The Feasibility of a Middle School in Modern Education

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THE FEASIBILITY OF A MIDDLE SCHOOL IN MODERN EDUCATION

by

George Denda

A Project Report
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment
of the
Specialist in Education Degree

Western Michigan University
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December 1972
INTRODUCTION

The junior high school movement some time ago took into account the fact that preadolescents had special needs and special characteristics which require educational patterns different from either those applied to grade-school age children or senior high school age youths. Consequently, junior high schools developed. However, their inadequacies proved serious (see Chapter 2).

The middle school concept, one answer to the shortcomings of the junior high school, stresses that grade nine (commonly included as a junior high school grade where such schools exist) belongs, in fact, to the senior high school; and that grades 6, 7, and 8 (or 5, 6, 7, and 8) should comprise the school between grade and senior high schools—hence the term middle school.

The following chapters will outline pertinent facts concerning junior high and especially middle schools. It will be seen that children of the middle school age (roughly ten or eleven to twelve or thirteen) have special requirements; and that the middle school—a conception much more clearly and methodically thought out than the junior high school idea—is best suited to answer those requirements.
Masters Thesis M-4023

DENDA, Heinz George

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CHAPTER I

THE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

The First Junior High Schools

The first junior high schools appeared at the beginning of the twentieth century. At this time secondary education was undergoing a reorganization process, as educators realized the inadequacies of the present system. The main problems with which they were faced were:

1. The high pupil dropout rate from sixth grade through the early years of high school;
2. Realization that present schools were not adequately preparing students for occupational life or future training;
3. Recognition that adolescents were physically and psychologically out of place in the elementary school;
4. Congestion and overcrowding in elementary schools.¹

In addition, a "bandwagon phenomenon" apparently played a large role in the rapid development and growth of junior high schools, i.e. educators who perceived neighboring communities were contemplating the construction of a new three year school determined that their own community must "not be out-done" and were instrumental in the establishment of such a school in their own community.²

²loc. cit., p. 6.

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This aspect of the problem will be taken up in more detail later, as the author believes it has particular relevance for educators engaged in the problem of developing middle schools today. However, it is significant to note that in the establishment of the junior high schools, curriculum and student program—scientific research played a minimal part, whereas the determination of educators to participate in a "popular fad" was crucial. The inadequacies of establishing an educational program on such a basis are self-evident.

It is not surprising, therefore, that remarkably little agreement existed on the question of "Exactly what a junior high school was."

In *The Effective Middle School*, DeVita, Pumerantz, and Wilklow made this point:

"But what was a junior high school? The rapid growth of junior high schools after 1910, and the variety of grade organization . . . make this a moot question. . . . All the definitions that evolved revealed the different concepts that existed for the new type of school. Various grade organizations were determined by particular local purposes. By the close of the first decade of the twentieth century, the junior high school was not a definite institution, but rather a state of mind, as attempt to remedy all the weaknesses of the traditional 8-4 system. The name was associated with new ideas in promotion, the prevention of pupil elimination, individual differences, different enriched courses, differentiated courses and curriculum offerings, guidance teaching methods, and exploitation experiences. By 1920, the junior high school was firmly entrenched as an American school between the elementary and the high school."

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Later Developments

Historically, developments in fields other than education, including psychology, industry, demography, were extremely influential in the course the junior high school movement followed, once it was firmly entrenched within American education. The advance of technology made it unnecessary for industry to employ great numbers of children and young adolescents. The consequent rapid increase in high school enrollments after 1910, resulted in administrative and building problems that could most easily be relieved with a new type of grade organization.¹ In addition, population growth, substituting machinery for child labor, and extension of compulsory school attendance laws in many states created an enlarged high school enrollment in the early twentieth century. During the decade from 1910 to 1920, the enrollment in public secondary schools rose from 915,061 to 2,200,398.²

A second influence on the development of the junior high school was the appearance of new research by psychologists. For the first time, it was suggested that secondary education should begin at the age of twelve rather than fourteen. Many psychologists, and ultimately educators, realized that these students had special needs which warranted their placement in secondary rather than elementary schools. The value of extracurricular activities for these students was

²Moss, op. cit., p. 62.
also a determining factor. These already existed in junior high schools, but were generally absent from eight-year elementary schools.

