to assist them in understanding the rational and implementation of a middle school.

Procedure

Subjects.

This handbook is designed for teachers teaching seventh and eighth grades in the Findlay City School system.

Setting.

The Findlay City School system presently has three buildings operating with a traditional junior high school setting. These buildings house grades seven, eight and nine. In the near future, Findlay will move the ninth grade students to the high school, making it a four-year facility and convert the seventh and eighth grades to a middle school concept. In this way, all students will benefit academically, socially and athletically.

Data Collection.

The researchers have used many sources for collecting data such as books, periodicals and written printouts. Also, visits to observe middle schools in action as well as the interview of teachers, administrators and students at these schools have been used to gather information useful to producing this handbook.

Results

The result of this study is a handbook that will aid
Findlay City School teachers in the transformation from a
traditional junior high school to a true middle school
program.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Across Grade Level Teaching - Students from more than one grade and studying the same information at the same place and time. IE. A group of seventh and eighth grade students are being taught fractions in the same class.

Adviser-Advisee Program - This program is a very important component of the Middle School Concept. Guidance activities and other activities thought useful for the Middle School Child are experienced as a group. The imagination is the only limit on the usefulness of this component.

Bottom To Top Decision-Making - Decision-making in the middle school focuses on the team as the integral part of decision-making process. Decision-making is viewed as a team effort including the team, administration, support staff, and staff not on the team. The traditional top-down hierarchical decision-making model of the junior high is ineffectual due to the importance of the team in the daily planning for the students.

Common Planning Time - One period a day is allocated for the team so that they can address the issues the team was designed to focus on.

Equal Access - No one should be denied entry into any part of the curriculum because of his/her ability. Effort will be made to "mainstream" all special students.

Exploratory Wheel - This refers to the courses that the students will take that are exploratory in nature. The courses are offered to expose young people to subject matter that they might choose to study in more depth at normally six or nine weeks in length.

Flex Scheduling - Time will be scheduled in blocks for teams of teachers so they can plan instruction around time restrictions associated with certain activities, audiovisuals, etc. State standards on minutes of instruction are followed but flexibility is incorporated.

Home Base - This is time when students are with a teacher and other students. It is an extended home room period. It would be one class period in length. The time period focuses on Adviser-Advisee programs, skill building and remediation, and other things thought appropriate for the developmental needs of the Middle School child.

Interdisciplinary Units - Each year the school chooses a topic which the students will focus on for a school year. The teams all plan activities and lessons around the unit and the unit is concluded with an exciting activity. The unit serves as an academic theme to pull the school together and also reinforces the interdisciplinary nature of learning.

Teaching Across the Curriculum - Knowledge about issues/topics does not always fit neatly into academic disciplines. For example, The Green House Effect can be discussed from many academic discipline's point of view. By sharing with team members the subject matter taught in the various class rooms, the team members can reinforce the material in their own classes. Teaming permits this.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RESEARCH

A desired change in our educational system is needed to shift from the traditional approach of education to one of educating our students for the 21st century. A school that would provide a program that planned for a range of children of all ages is needed and necessary. A new concept of building upon the elementary school program that in turn is built upon by the high school's program is essential for today's student and achiever.

A middle school is a bridge from elementary to secondary education. It must not only build upon the program of earlier childhood and secondary education, but it must be directly concerned with the problems and interests of the students. It is a school that focuses on the educational needs of students in these in-between years of elementary and high school and is designed to promote continuous educational progress for all students. (Alexander & George, 1981)

Judith Murphy, one of the early pioneers of the middle school movement, describes the new intermediate unit as a school between elementary and high school. Housed separately, it is designed as a building with purpose and covers at least three of the middle school years beginning with grades five or six. (Moss, 1969)

There is no general agreement as to when the initial year of the middle school should begin. Some educators believe that it should begin in grade five while others believe it should be in grade six. A decision that grade 9 be part of the high school and not of the middle school is unanimously accepted by all. A new start and fresh programs are needed for the intermediate unit to succeed. (Moss, 1969)

The junior high school idea came into existence about fifty years ago because of three persistent educational problems. The first one dealt with the large number of students who dropped out at the end of grades six and eight. The second dealt with the emotional adjustment children experienced when they went from the security of elementary schools to that of a high school situation where they did not know any one and no one seemed to care. The third problem developed when the elementary schools were unable to adequately provide for the increased size of so many boys and girls and the needs which grew out of the nature of development changes in the teen years. In addition to all this, educators felt that the gifted should be pushed into college as soon as possible. This idea was given up in the early 1950's when comparisons between American and European education became popular. Keeping pupils with their own agemates was not the recommended concept. (Noar, 1961).

Teachers in the classrooms of the junior high school attest that their schools have resulted in improved

attendance, reduction of truancy to a minimum and a decrease in the number of discipline problems. In communities where intergroup tensions have been high, improvement in school curriculum resulted and a reduction of overt conflicts appeared. (Noar, 1961)

There are nine essential factors that relate to middle level education that differ from the traditional junior high school. These nine factors will be discussed and compared to the junior high perspective of teaching.

1. Knowledge- This includes what society and educators expect students to have learned during their schooling experience. Traditional education accumulated pieces of information that could be identified and listed.

   The twenty-first century school or middle school would combine the needed skills and information that is rapidly changing and infinite in scope.

2. Curriculum-The standard school was divided into academic and special subject areas that were separated by category.

   The middle school concept would intertwine thematic and interdisciplinary units closely related to the student's real world.

3. Teachers- Traditional teachers were seen as subject specialists who understood and related well to students. This understanding would usually last for one period of each day.

   The twenty-first century teacher was competent in several subject areas and could teach a wide variety of students by adapting the program to the student's needs.

4. School Organization-Subjects are compartmentalized by faculty, facility, and schedules in the regular classroom.

    The middle school concept integrated time block flexibility with interdisciplinary teaching teams.

5. Grouping for instruction-Students are grouped in classes according to knowledge determined from test scores.

    Middle schools group according to needs and interests of the students and the skills to be developed.

6. Classroom activities-The traditional way in that information is given to students through teacher talk, textbook assignments, or audiovisual presentations. Thus, the student is a passive learner.

    In a middle school, information is imparted through active participation in the classroom.

7. Student placement-The traditional school places emphasis on physical, social and emotional growth for placement in school levels.

    The twenty-first century school places wide diversity of physical, social, and emotional growth with the school changing for the students.

8. Requirements-Specific grades and requirements are needed in a traditional setting.

    The 21st century school offers skills developed according to student's individual level of growth and readiness.

9. Student Assessment-The evaluation of the student is primarily through teacher-developed tests, textbook tests or standardized tests that focus on the recalling of learned facts.

    The middle school concept evaluates a student through performance-based activities. (Stephens, 1991).

Piaget's classification of the stages of intellectual development guided the middle school educators until the late 1970's. Recent research has challenged this classification and new studies have been found on brain growth. Toepfer stated this quite clearly in the following paragraph:

The problem for middle grades seems to reside in the nature of educational programming offered during the age 12-14 year span. Clearly, achievement and growth during the age 10-12 period seem to confirm that emerging adolescents have the capacity to learn new and higher level thinking skills along with facts and information at that time. However, the fact of the plateau period of brain growth during the following age 12-14 years period and the classic mental age growth studies...indicate that youngsters cannot continue to grow and develop new and higher level cognitive thinking skills during the brain growth experienced between age 10-12 years and the plateau period of ages 12-14. (Alexander & George, 1981)

Eichorn introduces the term "transcescence" when discussing the physical and emotional stages of the junior high student. Transcescence is the stage of development which begins prior to puberty and extends through the early stages of adolescence. On the average, the transescent is an eager and able learner that displays somewhat emotionally erratic, inconsistent, and unpredictable behavior. He or she is highly dependent on peer acceptance and praise rather than adult approval. (Kohut, 1976)

Thus, the middle school idea would meet the emotional as well as the physical needs of the students. The junior high concept would rely too much on tests and academic results of the classroom and less on the positive progression of each student. Most teenagers have seen more

of the world through television, movies, and travel that previous generations and the middle school concept recognized the potential for critical thinking and problem solving of their student.

