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ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE AND REFORM IN MIDDLE GRADE
EDUCATION: A CALIFORNIA MIDDLE SCHOOL CASE STUDY

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirement for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Secondary Education


by
James Richard Watson
June 1996

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EDUCATION: A CALIFORNIA MIDDLE SCHOOL CASE STUDY

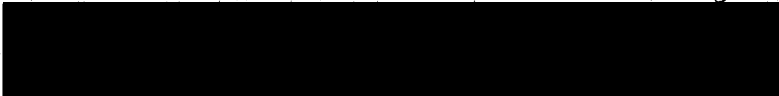
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Approved by:


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June 1, 1996
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ABSTRACT

By the year 2005, all schools in California must be restructured as stipulated by the Department of Education. Consequently, a Southern California school district embarked on the road to reform the process of education. Thus, in 1988 XX Junior High became known as XX Middle School. The name change aside, the question remains as to whether or not the philosophy of middle grade education accompanied the transition.

Subsequently, the task at hand determined to what extent XX Middle School conforms to the current revolution towards a "State of the Art" middle school. The philosophical scope of reform has been reduced to two factors that have a correlative value with the student population: curriculum and instruction. Moreover, the organizational changes that either preempted or accompanied the implementation of middle grade practices was identified and explored. This query traced the school historically from the 1988 name change through the end of the 1993-1994 school year.

The information generated directly emanated from the school site in an accumulation of plural configurations. Adult survey questionnaires assisted with the background information regarding the organizational change and reform measures, while student interviews served to demonstrate the impact of the restructuring efforts. Correspondingly, the data from student interviews as well as the adult questionnaires was aligned with the 1990 and 1994 (PQR)

Program Quality Review findings, action plans and recommendations. Thus, the association of individuals with reform measures converged to demonstrate the compilation of data for this study.

The conclusions drawn from the responses to the survey questionnaire indicate three realms of convention that hold the embodiment of explanation for the low extent (See Matrix, p. 93) to which XX Middle School correlates with the "State of the Art" middle school idealism. The three realms of convention are design, communication and personnel.

The design of the reform model directly affected the implementation and result of the reform measures. As components of the change models, preplanning, a timeline and assessment were nonexistent. Further, several different models were simultaneously in operation which lead to breakdowns as one replaced the other.

Communication throughout the entire venture created an atmosphere of division and confrontation that permeated the organization. The dysfunction of the communication between participants was fueled by numerous personnel changes throughout the years that reform was mandated.

Furthermore, the support for the reform measures stratified the participants and the ensuing camps set out to purport their particular version of the model. There emerged not an arguable strength for a particular faction, but rather an illusion that change was occurring at the site simply because a model was in position. As a faculty member states regarding the reform measures at the study

site: "Oh, there is a reform movement at XX Middle School. There is not!"

Finally, XX Middle School deviates from the paradigm of middle grade education as delineated in the State document *Caught In The Middle*, both in theory and practice.

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To my father and mother, John B. and Betty H. Watson, I am eternally grateful for their continued love, understanding and support of me as a student, as a son, and as a person. It is through my parents that I learned the responsibility and independence, requisite in the journey of life.

Esto Quod Esse Videris

J. R. W.

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"All reforms which rest simply upon the enactment of law, or the threatening of certain penalties, or upon changes in mechanical or outward arrangements, are transitory and futile."

John Dewey

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

American economic, political and social forces have historically functioned in unison as innovations and augmentations within society emerged. The agrarian economic structure at the turn of the century provided the growing nation with a secure and stable economic entity. As time progressed the economy metamorphosed and was transformed into an industrial complex that served as an international model. Ultimately, further shifts occurred and the nation moved from industrial to post-industrial to an economy based on high technology. Presently, the nation's economic condition is marked by information and service linked to high technology. Meanwhile, the political arena correspondingly altered the foundations of government. What had been a cloistered operation with limited public attentiveness, became a public stage that is fueled by special interests and factions from all sides of the political continuum. In the same way, the social agenda of the nation concurrently developed as the notion of individual and group civil rights were exercised and then realized. The convergence of economic, political and social facets of American policy created a strong and powerful nation accorded the role of world leader.

The shards of change that were evidenced by the developing nation, did not however, transfer to education. The countenance of

schooling in America preserves the disposition of entrenched practices that have endured a century of surrounding change. There have been intermittent interruptions and fascinations within the schooling community to embrace reform measures. However, these were pretender efforts that were celebrated by blind uncertainties and resulted in counter productive contrivances. Change and experimentation in the way schooling functions has been the one constant throughout the twentieth century. When a particular program or reform measure was adopted it assimilated into the existing educational structure. Thereby, the experiment would generally be short lived and soon to be replaced by the next state of the art pedagogy. Without altering the structure of education, reform efforts were incompatible with the bureaucracy of the established educational process. Consequently, the nation evolved, experienced expansion and invention while educational detachment from advancement and alignment with the societal changes was the order of the day.

Education in the United States is presently a fragmented venture that has been designated by various economic, political and social groups as ineffective and outdated, resulting in the drafting of reform documents. These documents address the complexities and controversies that surround educational reform. *A Nation At Risk*, (1984) published by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, was the first of the popular contemporary reform reports to surface nationally and was limited to high school education. The

document, *Second To None: A Vision of the New California High School* (1992) was published by the California Department of Education to develop changes in the approach to high school education. It presently serves as a blueprint for organizational change and reform in high schools throughout California.

Secondary education comprises and extends beyond the confines of high school. The junior high school, much like its similarly structured older sister was also in need of redevelopment. Subsequently, prior to the publication of *Second To None*, the middle school community in California embarked on researching potential changes for the junior high school. Thus, a document was constructed that presented the results of research in the field of middle grade education. At the locus of the report resides an often disregarded realm of schooling: the middle grades. The document, *Caught In The Middle*, was drafted in 1987, by the California State Department of Education, and serves as the preeminent instrument of reform in middle school education.

The document, revised in 1990, delineates the components of Middle Grade Education. A cardinal tenant of *Caught In The Middle* is the notion of the "State of the Art" middle school. In effect, a "State of the Art" middle school "is one that indicates there is a willingness to plan and implement new, innovative strategies, programs, practices, and policies which have the potential to facilitate the achievement of middle grade educational reform goals" (CSDE, 1987, p. 140). Further, the publication served as a blueprint

and identified twenty-two separate aspects of middle grade education to be addressed when reform is eminent. Two of the twenty-two areas of concentration of a successful middle school, for example, are curriculum and instruction. Moreover, these components are uniquely created to address the particular developmental complexities of the transescent (early adolescent).

Heralding in a future of change and transition, then, encompasses the correlation between the school and the student. In this instance, the school and the student are caught between the confines of childhood and young adulthood. Consequently, "the school must represent present life - life as real and vital to the child as that which he carries on in the home, in the neighborhood, or on the playground" (Dewey, 1940, p. 6). Therein are the remains of the struggle to reform the junior high school; The school is neither a miniature high school nor are the students, replicas of high school pupils. They are clearly at differing stages of cognitive, physical, psychological, social and moral development. Thus, the schooling and the student to be schooled are not to be differentiated, but rather assembled to create a conglomerate that is middle grade education.

The national movement to shift away from the existing paradigm of junior high pedagogy towards the belief of a separate middle school philosophy has occupied three decades of reform measures. Complete accord on how to best educate the transescent remains illusive. It seems that the contending measures are emblematic of the disparities and polarization of two paradigms: the

junior high (traditional model) versus the middle school model. The dichotomy aside, both cannot function simultaneously in one educational institution for such an uncertainty would lead to dysfunction.

Definition of Terms

For this study on Middle Grade Education the following definitions apply and may be considered unique to this particular field of schooling. A "State of the Art Middle School" as defined by *Caught in the Middle* (1987) adheres to the vision that the school community can "indicate their willingness to plan and implement new, innovative strategies, programs, practices, and policies which have the potential to facilitate the achievement of middle grade educational reform goals" (CSDE, 1987, p.140). Transescence is "the stage of development which begins prior to the onset of puberty and extends through the early stages of adolescence" (Alexander, Eichnorn, Toepfer and Vars, 1992, p. 5). During the stage of transescence the individual youth is identified as the transescent. An Interdisciplinary Team "consists of an English teacher, a social studies teacher, a science teacher, a mathematics teacher and, perhaps, a reading teacher" (Vars, 1990, p. 5), or elective/exploratory teacher. By in large the Elective Classes are pre-selected by the team teachers and the students rotate on an elective wheel on a twelve week schedule, through several classes as the school year progresses, such as art, computers, technology,

community service and the like. Exploratory Classes can be six, eight, or 12 months to year long classes such as chorus, law, band, Model United Nations, backpacking and the like. The Core Classes usually are English, math, social studies, and can include elective and physical education courses as well. They are taught by team teachers. The team teachers who share a common group of students also will require Common Planning Period. This is essential for the team teachers to discuss student progress, curricula, conference with parents/students and the general welfare of the team. The Advisor-Advisee Program serves to ease the transition from the self-contained single teacher environment of elementary school to the multiple teacher middle school model. Further, "it provides every student with an advisor, a teacher who has a special concern for the student as an individual" (Wiles and Bondi, 1993, p. 305). Special Programs are similar to the Advisor-Advisee program; however, they tend to be an academic or participatory role-playing style of course. They cover a wide range of topics "such as drug education, sex education, AIDS education consumer education, and law education" (Wiles and Bondi, 1993, p. 307). Within the framework of a Block Schedule, the team teachers can divide the time allocated to the core classes in a variety of configurations that can be different on any given day. This form of Flexible Scheduling, allows for the team teacher to rotate the classes being taught, extend a lesson over several periods and even eliminate a class for a day or two, in order to give more time to another course.

This type of scheduling allows for the extension of a lesson that is usually part of an Interdisciplinary Unit. Often times a social studies teacher will need a block of time for an activity and the other team teachers will keep the rest of the team for the required amount to time. This is accomplished because the Interdisciplinary Unit includes aspects of the curriculum of the core classes. It has been created by the core teachers for the purpose of linking these areas of study together.

Problem Statement

The movement of transforming a junior high into a "State of the Art" middle school in California is commonly associated with public education. By the year 2005, all schools in California must be restructured as stipulated by the Department of Education. It has been noted that middle school "is neither an elementary nor a high school. It is a school for youngsters at an age that is unique, and it should be a distinct entity" (Levy, 1988, p. 105). Therefore, the process in XYZ School District embarked on the road to reform. Bearing in mind the philosophy of middle grade education and that "the chief effort of all educational reforms is to bring about a readjustment of existing scholastic institutions and methods so that they shall respond to changes in general social and intellectual conditions" (Dewey, 1962, p. 167), the process commenced. The first step was the formation of a committee that generated a document delineating what middle school in the district was all about as well as

proposals for reform. Thus, in 1988 XX Junior High became known as XX Middle School. The name change aside, the question remains as to whether or not the philosophy of middle grade education accompanied the transition.

Subsequently, the task at hand is determining to what extent does the study site conform to the current revolution towards a "State of the Art" middle school. For purposes herein, the philosophical scope of reform has been reduced to two factors: curriculum and instruction. Moreover, the organizational changes that either preempted or accompanied the implementation of middle grade practices will be identified and explored. This query will trace the school historically from the 1988 name change through the end of the 1993-1994 school year. There was a reform measure for each of those seven school years, (See Appendix C, p. 110), with several that overlapped one another.

The information to be generated will directly emanate from the school site in an accumulation of plural configurations. Adult survey questionnaires will assist with the background information regarding the organizational change and reform measures, while student interviews will serve to demonstrate the impact of the restructuring efforts. Correspondingly, the data from student interviews as well as the adult questionnaires will be aligned with the 1990 and 1994 (PQR) Program Quality Review findings, action plans and recommendations. Thus, the association of individuals with reform

measures will converge to demonstrate the compilation of data for this study.

Assumptions

The following assumptions may be applicable to this study of middle grade education reform. The researcher assumes that middle grade education, as a paradigm, is accepted and valid. This is reflected by the literature and research that is available and continues to expand nationally, with the National Association of Middle Schools and in California with the California League of Middle Schools. Therefore, it is assumed that middle grade pedagogy is in operation and functioning at the middle school study site. Next, the researcher gave credence to the notion that the faculty and staff at XX Middle School subscribe to the philosophy and implementation of middle grade education. This assumption of support for middle grade education is two-fold: First, the reform measures have been numerous as well as diffused over several years which indicates a Herculean stamina and desire for change; Second, they are professional educators who have been trained and certificated to teach at this level in California. Lastly, it is assumed that the student and district/school personnel subjects responding to interview and survey questions will be forthright.

Limitations

There are several concerns regarding this study in reference to the anticipated findings as well as issues pertinent to data collection and processing. In reference to the findings, a potential problem may arise if the students respond in a particular fashion to the interview questions. Next, what are the implications of student responses that fit the paradigm, but are dichotomous to the practice of schooling at the study site? In addition, will the researcher have difficulty separating himself from his role as a former teacher at the study site during the interviews? What effect will student responses have if the student perceives their answers to be hurtful to the teacher/researcher? Further, will the school personnel respond with openness and honesty while completing their written responses? Will the interpretation of data be separated from the evaluation of the school personnel during data analysis and treatment? Finally, can this particular case study be generalized and will it be useful to others beyond this middle school site?

Significance of the Proposed Study

California educators have begun to take notice of the correlation between learning styles/modalities and academic success. They are gradually becoming aware that the regimented, fully departmentalized middle schools are not serving student needs, and therefore, change needs to occur. Reform measures for middle grade education were determined and outlined in the State document,

Caught in the Middle. On the basis of this document, XX Middle School, the site of this study, began to make the necessary adjustments to curriculum and instruction during the 1987-1988 school year.

This research will determine if the reform measures are actually in place and to what extent they are functioning. Findings may indicate how quickly and successfully change can be implemented. The findings of this report may also provide the leverage necessary to initiate further required changes. In essence, the findings may indicate the extent to which the characters involved in reform, exemplify Sarason's (1971) change principals: 1) People tend to change what is easiest to change, and 2) People will find a way to circumvent change. Finally, research of organizational change and reform in middle grade education is not an effort to seek a destination, but rather a perpetual journey. Perhaps that journey can give rise to solutions of perplexities that confront education in the United States.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction of Educational Reform

Attempts at organizational change and reform in American education are neither a recent nor an isolated phenomenon. Throughout the growth and development of public education, conflict concerning such an enterprise has assembled scholars to controvert the face of schooling. At infancy, the structure of elementary, secondary as well as post-secondary education has been encircled by discussion, debate and division. For instance, Horace Mann successfully lobbied for his vision of a public educational system that embraced radical reform. A significant component of the measure correlated the expanding economy with the funding of public education through the national and state taxation structures. This commenced in the 1820's and 1830's in Massachusetts, prior to elevation of the expansionary reform measures, nation-wide. Many of Mann's intellections serve as a blueprint for what today can be observed in the public school system throughout the United States.

Furthermore, Mann purported the notion of the *Common School* which he believed had several missions: upward mobility, future progress and prosperity for the Nation and hard working, law abiding citizens. However, it was not until the latter half of the nineteenth century that the public high school became an integral

and inseparable part of the schooling of American youth. With the creation of the high school prior to the turn of the century, reformers resolved the debate concerning public education and established compulsory attendance. Subsequently, in the crucible of reform, was a mixture of issues that created a national policy for education within the expanding and mobile society.

Meanwhile, the junior high was created to bridge the gap between the elementary and high school levels of education. The Committee of Ten that was created in 1892 by the National Education Association devised the structure of schooling including grade breakdown (Kindergarten through twelve) and curricula that was appropriate by grade level. The junior high was based on the recommendations of the Committee of Ten. It became as the name suggests, a miniature high school. And, much like the high school, little has changed in the past one-hundred years, despite many efforts to redevelop secondary education.

The ghosts of educational reform return periodically to haunt the halls in a post modern society. This occurrence reflects the detachment between the modernistic practice of schooling while operating in a post modern epoch. There is however a difference between reformers of the past and those who presently seek to change educational practices. For instance, "the early progressives believed that public schools were the fulcrum of democracy and any deficiencies could be over come by the introduction of innovative programs and practices. Not so for today's reformers who generally

contend that schools are bureaucratic, coercive institutions that alienate students and deny them their rights" (Rich, 1975, p. 180-181). The reformers of the past, their beliefs and practices, are a window from which contemporary reform advocates view what has gone before as well as what lies ahead in the realm of educational change.

Presently, the national call for educational reform, stems from what is perceived by citizens as a system fraught with failure, disenchantment, disenfranchisement, and generally not preparing students for their place in a post-modern society. National political debates and best selling books fuel the fires of public sentiment that warns of the lack of promotion and advancement of social, political and economic status based upon atrophy of the educational system. This, however, is not a new perception of public concern that links education with social agendas. In 1869, C.W. Eliot, as the president of Harvard stated in his Inaugural Address:

...for unless a general acquaintance with many branches of knowledge, good as far as it goes, be attainable by great numbers of men, there can be no such thing as an intelligent public opinion; and in the modern world of the intelligence of public opinion is the one condition of social progress (Eliot, 1869, p. 3).

It is entrusted to the educational structure to produce an intelligent populace that will cement a bond between public opinion and the future of the Nation.

The alignment between the educational system and societal ambiance is reflected in opposing looking glasses; however, the

reflection seems to emanate from society to education without a returning view from education to society. John and Evelyn Dewey, nearly a century after Eliot, write in *Schools of Tomorrow*:

the chief effort of all educational reforms is to bring about a readjustment of existing scholastic institutions and methods so that they shall respond to changes in general social and intellectual conditions (Dewey and Dewey, 1962, p. 167).

The inherent presence of change in the educational structure coexists with shifts in public opinion regarding the direction of societal concerns. This is a necessary association given that the process of schooling is not limited to facts, knowledge, skills, cognitive development, and academic pursuits, but also acculturating the American youth according to the norms and agendas of society as envisioned by public opinion. The perpetually unanswered question is which entity influenced the other first: public opinion or educational vision. They apparently are reflections of one another as viewed in opposing mirrors, constantly emulating the other's agenda.

Sensationalistic dogma of social agendas aside, contemporary reform efforts in education are obfuscatory in practice. This phenomenon may result from design, implementation and/or evaluation imperfections. Where the difficulties of a particular redevelopment measure rest, is situational to the actual labor and cannot serve as a blanket to cover all educational reform. Largely, however, some regularities of reform tend to prevail when enigmas emerge in educational reform. John Dewey writes in *The Way Out Of Educational Confusion*:

For confusion is due ultimately to aimlessness, as much of the conflict is due to the attempt to follow tradition and yet introduce radically new material and interests into it - the attempt to superimpose the new on the old (Dewey, 1931, P. 40).

This sense of ambivalence is in evidence throughout the reform measure and terminates the insurrection that precedes *real* change.

Complete and outright destruction of previous educational practices is radical and perhaps revolutionary. The consequences of such actions may insight those with unwarranted control and power to act as obstacles of such proposed proceedings. Be that as it may, two contemporary reformers state:

Nobody should be surprised, in education any more than in other fields, that where incremental efforts at reform are perceived to be not working very well, more revolutionary changes will be tried by those discontented with the status quo (Finn and Walberg, 1994, p. x).

The measure may fail subsequently, given the forces that oppose change may be greater than the force that elicits change.

Nonetheless, educational change requires a vision and a drive that has sustained American education for well over one-hundred and fifty years; it continues to flourish at all levels of schooling.

Middle Grade Educational Reform

In regard to the redevelopment of middle grade education in the United States, public opinion was not the driving force behind experimental change. The locus of the reform efforts came from the scantiness and ineffectiveness of the junior high model to facilitate in

the education of the transescent. What began throughout the nation in the 1960's has been a denunciation of the traditional junior high model and an attempt to create a learning environment suited for the unique needs of the middle level learner. Consequently, middle school educational philosophy, pedagogy and practice were inculcated.

The onset of reform in the middle grades is shrouded in a blanket of monumental change. The impact of the transformation of the junior high to middle school encompasses many facets of schooling. The range of components, which comprise the ascension of middle grade education in California, was directed by tenets of the document, *Caught In The Middle* (1987). From this quintessential report, the present day standard for the "State of the Art" middle school has been established and promoted through related literature. Two salient components of this definition, curriculum and instruction, will now be examined and subdivided for clarity. These two separate areas are integrally interwoven and are the vital threads that can be observed within the confines of organizational change and reform in middle grade education.

Middle Grade Curriculum

The curriculum at the middle level of schooling must address the uniqueness of the student on a variety of fronts. The learner in the throes of transescence possesses several characteristics unique to this stage of maturation. Subsequently, "no other grade span

encompasses such a wide range of intellectual, physical, psychological, and social development condensed into such a short time span" (Honig, 1988, p. 119). Therefore, a program of schooling must be attentive to this range of development that is remarkably significant to the transescent. In addition to the variant degrees of maturation, a curriculum should also be attentive to related aspects of the student's life. Many times are the case when life at home and life at school or "the real world" are separated. Consequently, there lacks an avenue for connectedness in the life of the student. Furthermore, "the middle grade school, one of the few socializing institutions for young adolescents, represents a critical 'turning point' in the lives of American youth" (Mac Aver and Epstein, 1991, p. 587). To weave these various threads of diverse social and academic curriculum together, several strategies are to be employed.

Middle Grade Curriculum Design Attributes

There are several design attributes that permeate the curriculum of middle grade education. The vast majority of designs revolve around the call for student-centered curriculum. The curriculum should be "resource-based, not textbook-based" (Lounsbury, 1990, p. 4). Another spoke on the wheel is an age appropriate core curriculum. Further, the curriculum needs to be relevant to the learner, both at school and for application in the outside world. In addition, thematic and interdisciplinary units that encompass the core curriculum as well as elective and exploratory

opportunities are a significant aspect of the wheel design.

Meanwhile, the affective facet of the transescent, in regard to curriculum, is a vital component of the overall arrangement. "Too many young people lack a sense of association and engagement with other individuals, particularly adults" (Lounsbury, 1990, p. 4). Thus, the curriculum design must account for the notion that "as more and more kids are growing up without the nurture of a functional family, the provisions by the school of a family-like atmosphere become more important" (Lounsbury, 1990, p. 4). The curriculum wheel at the middle grade level includes educating the whole child; therefore, the instructional strategies must be as varied as the curriculum.

Middle Grade Instruction

Students are the recipients of curriculum through a variety of instructional practices. Teachers are the conveyors of the curriculum who implement innovative instructional programs. The convergence of student and teacher, during the process of schooling, is facilitated when "humor and openness, in particular, serve to bridge age and status barriers and help connect students with adults" (Phelan, Davidson and Cao, 1992, p. 699). A strategy that attends to the sense of connectedness, such as interdisciplinary teams, is vital to instructional practices. The benefits of teaming, according to students, are that "they enjoyed belonging to a team and felt it made them work harder academically" (Schmidt and Kane, 1984, p. 34). A

similar account of the teaming process, from the teacher's perspective is "teaming gives a youngster a sense of identity" (Schmidt and Kane, 1984, p. 35). In direct correlation with teaming is the role played by the teacher and student. Traditionally, this role has been active for the teacher on one hand, and passive for the student, on the other. Middle grade philosophy, however, indicates that the students "prefer an active rather than a passive role; they prefer transaction rather than transmission" (Phelan, Davidson and Cao, 1992, p.699).

Middle Grade Instructional Strategies

Within the successful interdisciplinary team, varied instructional practices are prominent. The strategies include, for example, direct instruction, inquiry teaching, cooperative learning, independent learning and teaching of the various learning styles. In addition, many teachers use innovative and experimental techniques to further academic achievement and individual personal growth of the transescent. In effect, such strategies aspire to "the elements of sound instruction that facilitate clarity of purpose, motivate students, are sequential and build upon knowledge, and compel application and practice" (Cawelti, 1988, p. 8). Ultimately, it will be the combination of curriculum, instruction, learning environment, teacher preparedness, learner development and readiness, organizational structure, and a commitment to middle grade philosophy that create education at a "State of the Art" middle school.

Summary

In the end, organizational change and reform of middle grade education transcends the prescripts of the California State Department of Education. The pedigree of reform in the United States coupled with the imperative alignment of curriculum and instructional practices with the transescent, signify the repercussions generated by years of miniaturizing the high school. As research has indicated over the past several years, it is one thing to diagnose the enigma of reform measures, but quite another to resolve it. Numerous reformers have preceded those currently contesting the status quo in American education. In *Education Today* John Dewey writes:

all reforms which rest simply upon the enactment of law, or the threatening of certain penalties, or upon changes in mechanical or outward arrangements, are transitory and futile (Dewey, 1940, p. 15).

The predisposition that exists for educational reform as Dewey suggested nearly seventy years ago loiters as labor when educational change advances through a myriad of measures. Finally, in revisiting educational reform in middle grade education, Professor Larry Cuban believes that "after a quarter century of experience with middle schools, there is much evidence that what has most changed in the new middle schools has been policy talk, the formal names of schools, and the vocabulary of educators" (Cuban, 1992, p. 246).

Chapter III

HISTORY OF REFORM AT THE STUDY SITE: THE RESEARCHER'S PERSONAL NARRATIVE

The redevelopment of a school is a difficult task at best. The mere mentioning of restructuring peals through the halls as the onset of change, something that will require a great amount of work, effort and determination, commences. As the sounds of educational reform reverberate throughout the organization, caution, complacency and convention are discarded: deteriorating in a vast chasm of authoritative defiance. Regardless of the well intentioned plan, implementation of change is consistently met with a barrage of negativism from a variety of sources. The loudest of voices will tend to resonant from the bureaucracy that has become education.

The forfeiture of control can be noted from the smallest of school sites through district offices to federal agencies. While their sense of loss in terms of the functions of schooling is real, it is also necessary to address, in order to be a participant in restructuring. The deprivation of control does not eliminate a particular group or faction from the process, but rather allows for their inclusion. Moreover, "change is a difficult concept to accept because there is a widespread belief that it is possible to freeze actions at a point in time and to repeatedly use one, or a set, of procedures over and over. In effect, this belief endorses stasis as a normal and desired state

and characterizes change as aberrant and threatening" (Blair, 1992, p. 135). Be that as it may, redevelopment of schooling in California is mandated by the State for all schools by the year 2005. At XX Middle School the attempts, short-comings, failures and successes at restructuring are note worthy as the organization of redevelopment is explored.

During the 1988-1989 school year, the XX Junior High began flirting with the notion of change. It commenced with the arrival of a new assistant principal, five copies of the unknown document *Caught In The Middle*, and eternal optimism of a rejuvenated staff in-serviced the day prior to opening day on the behavior modification program *Assertive Discipline*, created by Lee Cantor.. As the buzz term *site-based management* permeated the halls coming from the lips of the eager, redevelopment was in full swing. Everyone had ideas. Cooperative learning was encouraged and teachers attended conferences to learn the techniques of Spencer Cagen. At staff meetings, the Bible of choice, *Caught In The Middle* was widely quoted. And, although it was a bench mark in Middle Grade Education, few staff members had held a copy in their hand, let alone examined its contents. By the end of June that first year, two teachers were regularly using cooperative learning techniques in their classrooms, the copies of *Caught In The Middle* remained shelved for all to view and *Assertive Discipline Training* failed to jump through the established junior high hoops. The Associated Student Body, did however, fund a granite sculpture that resembles a

headstone with the school's logo - a warrior figure - emblazoned in red that reads "XX MIDDLE SCHOOL." Thus, the reform efforts were underway and change had been introduced, even though there was no plan.

The following school year the sixth grade was added to the existing schedule at XX Middle School. For the die-hard middle schoolers this was a welcomed event; whereas, for the die-hard junior high school educator with a , departmentalized structure, six classes, six teachers, six rows of desks, it was an unacceptable form of change. Nonetheless, the sixth grade team was outstanding. Their lessons were interdisciplinary and the pride of the team was paramount. Meanwhile, the rest of the school functioned as a junior high. Near the end of the year it was announced that the following year, a grade seven pilot team and an English as a Second Language (ESL) team were being formed. Two other end of the year pronouncements by the district were unwelcomed by most of the faculty and staff: first, the five middle school principals' were being rotated and all after-school sports were not to be funded for the 1990- 1991 school year.

Then, from the Program Quality Review Board came the results of their year long study: The Music program, Special Education and the sixth grade team were awarded accommodations as exemplary; while all other programs were requested to develop action plans in a timely fashion. Hence, a nearly fifty page document was constructed to address the findings of the PQR team titled *Comprehensive*

Education Plan Abstract 1990-1991. The document forged a path towards a quality middle school carved through the old growth forest of junior high education.

The *Abstract* circumscribed several changes that were based on middle school philosophy. First, a school mission statement was to be written based on the tenants of *Caught in the Middle* that would serve as a middle school philosophical catalyst for reform. Second, interested teachers were to pilot two interdisciplinary teams, one for seventh grade and one for (ESL) English as a Second Language. In addition, the master schedule was to be modified and allow for the two teams to utilize block scheduling, common preparation period and a cohort group of students. Third, XX Middle School was to begin interdisciplinary teaming for the 1990-1991 school year. This would include a clear link between the core subject areas such as social science, language arts, math and science; further, the science instruction was to be predominately activity based. All of these measures included a timetable of one year for implementation.

The 1990 - 1991 school year began with change: a new principal and a vacancy, as the Assistant Principal left to assume reform efforts as a Principal at a middle school outside the district. By October, the Assistant Principal had returned to the classroom, replaced by a person from outside the district and the school had been rescheduled three times to reflect changes in enrollment and sudden teacher departures. Ten teachers replaced those who had transferred over the summer and fall. Furthermore, the two newly

created teams commenced implementing middle grade instructional practices; however; this transpired without assistance or support from the school site administration. Consequently, those not directly involved with the teams sought to thwart the efforts and activities of those piloting the new program. Over the course of the year, faculty who held traditional means of schooling seventh and eighth grade students, eagerly recruited collaborators from the abundant junior high pool.

Meanwhile, several teachers who embraced middle school philosophy were working on their Middle Level Certificates and reading, talking and generally annoying anyone with a middle school background. A core of teachers attempted to form a *Faculty Senate* to discuss middle school philosophy, site-based management restructuring options, grants and concerns about faculty and staff morale. Soon, however, this became the opportunity for additional staff meetings. It died. The year which had begun with change, ended with the announcement that the seventh grade team would cease while the ESL team would continue to function, but without a common preparation period. The concept of school-wide interdisciplinary teaming was suspended indefinitely. XX Middle School returned to the reality of junior high, while the rhetoric of middle grade education continued to be espoused by the administration.

It was a junior high in a Middle School's clothing. This was the beginning of the 1991 - 1992 school year. There was another influx

of replacement teachers for those exercising their option to transfer or retire. The departmentalized school returned to the philosophy espoused by the status quo of the junior high. Discontentment reigned as administrative decisions regarding scheduling, teaching assignments and the divorce from educational reform began to divide the school. This was exacerbated by an administrative resolution to withdraw the school's membership from the Middle School Partnership after one year. The old growth forest had consumed the newly forged path of educational reform.

Then, from the chasm of despair and complacency came X Graduate School and a leading researcher in the field of education to rejuvenate the restructuring process at XX Middle School. The notion was to look at American schooling from the inside. The participants/researchers were not to begin with any preconceived notions about schooling or what might be identified as problems. Rather, the qualitative research process would ask those directly involved with education their perceptions on schooling. The participants were students, teachers, aids, secretaries, office managers, nurses, grounds' keepers, custodians, kitchen workers, parents, administrators as well as the community. Many of the participants were researchers as well as subjects of the research.

Over eighteen months, twenty-four thousand pages of data, including hours of video and audio recordings, completed the compilation of the information that we analyzed and continually revisited. Many surveys were second and third generation as the

breadth and depth of the information grew. At long last, we would peel away the outer layers that confined XX Middle School and schooling at large and with a string sense of determination and dedication, began the process of redevelopment. Those teachers who were of the junior high mold offered the greatest insight and willingness to assist in the process of change. The participants slowly began to embrace the notion of change. A dialogue began between factions that previously would have not made the effort to allow another the time to voice a concern. The faculty, functioning as a cohort, began to travel beneath the surface of schooling. In the process, all participants began a personal voyage of understanding and self-examination of educational philosophy and practice. It was a renaissance of education, of purpose, of the excitement of change.

The first year of the research, 1991 - 1992, began with a series of surveys and questionnaires that were distributed to all participants. The participants included faculty, staff, classified, students, administrators and parents. After the first generation of responses were recorded, themes began to emerge. To follow up on those themes, second, third and fourth generation surveys were instituted and continually revisited to maintain validity. Over the course of several months, when the researchers would meet, what became known as *the process* was implemented.

The process is simply the democratic notion that all voices must be equally heard. In session after session, each researcher/participant at the study site had the opportunity to speak

or pass, in round-robin fashion. The process checker kept all on task and most importantly following *the process*. This participatory process allowed all voice from the inside of schooling to be heard - from the middle school students and their parents to graduate students, staff, teachers Ph.D.'s and educational researchers - as equals with a common cause.

The time frame, while never formalized, covered several years. In the first year, problems were identified at the elementary, middle, high school and university level of schooling. After eighteen months of participatory research, seven common themes rose to the surface from within schooling:

- 1) Relationships;
- 2) Race, Culture and Class;
- 3) Values;
- 4) Teaching and Learning;
- 5) Safety;
- 6) Physical Environment; and,
- 7) Despair, Hope and the Process of Change.

These were revisited continually until validated at all level of education. Then, in November of the 1992 - 1993 school year, the document, *Voices From The Inside: A Report on Schooling from Inside the Classroom* (1992), was published. The first year of formal redevelopment was complete, and the end of four school years of rhetoric on change drew to a close.

The 1992 - 1993 school year marked the second year and the second step of redevelopment at XX Middle School. The new teams set out to reach the lofty goals established by *Caught in the Middle*, regarding the "State of the Art" middle school. Teams learned by taking risks and sometimes arriving at the realization that this would be a slow process. Nevertheless, they believed in their successes. However, the year was marked by the complete breakdown of several teams, who returned to the junior high mode of delivering curriculum. Meanwhile, the presence of the researchers from X Graduate School diminished with the loss of their grant funds. The second phase of the original X Graduate School's measure, rectifying the identified problems, faded into oblivion. The grant funds for X Graduate School were not renewed and, consequently, the reform measure ended without the establishment of a plan for the following school year at XX Middle School.

Nonetheless, the year was deemed an overall success by the administration and those teams that had experienced success while preparations were composed for the 1993 - 1994 school year. And, despite the departure of ten faculty members, a sense of continued improvement and curricular reform was in the air. The hypnotic vapor emitted from the schema promised by X Graduate School was lifted as the association ceased between the two schools. XX Middle School would create a reform model that would alleviate the problems identified through the research of X Graduate School and design a multi-year measure that would eradicate the dilemmas.

However, the beginning of the 1993 - 1994 school year was marked by changes in personnel. Ten new faculty and several staff members filled the vacancies created by those who elected to either work elsewhere or pursue other opportunities in education. This impacted all of the existing teams as well as the elective wheel and the science program. For example, all of the teams except two were recreated to accommodate new members. Additionally, the schedule design occluded the complete operation of several interdisciplinary teams. The arrangement cored two teachers with two groups of sixty students, while a third teacher on the team taught all of the pupils. Consequently, the team was divided into two smaller teams who did not come into contact with one another. Two teams retained half of their original faculty members. In the meantime, the science department, which was under a Program Quality Review (PQR) for the school year, retained only one returning faculty member: three new teachers joined the team. In all, the personnel changes that had been evidenced in previous school years, persisted in formulating variations and inconsistencies in the characteristic of the faculty as well as the interdisciplinary teaming configuration.

The PQR findings exposed numerous discrepancies between the ideal of middle grade educational philosophy and the implementation of middle school practices. For instance, the science program is an isolated entity with scant opportunity for an interdisciplinary connection. This phenomenon exists at XX Middle School impart because of the inconsistencies built into the schedule. The science

teachers are not attached to a specific team, but rather all eighth grade students are assimilated into their courses. Thus, the connectiveness with the curriculum of the team is forfeited for the welfare of the master schedule. Nonetheless, the science team has incorporated instructional strategies that replicate the practices encouraged and adopted for the middle level learner. Evidently, the practice of interdisciplinary teaming exists to expiate the notion of educational reform.

The odyssey of educational reform at XX Middle School is sciential while maintaining a spinuous reality. The hegemony from the traditionalists and the reformers is transparent as the competing paradigm's battle for supremacy. The years of reform attempts return to réchauffe the compulsion for redeveloping a middle school. This does not indicate, however, a lapse in ability or determination to attempt reform. Several years of implementing measures signal the resolve of the participants to attempt change. The time, then, is at hand to determine if the measures have been a sloganization of middle grade educational reform; or from the point of departure has there been a supported and pragmatic implementation of middle grade practices.

XX Middle School has been involved with the reform process since 1988. Numerous and varied models have either functioned in isolation or in competition for legitimacy and supremacy. Meanwhile, participant transitoriness coupled with the bewildering innateness of change flourished throughout the seven years of

reschooling at the study site. The extent to which organizational change and reform have impacted the schooling at XX Middle School requires a research expedition that delves into the hearts and minds of those personalities and reform models that existed at the site. Thus, the design of this study and subsequent results of this study will illuminate the perplexities of educational reform as attempted at XX Middle School.

Chapter IV

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Site Selection

The chosen study site, XX Middle School, was a purposeful selection for several reasons. The first reason for the selection was the element of transition. The site has been attempting to become a middle school in more than name. The staff has undergone training and attended various conferences over the last several years to address the uniqueness of middle school curriculum and instruction in preparation to implement change. Second, the cultural diversity of the site represents an additional challenge to address multicultural issues. Third, XX Middle School is located within two miles of the researchers home; and the researcher had taught at the site for five years, prior to a departure to attend graduate school, which allows for accessibility to data as well as research subjects. Finally, the site was chosen based on the staff's attitude and embracement of the emerging paradigm of middle grade education that is believed to exist, which is the focus of this study. Inasmuch as the staff is not held to strict guidelines the opportunity for them to experiment with a variety of instructional strategies exists; Thus, the researcher assumes middle grade education continued to function and increase in practice in his absence.

XX Middle School is one of over thirty sites in an elementary school district in Southern California. It is located in a bedroom

suburb which has a population of 30,000. Surrounding cities have populations in excess of 125,000 as well as large industrial and retail complexes. The community epitomizes the turmoil and tribulations that afflict urban cores of major cities throughout the state. There exists an urgent obligation to bring the vintage 1950's physical plant of many school sites as well as the redevelopment of desolate and decaying downtown infrastructures. Consequently, the community and population of the citizens that send their children to the study site are unknowingly involved in a hurricane of transformation and represent a change in demographics .

The student population for the 1993-1994 school year was ethnically diverse and half the 1,012 children are Latino. Thirty-three percent of the student body was Euro-American, 12 percent was African-American while Asian, Pacific Islander and Middle Eastern ethnic groups are represent by a small group of students. Twenty percent of the students listed Spanish as their primary language; While most students noted they were from English-speaking homes. Meanwhile, Armenian, Tagalog and Vietnamese are the home languages of a small group of students. The variances of the student population reflect the growth within the community in part originating from the immigration.

The organization of the school comprises several elements that are representative of a middle school. The school, as of the 1993-1994 traditional school year, consists of grade six, seven and eight. There is one sixth grade interdisciplinary team, one English as a

Second Language (ESL) team, and three teams for grade seven and three for grade eight. In addition to these regular grade level configurations, XX Middle School is the home of a County Severely Emotionally Disturbed (SED) class, two Special Day Classes (SDC), two Resource Specialist Program (RSP) classes as well as three Trainable Mentally Retarded (TMR) classes. These special education classes are included within the aforementioned teams. In short, XX Middle School was a site that typified the diversity and a middle grade education organizational structure found throughout California.

Subject Selection: Student

The subjects utilized for data collection were selected purposefully. Students were selected as interviewees to provide information concerning the presence of components of the "State of the Art" middle school. As the recipients of curriculum development through instructional strategies, students would provide first hand accounts of information regarding their reception of middle grade programs. There were ultimately seven students chosen for the interviews. These seven students were selected for five primary reasons. First, they are in grade eight and have attended XX Middle School since grade seven, (often considered the middle school years). Second, they were on a team as a seventh grade student and are presently on a different team as an eighth grader. Third, they actively participate in school activities and functions. Fourth, they represent different learning styles and achievement levels. Lastly,

the students were a mix of racial, ethnic and gender representatives that relate to the overall make up of the school's student body. In addition, the advantage of using this purposefully selected group was their willingness (with parental permission, Appendix A, p. 110) to cooperate as well as their accessibility to the researcher.

Subject Selection: Adult

The adult subjects were randomly selected from a pool that included past and present employees from the study site. The potential respondent pool list was created from personnel rosters from the 1988-1989 school year through the 1993-1994 school year from the study site. In addition, district administrators with a direct link to the school site completed the pool. Consequently, when the construct was completed, it included district administrators, site administrators, faculty and support staff. Sixty-eight potential adult respondents were then randomly selected. This was accomplished by selecting every third name for round one; then, using the same method for the remaining potential respondents that would receive the survey questionnaire.

Respondent Protocol

The identities of the respondents were concealed and responses confidential. This was accomplished through the random selection of respondents from the potential respondent pool. Furthermore, the respondents were identified by a letter and number combination

that was indiscriminately assigned; thus, what will be known is that they are either a faculty member, staff member or administrator. The faculty pool includes past and present teachers from the study site. The staff pool includes past and present teacher aids, custodians, clerical, office personnel and classified employees from the study site. The administrator pool includes past and present principals, assistant principals, psychologists, nurses, program facilitators, district personnel, and the like from the study site. Further, neither the district nor the school will be identified in the publication of the findings. For purposes herein, the school district will be identified as XYZ School District and the study site as XX Middle School. Also, the names of individuals will not be used; If a specific name is identified by a respondent, the name will be replaced by the applicable respondent category. Finally, when the thesis is published, the master respondent list correlating the letter/number identification with a name, will be destroyed; thus, respondents will be only known by their letter/number reference.

Instrumentation

The development of the data collection instrument for the student respondents involved several stages and culminated with the adoption of a purposeful interview questionnaire. A set of criteria, established by the California State Department of Education in the document *Caught In The Middle*, describing elements of a "State of

the Art" middle school, served as the initial blueprint for the instrument. These components are as follows:

- 1) Core curriculum and instruction shall be appropriate to develop the young adolescents' developmental characteristics;
- 2) Curriculum shall provide the foundation for success in high school;
- 3) Curriculum should heighten students' curiosity about themselves, how they fit in, and who they are;
- 4) Thematically linked curriculum;
- 5) Broad academic foundation;
- 6) Instill a desire for future leaning;
- 7) Address various learning modalities;
- 8) Take students beyond current experience and knowledge;
- 9) Emphasizes active learning.

The literature review was then coupled with these the components. Using this criterion an interview model was developed. Prior to the selection of interview questions, a trial written questionnaire was prepared. The written questionnaire determined the best way to phrase questions which would elicit detailed/complete responses. It was also important to phrase the questions in a non-threatening fashion. The first set of questions culminated in predominantly "yes" or "no" answers. The set of questions was then modified to include "why?" questions and "can

you explain" statements. It was the second draft that was selected as the study instrument for data collection. It consists of 3 pages and 43 questions and was designed for the audio taped interview. (See Appendix B, pages 105 to 107)

The development of the data collection instrument for the adult respondents involved several stages and culminated with the adoption of a purposeful survey questionnaire. Unlike the student instrument which focused on curriculum and instructional outcomes of middle grade educational reform, the adult survey concentrated on the organizational change that was implemented over several years of reform endeavors. It also followed tenants of *Caught In The Middle* as well as the prescriptions established by researchers Miles and Huberman for qualitative data research and analysis. The adopted survey questionnaire consisted of 50 questions and was designed for written responses. (See Appendices D and E, pages 112 through 125)

The development of the survey questionnaire required several models prior to the adoption of the instrument titled, Survey of Middle Grade Education. The first draft contained nearly one-hundred open-ended questions. It was deemed too cumbersome by my advisors/readers as well as not addressing the specifics of the proposed study. The second prototype reduced the number of questions to sixty and included yes/no questions and likert scales. In addition, the sequence of the questions allowed for the navigation through the various aspects of organizational change and reform in

middle grade education. However, it was the third model that was adopted as the survey instrument. The process of creating a survey instrument that began in the fall of 1994 was completed by December of 1994 and produced an instrument with two endings: one for administrators and Faculty (certificated employees), and another for staff (Classified employees).

Data Collection: Student

The student data was collected at XX Middle School in Southern California. The student interviews were conducted in the library of the school to ensure familiarity and confidentiality (the library was closed when the interviews were recorded), on behalf of the subjects. The interviews were spread over a period of four days, (8 - 11 March 1994) and were administered during periods two, three and four without impacting the academic classes of the students. The audio taped interviews lasted fifteen to twenty minutes each and followed the format established by the data collection instrument. The questions were read in order and approximately at the same rate using the same voice style to assist in conformity of the interviews.

Data Collection: Adult

The adult data collection occurred over several months in the winter of 1994 and early spring of 1995. All correspondence with respondents was printed on University letter head and cotton

bonded paper. The first introductory letter was mailed to the 68 potential respondents in late December (See Appendix C, page 108). Several weeks later the informational letter, survey protocol determinant, procedural requirements (See Appendix C, pages 109 & 110) and the survey instrument were mailed with a stamped, researcher addressed return envelope enclosed. In late winter, reminder letters were sent to those who had not returned their completed survey (See Appendix C, page 111). By the middle of spring (April 10, 1995) 37 of the 68 had been received. Shortly thereafter, letters of appreciation for the time, concern and assistance that the respondents imparted were mailed to each participant (See Appendix F, page 126). The letters of appreciation were mailed beginning after the first respondent returned his/her documents and continued until all respondents had received their notes. All such letters were dated 14 February 1995. The correspondence with the adult respondents included the identities of the various educational institutions that were a part of this study; however, the documents located in the appendices do not identify these educational institutions as part of the survey protocol and issues of confidentiality.