The traditional junior high school organization has created much concern among educators. This level of schooling seems to be influenced too much by the high school curriculum. It fails to meet the needs of the junior high school aged learner. Human growth and development provide the base of tomorrow's junior high school and a firm foundation for a school is possible only when those concerned are guided by information about the basic needs and drives that motivate their pupils. The survival of the so called junior high is doubtful because the work and the activities of the school do not meet the needs and drives of its students. (Noar, 1961)

In a survey done by Davis, the middle school teachers demonstrated the use of more innovative practices when compared to junior high school teachers. In terms of learning, innovative teaching and organizational practices produced more beneficial results than traditional or conventional practices. Instructional and modern teaching techniques are seen in small and large middle school curriculum and this is only seen as a beneficial measure for adolescents. (Kohut, 1976)

Koslick compared and analyzed the comparison of instructional modes between junior high and middle school

teachers. Statistical analysis and the results of his

investigation reveal the following:

1. Middle school teachers displayed a difference in the use of instructional modes in the classroom.
2. Eliciting of verbal behavior was used more significantly by the middle school teacher.
3. Middle school teachers with elementary certification displayed a greater use of classroom instructional modes compared to middle school teachers who had certification on the secondary level.
4. In terms of understanding the philosophical purposes, goals, and actual practices of the middle school, no significant difference was seen (Kohut, 1976).

There are some advantages of the middle school over the

junior high classification. Dr. Pearl Brod of the Lakeland

School System reported in Clearing House, February 1966,

that there are sixteen advantages of the middle school. The

list is as follows:

1. It gives this unit a status of its own, rather than a "junior" classification.
2. It facilitates the introduction in grades five and six of some specialization and team teaching in staff patterns.
3. It also facilitates the reorganization of teacher education which is sorely needed to provide teachers competent for the middle school.
4. Developmentally, children in grades six through eight are probably more alike than children in grades seven through nine.
5. Since they are undergoing the common experience of adolescence, sixth through eighth graders should have special attention, special teachers and special programs, which the middle school permits.
6. It provides an opportunity for gradual change from the self-contained classroom to complete departmentalization.
7. Additional facilities and specialists can be made available to all children one year earlier.
8. It permits the organization of a program with emphasis upon a continuation and enrichment of basic education in the fundamentals.
9. It facilitates extending guidance services into the elementary grades.

10. It helps to slow down the "growing up" process from K-8 because the oldest group is removed from each grade level.
11. It puts children from the entire district together one year earlier, aiding sociologically.
12. Physical unification of grades nine through twelve permits better coordination of courses for the senior high school.
13. It eliminates the need for special programs and facilities for one grade and eliminates the problems created by the fact that the ninth grade is functionally a part of the senior high school.
14. It eliminates the possibility of some students and parents not being aware of the importance of the ninth grade as part of the senior high school record, particularly in terms of college admission.
15. It reduces duplication of expensive equipment and facilities for the one grade. The funds can be spent on facilities beneficial to all grades.
16. It provides both present and future flexibility in building planning, particularly when it comes to changing school population. (Bondi, 1972)

A combination of social change, rapid physical maturation, college-preparatory ninth grade, interscholastic sports and social activities has led to a disenchantment with the junior high school and a search for reform of grade organization. New ideas and techniques are needed to adequately accommodate the new student of the future. It is the belief of the writers that the middle school concept could adequately meet this challenge. Emphasis though must be placed on the importance of placing learning responsibility upon the student and the role of the teacher as a guide and counselor in the learning situation.

After existing for almost a decade, the middle school has firmly established itself as an acceptable model of education in America. A study by Howell and Mooney indicate

that middle schools have increased attendance and lowered discipline problems. (Wiles & Thomason, 1975)

Middle schools will be evaluated on the basis of whether they raise or lower the educational standards of their pupils. It is believed they will provide a true education for the pupil that yearns to express himself in activities which have an ever-increasing value. They also are able to diminish the cultural gap which formerly existed between eleven and thirteen-year-old pupils. They broaden the vision and will improve the teaching techniques of the teaching staffs. (Edwards, 1972)

The process of evaluation is very complicated yet so often used. Each day we virtually make hundreds of judgments that deal with our every day life. Most of our decisions are based on evaluations we have conducted. Sometimes these evaluations are formal and systematic while others are informal, spontaneous, and impressionistic. In all cases, an evaluation serves one purpose and that is to help determine the value of something. Usually, that value is expressed in terms of some type of cost. The question that is sought is whether or not the activity is worth the personal resources it will consume. (Arth, Bergmann, Johnson & Lounsbury, 1988)

The evaluations we perform in schools are not different from these. The assessment of student work, the effect of a new idea or the impact of a guidance program on dropouts are judgments that are dealt with each day. The ultimate

judgment is the worth of the evaluation object. (Arth, Bergmann, Johnson & Lounsbury, 1988)

Since middle schools have only existed a relatively short period of time, little data can be found that clearly emphasizes and encourages the middle school over the junior high concept. Although the ultimate criterion of the value of schooling is that of the student and his/her progress, educators and the community need to know what the strengths of this new idea are. Many aspects of student progress are very difficult to appraise, and attention has to be given to those factors which influence the quality of schooling.

A three-year study of the Brown Middle School in Hamilton County, Tennessee, cited eleven hypothese that proved favorable over the junior high school. The following hypotheses were stated and data was collected and analyzed regarding this study: (direct quote on the following) (Alexander & George, 1981).

1. That teacher attendance will be equal to or greater than attendance in a junior high school.
2. That average daily attendance of middle school pupils will be equal to or greater than attendance of junior high school students.
3. That student discipline cases will be equal to or less than pupil discipline cases in a junior high school.
4. That parent attitudes will be equal to or more favorable than parent attitudes in a junior high school.
5. That student attitudes will be equal to or more favorable that student attitudes in a junior high school.
6. That student achievement on standardized test scores will be equal to or better than student achievement test scores in a junior high school.
7. That former middle school student grade point averages in the first semester of high school

8. That materials, activities, course and program development will be equal to or greater than that of a junior high school.
9. That program and school communications with the community, parents, feeder and receiver schools will be equal to or greater than that of a junior high school.
10. That teacher attitudes toward school organizational design, programs, and students will be equal to or more favorable than teacher attitudes in a junior high school.
11. That curriculum expansion and flexibility will allow equal or greater individual student choices in the learning process than student choices in the junior high school.