Data Treatment Procedures

The student interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed. Student answers were then topic coded in the following manner: The number "1" was assigned all answers dealing with

curriculum and the number "2" was assigned all answers relating to instructional methods. These two topics of the middle grade education paradigm were then subdivided into supporting and non-supporting data. Supporting data is designated by the letter "a" and non-supporting data by the letter "b." Once the data was coded, inductive reasoning procedures were then applied. The criterion for "State of the Art" middle schools was used as the determining factor on whether data could be considered supporting evidence.

The adult surveys were removed from their envelopes and placed in file folders. Then, once the cut-off date had arrived, the information was transferred to a data base created by the researcher using Microsoft Word 5.1a on a Macintosh LC III, 12 MB, 160. They were identified only as A (administrator), F (faculty) and S (staff). Each of the fifty questions were followed by the reply of the respondent word for word. This was performed for each question and for each corresponding response for the 37 returned questionnaires. Once the data had been entered, and stored on a disk, a printout was created on an Apple Personal Laser 300 printer.

The data was then reviewed and analyzed by the researcher for several weeks. The task was to transubstantiate numbers for purposes of characterizing the intentions of the respondents with regard to a particular phenomenon. Then, the numerical and yes/no responses were tallied. Next, tables were created using Microsoft Graph that was embedded in the Microsoft Word 5.1a software program. Thereby, data in this form can be represented through

numbers for purposes of expressing the opinions, interpretations and views of the respondent congregation.

The data was further reviewed in efforts to identify themes that were relevant to the intended purposes of the study.

Limitations of the Design

There were several limitations inherent to the project design. The study was limited by time constraints and logistics. Due to time limitations, fewer students and no community members were surveyed; thereby somewhat reducing the breadth and depth of supporting data. In addition, the parents were not included in the design of the project for lack of available time to construct an instrument and complete the interviews. Further, the researcher had to balance teaching time with 52 University units from the spring of 1994 through the spring of 1995 which limited the time available to follow up anomalies that were discovered in the data. Ultimately, several hours of valuable research time were lost due to logistics—round trip from the site to home to University requires eighty minutes of clear freeway travel. The deleterious time loss was compounded by employment with a school district in the capacity of a middle school social science and English teacher. Finally, the researcher's five year teaching association during the initial years of reform implementation may influence the interpretation of data given that complete objectivity is illusive at best.

Chapter V

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

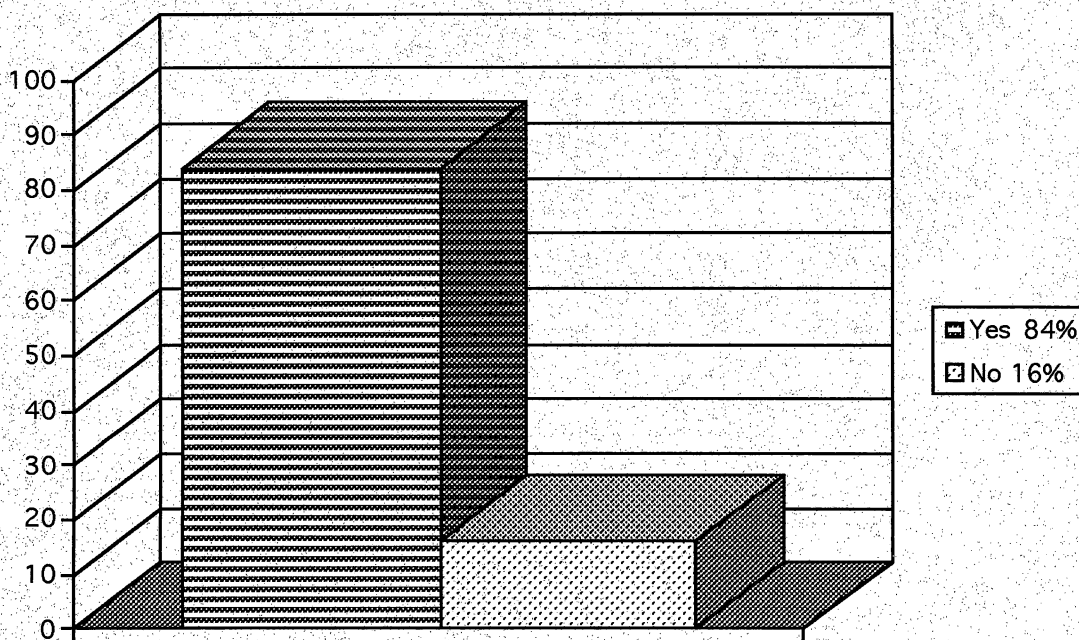
Findings: Adult

The questions that comprise the survey instrument are based on the foundations of middle grade educational philosophy. They include organizational change as well as the processes involved in transforming a junior high into a middle school. The relations between the participants are a component of the implementation of reform. The procedural formulation, implementation and discovery comprise the remainder of the inquiry. Consequently, the findings represent the interpretations of the respondents to the questions and their explanations and/or opinions for many of their responses.

The first set of questions concerned the establishment of the philosophy and pedagogy of middle grade education. In response to survey question number one, a clear majority of the respondents believe in the validity of reform efforts in middle grade education as expressed in Table 1. However, the respondent's reasoning for support of reform varied markedly and included societal concerns, pedagogical efficacy and expansive provisions for general educational redevelopment. A faculty member commented: "Middle grade education should meet the academic, developmental, and psychological needs of the students." Another faculty member notes: "They are valid because they are progressive, and take into

consideration modern research and theory concerning middle level learners." A respondent's comment on the validity of middle school reform illustrates an urgency for educational change at all levels. An administrator states that "society is changing, our students and their needs are changing and the way we do education needs to change in response to these. We need to look forward and prepare our students for a changing world."

Table 1
Do you believe that reform efforts are valid in Middle Grade Education?



As for specific policy on educational change, Tables 2 and 3 show there was a discrepancy between the respondents familiarity with the State of California's reform document and the policy document published by their district. On one hand, most respondents were familiar with *Caught In The Middle*, while on the

other, a meager number of surveyed educators were knowledgeable of middle school educational policy within their district.

Table 2
Are you familiar with the document *Caught In The Middle* published by the California State Department of Education in 1987?

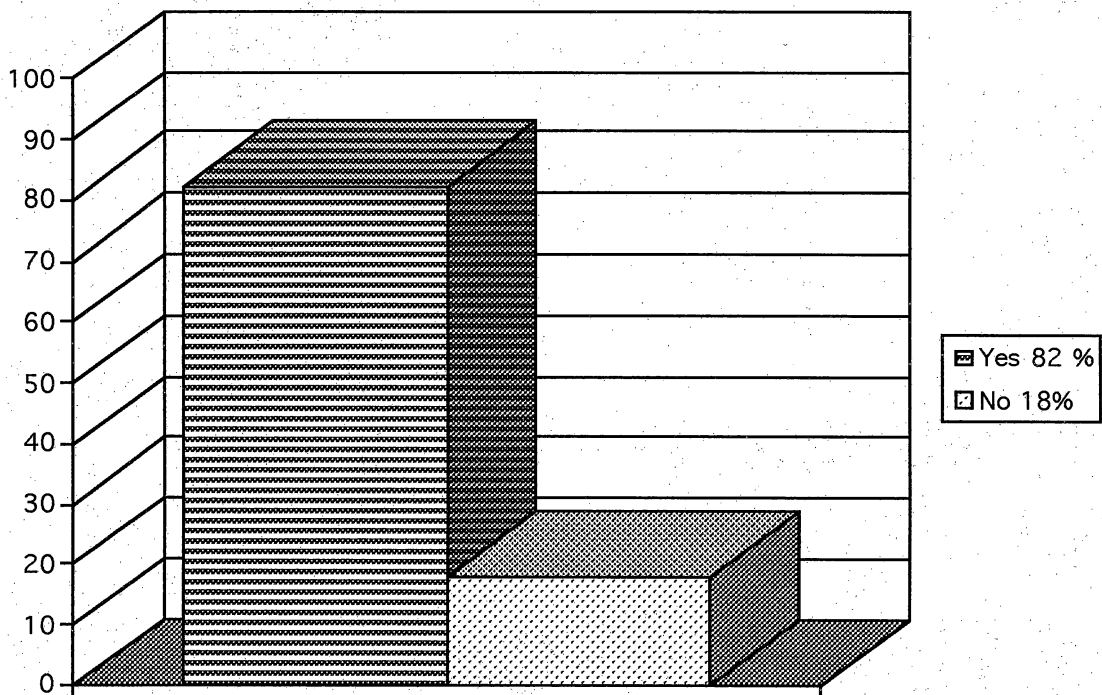
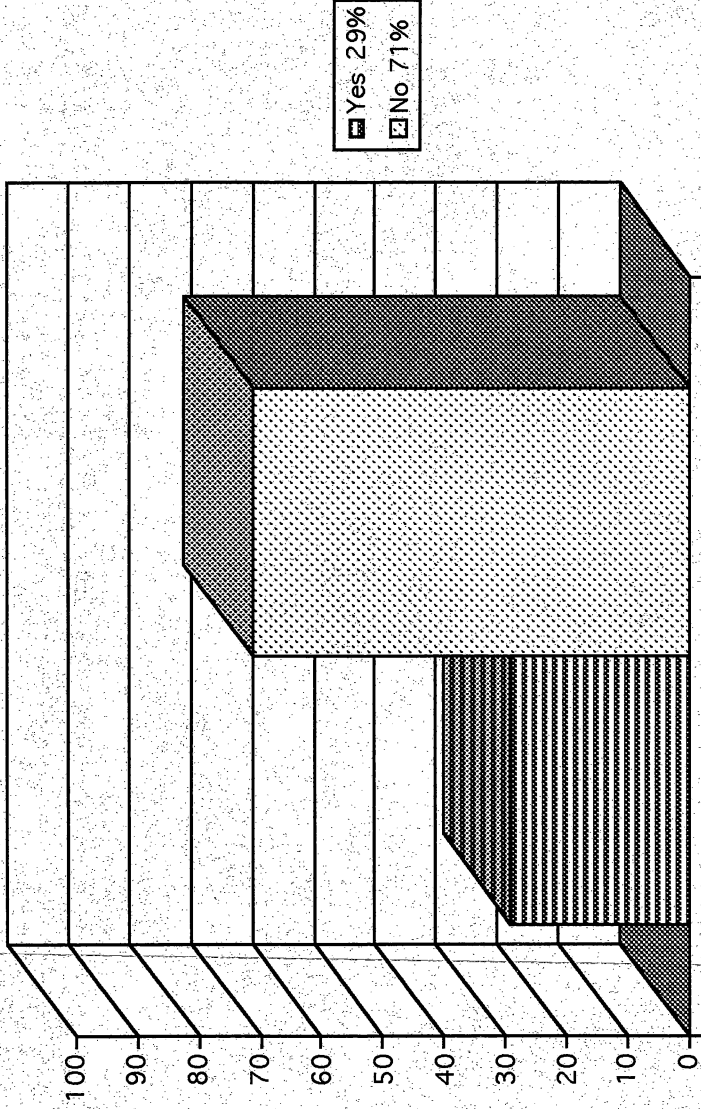


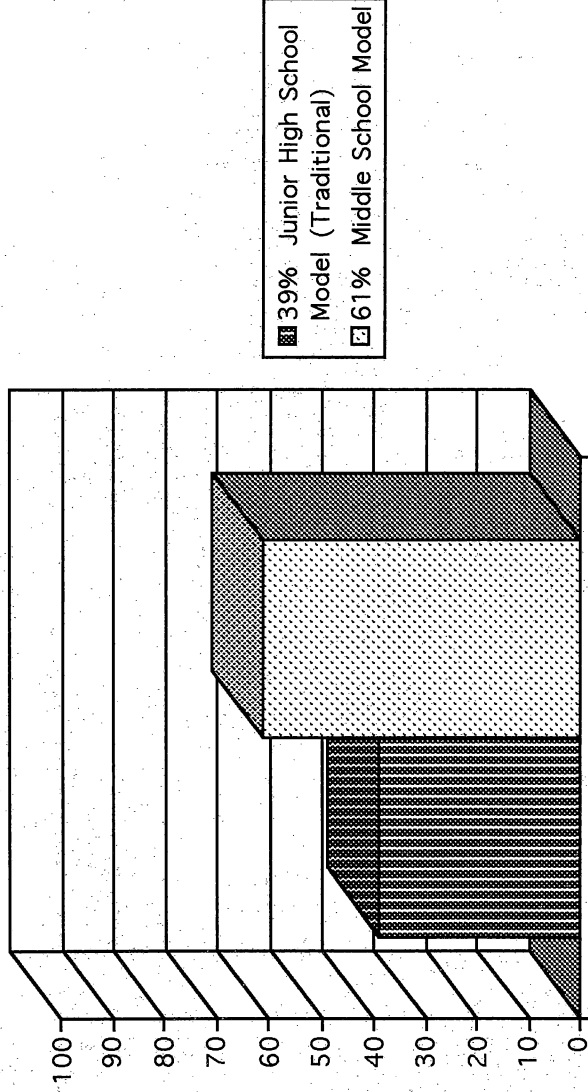
Table 3
 Are you familiar with the document *Middle Grade Education* published by XYZ School District in 1992?



Additionally, in Table 4, there exists a close consistency with those favoring the traditional junior high model versus the middle school model for early adolescent education. This contradicts prior indications of support for reform of middle grade education, Table 1, where the respondents overwhelmingly endorsed change.

Table 4

Which best reflects your personal/professional perspective on early adolescent education?

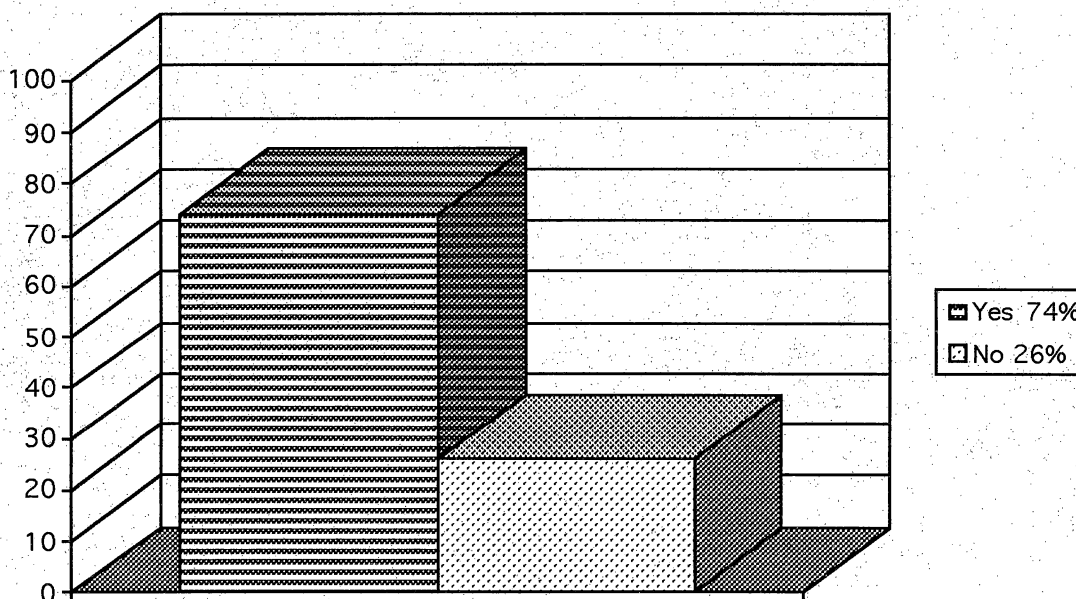


Finally, there exist a decisive percentage of those respondents who favor reform at XX Middle School.

The endorsement for the implementation of the reform measures varied amongst the respondents. A faculty member indicates that "XX Middle School needs to update its approach to education and develop a school community which addresses its current population and not the populations of the past." Further support for the reform are organizational changes that were components of the measures. As a faculty member states: "I think the kids did benefit from the teaming approach." Meanwhile, a respondent who did not support the reforms at XX Middle School

held a contradictory view of the process. The faculty member reported: "I believe they were too theoretical and concentrated on problem identification far too long. The problems were obvious. What was needed were solutions to be implemented." Nonetheless, Table 5 demonstrates that a tangible number of participants favored the reform measures at XX Middle School.

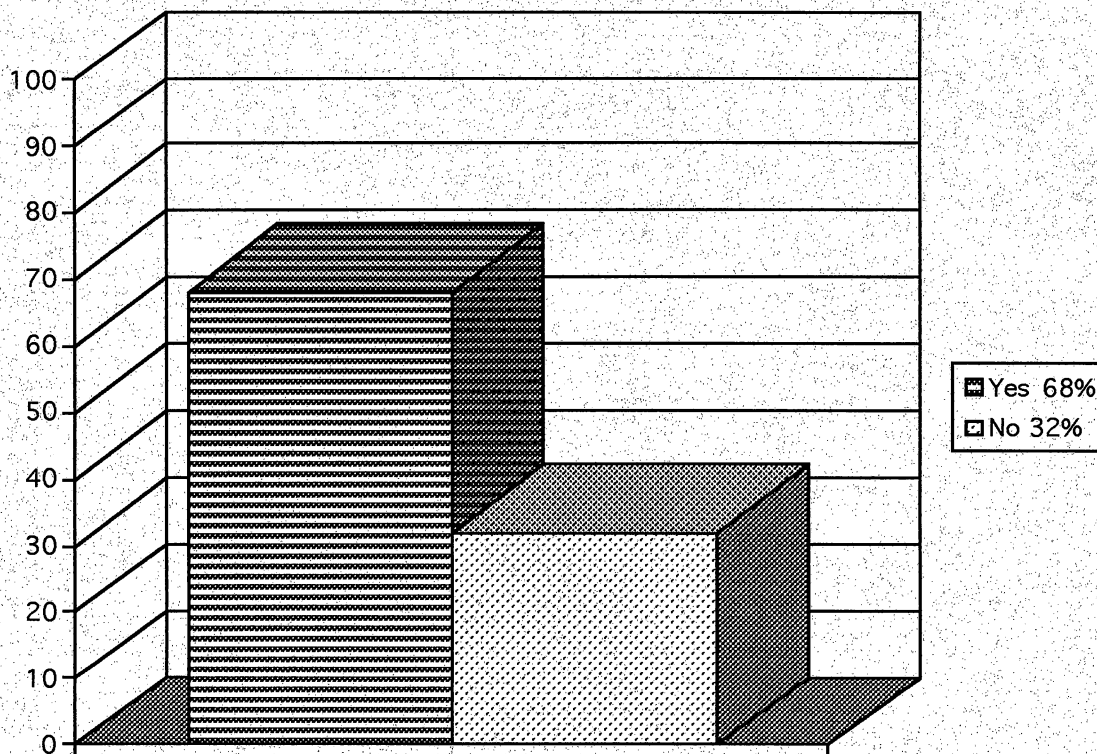
Table 5
Do you support the reform measures at XX Middle School?



The establishment of middle grade educational philosophy secured the passage for the participants to begin a dialogue regarding reform. However, the level of support and enthusiasm for the reform measures varied amongst the participants. The reform advocates at the school site set the tone for the impending changes

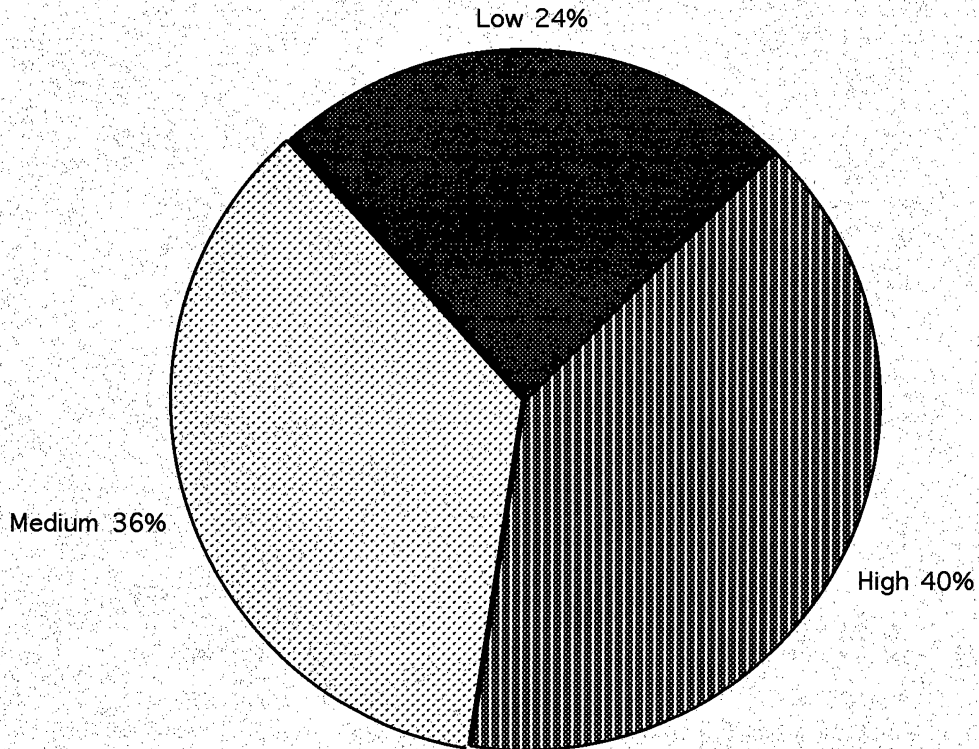
and their involvement was disputed by the respondents as identified in Tables 6 and 7.

Table 6
Were there many reform advocates at the school site?



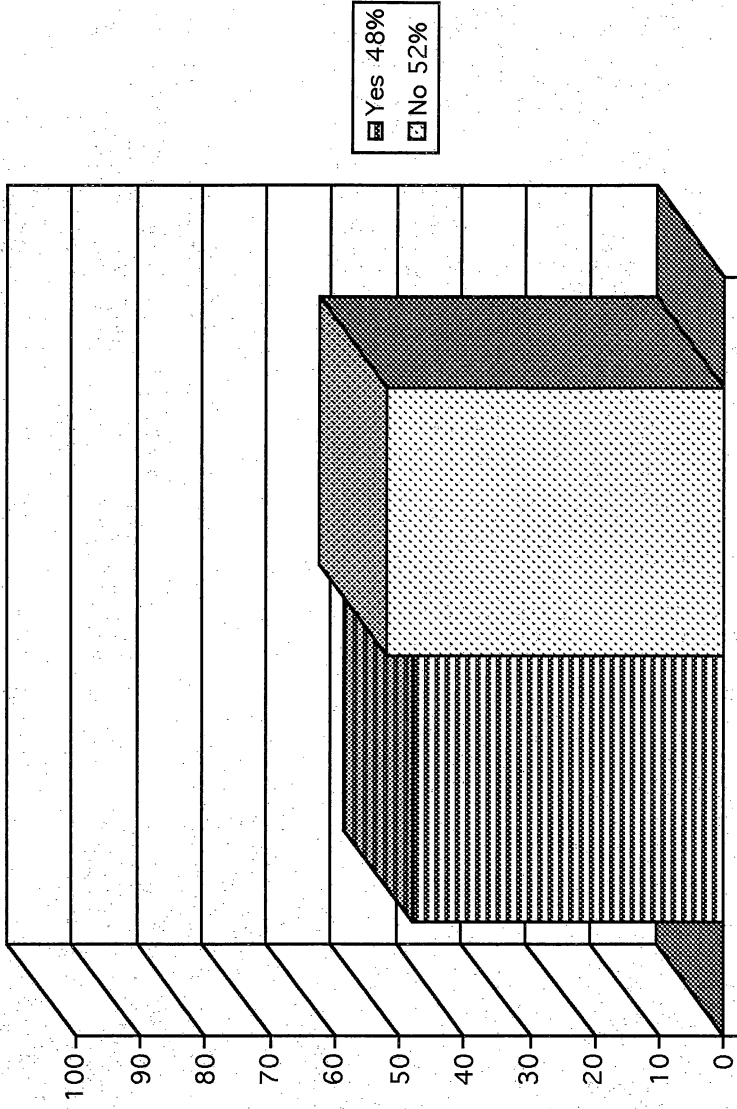
Even though 68 percent of the respondents reported the existence of reform advocates at the school site (Table 6) their level of influence permeating the process was scattered as 60 percent of the respondents rated their impact as either medium or low (Table 7).

Table 7
What was the level of influence of the reform advocates?



The levels of support and enthusiasm for the changes divided the participants into two groups as demonstrated by Table 8, as 4 percentage points separated the expressed ebullience for reform.

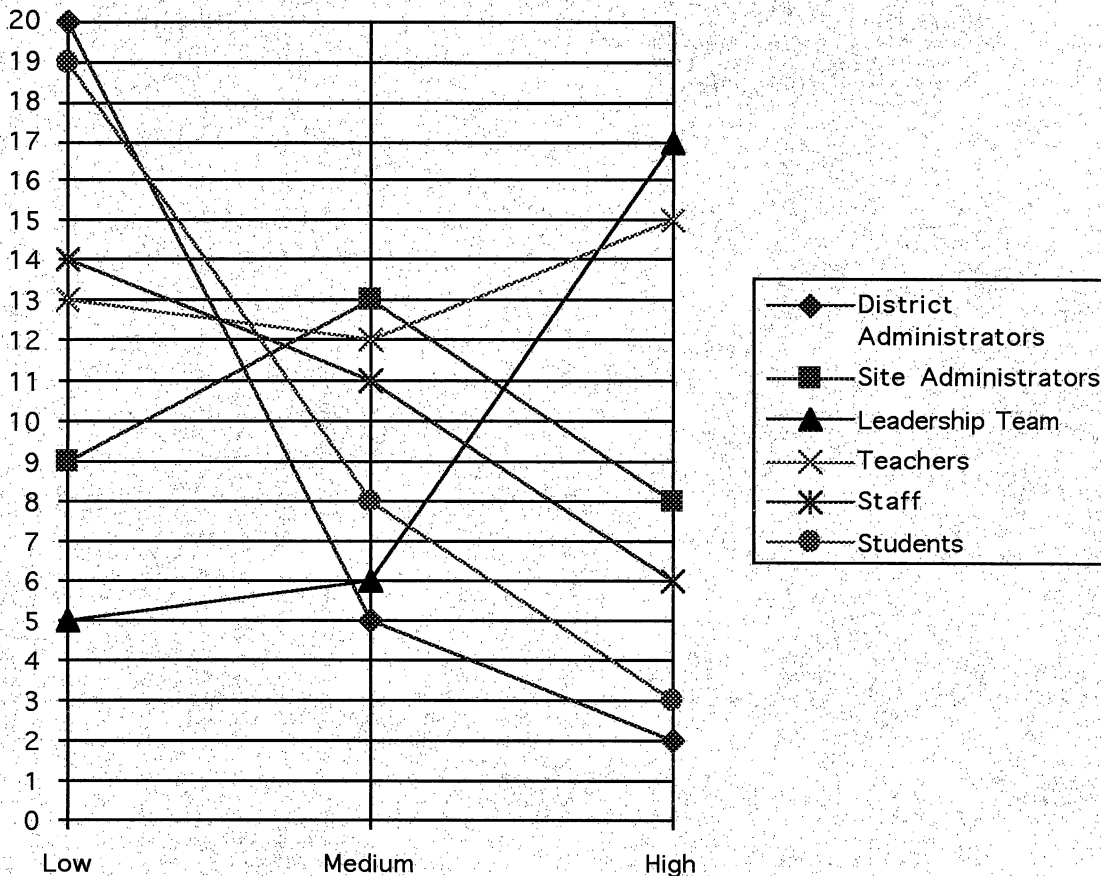
Table 8
 Were the participants enthusiastic regarding the changes?



Further, the levels of support for the reform measures varied between the participant groups. The findings regarding participant support for the reform measures modulates amongst the participant groups as well as within the various groups. The expression of levels of support by participant group is charted in Tables 9 and 10, while Table 11 shows the percentage of support for the combined participant groups.

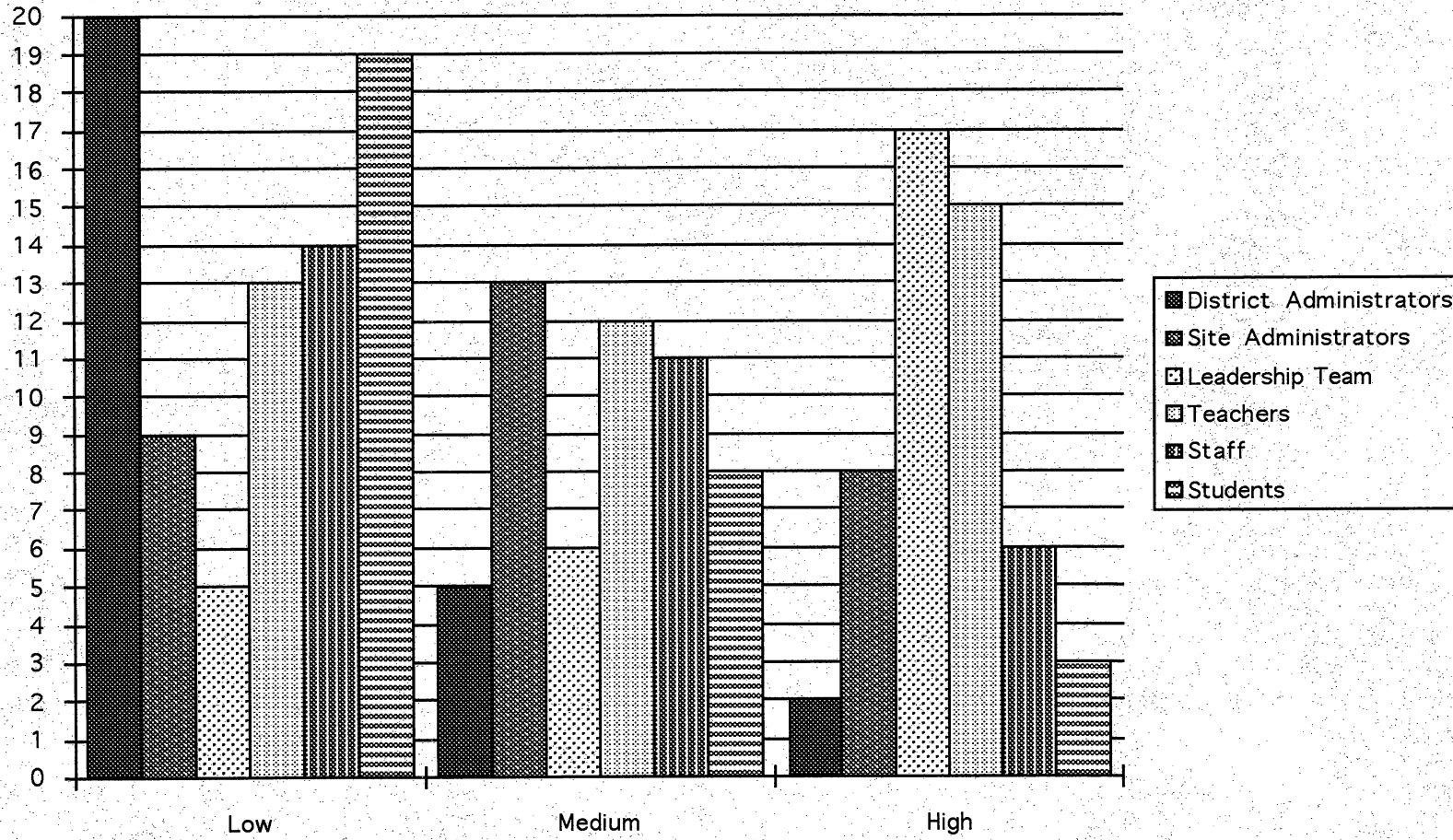
Table 9

What was the level of support for the reform measures of the participant groups?



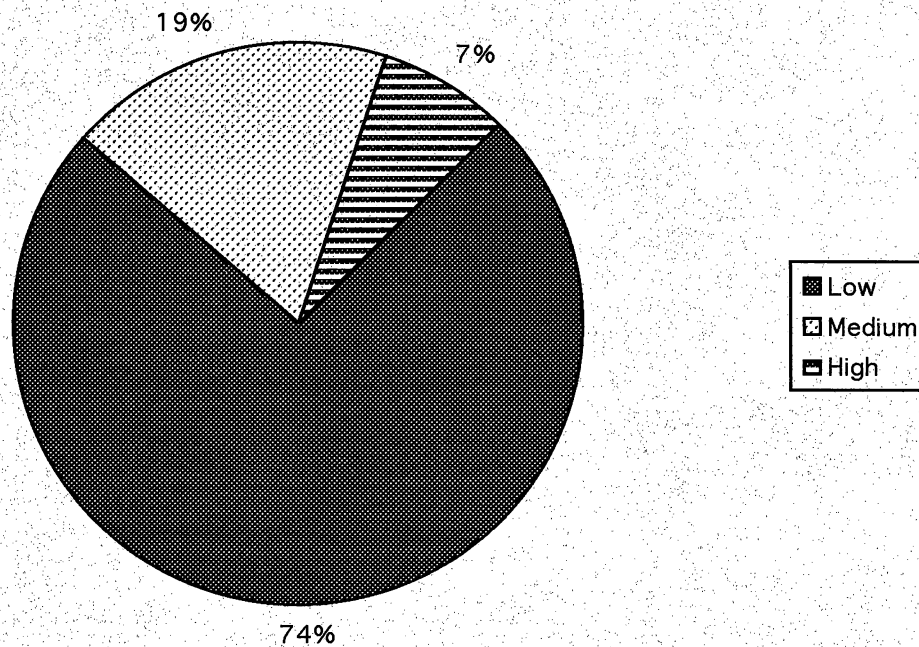
The level of support by participant group, Table 10 is varied and demonstrates the stratification of the representatives from the sample. Overall, the District's administrative support and student support was rated as Low. The site administration and staff support was generally recorded at the Medium level of support. Lastly, the Leadership Team and the teachers were categorized as having higher levels of support for the reform efforts at XX Middle School.

Table 10
 What was the level of support for the reform by participant group?



The overall participant support for the reform, Table 11, was transparent as 74 percent of the respondents rated the level of support for the reform measures as low.

Table 11
What was the level of support for the combined participant groups?



The reform efforts were undertaken at XX Middle School for various reasons according to the participant's response to survey question number five. For instance, a faculty member states that "there were major problems in achievement, discipline and 'school spirit'." Further, It was noted by an administrator that "to move from a traditional departmentalized program to a program where

students felt connected and staff felt responsible for the outcomes. The district document and *Caught In The Middle* both call for reform" as the catalyst for the measures. Another common theme for the reason for reform was "to create a fun, caring, learning program with safety and curricula, age appropriate methods" according to a faculty member. Several other adult respondents cited grant funds, reduce over-crowding at the elementary sites and a general sense of bettering the education for the students as the impetus behind the reform efforts.

There is a wide discrepancy on who initiated the middle school reforms at XX Middle School according the responses to survey question number six. A former administrator's name was frequently mentioned as the person who began the implementation process. Also, district and administrators were as a group identified as the initiators of reform. A faculty member summed it up in this way:

(Former Administrator Named) was moving our school in the direction of middle school philosophy which included transitioning to the team concept.

- 1) District housed 6th graders at XX Middle School to reduce population at one Elementary;
- 2) *(Former Administrator Named)* believed in middle school concepts - district promised to eventually make us a 'real' middle school.

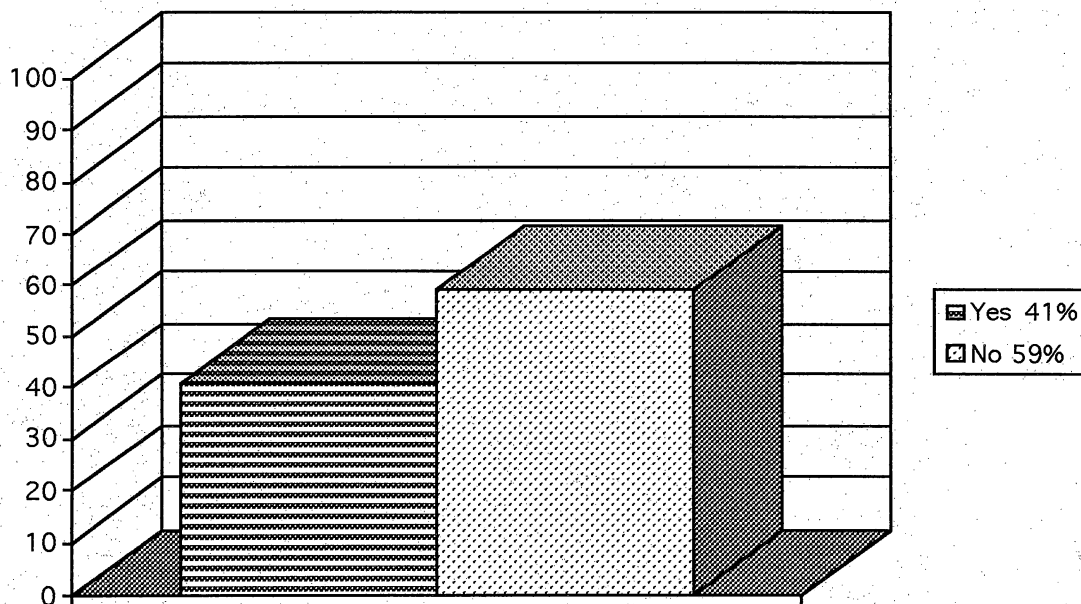
Several respondents added that grant money tied to X Graduate School initiated the reform efforts.

The decision for program change as surveyed in question number ten, varied by respondent. The most common response was

a consensus between staff and administration and included a vote. However, many faculty and staff members stated that they "don't know."

The readiness prior to the implementation of the reform measures as indicated by the sample findings were consolidated and express a clear lack preparation time. In Table 12, 59 percent of the respondents reported that a lack of preparation time preceded implementation of the reform measures.

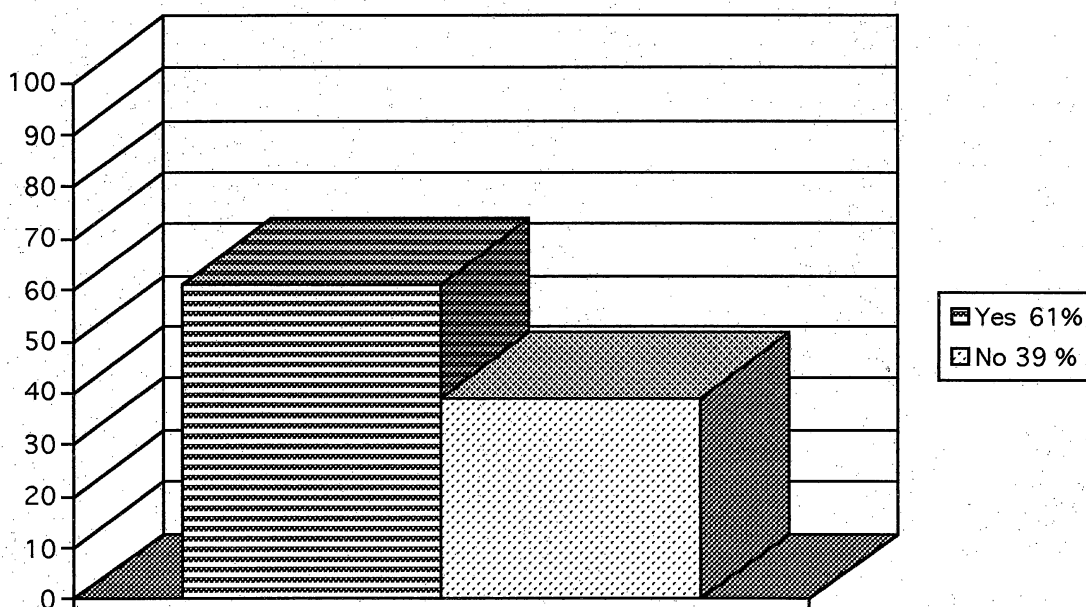
Table 12
Was there adequate preparation time prior to the implementation of the reform measures?



The lack of preparation time was revisited with another question and displayed in Table 13. The preparation prior to the implementation of the reform measures indicates a diminutive

amount of support for the time available to the participants. This is a slight reversal of findings from a similar question shown in Table 12. Upon examination of both Table 12 and Table 13 it is evident that adequate preparation time as well as a time frame to plan for the impending changes were deficient as components of reform measures.

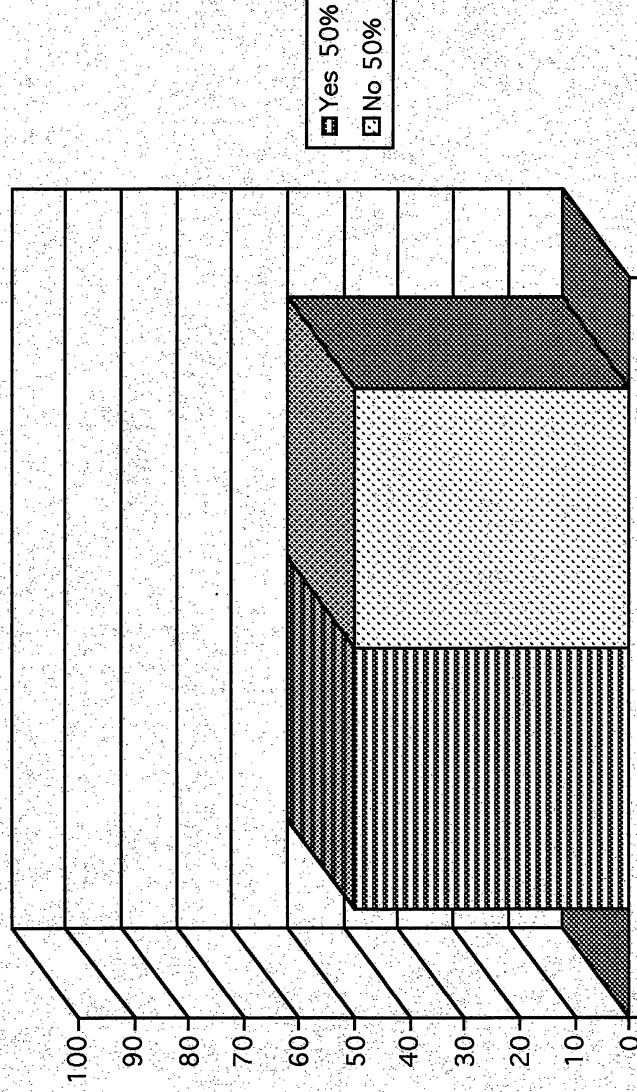
Table 13
 Prior to implementation, was there a planning period of time to prepare for the impending changes?



Meanwhile, there existed a vapid difference between the respondents regarding the element of staff development prior to the implementation of the measures. Table 14 shows the findings regarding staff development that existed prior to the reform changes. The horizontal views regarding staff development exists as the

respondents are divided as to whether or not prior to the implementation of the reform efforts they were engaged in productive instruction and training.

Table 14
Was there staff development prior to the reform implementation?



The intended outcomes of the reform measures modulated between changes in the structure of the organization and meeting the needs of the students. The organizational changes were expressed in summary of the prevailing proposition of the respondents by the following statements:

- 1) A faculty member stated: "I believe that the intended outcomes were structural changes in the operation of the school;"

- 2) A faculty member stated: "Schedule flexibility, teacher coring - Cross curriculum - Site based management;"
- 3) A faculty member stated: "...most basic was teaming and personal contact between staff and students."

Meeting the needs of the students was the second theme that emerged as a reason for restructuring XX Middle School and was evidenced by the following statements:

- 1) A staff member notes: "Assurance of a safe, well rounded, supportive transitioning place for students from grade school to high school;"
- 2) A faculty member notes: "To increase educational outcomes by helping students feel more connected to school, staff and each other;"
- 3) A faculty member notes: "The interaction among teachers and students was to be enhanced and the learning environment (the classroom) was to be improved."

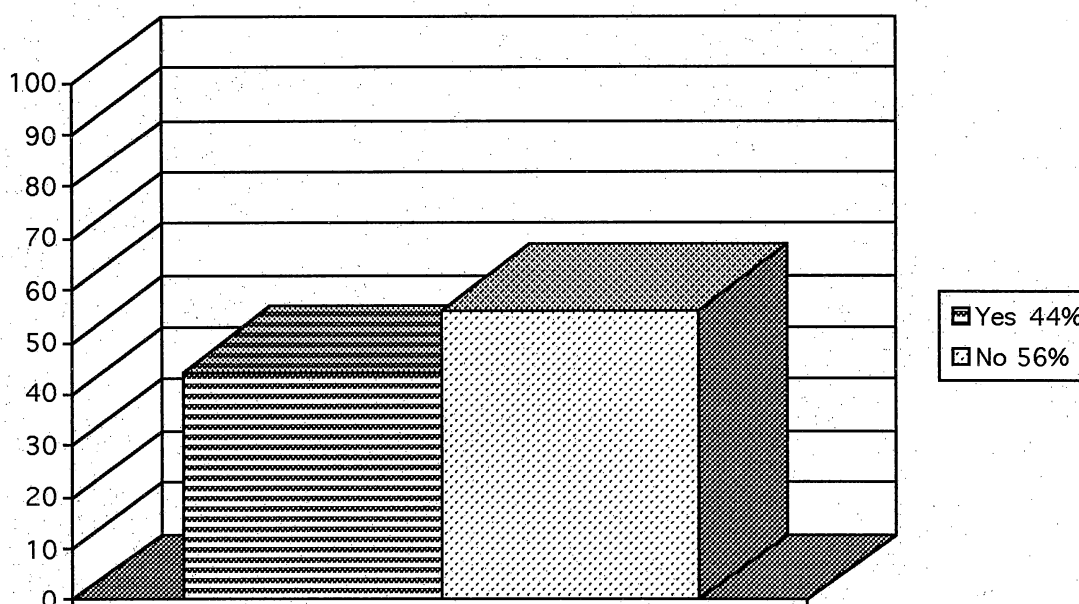
Meanwhile, several of the respondents merged their responses regarding intended outcomes of the reform to include both organizational changes and the meeting of students needs as recorded below:

- 1) An administrators response: "Intended outcomes were flexible scheduling, interdisciplinary teams, improved student/teacher relationships, improved student performance, improved staff morale, etc...;"
- 2) A staff members response: "Understanding what kids wanted. Understanding what teachers wanted. Understanding what parents wanted. Seeing how it all fit together and see if then we could make a program to fit what's needed."