Information is developing at too fast a pace for education to be a fact storing process. The human being must face the task of how to best approach learning and how to deal with information when it becomes available. Thus, the student must develop efficient and effective learning techniques along with decision analysis capabilities required for decision-making. (Grooms, 1967)

The middle school cannot develop to its potential unless parents and the community become involved. This improved learning support would reinforce parental and community willingness for further changes that lead to still more effective and efficient education. (Grooms, 1967)

Time has come for undertaking the transition of junior high schools to middle schools and improving the education of students who will be adults in the 21st century. The changes that have been made so far have resulted in a better and more appropriate educational programs for the students. Continued growth and preparation in still needed for a

student of tomorrow. By working together to address the needs of early adolescents, the school districts may have enough momentum to break away from those forces that kept us in the status quo. (Stephens, 1991)

The price tag for changing the country's schools will be higher than the federal, state, or local governments want to pay. The Carnegie Corporation of New York reported in an article entitled, "Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century," that sweeping changes in our schools need to be made especially in the field of at-risk students. Carnegie feels the real choice needs to be made by the tax payers or face the results of higher costs in dropouts, ill prepared work forces and a swelling welfare and prison rolls of tomorrow. (Tifft, 1989)

Middle level programs are as diverse as the population they serve and are staffed by administration and staff who share this same practice. The middle level ground or the middle school concept is fertile with support, for its very nature deals and respects the developmental needs and differences of the individual student. (Peterman, 1990)
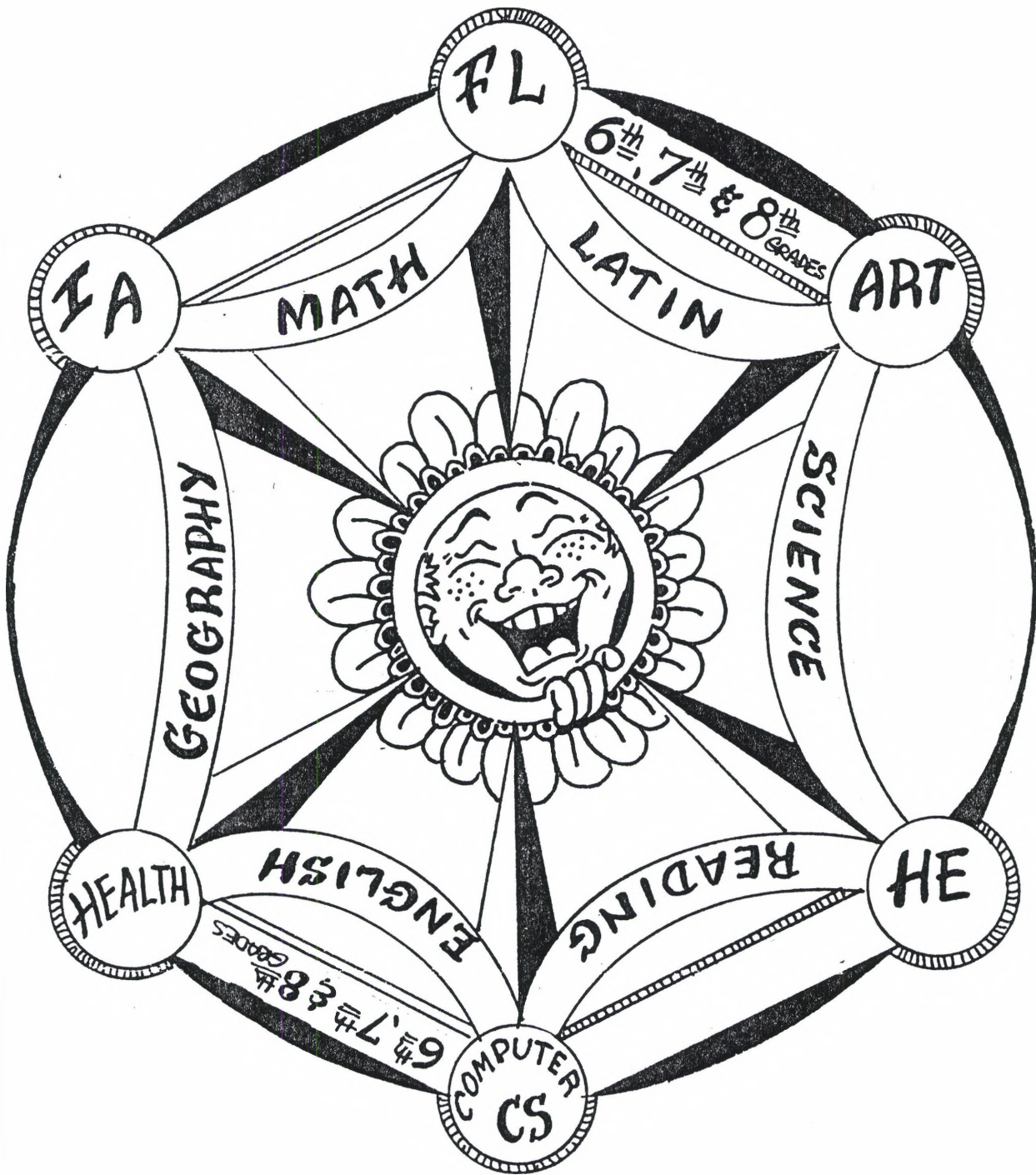
CHAPTER III

HANDBOOK

GOAL

In the near future, the Findlay City School system will be making a transition from a traditional junior high school to a middle school setting. The success of this change depends on the complete understanding of the workings of an effective middle school.

This handbook is designed to assist teachers in the Findlay City School system in understanding the rational major components and implementation of a middle school.

RATIONAL

To be competent, a teacher must not only know how to teach but also understand why one approach is likely to be more effective than another for a given purpose or situation. Teachers must understand their options and utilize the best strategies and techniques for the accomplishment of their goals.

During the middle school years, individual differences in physical, intellectual, social and emotional growth are striking. These students desire opportunities to act independently but also want security and support. Schools and teachers should provide opportunities for adolescents to explore and experiment in a stable supportive atmosphere.

Simply changing the name of a school from junior high to middle school is ineffective. Techniques for teaching these students must be distinguishable from those that are commonly used in high schools. We must recognize that students in these early adolescent years need a special educational experience to nurture them through this unstable time.

QUALITIES OF MIDDLE LEVEL TEACHERS (Williamson and Johnston, 1991)

The National Middle School Association in a recent publication reviewing research on effective middle level practices identified 18 "clusters" of teacher behaviors that contribute to the success of middle level teachers. We know that these characteristics are possessed by our professional staff and that all good teachers at any level possess them. Nevertheless, for your information, this research found that effective middle school teachers...

1. *Have a positive self-concept.* They identify with others, feel adequate.
2. *Demonstrate warmth.* Teachers who seek contact with students, use affectionate words, smile and look pleasant are generally regarded as more effective. Teacher displays of warmth are important because teachers who like students (and show it) tend to have students who like each other.
3. *Are optimistic.* More effective teachers express positive attitudes and pleasant feelings in the classroom. They are optimistic in their assessments of individual student capabilities and tend to be encouraging.
4. *Are enthusiastic.* Effective teachers are vigorous in their presentations and involved in the activities of the class. They tend to gesture and avoid "reading" prepared lessons.
5. *Are flexible.* These teachers can change the focus in the middle of a lesson if the students become bored or uninterested; they adjust easily to changes in plans, time scheduled, absence, or student behavior; they respond to constructive requests for changes in classroom procedure.
6. *Are spontaneous.* Spontaneous teachers can capitalize on unexpected incidents that arise in class. They also tend to encourage student expression and do not avoid situations that deviate from planned activities.
7. *Accept students.* Accepting teachers avoid criticism, not by refusing to tell a student he or she is wrong, but by using sincere and frequent statements of approval. These teachers are disinclined to berate or belittle children in front of others or to display negative perceptions publicly.
8. *Demonstrate awareness of developmental levels.* They assign tasks appropriate to a student's ability and adjust tasks when students become confused or uncertain. They show less tendency to push students into activities for which they are not ready, and they express less bewilderment over student inability to perform tasks.

9. *Demonstrate knowledge of subject matter.*
Knowledgeable teachers are able to structure lessons
and alter instruction on the basis of student needs.
They are able to monitor learning and engage students
in instructional activities related to significant
concepts.

10. *Use a variety of instructional activities and
materials.* These teachers are able to vary
instruction in accordance with individual student
learning styles.

11. *Structure instruction.* Teachers who spend time
discussing, explaining, and stimulating cognitive
processes in organized ways encourage greater pupil
performance. They tend to review previous lessons,
outlining main topics of planned lessons, signalling
the beginnings and ending of lessons, underscoring
important points, and summarizing. These teachers
are less likely to begin new topics without
summarizing previous ones.

12. *Monitor learning.* These teachers check test papers
and student work in order to adjust instruction.
They also move about the room, observing students and
making suggestions. In lieu of "busywork," they used
extra time for creative, social, or interest-directed
activities.

13. *Use concrete materials and focused learning
strategies.* These teachers use models, objects, and
visual aids to provoke imagery; attend to the
manipulation of concrete images before moving to
formal operations; and focus student attention on
problem-solving situation.

14. *Ask varied question.* Using both higher order and
lower order questions, in appropriate situations,
produces improved student performance. Using a
variety of question types for maximizing
instructional effectiveness is preferable to relying
on a single type of question.

15. *Incorporate indirectness in teaching.* Indirect
teachers build on student statements, praise
students, encourage student talk, and minimize
criticism, lecture, and confusion.

16. *Incorporate "success building" behavior in teaching.*
Success-oriented teachers use positive reinforcers,
encouragement, and praise of student work. They are
disinclined to use sarcasm, shame, and harassment.

17. *Diagnose individual learning needs and prescribe
individual instruction.* More effective teachers
monitor the completion of tasks, perceive various
learning rates, and allow adequate time for
completion. They design interest-based learning
tasks, define expectations on an individual basis,
and allow for independent and small group activities.
They also demonstrate less of a tendency to teach an

entire class the same lesson and to grade on a group standard.
18. *Listen.* Teachers who listen to student attend to and build upon student thoughts and expressions. They acknowledge student input by summarizing what was said and by avoiding the appearance of preoccupation.

What emerges from this listing of characteristics in the image of a self-confident professional who demonstrates both an awareness of student needs and varied learning strategies.

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE TEACHERS   (Bergmann and Baxter)

In addition, you will want to incorporate into your teaching style the characteristics of the most effective teachers. The following are ten characteristics of effective teachers:

1. The effective teacher knows the students, their styles, their strengths and weaknesses, their knowledge and skills, and how they learn best.
2. The effective teacher is well prepared, that is, a master of content who carefully plans the lessons.
3. The effective teacher is well organized. That teacher's classes move along smoothly and briskly, with a minimum of confusion, overlapping, dead spots, irrelevancies, sudden shifts in direction without appropriate transitions, and inappropriate behavior.
4. The effective teacher is businesslike and conducts a businesslike class in which each student's class time is concentrated on accomplishing learning tasks.
5. The effective teacher is a good manager. The students know what they are supposed to do and do it because from the very first day the teacher carefully maps out the rules of behavior and the consequences of inappropriate behavior, sets up definite and clearly understood routines for classroom procedures, and makes clear and relevant assignments, pointing out what the students are to do, how they are to do it, and why they do it.
6. The effective teacher makes manifest by his or her behavior to the students that each student is respected by the teacher, that the teacher is sincerely concerned about each student's progress and welfare, and that the teacher confidently expects each student to do well.
7. The effective teacher adjusts the teaching method to fit the subject matter, the objectives, the group, and the individual students.
8. The effective teacher monitors student performance carefully and continually, providing frequent comprehension checks, giving students individual and constructive feedback about their work and progress, and taking particular care to recognize individual student accomplishment however slight.
9. The effective teacher is an effective communicator, who uses thoughtfully selected words, carefully planned question, expressive voice inflections, useful pauses, meaningful gestures, and productive and expressive body language.

10. The effective teacher is quick to recognize a student who may be in need of special attention, knows where and how to refer a student whose behaviors indicate a need for more specialized attention, and can do so with minimal class disruption or embarrassment to the student.

(Introduction to Teaching in Middle and Secondary Schools, p. 24-25)

COMMON ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE MIDDLE LEVEL PROGRAMS
(Williamson and Johnston, 1991)

1. A comprehensive academic program that stresses skill development for each student.
2. A program of exploratory and enrichment experiences.
3. The use of instructional methods appropriate to the age group: individualized instruction, variable group sizes, multi-media approaches, independent study programs, inquiry-oriented instruction.
4. Flexibility in scheduling and student grouping.
5. Cooperative planning and team teaching.
6. Planned opportunities for teacher-student guidance, which may include a home base or adviser-advisee program.
7. Cooperative instead of competitive activities.
8. At least some interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary studies.
9. Emphasis on increasing the student's independence, responsibility, and self-discipline.
10. Opportunities for students to formulate personal values and standards.
11. Physical and health education based solely on the needs of the students.

HIERARCHY OF NEEDS (Williamson and Johnston, 1991)

	Staff	Parents	Students	Administrators
Aesthetic needs (self-actualization)	Attention to the needs of students first	Attention to the needs of students first	Attention to the first	Attention to the needs of students first
				Appropriate attention to the needs of staff and parents
Need for Understanding:	Focus on the developmental needs of students	Curriculum content	Exploration	Knowledge of middle level students, curriculum, assessment
Need for knowledge:	Staff development student needs program models planning skills curriculum instruction assessment multi-cultural	Knowledge of middle level adolescent	New areas of study Enrichment Teaching specialists	Knowledge of middle level programs Process skills for collaborative planning
Esteem Needs:	Will I be successful?	Will my child be successful?	Will I be successful?	Will I be successful
Belonging Needs:	Will I be valued? Will I fit in? New social/work norms	Will my child fit in? New social norms	Will the other kids like me? Will I be safe? New social norms	New organization Will I be able to recognize achievement of self and others?
Security Needs:	What school will I be assigned to?	Is the staff qualified? Will my child be safe?	Who will my teacher be?	How will I organize this school?
Survival Needs:	What will I be assinged to teach? Will I know the content of the curriculum? Where will my room be? Will I have sufficient and appropriate materials Are the courses developed		What courses will I take? Will I get lost? Will I be safe:	How do we plan for the new model? What school will I be assigned to? Who will be on my staff? Will the staff/parents/ students support this program? Will I receive support from the central office?

Adapted by from Maslow

ADVISOR-ADVISEE PROGRAM

The purpose of the advisor-advisee program, often called home base, is to give support and understanding to students of Middle School age. It is an age in which each child is becoming a person in his own right and is capable of deeply felt relationships. They need security and affection which creates a feeling of being wanted and a sense of belonging.

The advisors role is to become the student's best adult school friend. The advisor should be available to help students through difficult times and to share successes. He or she helps personalize the learning experience for the student and helps develop their fragile self-concept.

Some teachers feel very uncomfortable with the guidance and advisory program because they are trained to be teachers and not counselors. However, teachers do more guiding and advising that they realize when dealing with this age group of student. Teachers may well be the most consistent adult in the students' lives.

To become more confident in an advisor role, it is important that the teacher have inservice meetings and attend professional classes in child development. Also, adequate time must be devoted to preparing advisory philosophy and implementing it.

The first year of implementation should be devoted to staff development, setting goals and priorities, establishing committees, gathering materials and developing

the rationale. Parents and students should be included in
the development of this program. One method of doing this
is to conduct a survey to discover the needs for the
program.

The second year is devoted to analyzing the program
from the first year and concentrating on improving the
weaknesses. At this point, teachers will fall into three
categories which are: 1) those who are confident with the
advisory program, 2) those who have experienced some success
with the program but still need further development and 3)
those who are uncomfortable with the program and have
experienced little success. The key is to concentrate on
total success for all teachers. One method of accomplishing
this is to team successful teachers with those who require
additional development and to continue inservice programs.