The components of the reform models to deliver the intended outcomes were indicative of the significance of the overall reform

movement. For example, in Table 15, shows ambiguity amongst the respondents regarding a completion time-line.

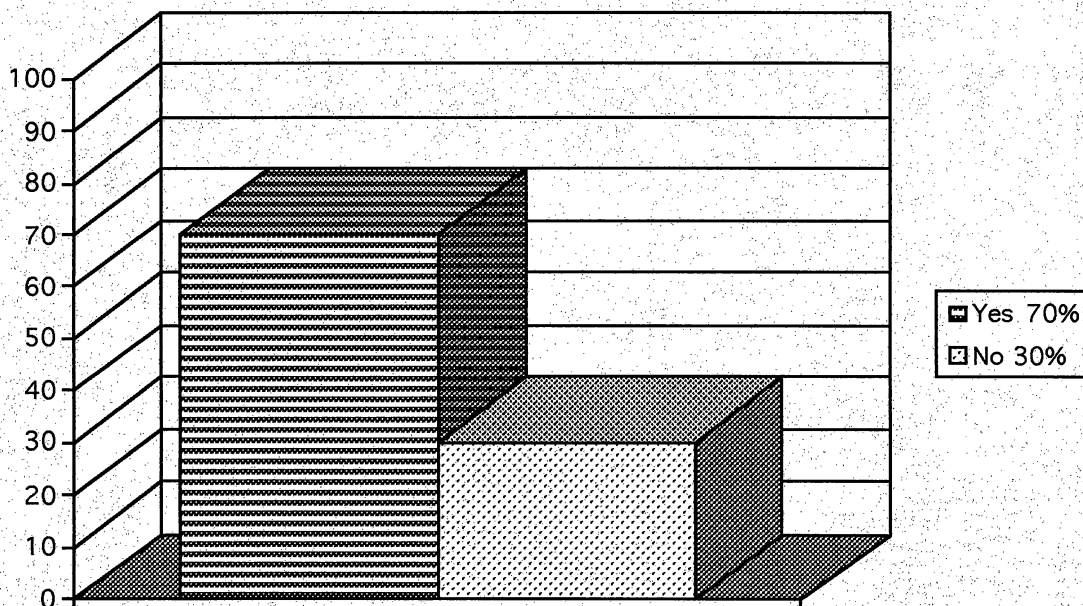
Table 15
Did the reform models have an established time-line for completion of objectives?



While attempting to implement the reform measures, the participants indicated that positive and negative consequences operated. Additionally, Tables 16 and 17 show a high rate of incidence for attempting reform versus a lower rate for non-participation in the reform process. Many thought that communication was at first effective and measurable in then openness of the reform participants. However, as the months and years went by, effective communication was replaced by silence or unresolved arguments. In addition, the organizational structure of

interdisciplinary teaming had a wide-spread positive consequence as a faculty member notes: "The teams inspired community building among teachers and students."

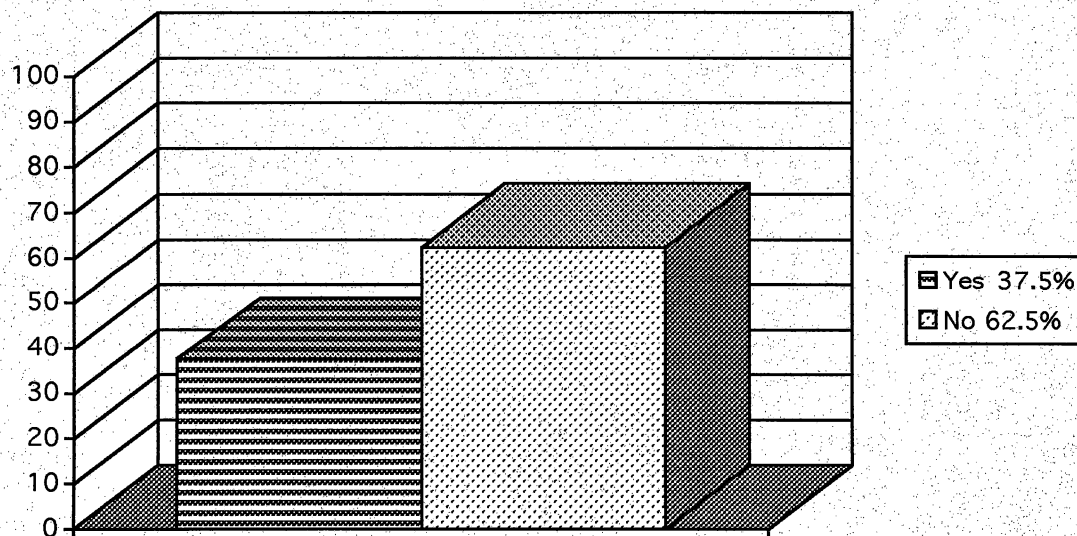
Table 16
Were there positive consequences for attempting to implement the reform measures?



Meanwhile, punitive consequences for attempting to implement change were present. For example, a faculty member states: "It caused a power struggle on campus between teachers & administrators and teachers & teachers." In the end, it was noted by an administrator that over the years of implementation, "peer pressure and the ultimate stratification of the staff resulting in some requests for transfers" was a monumental punitive consequence for

attempting reform. Indirectly punitive consequences resulted, not from administration or specifically built into the reform model, but rather as an out growth of the reform process. For example, a faculty member stated that "more and more people opted out of the reform process as time went by due to frustration. Nothing could be done or was done about this." Nonetheless, 62.5 percent of the respondents indicated that punitive consequences for non-participation did not exist as a component of the reform process (Table 17).

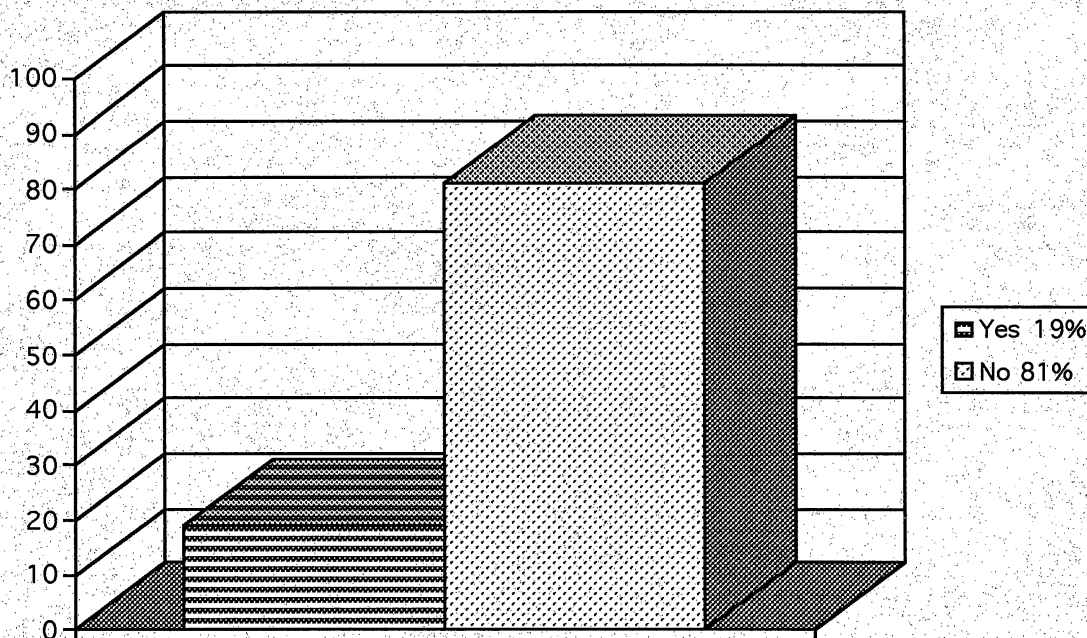
Table 17
Were there punitive consequences for non-participation
in the reform process?



There was a sizable statistical difference between the participants regarding the existence of an evaluation component to

the reform process as shown in Table 18 as most indicated the nonexistence of a procedure for assessment.

Table 18
Was an evaluation process built into the reform measures?



As a group, the community and specifically the parents or guardians of the students were involved in the reform measures on a limited basis. The respondents indicated that the involvement of this group in the process ranged from solicited to unsolicited participation. The consensus held that most were involved through questionnaires and invitations. There was also a number of subjects who noted that this particular group was either involved minimally or not a significant factor in the reform process. One faculty member summed the disparity this way: "Parent - site council - little

involvement considering the parent/student ratio." Further, the community participation tended to involve the business districts and pertained to the donation of awards and gifts. In the end, "there did not appear to be much parent/community involvement" observed a staff member.

The schedule was omnipresent and the respondents indicated that it rather than changes in the organization's structure superseded the reform measures. Student and faculty scheduling were components of the reform measures that impacted the process and surfaced in prolific stature throughout the survey sample. Student scheduling impacted the reform models in a variety of ways that thwarted the measures. A faculty member states that the schedule retained "too much control! Dominated reform measure." An administrator indicated that other enigmas impacted scheduling such as "class size and other contract issues created too many constraints." The prevalent interpretation of the significance of scheduling of students placed limitations at the locus of the situation. A faculty member comments: "It drastically limited options of reform. Scheduling drove everything." Further, a faculty member exhorted: "Nothing impacts the rigid scheduling at XX Middle School, not even reform!" Lastly, a faculty member conjectured: "What scheduling? - This is the crux of the problem."

A similar obstacle was reported by the respondents regarding faculty scheduling. One faculty member reported that there were "too many complications - No constant common preps or complete

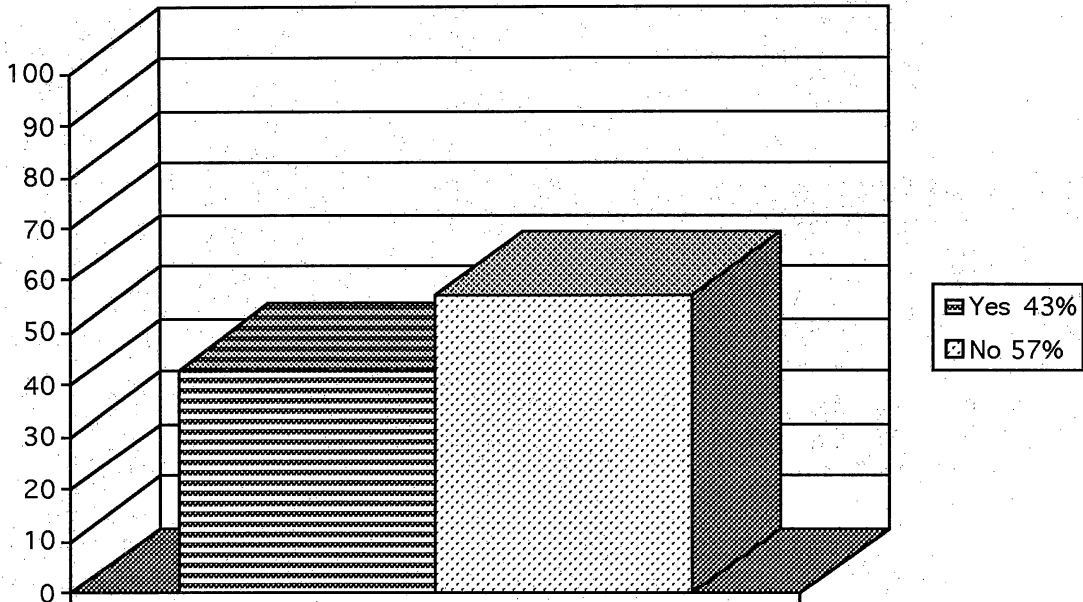
teams." This sentiment was supported by a faculty member who stressed that "we were told that teaming could not be done due to scheduling - But if teaming was 1st priority we know it could be done."

Question number twenty of the survey instrument elicited responses to the accountability of the various participant groups during implementation of the reform measures. Generally it was believed that the professional, career oriented individuals would monitor their own behavior. A faculty member predicted that "it was assumed educators would follow through. I know of no other means to determine accountability." However, district administrators, site administrators, the leadership team, teachers, staff and students were depicted by three characteristics that categorized accountability: no accountability, little accountability and unknown. The repercussions of the lack of accountability for the implementation of the reform measures are best lamented by a faculty member: "Polarization and hard feelings were created during this time. Some because of the project, some not - almost all of it was blamed on the project. There will be consequences for years at XX Middle School as a result."

During the implementation of the reform efforts marginal significance was reported regarding the existence of on-going training and problem solving, (Table 19), as a component of the reform measures.

Table 19

Was there on-going training and problem solving during the implementation of the reform measures?

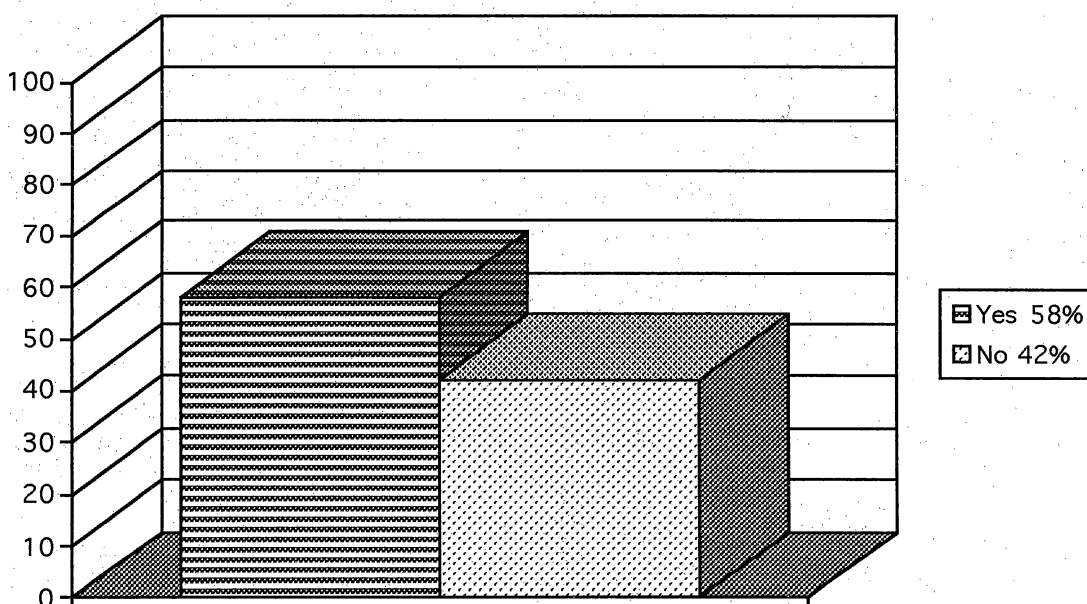


The manner in which decisions were reached regarding the reform measures at XX Middle School were fragmented according to the responses to question number thirty-eight of the survey. The respondents indicated that the decision making was for the most part top-down and involved the schedule. The administrators made the vital decisions regarding program change. As a staff member states: "Top down, after many months of prep and discussions - the key was scheduling and eventual decision by administration." The respondents also described some element of a shared decision making process. What was shared, though, was a limited set of alternatives. On the decision making process, a faculty member

notes: "Mostly it was top-down because reform was schedule driven. Teachers did have input on team matters and vote on narrow sets of options." In all, a dichotomy existed between the way in which decision making was discharged: top-down or shared.

Meanwhile, a slight discrepancy was indicated by the respondents in survey question number thirty-seven as to the availability of experts and/or consultants to assist the participants during the implementation of the reform measures. The findings are expressed in Table 20.

Table 20
Were experts and/or consultants available to assist the participants during the implementation of the reform measures?



Communication during the implementation of the reform measures clearly experienced a degree of insufficiency and at best moderation.

Tables 21 and 22 show the inadequacies of communication during the implementation of the reform measures.

Table 21
Was there effective communication during the implementation of the reform measures?

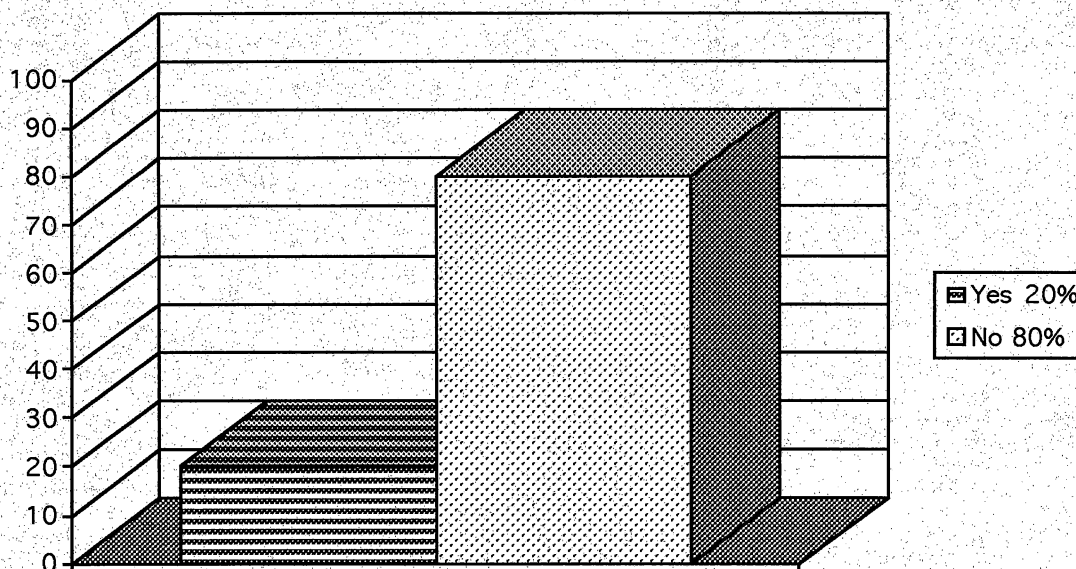
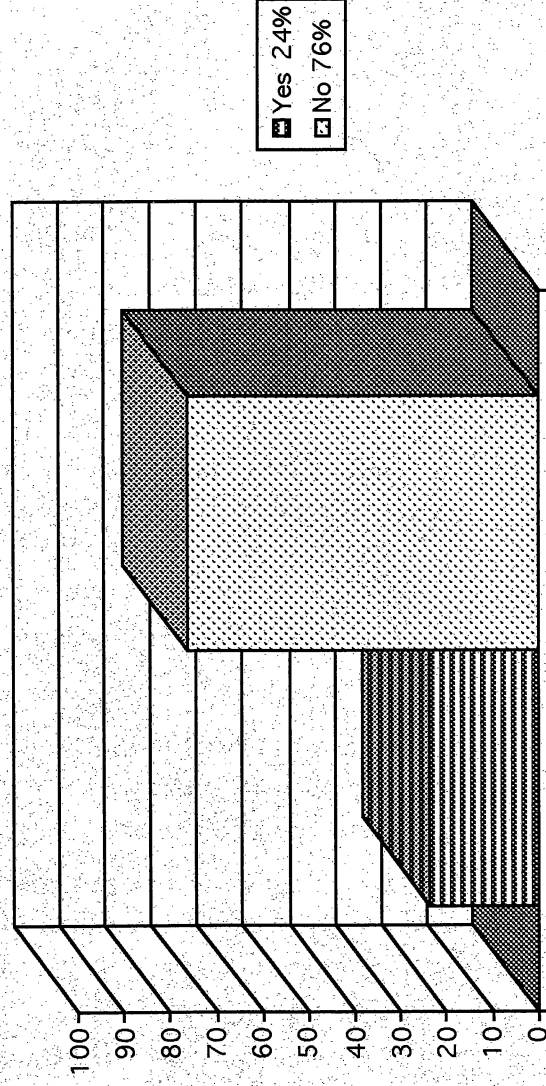


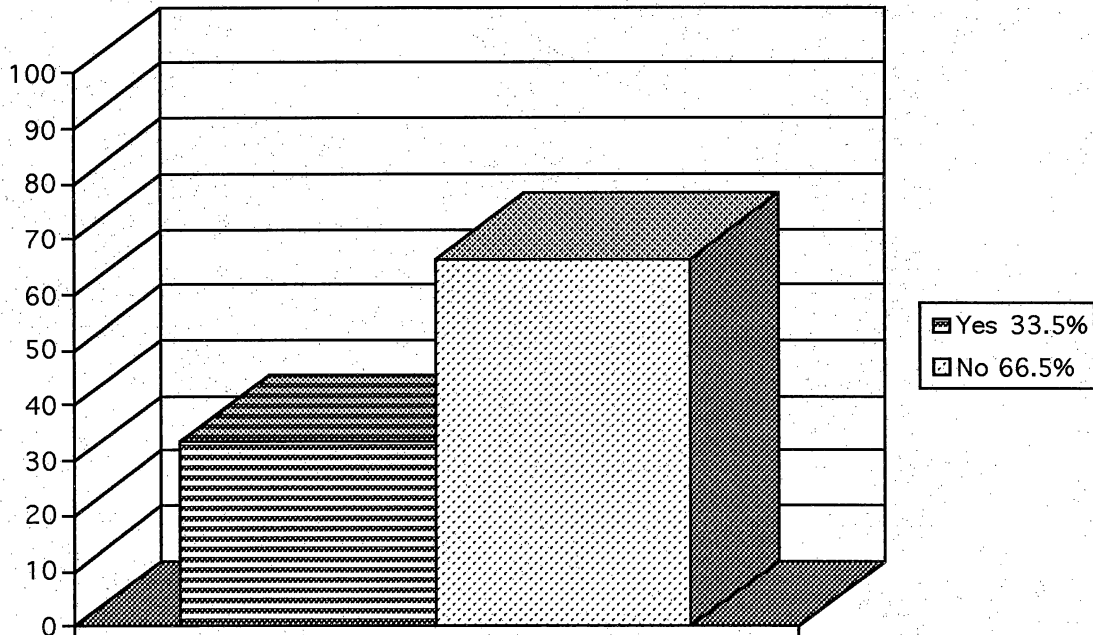
Table 22

During the reform efforts, was there clear communication about the role of the participants during implementation?



During the implementation of the reform measures funding and the availability of materials are expressed in Tables 23 and 24 and show a significant level of abandonment in these categories.