By the third year, the program should be well underway.
Continual inservice programs need to be available to update
the program and gain new ideas. Advisory Planning Guides
should be developed to give ideas for discussion topics. At
this point, parental involvement should be increasing in the
program and long range goals for the program should be
developed.

The advisor is the most important link between the
school and home. Because the advisor is working in small
groups, he or she gains an in-depth understanding of each
student. Classroom teachers should bring to the advisor's
attention problems that are occurring in the classroom. In

turn, the advisor can work with the student to solve these problems and keep in close contact with the parents for home support. The advisor should be the first person to contact the parents and the parents should first contact their child's advisor when problems or questions arise. Because of the close network between advisor, student and parents, the program enhances the parent's positive perception of the school.

The program should consist of approximately 25 students for every advisor. It should meet every day at a regular time for 20 to 35 minutes. It has been suggested that it open the school day for three reasons. They are as follows:

1.   It is viewed by the students as important and is less apt to be viewed as free time.

2.   It gives the students time to unwind, unload and work through difficulties before beginning academic work which will enable the student to learn more if not troubled.

3.   It sets the mood for the entire day by sharing attitudes and thus the behavior of the students.

Opening the school day is not the only time the advisor program can be scheduled, but it should be scheduled at an important time so it is viewed as important and positive to the student.

The program should concentrate extensively on two topics. The first being self-knowledge which should include: 1. getting to know each student exceedingly well, 2. letting students get to know the advisor well, 3. helping students get to know each other, and 4. helping students get

to know themselves. The second topic is groupness which

includes: 1. helping the group care about the group itself,

2. helping the group learn to work and play together,

3. helping the group learn to talk and listen together, and

4. helping the group be self-directed.

The following is an example of an advisor program topic

for one month.

<u>Title</u>:   Teen Pressure and Social Situations
<u>Goal</u>:   To equip students with an awareness and
              understanding of peer pressure and
              societal pressures as they may effect
              students in various social situations.

<u>Objective</u>:   To increase awareness of life crisis
              areas including:

              a. substance use and abuse
              b. suicide and death
              c. loss of relationships of friends
              d. selecting healthy life styles

On the next three pages are examples of daily

activities that could be used with students in this program.

Additional activities can be found in child development

activity books.

CAN YOU GET THERE FROM HERE?

YOU WILL NEED A MAP OF THE BUILDING AND A PEN OR PENCIL.

1. Circle the principals' office. Write their names and their secretaries' names in the upper left-hand corner of the map.

2. Draw an X on the door you use to enter the cafeteria.

3. Draw a football in the room where you buy tickets for Senior High games.

4. Put a T on the teachers' lounge. What procedure do you follow once you get there?

5. Write AV on the room where you go when your teacher sends you to get a piece of equipment. Who is in charge? What does AV mean?

6. Circle the area where the guidance counselors' offices and the nurse's office are located.

BITS AND PIECES

1. Spell the name of your school. _____

2. The two counselors' names are _____

    and _____.

3. Who is in charge of attendance? _____

4. What is the name of your school nurse? _____

5. Where is the lost and found located? _____

6. If you are absent, where do you go when you return?

    _____

7. During what periods should you go to your locker? _____

    _____

8. How much does lunch cost? _____milk? _____cookies?

9. What do you do if you forget your lunch money? _____

    _____

10. You have a dentist's or doctor's appointment today at 1:30 p.m. Who do you go to in order to get permission to leave school?

    _____

11. During class, you suddenly become very ill. What do you do?

    _____

12. When lost, what do you do?_____

13. Which phone(s) do you use? _____

14. When may you chew gum in school? _____

GAP ACTIVITY

My students said they wanted to discuss the topic of dating.
These are the questions I used for the discussion. We met
with all boys one week, all girls the next week, and then
the entire group to summarize the results.

1.   What is a date - or what is dating?

2.   When should people begin dating?

3.   How do you get another person to notice you or let
      them know you like them?

4.   What do boys like and dislike about girls?

5.   What do girls like and dislike about boys?

6.   How do you ask a a girl for a date?

7.   What do you say if they refuse?

8.   How do you tell a boy that you don't want to go
      with him? What if he won't take no for an answer?

HOW TO BECOME MORE LIKEABLE

Most of us enjoy being liked, and rightly so, for unless we are fairly well liked our lives will lack warmth and value and we will be unable to have much wholesome influence with those with whom we come in contact.

If you want to be liked, you must be likeable. The degree to which you possess this trait can be determined fairly well by the following inventory. It consists of twenty-five questions, each of which is followed by the words "yes" and "no". Read each of the questions carefully and circle either the "yes" or "no".

1.	Are you fairly energetic?	Yes	No
2.	Are you a good loser in a game?	Yes	No
3.	Are you fairly free from selfishness?	Yes	No
4.	Are you usually natural rather than artificial?	Yes	No
5.	Do you usually speak distinctly?	Yes	No
6.	Do you usually use good English?	Yes	No
7.	Do you refrain from being gossipy?	Yes	No
8.	Do you refrain from envying others?	Yes	No
9.	Do you make and hold friends easily?	Yes	No
10.	Do you avoid trying to make other people over?	Yes	No
11.	Can you stand criticism without showing resentment?	Yes	No
12.	Do you try to understand people and the reasons for their actions?	Yes	No
13.	When talking to others, are you careful not to exaggerate?	Yes	No
14.	Do you avoid flattering others?	Yes	No
15.	Do you avoid trying to dominate others?	Yes	No
16.	Do you refrain from correcting the mistake of others?	Yes	No
17.	Do you avoid reproving others for what they say or do?	Yes	No
18.	Do you refrain from laughing at the mistakes of others?	Yes	No
19.	Do you as a rule, refrain from asking favors of others?	Yes	No
20.	Do you refrain from excessively talking about your personal troubles?	Yes	No
21.	Can it be said that you seldom if ever, borrow anything?	Yes	No
22.	Do you usually respect the opinion and rights of others?	Yes	No
23.	Do you avoid saying anything that would embarrass anyone listening?	Yes	No
24.	Do you constantly ask someone to repeat that he/she has just said?	Yes	No
25.	Do you compliment others when they do something nice?	Yes	No

In figuring your score count the number of your "yes" answers, each of which indicates a likeable trait (each "no" answer indicates an unlikable trait.

If your score is from 20 through 25, you are indeed a rare person - nice to know, nice to associate with, nice to have as a friend.

If your score is from 15 through 19, you are average in likability.

If your score is from 9 through 14, you might want to work on some self-improvement goals.

If you want to improve yourself and become more likeable you must have a sincere desire to be more likeable. If you have such a desire the following hints will become helpful.

1.   Try to form a mental picture of what you think is a truly likeable person.

2.   Devise some plan by which you think you can make yourself more likeable.

3.   Ask your counselor or teacher for suggestions as to how to set up goals for self-improvement.

A weekly sample schedule for a balanced adviser program is outlined below. The schedule has four basic components with one repeated part.

    1.   Creative Expression - This might occur on Monday and is characterized by the following activities.
        A.   art work
        B.   music related activities
        C.   creative writing
        D.   dramatics

    2.   Valuing Process - This absorbs two school-week days and is devoted to the following items.

        A.   group sharing sessions
        B.   interviews
        D.   teacher-directed discussion of the following:
            1.   beliefs
            2.   current issues
            3.   personal problems
            4.   school problems
            5.   adolescent problems
        D.   working through value clarifying activities

    3.   Group Time - This component involves the group in some special project or happening such as the following:
        A.   planting flowers in the school yard
        B.   making a mural for the school
        C.   painting the windows in the classroom
        D.   making Christmas presents for orphans

    4.   Individual Conference or Academic Work - This provides a chance for each student to talk to you alone or have you help them with specific academic difficulties. It is a quiet time and gives the teacher a chance to know more about the student personally and academically.

Nine components are essential to a successful guidance and advisory program. They are:

1. The principal and every teacher must possess basic counseling skills. One guidance counselor in a school of 400 students cannot be expected to reach every student.

2. Time must be given during the school day for every student to be in an advisory group. The advisory session should last at least 20 minutes.

3. Formal and informal guidance activities are needed at the middle level. Students don't have dilemmas only during advisory time. Teachers must be available to help students at the time the students need them.

4. Teachers must be trained in basic human relations skills before they are involved in a formal advisory program.

5. Inservice and retreats should be planned to help teachers prepare for the advisory program. Teachers as well as students need support.

6. The guidance model should permeate the regular curriculum. Al teachers should recognize the importance that decision making plays in the lives of transescents and teach the decision-making process through subject areas.

7. Health information must be available to every student. Every teacher should be aware of the health needs and physical development process of transescents. Most of the advisory questions and discussions will be related to these issues.

8. Parents should be informed about the guidance or advisory program. Parent support groups can be formed to discuss advisory issues with teachers and to follow through with the program at home.

9. The formal advisory program must be written as a guidance curriculum with goals, activities, and a means of evaluation. It must have a definite scope and sequence.

An advisor-advisee program is essential for a middle school to work. Children at this age require guidance in developing a positive self-concept and working through difficult times. For this program to be effective, the advisor must be trained in child development through inservices and classes. Adequate time must be allowed to establish the appropriate rationale and goals for the program which meet the needs of the school, students, parents and community.

INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM ORGANIZATION

What is it?

One of the most important tasks of all middle schools is the organizing of the faculty into an interdisciplinary organization of teachers that is the backbone of its program. If the groups are strong, the entire program will function better. Without it, the program will probably fail or at best be second-rate.

An interdisciplinary group is a group of teachers representing the core subject areas and are organized in the following way. Each group should share: (1) the responsibility for planning, teaching and evaluating curriculum (2) the same group of students (3) the same schedule and (4) if possible, the same area of the physical plant. When all four of these criteria are satisfied, team organization is better facilitated.

Going further, the interdisciplinary team is a combination of teachers from different subject areas who plan and conduct instruction for particular groups of students. The aim of this interdisciplinary teaming is to promote communication, coordination and cooperation among subject matter specialist. Students, therefore, will benefit from instruction planned by specialists, and escape the individualism that characterizes departmentalized organization.

Facts that support the interdisciplinary team organization approach are as follows:

1. Teachers in the middle school need to be specialists in a single subject discipline. With the ever increasing demands for competency, it is not practical to expect a teacher to develop a depth of background and method in more than one area of knowledge to attain effectiveness.

2. While paying attention to the demand for teacher competency in a specific discipline, it is necessary to keep in mind the child-oriented concept emphasized in the elementary school. The elementary teachers know relatively few students more completely, and the students tend to know the teacher better.

3. The teacher team organizational design adds a new dimension, a stimulation resulting from the interaction of teachers who are planning together for a common group of students.

4. The team organization, because of its nature, allows many opportunities to develop in the areas of large and small group instruction and independent study.

Teachers working with each other in an interdisciplinary team, deal with individual student problems, seek the aid of specialist, integrate subject areas and deal with other school-related topics.

The advantages of using interdisciplinary teaming.

The researchers believe the benefits of indisciplinary teaming to be of the upmost importance. To add to those already mentioned, some other advantages are listed below.

1. Providing needed assistance to student and beginning teachers.

2. The team scheduling block promotes the professional growth of teachers through the exchange of ideas among the teaching team.

3. The possibility of teams completely rearranging time and period schedules without effecting the overall school program to best meet the needs of their program and the need of their students.

4. The academic teachers could schedule times for parental conferences when all of them could be available.

5. Large blocks of time are available for field trips, films or guest speakers. In all, less teaching time would be lost.

6. A number of teachers can lend their individual expertise to a topic together.

7. Allows for closer work with learning specialists and guidance counselors.

8. Teachers can better understand individual differences in students when more than one person is making the observation and evaluation and, therefore, can deal with those differences more effectively. Discipline

problems can be more easily handled and steps for alleviating the problem can be more readily discussed.

9. Teachers can be more aware of what is being learned by their students in other classes. This could lead to insight and appreciation for other projects making demands on their students.

10. Knowledge in specific subject areas can be coordinated so that students can relate one subject to another. This leads to a greater overall understanding for the students.

11. With all the teaching group understanding the schedule, use of instructional materials, student grouping and instructional methods, individual student learning will benefit.

12. Block scheduling allows teachers greater flexibility in scheduling to accommodate large and small group instruction, remedial work, and independent study.

13. Common planning time leads to more creativity in teaching approaches and to consistency in teaching strategies.

14. Interdisciplinary teaching leads to economy of learning time and transfer among students.

15. The team approach enables teachers to contrast a student's behavior and ability from class to class, thereby enabling them to develop a consistent and systematic approach for helping the child.

16. Students are able to identify themselves with a smaller school within a school.

17. Teachers have more flexibility to develop thematic units that weave together several disciplines to reach a common goal.

The team in our school

The basic interdisciplinary team will consist of five members, one from each of the academic disciplines that will be responsible for both planning and the teaching of that discipline. The members of each team are to represent the following areas; mathematics, language arts, social studies, science and reading. In addition to these five members, the teachers of music, art and industrial technology will also be assigned to a group to keep school unity intact. No one group of teachers should ever be made to feel as outsiders because this in effect would be defeating the purpose of teaming.

TEAM LEADER EXPECTATIONS

Make every effort to incorporate exploratory, special education, and physical education teachers in IDUs, planning and participating in team time, IDT meetings, governance of the school and team activities/functions.

To follow chain of command in the decision-making process within the team, other teacher, the administration and counselors.

To encounter conflict when it occurs and to resolve the issues immediately.

To foster in your team that all members will communicate with parents when discipline, academic or other problems arise and provide positive feedback about students.

To be responsible for substitutes if they have problems or need assistance.

To prepare team budgets and approve all expenditures.

To assign mentor teacher; to assist new staff members with in the IDT.

To be a "cheerleader" for your team and help to develop a positive climate in the team and with your students (Team Pride).

To implement one major IDU each trimester and provide the constant encouragement to staff to draw the curriculum together wherever possible.

To coordinate the TAG, BASE and special education aids and students with the team.

To plan interdisciplinary team agenda and provide agenda to members in advance of meeting; to inform administrators and counselors of the meeting time, and to provide written results to the team members, administration and counseling.

To assist in selection of team member replacement.

To develop individual team goals for the year to be shared with the administration in mid-September.

To coordinate communication with the other grade level teams and other teams in the building.

To work closely with your counselor and to assist students in your team.

<u>Team Leader</u>

One person from the interdisciplinary team will serve as the team leader. This person is to be chosen by the school principal. The duties of the team leader shall as follows:

I.   Responsible to:

   A. Principal

II. Major functions:

   A. Under the direction of the principal, the team leader will provide instructional leadership to members of the teaching team and students to which he/she is assigned.

   B. Communicate current trends and development in curriculum, teaching strategies, effective classroom techniques and management.

   C. Perform team functions in the areas of communication, personnel, student operations, curriculum and instruction, materials and supplies and public relation.