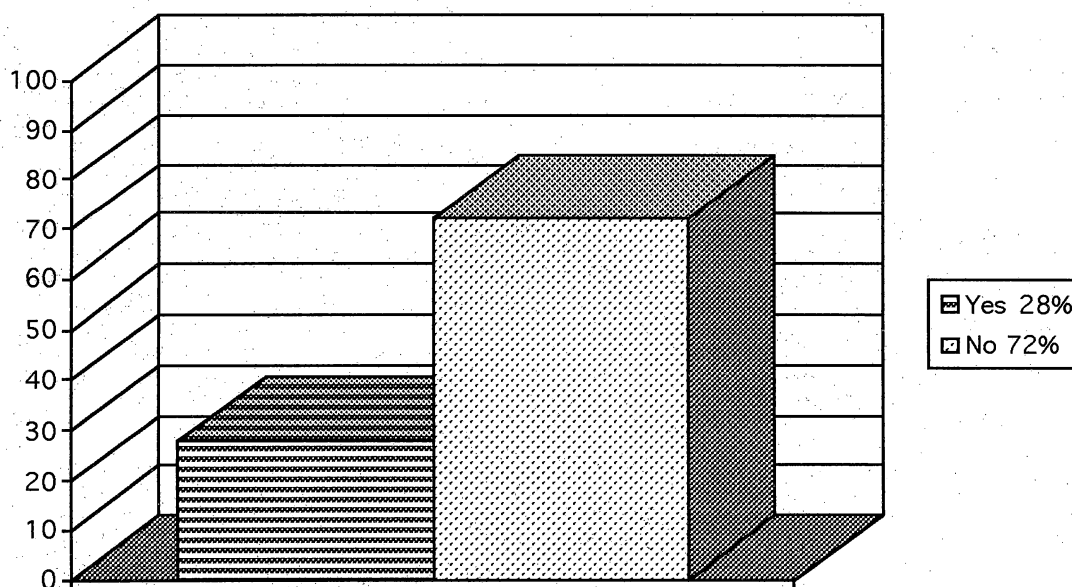
Table 23
Were funds available to support the reform efforts?



The findings regarding the explanation for the respondents belief that facilities and materials were inadequate as shown in Table 24, involved the physical plant as well as personnel. Specific responses to the vintage 1950's school include the absence of air conditioning as well as "XX Middle School is an outmoded, run-down, dilapidated school site..." as noted by a faculty member. Furthermore, a faculty member commiserates: "We didn't have enough rooms to do what was needed...Many teachers had to travel all day (very frustrating)." Funding was not increased to accommodate the changes in the organization to facilitate the implementation of the reform measures. An administrator commenting on the issue of funding states: "There was no district

funds specifically dedicated to the reform effort." A significant portion of the respondents indicated they used inadequate materials, supplies and hardware, while awaiting the promised funds to appear in their budgets. Further, the pervasive notion tended to involve funding that was not designated for the implementation of reform but rather was directed to the discovery process. As a staff member explains their position: "It was not there - the money went for buildings to meet at - food to eat while there and printers to print what was found, but NO money to implement ideas."

Table 24
 Were facilities, materials, supplies and the like adequate during the implementation of the reform measures?



In response to survey question number 23, regarding how the reform measures affected the respondents subject area or job, two

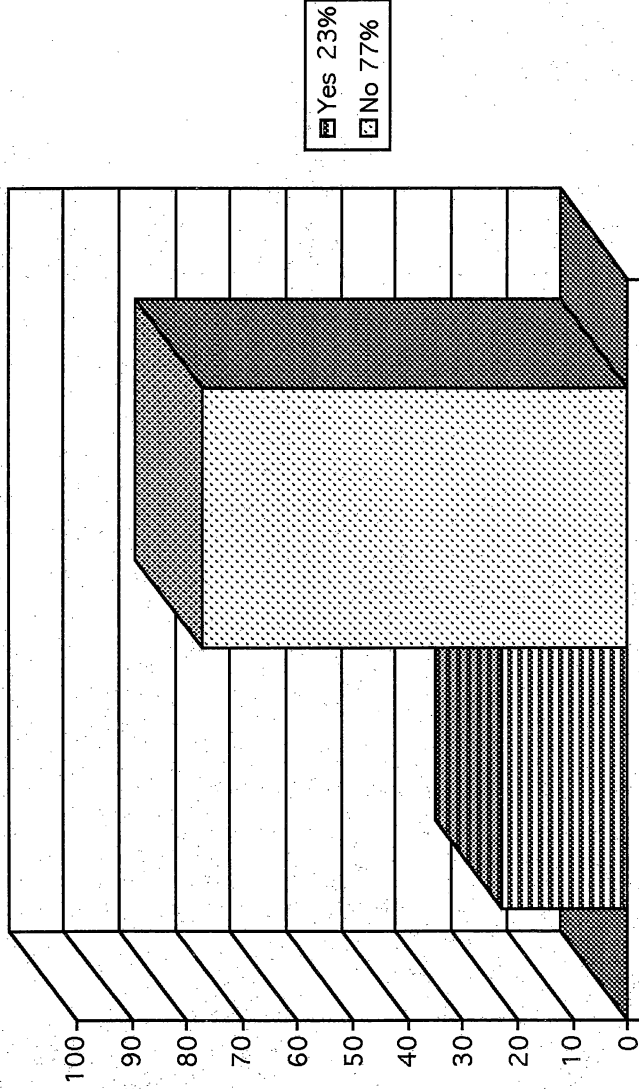
dichotomous camps emerged: laudatory and disastrous. The convictions for the effects of the reform measures were stalwartly stated by the respondents. On the side of disastrous results, a faculty member charged: "Damned near destroyed people and careers!" This sentiment was furthered by an administrator who revealed that it "created some problems for me in the form of complaints about the school administration. However, it was not the reform attempts per se but rather the behavior of administrators." The center of the continuum was a middle ground in which numerous respondents found the conflict between the reform attempts and administrators. A faculty member pointed out that "when I was a part of the team structure the content of my courses were directly related & relevant to what was going on in other classes - Being removed from the team structure made less relevancy/isolation for subject and teacher." For those respondents who experienced positive results as the reform measures were implemented lauded their encounters with change. A faculty member recalled "it was difficult at first as I was put in a poorly chosen configuration (team). But I have been lucky my team has stayed together for three years and we keep getting better." A concurring faculty member continued that it "made my job easier in the sense of communicating better with students - motivating them comes easier. Made job harder in that I spend many, many more hours preparing and helping students. But: student are more willing to learn now."

The reform attempts affected the participant's classrooms in a variety of fashions as the sample responded to survey question number 24. A significant number of statements emphasized that an affect was either not present or ineffective at best. On the other hand several respondents expressed observed positive comporment. A faculty member described the affects of the reform measures in that "teaming has helped me build rapport with my students - we build identity and accountability." In regard to the reform measure of the interdisciplinary team structure a faculty member maintained that "all efforts except teaming did nothing. Teaming helped kids feel a little more connected and kids were given more individual attention." Meanwhile, the preponderance of statements lamenting the classroom impact of the reform measures were clear in there intent. As one faculty member deplored: "Being a new 6th grade teacher, other staff members rarely made us feel a part of the school. Lots of negative comments about 'those little kids'." Furthermore, the implementation of the reform measures created "no significant ramifications/fall out" conceded a faculty member.

The outcomes of the reform measures emerged from survey question number twelve were consequently undesirable and did not produce what the participants had intended as the result of their exertion. The findings regarding the outcomes of the reform measures as desired by the participants contradicts their intentions as a clear majority indicate and is represented in Table 25.

Table 25

Did the reforms produce the outcomes you desired?

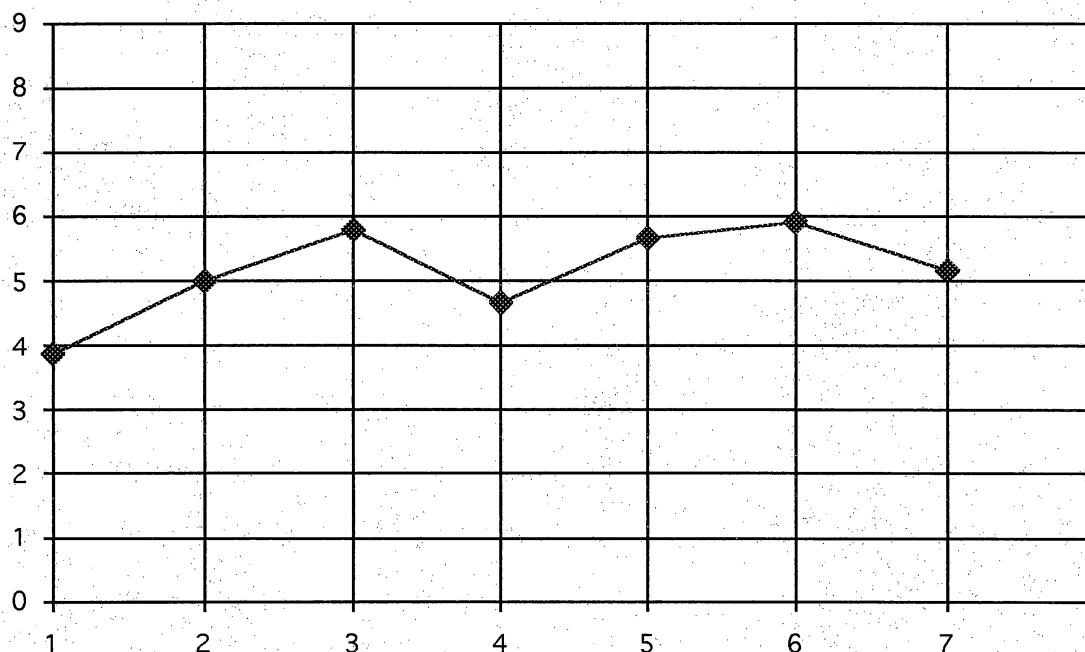


The reform attempts affected the school as a whole, survey question number 25, dramatically and produced outcomes that segued between mild evidentiary successes and stark annihilation of professional/personal relationships, organizational structures and middle grade practices. A faculty member defended the reform efforts with the following statement: "The entire student body enjoyed being identified by a team name, team colors, and a team mascot." For the most part, the isolated voices expressing success for the structure of teaming were quitted by the thunderous clamor of devastation. The effects of the implementation of the reform measures on XX Middle School according to a faculty member were such that "they created a tremendous amount of dissension and

division among faculty." This outcome was supported by an administrator who queried: "The most pronounced affect was a division of the staff."

Furthermore, Table 26 shows the success rate of the seven reform measures at XX Middle School.

Table 26
On a scale of 1 to 9, with 9 representing high level of success, rate the seven attempts of reform.



- Reform measure number 1: 3.38
- Reform measure number 2: 5.
- Reform measure number 3: 5.78
- Reform measure number 4: 4.68
- Reform measure number 5: 5.68
- Reform measure number 6: 5.9
- Reform measure number 7: 5.17

There were a number of significant strengths that were present within the reform measures that emerged from survey question number 26 and the interdisciplinary team structure was at the nucleus. As a faculty member revealed: "Teaming made more creative instruction and student rewards possible. It also helped with discipline and personalized student attention. Other reform efforts were like spinning our wheels to go nowhere." An encompassing synopsis of the reform efforts were boosted by a faculty member:

School environment is more professional an atmosphere. Students expect and want to learn. Students now know which team, which teachers they want according to their own attitude about school and learning. The team they are on determines their mind-set (because of teachers).

Finally, a faculty member commenting on the indispensable nature of the teaming structure confirms that "implementing teaming - First year many efforts & time given in planned curriculum and team activities. Team identification. Loss of most teams, this growth and commitment has been lost."

As a positive change that resulted from the implementation of the reform measures, survey question number 27, teaming was the single recognizable model. As a faculty member contended:

Teaming gave students a sense of ownership and therefore, feel more accountable for their behavior and achievement. Before reform efforts, they were 'one of the crowd' unaccountable to no one. Their actions were of no consequence.

While numerous weaknesses flourished in the planning, implementation and post-implementation stages, they were directed towards a two-fold realm: personnel and/or the model. The findings indicated that a significant desecration of these two entities functioned in a state of perpetual abandonment. Table 27 indicates that weaknesses were present in the measures. The following direct quotes from faculty members expound upon the findings of Table 27:

- 1) "Not giving change a chance to work - Not giving the plan time to be successful;"
- 2) "There was no standard or goal toward which efforts could be directed;"
- 3) "Biggest weaknesses I see are staff who:
 - 1) do not but into reform in any shape/form;
 - 2) are not willing to 'give';
 - 3) will not 'bend' outside of contract;"
- 4) "Everyone wants to complain - No one wants to 'do';"
- 5) "After problems identified, little change occurred;"
- 6) "No one seemed to know what to do or who should do them;"
- 7) "Power struggles. Failure to keep promises. Lack of follow-through. Wrongly chosen leadership;"
- 8) "Not sticking to change long enough to get the bugs out. Scheduling limits drive every attempt at change;"
- 9) "No effective administrative direction toward reform. Total indifference as long as anything doesn't 'rock the boat'."

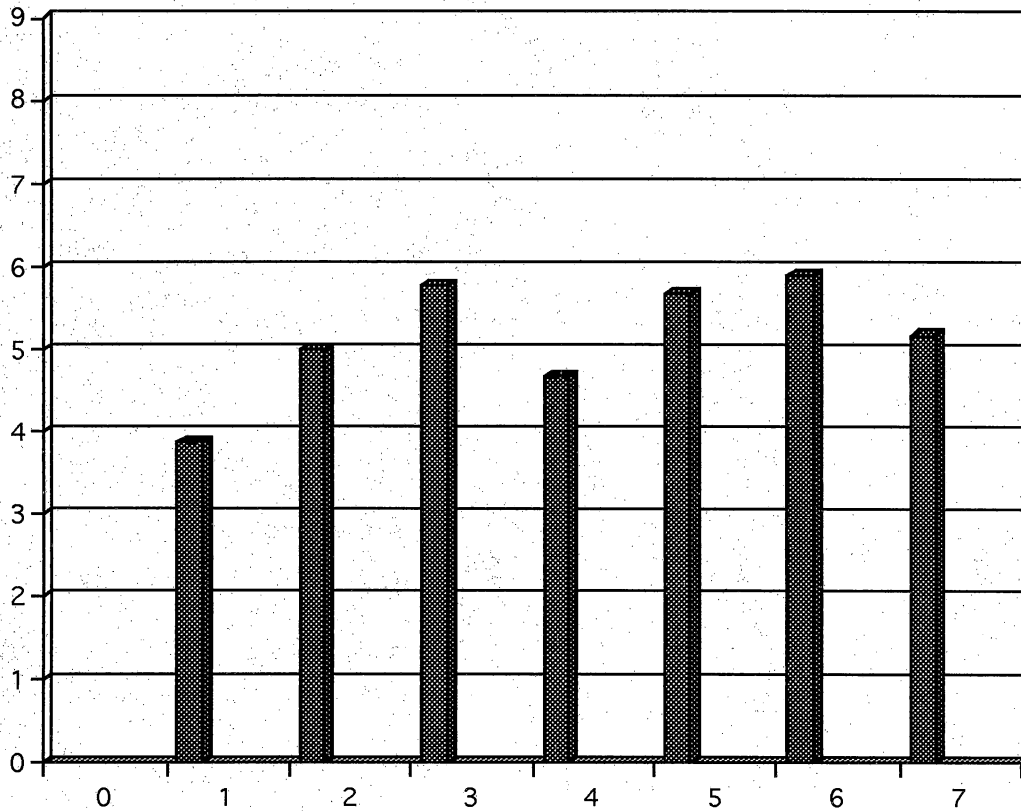
A staff member commenting on the weakness of the reform measures contended that the "discontinuation of interest when the money got short. Discontinuation when the work load increased."

Administrator comments reconfirmed those of the faculty members and staff members regarding weaknesses of the reform efforts:

- 1) "Lack of master plan with bench marks and a time line that was adhered to. Lack of an administrative and site commitment;"
- 2) "Caused division of staff. No consistent vision or focus. Students were often the last consideration rather than the focus."

Table 27

On a scale of 1 to 9, with 9 representing high level of success, rate the seven attempts of reform.



Reform measure number 1: 3.38

Reform measure number 2: 5.

Reform measure number 3: 5.78

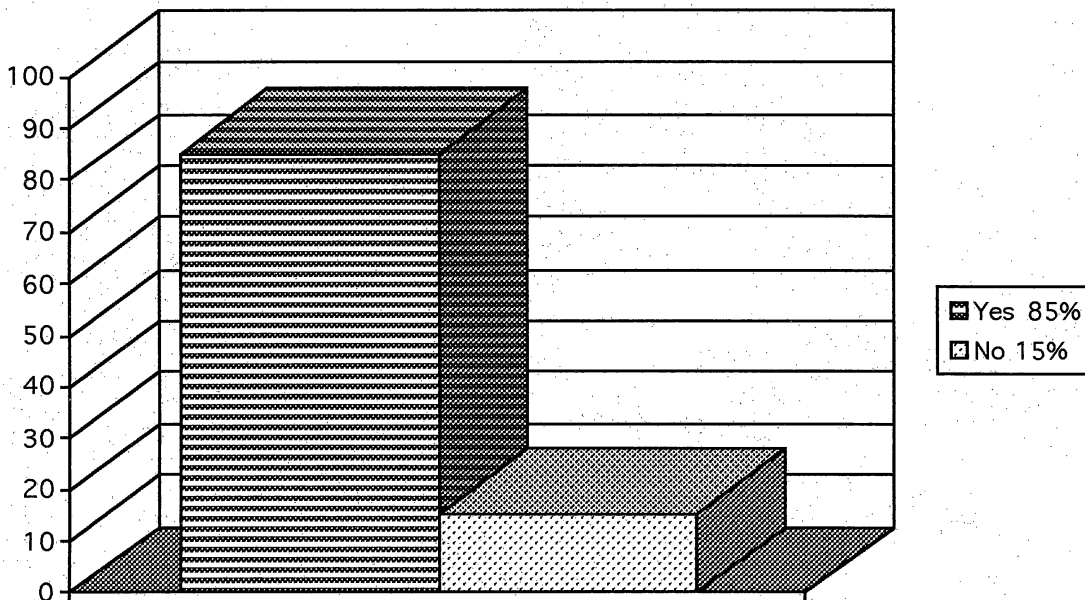
Reform measure number 4: 4.68

Reform measure number 5: 5.68

Reform measure number 6: 5.9
Reform measure number 7: 5.17

Meanwhile, a substantial proportion of the respondents signified (Table 28) that issues obstructed the implementation of the reform measures.

Table 28
Were there any difficulties or underlying issues that affected the reform efforts?



The obstacles identified by the respondents that thwarted the implementation of change revolved around three central themes: solidarity, vision, and organization of the reform measures. First, a faculty member in response to survey question number 29 began by writing that "staff must 'buy into' change. The change of staff-nearly 25% new each year for several years caused dramatic change in

cohesiveness of staff. A once cohesive staff became divisive." Second, a paramount obstacle of change that fueled the fires of reform prevention was a common cause or vision. "Some had preconceptions about what the problems were and how to solve them. When results proved otherwise-they refused to change or address the findings. The bulldozer continued full speed ahead," acknowledged a faculty member. Third, the prevailing obstacle to reform was a component of the organizational structure: the schedule. Two faculty members declared:

Scheduling, class size, limited funds, and some negative attitudes. Changes happened so frequently, they were hard to take seriously;

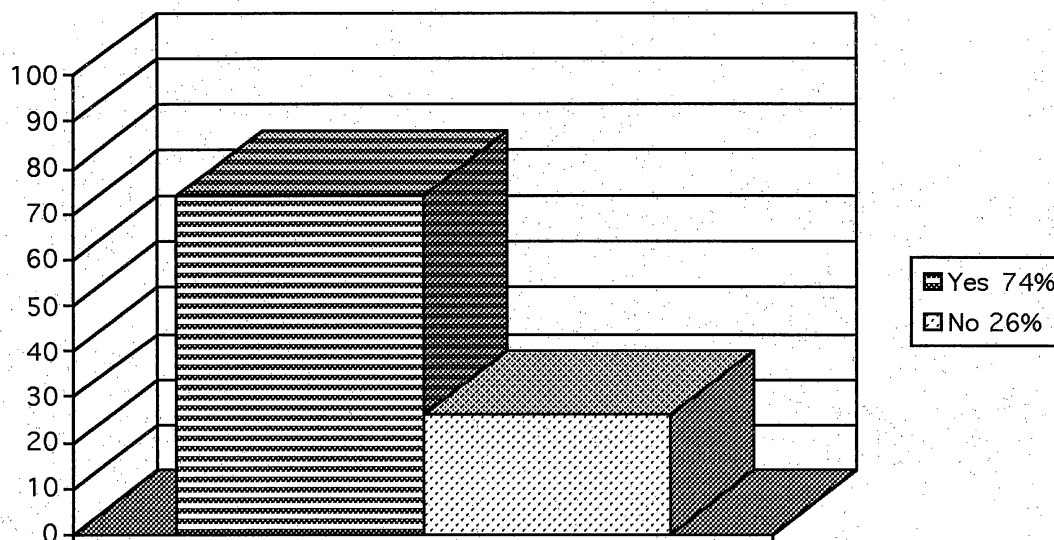
Scheduling - resistance from some staff members. Too many leaders and not enough direction from administration.

Consequently, the recognition of change in the organization were strategically encumbered by numerous obstacles embedded within as well as present in the atmosphere of the reform measures.

As an example of the implementation of a particular reform measure element in relationship to the difficulties and issues previously related, the Advisory Program is a case in point. A component consistent within the organizational structure of a middle school is an advisory program. At XX Middle School an Advisement Period existed for three school years. The respondents at the study site during the residence of the Advisory Period are represented in table 29. With nearly three quarters of the respondents having been at the study site during one to three of the years the Advisory Period

existed, this particular component of organizational change can be examined.

Table 29
Were you at XX Middle School during the
existence of the Advisory Period?



The effectiveness of the Advisory Period was viewed by the respondents in both positive and negative perspectives. A faculty member confirmed that it created "a chance to speak more one-to-one with students in a less threatening, non-structural atmosphere." Furthermore, a faculty member supporting the program added it "gave you a smaller group of students to work with on general life skills, homework, self esteem." To the contrary, numerous respondents regarded the Advisory Period as "a waste of time" or as one faculty member challenged: "Advisory allowed for two lunch periods." The managerial aspect of the implementation of the Advisory Period and coupled with the effectiveness of the program

was lamented by a faculty member who exhorted: "I saw no evidence that it accomplished anything other than making lunch supervision easier."

Be that as it may, the demise of the Advisory Period materialized according to the survey respondents for a three-fold set of reasons. First, "it was seen by many as an additional teaching assignment" according to a faculty member. Second, the program ceased because as an administrator succinctly stated: "Change in leadership." Third, the respondents indicated that there was a lack of vision, faculty and staff support and an overall apathy regarding the program that ushered the Advisory Program toward abolishment.

All of the respondents agreed with survey question number forty-six that regarding the following quote by S. B. Sarason:

What is not recognized or verbalized cannot be dealt with, and if it is important and not recognized, efforts to introduce substantive change...result in the illusion of change (Sarason, 1971, p. 78).