III. Characteristic duties:

   A. Communication - Shall provide a line of communication by:

      1. Attending scheduled team leader/administrative meetings.

      2. Conducting regularly scheduled team meetings.

      3. Disseminating information of common concern to the team.

      4. Providing feedback of concerns and ideas of the teaching team and students.

      5. Interpreting team and school goals and objectives.

   B. Team Members - Shall provide leadership for team members in the following areas by:

      1. Facilitating an coordinating of team planning and review.

2. Arranging for the preparation of and participation in staff development activities for team members.

3. Orienting new personnel to responsibilities in their assigned teams.

4. Advise substitute teachers of any team changes or unusual situations.

C. Pupil Personnel Operations - duties shall include:

1. Keeping students informed of educational opportunities, benefits and achievements.

2. Utilizing staff members and counselors in developing individual attention to the needs of students in an assigned team.

3. Assisting teachers and building administrators in developing, maintaining and evaluating a student activity program by being an active participant as well as a leader of team efforts.

D. Curriculum and Instruction - Shall help develop an instructional program by:

1. Working with the team, coordinators, and principal to implement each course of study offered.

2. Providing for articulation of the curriculum program with other teams within the school district.

3. Keeping team members aware of new materials and developments in their subject area.

4. Studying and evaluating the effectiveness of the instructional and curricular program in the team.

5. Helping to establish annual goals for the team with specific emphasis on curriculum and instructional effectiveness.

6. Organizing the students' instructional program along with the other team members.

7. Cooperating with special area teachers for total curriculum coordination.

       8. Working with team and subject area teachers to prepare for North Central Evaluation.

E. Material, Equipment and Facilities - Shall be responsible for:

       1. Advising the principal on the needs of the team.

       2. Carrying out the related duties as assigned by the building administrator.

F. Miscellaneous Duties - Shall be responsible for:

       1. Assisting the building administrator with preparation of school informational and public relations materials.

       2. Carrying out related duties as assigned by the building administrator.

THOUGHTS ON BEING A SUCCESSFUL TEAM MEMBER

These are OUR students-not my students.

These are MANY ways and not just my way.

There are goals to achieve and plans to implement the goals, including long-range as well as short-range plans and goals.

The team must evaluate what happened last week before planning for next week.

The team must be willing to change a plan, if it appears to be going wrong.

Team members should remember that disagreements are normal but can and should be resolved.

A tactful honesty and a willingness to work and plan together on an idea.

A utilization of the differences, as well as the similarities, among members.

The ability to accept and recognize failure and a desire to try again.

The realization on each teacher's part that his or her subject is of no more or less important than the other subjects.

A recognition of new and better avenues to a definite goal (don't think "subject matter", just . . . THINK!)

An awareness of how student interest can be employed in teaching the required curriculum.

A knowledge that students recognize "busy work" and respect work pertinent to the topic.

The realization that ability grouping may not be compatible with interdisciplinary team teaching.

A flexibility among team members in individual scheduling to meet a particular student's needs.

A knowledge that interdisciplinary thinking compliments individual instruction.

An interest in (not necessarily and understanding of) the other academic subjects.

A sensitivity to the feelings of the other team members;
an elimination of petty and/or personal "gripes" that
may interfere with the primary objective . . .
interdisciplinary team teaching.

The awareness that interdisciplinary topics may not
include all five disciplines and may, in fact,
encompass some electives.

<u>Team expectations</u>

What must teams, once organized, accomplish? When teams meet, what concerns are focused upon? What decisions must be made? How can teams become more effective? What are some of the problems that can cause a team to become less effective? These are all important questions and they must be answered. Here are some guidelines to help to foster the team concept.

<u>Guidelines for team meetings</u>

1. Prepare for the meeting.

 a. Have a clear idea of why you are meeting.

 b. Prepare the agenda in advance.

 c. Assemble the materials needed.

 d. Block off time needed for the meeting.

2. Adopt a plan for managing the meeting. There are five elements without which a meeting does not run smoothly. The plan should include:

 a. Start and stop at agreed times.

 b. Agree on the agenda.

 c. Hear from everyone who wants to contribute.

 d. Keep on the topic.

 e. Keep records during and after the meeting.

3. Analyze the problem.

 a. Study the situation and discuss the facts.

 b. Examine people's assumptions about the situation.

 c. Consider the boundaries within which the group works.

4. Examine possibilities for action.

   a. Brainstorm ideas.

   b. Propose tasks or goals.

   c. Consider alternate plans.

   d. Test the consequences of a plan.

5. Decide on an action plan.

   a. Reconsider the problem; clear up confusion and ambiguity.

   b. Design the plan.

   c. Agree on work assignments.

   d. Agree on a timetable and communication plan.

6. Keep group processes moving. While the group is acting on its agenda and following the problem-solving sequences, some members must be giving attention to the interpersonal processes of the group.

   a. Encourage each member to participate and share information.

   b. Protect members' rights to have their own opinions known and feelings aired.

   c. Bridge differences and conflicts between members.

   d. Help the group to be aware of its procedures and interactions, and to consider changes if needed.

   e. Clarify, elaborate and summarize ideas and suggestions; offer conclusions for the group to accept or reject.

   f. Ask for clarification, elaboration or summary.

   g. Ask for expression of feelings and concerns.

   h. Try to ensure that everyone shares in the decisions being made.

   i. Be constantly alert to what the group process needs at any moment to move it ahead.

7. Carry out the meetings' decisions and plans.

    a. Refrain from altering the plan without the groups consent.

    b. Keep complaints for the next meeting.

    c. Protect the confidences of the meeting.

Uses of team planning time

1. Build a good rapport with team members, which leads students to a more positive attitude towards school.

2. Set team policies or rules.

3. Discuss when and how to fill out necessary forms at the beginning of the school year.

4. Group students for basic skill classes.

5. Discuss and schedule student assignments.

6. Discuss students.

7. Student conference.

8. Phone parents.

9. Parent conference.

10. Fill out progress reports.

11. Fill out report cards.

12. Plan schedule adaptations.

13. Plan special activities (Team-teaching, interdisciplinary units, field trips, etc.).

14. Select students for special awards or programs.

15. Schedule and recommend students for high school placement.

16. Evaluate team effectiveness.

Team Activity: questions to be answered by the team.

1. What is our primary goal as a team? Where can we post this to constantly remind us of our primary goal?

2. What is our definition of the team process?

3. What is our definition of the middle school concept?

4. What is our professional relationship to each other?

5. What is our relationship to the school as a whole?

6. How much time will we devote to the team process?

7. What is our commitment to the concept of flexibility?

8. How will we attempt to develop a strong, positive team identity among our students and parents?

9. How can we identify opportunities to correlate content and/or skills in our team situation?

10. How can we provide personal development activities for the pupils on our team?

11. How can we utilize the resources to facilitate pupil adjustment?

12. How can we continue to discuss and evaluate our role and function as a team?

Enhancing Team Effectiveness (Merenbloom, 1991)

Once the members of a teaching team are aware of the team's role and function, they are ready for some activities designed to enhance team effectiveness. Team enhancement activities include (1) getting to know each other, (2) discussing expectations of other team members, (3) discussing expectations of the team leader, (4) discussing expectations of the guidance counselor, administrators, librarian, and other resource personnel, (5) developing procedures to establish team goals, and (6) determining the concensus needed for team decisions.

Getting to know each other

Some questions to use for getting acquainted:

1. How long have you taught in the district?
2. What was your previous assignment?
3. Can you tell us about your family?
4. What are your hobbies and interests?
5. Are you enrolled in a graduate program?
6. What are your feelings about teaming? Any fears?
7. What strengths do you bring to the team?
8. What support do you want from this team?

It is important for team members to be good listeners as well as to be honest in giving answers. It is also important to learn how to share. Sharing of prior experiences build a strong foundation for later sharing when the process is critical to the team's success. Team members

must learn to recognize verbal as well as nonverbal cues. More importantly, team members must learn to handle these cues in ways that are not threatening to each other. Remember, the main goal is for the team to feel both comfortable and honest with each other.

Teaching on a Team

The instructional responsibilities of team members fall into three categories:

1. Subject Area: You have been given a teaching assignment in your area of certification. You have a course description and it states skills which you must cover. Most of your instruction in this area will be done independently of what the other members of your team are doing.

2. Interdisciplinary Activities: Many of the concepts and skills that you teach in your subject area can be coordinated with, or reinforced in, other subjects. By sharing your course content and lesson planning with other members of your team, you can develop interdisciplinary activities which incorporate this coordination and reinforcement. These are activities you will do when they are convenient, easily accomplished, and educationally advantageous. They may involve as few as two teachers, or all the members of the team.

3. Thematic Units: These are carefully planned units developed around a central theme. Research in intermediate education indicates that they are important for students this age to foster an understanding of the interrelated importance of all subjects. Thematic units require a great deal of advanced planning. It is recommended that you begin slowly, one such unit in the first teaming year would be a true accomplishment. Some teams may eventually have as many as two or three units in a school year. Thematic units provide an excellent opportunity to include the special area teachers and other support personnel. Sometimes the entire school will participate in a thematic unit.

Some Examples of Interdisciplinary Activities:

Science and Math - The very large and small numbers required in some studies of science can be also taught in the Math class as the concept of scientific notation. The metric system also provides many opportunities for activities.

Science, Reading and English - In English it is necessary to be able to distinguish fact from opinion; in Science you must be able to separate cause from effect and theory from law. Both can

coordinate efforts on common reading skills and reasoning processes.

Math, English, Social Studies, Science and Reading - A simple seed or gardening catalog can be obtained and used in succession by teachers. The Reading teacher will stress the importance of reading skills. The English teacher the correct way to fill out forms, order blanks and business letters. The Math teacher can incorporate comparison shopping into an exercise in which the students order various items and compute the cost of the order. The Social Studies classes can examine or draw maps showing where the plants can be grown. The Science teacher can refer to the illustrations and descriptions of plants, or do a lesson on disease and insect control.

Math and English - Students can be shown the relationship between direct proportions and analogies. The English teacher can use the mathematical form of a proportion to outline analogies.

Social Studies and Science - A Science teacher presents a unit on electricity. The students will learn about the principles and theories of electrical power as a source of energy. In Social Studies the students will be taught the discoveries and inventions related to electricity and how this leads to the expansion of transportation and communications systems.

Math, Science, English and Social Studies - In Math, the students learn the various comparisons and conversions of the metric system. The English teacher emphasizes the spelling and proper use of the metric system terms within sentence structure. In Science, students use the metric system in their lab and classwork. An in Social Studies the teacher emphasizes the historical background of metrics and its use in other parts of the world.

Social Studies and Math - In Social Studies, a unit has been developed for map and globe studies. The students will learn to draw, read and interpret the language of maps and globes. In Math the students will learn proportions to help emphasize drawing maps to scale.

Remember, these are just a few examples of interdisciplinary

activities and teachers are encouraged to develop their own

to better fit their needs and those of their students. This would be an excellent time to incorporate team teaching techniques into the unit.

Possible Ideas for the Development of Thematic Units

- Space Exploration
- Careers
- Pollution
- Drug Abuse
- Micro-Electronics
- Consumer Economics
- Energy
- Conservation Issues
- Health - Hygiene - Grooming
- Safety
- Technology
- Music
- Animals
- Genealogy
- Sports
- Cooperation

INSERVICE

Staff members must have and feel that they have support throughout the transition to a middle school. Additional burdens will be placed on school personnel in the areas of planning, participation in staff development, dealing with adjustments to a new organizational system and, at the same time, continue to conduct business as usual. Teachers must be provided with time and proper resources for the transition to take place smoothly and effectively.

Staff development is the key to a comprehensive program implementation. First, before any thing else, clarification and disclosure as to why the transition is taking place in the school system needs to be explained and discussed by all parties. If the issue is dealt with openly and fairly, it is less likely that bad feelings will not develop and enthusiasm for and willingness to participate fully will be positive.

Commitment by the central administration must be clearly perceived and discussed for the teachers to accept the change. An increased amount of time spent by the administration of the issue shows an increase in importance. Modeling is an important tool for stimulating learning, even at the advanced professional level. The central administration must be devoted to the efforts of retraining the staff.

School board members also must demonstrate their understanding of and a commitment to the reorganization effort. They must commit to an increased financial support for professional staff development. They can not have a wait and see attitude for an effective transition. This must be a joint commitment by all.

A coordinator needs to be appointed who is in charge of the retraining effort and responsible for establishing inservice programs. This person should have training, experience and an in-depth exposure to the middle school concept. A staff development committee should be developed to assist the coordinator. Represented on this committee should be the administration, a curriculum specialist and faculty members. Their main objectives should include the following: 1. develop rational for staff development, 2. long range plan of activities, 3. establishing time lines, 4. constructing learning experiences, 5. outlining funding requirements, 6. identification of participants.

Inservice programs must be sensitive to those who have strong ties to past teaching practices and altered relationship among staff because of transfer of personnel to new buildings. Needs for development differ among the staff, therefore, inservice must be delivered in a variety of ways. Before establishing programs, the teachers should be polled as to their previous experiences with middle school, their perceived informational needs and their own

learning styles and then develop programs based on this information.

Inservice should focus on two methods of staff development which are individual and group. Individual development should include sabbaticals, attendance at middle school conferences, on-site visits and the creation of an individual development plan. Group inservice should include workshops and classes, internal district conferences, common readings, use of consultants, guest speakers and visits to middle school.

The knowledge imparted during inservice programs should start with the middle school philosophy and then go into depth about the major components of a middle school. The first component that must be understood by teachers is team teaching. The main element of this component is a common planning period in which a variety of activities occur such as the formation of interdisciplinary units. Inservice should concentrate on interpersonal communication because it is vital that team members must be willing to share thoughts, ideas and responsibilities.

Teachers must also understand the characteristics of the middle school child. This goes hand in hand with the philosophy of the middle school and student centered learning.

The advisor-advisee program is essential for an effective middle school. Since most teachers are not trained for counselor roles, inservice of teachers in this

area is imperative for a serviceable program to be developed.

There are many other topics that need to be addressed for an efficient middle school to operate. They are as follows: 1) student activities 2) special education 3) evaluation 4) curriculum 5) evaluation 6) community involvement 7) scheduling and 8) discipline.

Teacher inservice is the beginning of the establishment of an effective middle school transition. It is imperative to have the commitment of all groups involved towards this endeavor. Ample planning, time and finances must be devoted to provide sufficient information to the teaching staff.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY

Simply changing the name from junior high to middle
school is ineffective in establishing a middle school.
There are major components that must be addressed and
understood by all who work with the middle school concept.

Instructional methods should be appropriate to this age
group and should include practices of individualized
instruction, inquiry-oriented instruction, cooperative
learning and variable group sizes. Scheduling should be
flexible and must include a team teaching approach with a
common planning period. A teacher and student guidance
program that includes a home base is essential to help
personalize the learning experience for the student and help
develop their fragile self-concept.

To make the transition from a junior high to middle
school a commitment must be made by all involved including
the Board of Education, administration, teaching staff,
students and the community. Cooperation, communication and
understanding between all groups is primary.

To begin this transition, teacher inservice is
required. Most teachers are unfamiliar with the rational
and implementation of this concept. Ample planning time and
finances are necessary for an effective program created by a
dedicated and understanding staff.

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