The respondent's identification with this statement is compelling and consistent throughout the responses. A faculty member emphasized that "it characterizes the situation, except for the last part...We don't even have the 'illusion' of change." Echoing the sentiment of many respondents as faculty member writes:

We had a lot of illusionary change at XX Middle School. Only teaming dealt with some of the real issues like limited resources and isolation. X Graduate School's project exemplifies the illusion of change - No change actually occurred.

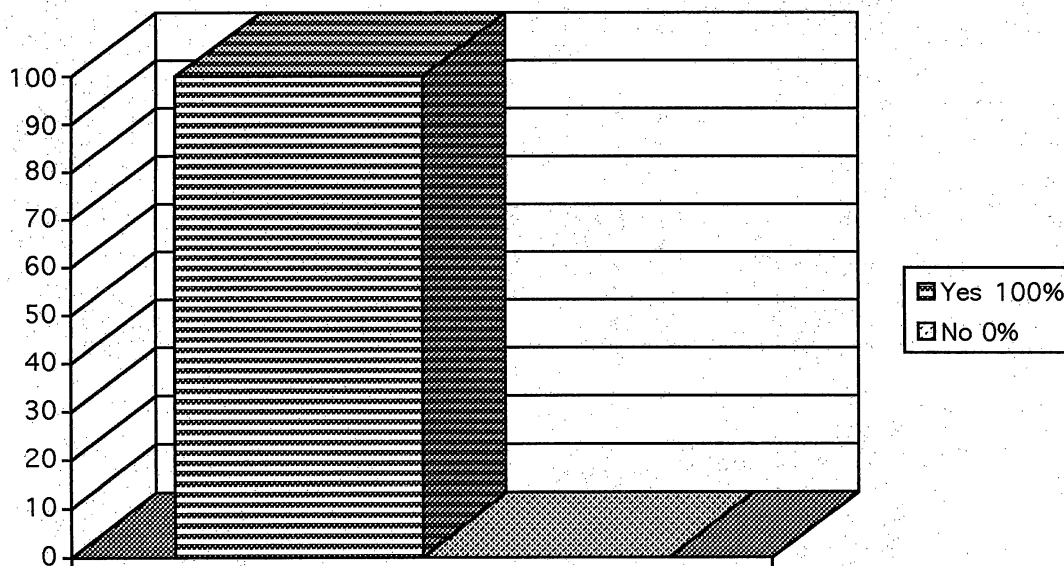
In a comprehensive cause and effect declaration, a faculty member opined:

Need for change has to be recognized in education before change can begin. However, true change in education will not be, (cannot be) radical. It has to start in little ways and gradually build up until someday we look back and are able to say: 'Education is radically different from...!' Too much, Too soon - Burns Out.

The significance of the study is exemplified by the comprehensive and sweeping results identified in Table 30, regarding the organizational change and reform the participants experienced over the course of seven school years.

Table 30

Do you agree with the statement "What is not recognized or verbalized cannot be dealt with, and if it is important and not recognized, efforts to introduce substantive change...will result in the illusion of change" (Sarason, 1971, p. 78)?



Finally, a staff member capitalized the juxtaposition between substantive change and illusionary change at XX Middle School with the following discernment: "Unless you truly understand a problem and work as a team to change it, it will not improve or go away - It will only change its appearances."

Findings: Student

The results of this study show to a limited extent that XX Middle School fits the emerging paradigm in the areas of instruction and curriculum of Middle Grade Education. The student responses varied in their view of education; however, the findings indicate that students are very much aware of what is being directed to them as well as differences in instructional delivery methods.

In the area of instruction, students felt that they are active participants in the learning process in some classes, but not in most. Class discussions made students feel that they were involved in what they were leaning rather than just receiving information. Several students noticed a drawback in engaging in class discussion with certain teachers because "they're right or nothing...what they say is right and you're not." Nevertheless, students also felt that class discussions helped to clear up issues and led to better understanding of text material. However, students felt that their teachers did not respect their input. Several students noted that most of the time the teacher would discount their opinions by treating them as if they

were invisible and/or indicating that they were in error. As one student noted: "They ignore anything we say."

Students responded favorably to the "text-based" approach to teaching. This type of teaching combined with a lecture format of instruction is still a part of the instructional practices according to the students, even though the literature and research on Middle Grade Educational practices does not recommend these methods of instruction. The student responses meanwhile, indicated that reading the material and then being tested on it was easier, therefore, the students liked it. However, as one student suggested regarding this style of instruction: "Its boring." Another student commenting on what makes school boring said: "When my teachers give me lectures all day and do nothing."

In the meantime, group projects were seen by students as an easier way for them to understand a concept. This active learning was recognized by all students as a way for them to be involved in the learning process and is supported and well document in the literature as an effective instructional strategy. Noting what makes leaning fun a student said: "When we get to move around...you know...to make things, do projects...to be with our friends and work in groups." Students also saw that working on group projects would help them later in high school. Nevertheless, it was occurring mainly in science classes where the students were grouped to build a volcano or dissect a fetal pig.

In the area of curriculum students felt that their classes were relevant to the real world and would be useful to them in high school. Science was described by one student as a favorite class because "it helps me better understand things...physical things in the real world and other stuff." Students also saw the connection between subject material from different core classes, but from their seventh grade year. An example of this was found in the areas of Literature, Math and Social Science. One student noted the connection by stating: "Like we did last year. It took me back to that time era. Getting to participate in all the stuff we did...like...make shields and send messages and keep track of the dead people. It was cool how we did all that stuff...how the classes looked like they were from the Crusades." Moreover, the interdisciplinary approach from a curricular standpoint is validated through related research as a descriptor of one of the components of the "State of the Art" middle school. Further, it provides a connection between subject matter in several courses and serves to reduce learning about a concept in isolation.

Chapter VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary of the Study

The study was designed to determine to what extent XX Middle School conformed to the "State of the Art" middle school as prescribed by the document *Caught In The Middle* (1987). The adult portion of the study focused on the specifics of organizational change, personnel configurations, and the design and implementation of the reform measures. Meanwhile, the student portion of the study identified the impact of the reform measures on the recipients of the changes in the areas of curriculum and instruction. The survey questions were imbedded in the philosophy of middle grade education. The information generated directly emanated from the study site. Thus, the association of the individuals (participants) with the reform measures converged to demonstrate a conglomerate bedrock of data for the study.

The respondents to the survey questionnaire included thirty-seven adults (former and present employees) in administrative, faculty and support staff positions as well as seven eighth grade students who had been at the study site the previous year. The respondents were representative of gender and ethnic diversity. The setting of the study site embodied the contemporary urban/suburban community complete with the perplexities of

growth and social problems inherent to an urban core of an international city.

The survey findings indicated that while the adults generally supported the philosophy of middle grade educational reform, in practice seventy-four percent of the respondents indicated that the level of support from all participant groups was low. (See Table 11, page 56) In addition, seventy-seven percent of the respondents indicated that the reform measures did not produce the desired outcomes. (See Table 25, page 76) Furthermore, the obstacles present while the reforms were implemented were identified as communication, design flaws, support for the models, funding shortages and personnel conflicts. The significant obstacle that impacted reform was the design of the reform models. The reform measures lacked several salient components such as:

- 1) a timeline for completion;
- 2) faculty development;
- 3) a clear means for communication;
- 4) a vehicle for measuring progress;
- 5) adequate funding;
- 6) competing reform models;
- 7) clear and define outcomes.

These design flaws lead to personnel conflicts as sides were delineated; then, erosion for support reached avalanche proportions.

Conclusions of the Study: Adult

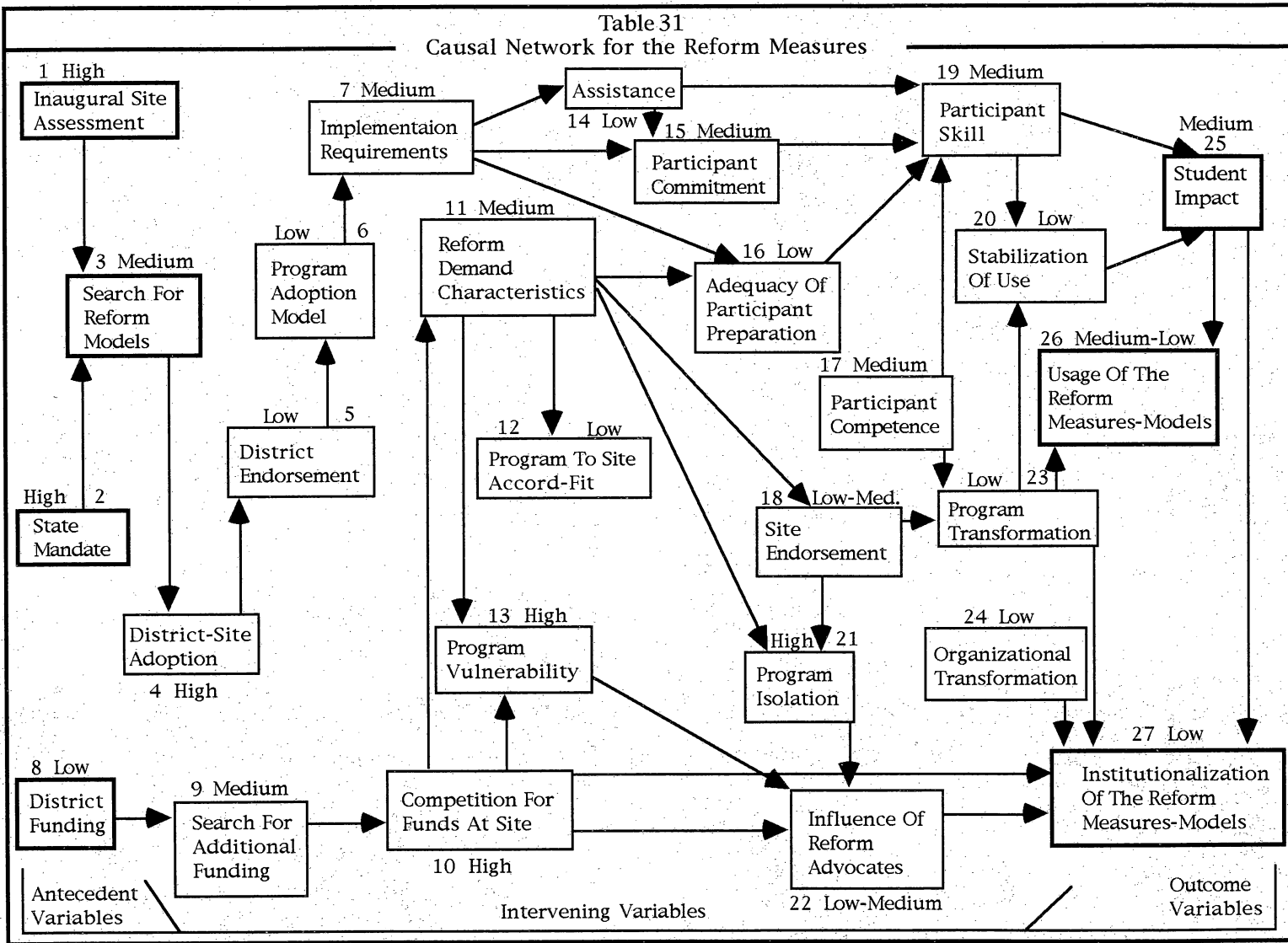
The intended organizational changes at XX Middle School were found to be minimal at best after several years of reform implementation at the study site. The impetus of the organizational change was to transform a junior high into a "State of the Art" middle school through several multi-year reform measures. The innovations were established and set in motion fraught with the perils inherent to a mixture of interrelationships, denied social behaviors and an unobservable conceptual blueprint for the design. The levels of success as reported by the respondents determined the findings as shown in the Causal Network for the Reform Measures of Table 31 (Page 93). The representation of these findings are divided into three categories: 1) Antecedent Variables; 2) Intervening Variables; and 3) Outcome Variables.

This causal network is based on the statistical quantitative path analysis as directed by researchers Huberman and Miles (1984). However, Table 31 is not a path analysis but rather a visual organization of qualitative data that emanated from the survey findings. Twenty-four variables consisting of antecedent and intervening variables are rated from low to high. Then the visual path makes its way to the three Outcome Variables:

- (25) - Student Impact;
- (26) - Usage of the Reform Measures-Models;
- (27) - Institutionalization Of The Reform Measures-Models.

The end result of the study indicates that the Institutionalization Of The Reform Measures-Models (27) at the study site can be characterized as low. Next, medium to low characterized the Usage Of The Reform Measures (26), while the Student Impact (25), was determined to be medium. The contrast and variance of the three aforementioned outcomes is indicative of the findings of the study.

Table 31
Causal Network for the Reform Measures



The survey questions were designed to garner information on organizational change and reform at a middle school that was actively participating in educational change. To that end, the data reported in Chapter V reflects the thoughts, actions and concerns of the participants for whom the implementation of numerous reform measures impacted their lives. The conclusions drawn from the responses to the survey questionnaire indicate three realms that hold the explanation for the low extent to which XX Middle School correlates with the "State of the Art" middle school idealism. The three variables that limited reform are design, communication and personnel.

The design of the reform model directly affected the implementation and result of the reform measures. First, several models were functioning simultaneously throughout the multi-year time frame that was examined by the study. This led to breakdowns in the design of a model such as the Advisory Period, which was abolished and replaced by the interdisciplinary team and the block schedule. Second, a timeline complete with benchmarks did not exist within the design of any of the reform measures. Preplanning was almost nonexistent as was a means for assessment either during or post implementation of a given reform measure. In short, the design of the change model became an obstacle that prevented successful implementation as well as the intended outcomes of the educational changes.

Next, communication throughout the entire venture created an atmosphere of division and confrontation that permeated the organization. Participants indicated through the survey findings that distrust of other participants and hidden agendas stalled the process on numerous occasions and lead to non-participation for many of the respondents. The dysfunction of the communication between participants was fueled by numerous personnel changes throughout the years that reform was mandated. As many as twenty-five percent of the faculty departed each year as well changes in administrators at the study site, which created a chasm through which communication ceased.

In addition, the support for the reform measures stratified the participants and the ensuing camps set out to purport their particular version of the model. The lines involved department versus department, team versus team, faculty versus administration and paradigm versus paradigm. There emerged not an arguable strength for a particular faction, but rather an illusion that change was occurring at the site simply because a model was in position. As a faculty member states regarding the reform measures at the study site: "Oh, there is a reform movement at XX Middle School. There is not!"

In the end, the ramifications for the future of reform at the study site will continue on a path of blind ambition. The quandary that exists survives on the nourishment provided by numerous reform models that are in competition for dominance as well as

representing dichotomous paradigms of middle grade education. The difficulties will be compounded if such reform measures retain the components of those identified in the study as hindering the process. In sum these components resemble a model that is unplanned, non-goal oriented, lacking benchmarks and functioning in the absence of evaluative and assessment instruments.

Conclusions of the Study: Student

The findings illustrate a minor correspondence between XX Middle School and a "State of the Art" middle school. The student responses indicated that Middle School, to a large extent, does not fit the emerging paradigm of a "State of the Art" middle school.

Students are actively involved in a thematically linked curricular process on some teams, but this practice is not school wide. Most notably, students saw relevance in what they were taught and were respected for their input, even though this was not widespread.

Project-based learning was evident across the curriculum on some teams, and was identified only in science classes currently.

Meanwhile, students felt that projects enabled them to better understand concepts and/or ideas.

Teacher/student interaction was shown to place the learner in a passive role in several ways. For instance when students engaged in such practices as the completion of "dittos," their responses were unfavorable. As one student put it, "I don't like it when the teacher just sits there and tell you to do it on your own." This practice was

evident in several classes, and is an indication that middle grade philosophy is not being implemented in some classes at XX Middle School. Furthermore, the students had the most comments on student-teacher interaction that relates to the passive role of the learner. One student recognized a significant difference amongst teachers. For example, he likes teachers who "works with us and helps us" on the one hand, and dislikes teachers who "just act like were drones and were supposed to do everything they do."

A similar notion was echoed when discussing personal relationships between student and teacher. The student could identify which teacher would help them with personal problems. They identified characteristics that they looked for in a teacher as one they could "go up to them with a problem and feel comfortable like there're real cool about it...like a friend." Finally, the students interviewed preferred a teacher who would talk *with* them rather than one who would talk *at* them.

All in all, XX Middle School deviates from the paradigm of middle grade education as delineated in the State document, *Caught In The Middle*. For the most part, curriculum and instruction resembles the traditional junior high school model that has existed for the past century. Simply changing the name from junior high to middle school on the monument in front of the school site is not adequate reform. In essence, the argument is that incremental attempts at change rather than fundamental shifts have been the mainstay of middle grade education. When the junior high was

established at the turn of the twentieth century, that was fundamental change; however, "after a quarter of a century of experience with middle schools, there is much evidence that what has most changed in the new middle schools has been the policy talk, the formal names of schools, and the vocabulary of educators" (Cuban, 1992, p. 246). The totality of the situation clearly indicates that significant, innovative and meaningful reform measures must commence post haste at XX Middle School. In the words of a reformer:

On the plains of hesitation lay the bones of those
who - on the road to success - stopped to rest.
Resting they died (Lounsbury, 1990, p. 3).

Final Thoughts from the Study

The likelihood of real change transpiring at XX Middle School presently, is obscured by several factors and behaviors of those who would be the agents of change. Attempts at curricular change have begun, ended and begun anew since 1988. For the most part, the central cast of characters has remained the same, despite the attrition of approximately ten faculty members per year. The student body has changed dramatically in the last seven years as the cultural and socio-economic configuration is presently seventy percent minority; while in the past, the percent of minorities was thirty. In addition, the rationale behind the middle school movement has overwhelmed an ill-prepared staff that exists within an elementary school district. The anomalies are beginning to over

take the junior high school paradigm; however, the behaviors of the faculty, staff and administration remain steadfastly devoted to preserving what has long since departed - the junior high school.

The obstacles noted by school personnel have been orchestrated to preserve the past. For instance, an attempt at a double lunch period would have required the Physical Education Department to alter their schedule of competitive sports. One teacher devised a plan in an attempt to change; however, the other three P.E. teachers refused to participate or give the plan a try-out. Consequently, one thousand students converge on the lunch area and basketball courts every day for thirty minutes. The area was designed for half that amount of students. Other cries have appeared from the Union regarding a contract violation if the number of periods were increased from six to seven.

Nonetheless, the Union continues to support teachers who continually fall below district guidelines when their teaching is evaluated annually. There have been attempts to oust everyone from the principal (for favoring middle school practices as well as for not favoring those practices) to kitchen workers. The infighting appears to be territorial, where *the survival of the fittest* mentality prevails. Evidently, the psychological constructs of all involved are an obstacle of reform that need to be changed. Eventhough, for instance, the respondents indicated they supported middle grade philosophy (Table 1, page 46) as well as the reform measures at XX Middle School (Table 5, page 50) they were not prepared to align

their beliefs with programmatic change. Agreement then, is at hand with Sarason on this consideration:

At this point I am not interested in whether or not one likes or agrees with the programmatic change but rather in the fact that these changes require changes in some kind or kinds of behavioral regularities (Sarason, 1971, p. 75).

The history of reform section amounts to an exploration of change that is largely regarded by those involved to be a successful venture. In interviewing students who were participants and are presently recipients of the reform efforts, emerged a tale of two schools. The school's report to the community includes a mission statement that was five years in the making, demographics of school personnel and students, class size ratios, professional development and the like, also has a section *Instruction and Leadership*. The statement under the latter heading begins:

XX Middle School's curriculum and instruction reflect the student-centered philosophy of the school and respond to the transitional nature of the students by providing a variety of academic settings in which students are encouraged to engage in a wide range of educational and social developmental experiences (Whitcanack, 1994, p. 4).

This was contradicted by students who overwhelmingly provided data supporting the junior high mode of operation. Therefore, the curricular reform efforts have measured up with Sarason's cynical view of change on both fronts. First, what was changed was the easiest to change - the language and public relations of the school;

and secondly, forces discovered ways to circumvent, thwart and minimize the proposed changes.

The existing regularities prevailed. The cycle of change has returned to XX Middle School to its beginnings in 1957, as a junior high school. The number of students has doubled and changed, the faculty, staff and support systems has changed, the physical plant has been altered by the elements and years of neglect. But, through it all, the practices and policies remain, except now they have new titles and nomenclatures. To create new outcomes the behaviors of teachers, students and administrators must change coupled with the fabrication of new regularities and the dissolution of existing regularities that impede change. Finally, to change is to speculate on what might be rather than to exist (persist) with what is.

Where we have been successful we have been able to temper our faith with doubt; indeed, to base our faith on doubt, to develop the correct amount of tension between commitment and contingency. Developing the right amount of 'essential tension' is the art I believe of all curricularists, teachers, and learners need to develop...This is an art born not of faith in the rightness of our ideologies but our ability to be playful with serious commitments. Such a paradoxical blending becomes key, if we are to make our future age better, not poorer, than the one in which we now live (Doll, 1993, p. 156).

Let the risk begin; the past must not be allowed repetition or reform will result as a faculty member emphasized in response to the reform efforts at XX Middle School "The changes were cosmetic, superficial, and not substantial or life-shaking." The power of the

data produced by the study must extend beyond this particular study site. While a particular middle school will have situational characteristics that are unique and require inventive solutions, the generalities of programmatic change are universal. Partnerships between the students, staff, faculty, administration, parents and the community must be striving for the same vision through an agreed upon scheme. A clear, understandable and feasible reform model, complete with benchmarks for accomplishment and assessment that is revisited is paramount if reform is to reach below the surface of schooling and institutionalize organizational change in middle grade education.

In the end, there existed a clear lack of prioritization of what was desired from the reform measures. The outcomes were vague and often incoherent, even though the rhetoric espoused by the organization could be associated with educational redevelopment at the middle grade level. What was required, then, were three to five culminating results of a particular reform model. On the road to these specific outcomes should have been benchmarks for completion as the reform progressed over a specified period of time. In addition, the three to five outcomes should have been priority ranked according to their degree of importance to the overall site specific goals of educational reform at the school. However, XX Middle School is not an isolated educational facility that permits the end results of reform to be shrouded in ambiguity; National and

state attempts at redeveloping schooling also permit the absence of priority to dominate agendas and policy.

The shotgun approach of loading all that is education into one cartridge, labeling them as educational necessities and firing into the schools has created chaos and uncertainty as competing facets of education duel for their portion of the educational pie. This study has enumerated that competing programs create dysfunction; What is called for at the study site as well as in American education is the priority ranking of several specific desired outcomes rather than the traditional and time-honored fashion of allowing all programs, policy and practice to be deemed the top priority in education.

Appendix A: Correspondence with the Student Respondents



**CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SAN BERNARDINO**

*The California
State University*

7 March 1994

Dear Parent(s),

I am currently nearing the completion of a Masters program in Secondary Education and Middle Grade Education at California State University, San Bernardino.

During the week of March 8th through the 11th, I will be conducting audio taped interviews of students at XX Middle School. The interviews will last approximately ten to fifteen minutes and will not impact academic classes. The interviews will be conducted in the library at XX Middle School. All responses are confidential and the transcripts of the interviews will be available to you upon request. The questions cover the topic of curriculum and instruction. The responses of the students will attempt to provide me with information concerning the strengths and weaknesses of the existing program at XX Middle School. The program at XX Middle School will be compared with the definition of the "State of the Art" middle school as outlined by the California State Department of Education in the official document *Caught In The Middle*.

DEPARTMENT
OF
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AND
VOCATIONAL
EDUCATION

909/880-5650

The selection of your child for participation in this project is based on the following factors:

1. Attended XX Middle as a 7th grade student;
2. Presently in the 8th grade;
3. On an interdisciplinary team during both years;
4. Participant in school activities and functions.

If you are granting permission for your child to participate in this project this form must be returned prior to the interview.

I give permission for _____ to participate in
(Child's Name)
one audio taped interview during the week of March 8 - 11th, 1994.

Parent Signature _____ Date _____

If you have any questions regarding this project, I can be contacted at (909) 984-8770.

Thank you for your continued support.

James R. Watson

Appendix B: The Student Survey Instrument

1. Do you like it when you read a book and then take a test on the text materials?
2. Do you have this in any of your classes?
3. Which ones?
4. Do you like it when your teacher lectures the whole class period?
5. Is this a frequent occurrence?
6. Do you work often in groups on group projects?
7. What are some examples of these projects?
8. Do your projects include more than one subject area?
9. Can you give me an example?
10. Is it easier for you to understand an idea when you do a related activity?
11. Can you apply what you've learned to real life?
12. Do you feel you'll be able to use what you've learned sometime in the future?
13. Do you have class discussions on text material?
14. Do the discussions help clear up issues and lead to better understanding?
15. Do you feel your input is important to your teacher?
16. How can you tell it is important?
17. Does your teacher respect your opinions?
18. How can you tell?
19. Do you think group activities will help you in high school?
20. How?

21. How can you tell when or if your teacher cares about your education?
22. How can you tell when or if your teacher cares about you as a person?
23. How can you tell when you understand a concept?
24. Are there any Science concepts in your Literature class?
25. Can you give me an example?
26. Do your teachers ever talk about a connection between History and Math?
27. Does your History teacher teach you about the importance of language and science in History?
28. Do you feel you are actively involved in the learning process?
29. Do your teachers insist that there is only one right answer to a question or problem?
30. Do your teachers ever allow for many different answers or responses to a question or problem?
31. Can you explain?
32. Think of your favorite subject from 7th grade or 8th grade. Describe the class and tell me what made it a good one.
33. Think of your least favorite class from 7th grade or 8th grade. Describe the class and tell me why you didn't like it.
34. How do you learn best:
in a group? by your self? reading about something? writing about something? making things? an assortment of the above ways?
35. Why?
36. What makes learning fun?
37. If you could change one thing about last years team, what would it be?
38. Why
39. If you could change one thing about this years team, what would it be?
40. Why?

41. What makes school boring?
42. What are some of the problems here at XX Middle School?
43. How can you tell when teachers are willing to help you as a person rather than as a student?

Appendix C: Correspondence With Potential Adult Respondents



**CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SAN BERNARDINO**

*The California
State University*

29 December 1994

Dear Educator,

I am currently conducting a survey of organizational change and reform in Middle Grade Education. I am interested in your opinions as well as your interpretations of reform measures that have been implemented since 1988.

The purpose of this study is to identify those characteristics of schooling that have changed as a result of reform implementation. In addition, the causal relationship between change and student impact will be examined. Finally, the isolation of attributes that impeded the change process as well as those that facilitated the change process will demonstrate the complexities of educational reform in public schools.

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909/880-5650

Within the next several days, you will be receiving an envelope that contains two documents: 1) a brief explanation of the survey and the protocol procedures that ensure respondent confidentiality; 2) the survey instrument. As a respondent, you will be making an important contribution to the field of educational reform in Middle Grade Education.

I believe that the responses will not only assist me in the study of Middle Grade Education, but also to assist you as your reform efforts are continuing to reinvent schooling. Early responses to the questionnaire will be greatly appreciated.

I hope I will be able to include your confidential responses in my study. I will be most pleased to share the results of the study with you when it is completed.

Sincerely,

James R. Watson

5500 University Parkway, San Bernardino, CA 92407-2397



**CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SAN BERNARDINO**

*The California
State University*

6 January 1995

Dear Educator,

I am presently embarking on the culminating thesis of a Master of Arts Degree at California State University, San Bernardino. The area of emphasis of my degree in Secondary Education is Organizational Change and Reform in Middle Grade Education. Your participation in my research of this topic is paramount for two reasons: First, you are a professional educator with experience in Middle Grade Education; and second, you have been a part of change and reform at the Middle School level. Consequently, your experiences are valuable and will contribute to the outcome of my research.

Protocol for Respondent Confidentiality:

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The identities of the respondents will be concealed and the responses confidential. This is accomplished through the random selection of respondents from a pool of seventy-eight potential respondents. Furthermore, the respondents are identified by a letter and number combination; thus, what will be known is that they are either a teacher, staff member, or administrator. The faculty pool includes past and present teachers from the research site. The staff pool includes past and present teacher aids, custodians and the like from the research site. The administrator pool includes past and present principals, assistant principals, psychologists, nurses, program facilitators and the like from the research site as well as district personnel.

Further, neither the district nor the school will be identified in the publication of findings. Also, the names of individuals will not be used; if a specific name is identified by a respondent, the name will be replaced by the respondent category that is applicable.

When the results are published the master respondent list correlating the letter/number identification with a name will be destroyed; thus, respondents will only be known by their letter/number reference.

Survey Instructions:

Please answer the questions that are applicable to you and your position of employment based upon your personal experiences. You may use additional paper if necessary.

To ensure validity of responses, please do not share the contents of the survey with others; the intent of the survey is to garner individual opinions and interpretations of the reform efforts.

A summary of the findings will be available upon request.

Return the completed or incomplete survey (if you choose not to participate) in the enclosed addressed, stamped envelope by 6 February 1995.

Should you have any questions regarding this study or responding to a survey question, I may be contacted at (909) 984-8770.

5500 University Parkway, San Bernardino, CA 92407-2397

The chart below identifies seven organizational changes and reform measures in Middle Grade Education at XX Middle School.

You will need to refer to this chart to answer several of the survey questions.

Reform Measures At XX Middle School	
1988-1989	Sixth Grade Students Are Placed On The Campus In A Team Configuration. Junior High to Middle School Name Change. Advisory Period Begins.
1989-1990	Program Quality Review Vocal/Instrumental Music And Special Education Aclaimed.
1990-1991	Two Pilot Teams: Grade Seven And ESL Team. CGS Research Begins. Advisory Period Ends.
1991-1992	Elimination Of Grade Seven Team, ESL Team Remains Intact. CGS Research Ends.
1992-1993	Site Fully Teamed Except Special Education. Claremont Graduate School Publishes Findings.
1993-1994	Site Fully Teamed Including Special Education.
1994-1995	Sixth Grade Returned To Elementary Sites. Grade Seven Teamed. Grade Eight Cores For Social Studies And Language Arts.

The time to complete the survey will vary from respondent to respondent; however, in several practice sessions, the typical time for completion was thirty minutes.

The survey that follows is an instrument designed to detect attributes of the reform mechanisms that were practiced from 1988 through 1995 at XX Middle School.

Thank you for your support and participation,

James R. Watson



CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SAN BERNARDINO

*The California
State University*

27 March 1995

Dear Educator,

Several weeks ago I sent you a survey on Middle Grade Education. Please take the time to complete as much of the questionnaire as possible before returning it in the enclosed envelope. The inclusion of your opinions and observations will serve to strengthen and guide my research.

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OF
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AND
VOCATIONAL
EDUCATION

Consequently, your responses to the questions/statements are important to me as I prepare to write a thesis on the topic of Organizational Change and Reform in Middle Grade Education.

Please return the questionnaire before **10 April 1995** for your responses to be included in the survey results and body of research.

909/880-5650

If you have misplaced the questionnaire or have any questions concerning this survey, contact me at (909) 984-8770.

Thank you for your continued support, time and effort,

James R. Watson

5500 University Parkway, San Bernardino, CA 92407-2397

Appendix D: Adult Administrator and Faculty Instrument

SURVEY OF MIDDLE GRADE EDUCATION

1. Professor Larry Cuban believes that "After a quarter century of experience with middle schools, there is much evidence that what has most changed in the new middle schools has been the policy talk, the formal names of schools, and the vocabulary of educators" (Cuban, p. 246).

Do you believe that reform efforts are valid in Middle Grade Education? **YES** **NO**
Why?

2. Are you familiar with the document *Caught In The Middle* published by the California State Department of Education in 1987? **YES** **NO**
3. Are you familiar with the document *Middle Grade Education* published by XYZ School District in 1992? **YES** **NO**
4. Which best reflects your personal/professional perspective on early adolescent education?
 Junior High School Model (Traditional)
 Middle School Model
5. Why was reform at XX Middle School undertaken?

6. Who initiated middle school reform efforts at XX Middle School?

7. What were the intended outcomes of the reform measures?

8. Do you support the reform measures at XX Middle School? **YES** **NO**
Why?

9. Did the reform models have an established time-line for completion of objectives?
YES NO
10. How was the decision for program change made?
11. Prior to implementation, was there a planning period of time to prepare for the impending changes? **YES NO**
12. Did these reforms produce the outcomes you desired? **YES NO**
13. During the reform efforts, was there clear communication about the role of the participants during the implementation? **YES NO**
14. Was there effective communication during the implementation of the reform measures?
YES NO
15. During the reform efforts describe and/or explain your interpretation of the **actual role** of the:
- a) District Administrators
 - b) Site Administrators
 - c) Leadership Team
 - d) Teachers
 - e) Staff
 - f) Students
16. During the reform efforts describe and/or explain your interpretation of the **ideal role** of the:
- a) District Administrators
 - b) Site Administrators
 - c) Leadership Team
 - d) Teachers

e) Staff

f) Students

17. How were the parents/community involved in the reform measures?

18. How did student scheduling impact the reform measures?

19. How did faculty scheduling impact the reform measures?

20. How were the following participants held accountable for implementing the reform efforts?:

a) District Administrators

b) Site Administrators

c) Leadership Team

d) Teachers

e) Staff

f) Students

21. Were there positive consequences for attempting to implement the reform measures?

YES NO

For Example:

22. Were there punitive consequences for non-participation in the reform process?

YES NO

For example:

23. Describe how the reform attempts affected your subject area or job.

- 24.** Describe how the reform attempts affected your classroom instructional practices or a class that you observed.
- 25.** Describe how the reform attempts affected the school as a whole.
- 26.** Identify strengths of the reform efforts.
- 27.** Identify positive change that resulted from the implementation of the reform efforts.
- 28.** Identify weaknesses in the reform efforts.
- 29.** What were the obstacles to successfully implementing the changes?
- 30.** Was there adequate preparation time prior to implementation? **YES** **NO**
- 31.** Were there funds available to support the reform efforts? **YES** **NO**
- 32.** Were the participants enthusiastic regarding the changes? **YES** **NO**
- 33.** Were facilities, materials, supplies and the like adequate during the implementation of the reform measures? **YES** **NO**
Explain:
- 34.** Was there staff development prior to the reform implementation? **YES** **NO**
- 35.** Was there on-going training and problem solving during implementation? **YES** **NO**

36. What was the level of support for the reform for the following participant groups? (**High-Medium-Low**)
- a) District Administrators _____
 - b) Site Administrators _____
 - c) Leadership Team _____
 - d) Teachers _____
 - e) Staff _____
 - f) Students _____
37. Were experts and/or consultants available to assist the participants during implementation? **YES NO**
38. How were decisions reached regarding the reform measures (top-down, shared, etc....)? Explain.
39. Was an evaluation process built into the reform process? **YES NO**
40. Were there many reform advocates at the school site? **YES NO**
41. What was the level of influence of reform advocates? **High-Medium-Low**
42. Were you at XX Middle School during the existence of the Advisory Period?
YES NO
- a) If Yes, then explain the effectiveness of the Advisory Period.
 - b) Why was the Advisory Period abolished?
43. Describe how the organization of the school changed during implementation of the reform measures.
44. Were there any difficulties or underlying issues that affected the reform efforts?
YES NO
Explain:

45. On a scale of **1** to **9**, with **9** representing high level of success, rate the seven attempts at reform. (Refer to the chart, Reform Measures at XX Middle School located in the introduction to the survey).

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____

5. _____ 6. _____ 7. _____

46. "What is not recognized or verbalized cannot be dealt with, and if it is important and not recognized, efforts to introduce substantive change...result in the illusion of change" (Sarason, p. 78).

Do you agree with the above statement? **YES** **NO**
Why?

47. In your professional estimation, what is required for reform to occur at XX Middle School?

48. In your professional estimation, what does the future hold for reform at XX Middle School?

49. Generally, comment now on the overall process of the reform efforts at XX Middle School. (You may use the reverse side of the survey or additional paper if necessary.)

50. Please complete the questions in the box below that will provide the study with **anonymous** statistical and demographic information.

<p>How many years have you been a teacher? _____</p> <p>How many years have you been with XYZ District? _____</p> <p>How many years have you been at XX Middle School? _____</p> <p>What subject(s) have you taught at the middle level?</p> <p>Have you taught outside your credential authorization while at School? YES NO</p> <p>What type of credential or authorization do you possess?</p> <p>Do you have a Masters Degree? _____ Do you have a Doctorate Degree? _____</p> <p>What is the specialty or area of focus of your advanced degree?</p> <p>What other certificates or teaching authorizations do you possess?</p>

This concludes the survey. Please return using the enclosed envelope. Thank you for your valuable contribution to the study of Middle Grade Education!

Appendix E: Adult Staff Instrument

SURVEY OF MIDDLE GRADE EDUCATION

1. Professor Larry Cuban believes that "After a quarter century of experience with middle schools, there is much evidence that what has most changed in the new middle schools has been the policy talk, the formal names of schools, and the vocabulary of educators" (Cuban, p. 246).

Do you believe that reform efforts are valid in Middle Grade Education? **YES** **NO**
Why?

2. Are you familiar with the document *Caught In The Middle* published by the California State Department of Education in 1987? **YES** **NO**
3. Are you familiar with the document *Middle Grade Education* published by XYZ School District in 1992? **YES** **NO**
4. Which best reflects your personal/professional perspective on early adolescent education?
 Junior High School Model (Traditional)
 Middle School Model
5. Why was reform at XX Middle School undertaken?

6. Who initiated middle school reform efforts at XX Middle School?

7. What were the intended outcomes of the reform measures?

8. Do you support the reform measures at XX Middle School? **YES** **NO**
Why?

9. Did the reform models have an established time-line for completion of objectives?
YES NO
10. How was the decision for program change made?
11. Prior to implementation, was there a planning period of time to prepare for the impending changes? **YES NO**
12. Did these reforms produce the outcomes you desired? **YES NO**
13. During the reform efforts, was there clear communication about the role of the participants during the implementation? **YES NO**
14. Was there effective communication during the implementation of the reform measures?
YES NO
15. During the reform efforts describe and/or explain your interpretation of the **actual role** of the:
- a) District Administrators
 - b) Site Administrators
 - c) Leadership Team
 - d) Teachers
 - e) Staff
 - f) Students
16. During the reform efforts describe and/or explain your interpretation of the **ideal role** of the:
- a) District Administrators
 - b) Site Administrators
 - c) Leadership Team
 - d) Teachers

e) Staff

f) Students

17. How were the parents/community involved in the reform measures?

18. How did student scheduling impact the reform measures?

19. How did faculty scheduling impact the reform measures?

20. How were the following participants held accountable for implementing the reform efforts?:

a) District Administrators

b) Site Administrators

c) Leadership Team

d) Teachers

e) Staff

f) Students

21. Were there positive consequences for attempting to implement the reform measures?

YES NO

For Example:

22. Were there punitive consequences for non-participation in the reform process?

YES NO

For example:

23. Describe how the reform attempts affected your subject area or job.

24. Describe how the reform attempts affected your classroom instructional practices or a class that you observed.
25. Describe how the reform attempts affected the school as a whole.
26. Identify strengths of the reform efforts.
27. Identify positive change that resulted from the implementation of the reform efforts.
28. Identify weaknesses in the reform efforts.
29. What were the obstacles to successfully implementing the changes?
30. Was there adequate preparation time prior to implementation? YES NO
31. Were there funds available to support the reform efforts? YES NO
32. Were the participants enthusiastic regarding the changes? YES NO
33. Were facilities, materials, supplies and the like adequate during the implementation of the reform measures? YES NO
Explain:
34. Was there staff development prior to the reform implementation? YES NO
35. Was there on-going training and problem solving during implementation? YES NO

36. What was the level of support for the reform for the following participant groups? (**High-Medium-Low**)

- a) District Administrators _____
- b) Site Administrators _____
- c) Leadership Team _____
- d) Teachers _____
- e) Staff _____
- f) Students _____

37. Were experts and/or consultants available to assist the participants during implementation? **YES NO**

38. How were decisions reached regarding the reform measures (top-down, shared, etc...)? Explain.

39. Was an evaluation process built into the reform process? **YES NO**

40. Were there many reform advocates at the school site? **YES NO**

41. What was the level of influence of reform advocates? **High-Medium-Low**

42. Were you at XX Middle School during the existence of the Advisory Period?
YES NO

a) If Yes, then explain the effectiveness of the Advisory Period.

b) Why was the Advisory Period abolished?

43. Describe how the organization of the school changed during implementation of the reform measures.

44. Were there any difficulties or underlying issues that affected the reform efforts?
YES NO
Explain:

45. On a scale of 1 to 9, with 9 representing high level of success, rate the seven attempts at reform. (Refer to the chart, Reform Measures at XX Middle School located in the introduction to the survey).

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____

5. _____ 6. _____ 7. _____

46. "What is not recognized or verbalized cannot be dealt with, and if it is important and not recognized, efforts to introduce substantive change...result in the illusion of change" (Sarason, p. 78).

Do you agree with the above statement? **YES** **NO**
Why?

47. In your professional estimation, what is required for reform to occur at XX Middle School?

48. In your professional estimation, what does the future hold for reform at XX Middle School?

49. Generally, comment now on the overall process of the reform efforts at XX Middle School. (You may use the reverse side of the survey or additional paper if necessary.)

50. Please complete the questions in the box below that will provide the study with **anonymous** statistical and demographic information.

How many years have you been with public education as an employee? _____

How many years have you been with XYZ District? _____

How many years have you been at XX Middle School? _____

Describe your formal educational preparation for your position including any certification and/or training.

This concludes the survey. Please return using the enclosed envelope. Thank you for your valuable contribution to the study of Middle Grade Education!

Appendix F: Correspondence with Adult Respondents



**CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SAN BERNARDINO**

*The California
State University*

14 February 1995

Dear Educator,

Thank you for participating in my study of organizational change and reform in Middle Grade Education. Your responses will make a valuable contribution to this emerging field of Education.

DEPARTMENT OF SECONDARY AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION
The summary of findings will be available after the conclusion of the spring quarter at California State University, San Bernardino. It will be my pleasure to share the findings with you at that time.

DEPARTMENT OF
SECONDARY
AND

VOCATIONAL
EDUCATION

909/880-5650

I am deeply appreciative of the time you spent responding to the survey questionnaire. Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

James R. Watson

Appendix G: Respondent's Comments on the Future of the Study Site

On what is required for reform to occur at XX Middle School.

"A change in paradigm, a visionary leader; true site-based management; a great deal of trust-building to reverse the dysfunction and distrust that is currently present"

Faculty Member

"Administration and staff which has a common focus, is trusting, communicates, is willing to accept change and differences in opinion"

Faculty Member

"Teachers and administrators who are not afraid of change"

Faculty Member

"A consensus as to what goals are to be achieved"

Faculty Member

"Need for change has to be recognized in education before change can begin. However, true change in education will not be, (Cannot be) radical. It has to start in little ways and gradually build up until someday we look back and are able to say: 'Education is radically different from...' Too much, Too soon - Burns Out."

Faculty Member

"Extensive staff development, district financial support, wavier of policies - Ed Code, contracts and other edicts inhibiting experimentation"

Administrator

"Site administration with in-depth understanding of middle school philosophies and the concept of site-based management who believe in both and are true leaders of people"

Faculty Member

"A staff that is willing to change. This includes addressing the needs of the students, parents and community"

Faculty Member

"Parents and teachers together planning strategies to challenge the children to strive for achievement. With parents and teachers in agreement for the goal and plans"

Staff Member

On what the future holds for reform at XX Middle School.

"Sadly, I'm not sure XX Middle School can be transformed; In order for transformation and restructure to occur, destruction must first happen."

Faculty Member

"I'm not sure where we go from here - much of what was built 3 years ago has been lost by the breakdown of teams."

Faculty Member

"We are on our way. We need to continue in small ways and continue to build on the positives. Teachers need to take ownership for what happens first in their classrooms and then in the total school. We need to recognize we need to work as a team effort to make XX Middle School better. We need to put this team effort as priority - above our personal peeves/prejudices, likes/dislikes - behave like professionals not like the adolescents we work with."

Faculty Member

"If there is strong leadership, district support and adequate staffing, reform could be significant."

Administrator

"I feel that as long as the primary administrator has blinders on in regard to reform, the movement will be impeded."

Faculty Member

"XX Middle School does not have an academic focus for instruction or learning. We cannot predict where we want our students to become in the 21st century."

Faculty Member

"Without major changes in mentality and personnel there will be no changes."

Faculty Member

"Considering the current structure of education, the future is bleak."

Administrator

On the overall process of the reform efforts at XX Middle School.

"There is no reform process in place - Voices has not been mentioned, nor has Caught... This exercise is totally dead and probably cannot be revived under current conditions."

Faculty Member

"I think the whole process was screwed up. X Graduate School misled and used us. We had administration that was incapable of leading us anywhere but was quite capable of sabotaging attempts of others. Overall, the process was one that was quite detrimental to XX Middle School."

Faculty Member

"Too much conflict, power struggles, deliberate division of staff. Several staff members are knowledgeable and competent enough to make progress. Philosophical issues, goals, common purpose should be the first step. I would rate progress as minimal."

Administrator

"I think that when something doesn't work, you grasp at straws to try and fix it. XX Middle School needs real strong leadership, and a change in personnel without that success seems very unlikely."

Faculty Member

"Lousy. Felt abandoned by district, X Graduate School, fellow teachers, etc. It really dehumanized this person."

Faculty Member

"There is too much pressure to avoid basic problems. If you say its class size fro example, you are told that can't be helped. So if reforms don't deal with the real problems and people don't dare speak their minds, reform is frustrating. It has been. It probably will continue to be."

Faculty Member

"Reform at XX Middle School would have been more successful if we had a common goal for teachers, students and parents."

Faculty Member

"Many people like the idea of change, but they are not willing to put in the work needed to be successful."

Faculty Member

"Lack of money and leadership and the support of higher level personnel to take risks, resulted in an overall breakdown and division of staff."

Administrator

"I have never seen such chaos. I fell sorry for the people having to work under bad conditions, and I feel especially sorry and worried for the student that have to attend XX Middle School."

Staff Member

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