In addition, demands for more vocational education and better preparation for college were heard from those espousing the new junior high school. As Moss has pointed out, "Though several of these factors appear to be contradictory, all were not equally strong in every district; their relative importance varied from community to community. It is important to note, however, that all these factors influenced the growth of the junior high school."

A note of warning should be sounded here. An examination of the literature on the emerging Middle School Movement of the past decade reveals a startling similarity between the considerations which 60 years earlier played a part in the establishment of the junior high school and the inadequacies which proponents of the Middle School charge the junior school with. In other words, allowing for certain differences due to the increased sophistication which prevails in education today, the need for another reorganization of American education is based on needs similar to those which created the junior high school in the 1900's. Without careful, methodical, evaluatory plans and research, there is no guarantee the Middle School, some 50 or 60 years hence, will not go the way of the present Junior High School. This fact should be impressed on all educators and administrators currently engaged in the development of the Middle School curriculum and program.

\[1\text{loc. cit., p. 6.}\]
Purposes of the Junior High School

In 1920, Thomas H. Briggs, in *The Junior High School*, listed five aims for the junior high school:

1. To continue, insofar as it may seem wise and possible, and in a gradually diminishing degree, common, integrating education;

2. To ascertain and reasonably to satisfy pupils' important immediate and assured future needs;

3. To explore by means of materials in itself worthwhile, the interests, aptitudes and capacities of pupils;

4. To reveal to them, by materials otherwise justifiable, the possibilities in the major fields of learning;

5. To start each pupil on the career which, as a result of the exploratory courses he, his parents, and the school are convinced is most likely to be of profit to him and to the state.

That society and cultural emphasis change is a foregone conclusion. The question is have the changes which have taken place been so drastic as to place in the category of irrelevancy Briggs's classic statement on the goals of a junior high school, which were essentially re-stated in words to suit their times by many later writers in the field of education. For many years the preparation of children to live within our democratic system was a foregone conclusion, as a primary educational aim. Indeed, one who dared to question this aim would have been regarded as heretical, if not an outright traitor. In other words, the question to which we must address ourselves in the discussion of the Middle School, in Part II,

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is in terms of educational goals. The basic issue is of paramount importance in developing better goals for our schools.

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<tr>
<td>8-4</td>
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<tr>
<td>6-6</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>4-4-4</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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*Personal research based on 12,130 school systems, enrolling from 300 to more than 2,999 students each.

Inadequacies of the Junior High School

Many of the factors described above which led to the establishment of the junior high school; have, during the past decade been converted into criticisms of that same institution. A need for grade reorganization is again being sounded by many educators. The main rea-
sons today's junior high schools are charged with inadequacy center around the issues of social change, more rapid physical maturation, necessity of college preparation in the ninth grade, overemphasis on interscholastic sports and social activities, and de facto segregation. In large cities such as New York, junior high schools drawing from segregated neighborhoods are themselves generally segregated. A four year high school, drawing from larger districts would, according to theorists, allow for one more year of integrated education.

DeVita, Pumerantz and Wilklow ask, "Has the Junior High School failed in practice?" Referring to Briggs five aims for the junior high school, cited above, they say:

"Thomas Briggs's five aims of the junior high school are as relevant today as they were almost thirty years ago when he stated them. What then accounts for dissatisfaction with the junior high schools? The problem lies not with the goals and functions of the junior high school, but with the failure of the junior high school to fulfill these goals. The junior high school may be alienating students from educational achievement rather than easing the transition to the senior high school. Some of the more obvious defects in the educational system which reflect these symptoms are the increase in juvenile delinquency and crime, the number of young people whom we permanently stigmatize as failures, the waste of talent, low academic standards, the high dropout rate. . . .

The system is too impersonal and fails to account for individual differences. . . ."

This paper is based on the contention that the junior high school, consisting of grades 7, 8, and 9 is not the most effective organizational structure in which to educate early adolescents. Too many junior

1 DeVita, Pumerantz, and Wilklow, op. cit., p. 20.
2 loc. cit., pp. 21-2.
high schools are not meeting the objectives proposed by earlier writers, or by current educators. More importantly, they are not meeting the needs of their students. These students, as will be shown in the following chapter, are characterized by increased sophistication and earlier maturation.

Junior high schools have failed to keep pace with changes in society. Academically, all too many are characterized by inadequate curricula, and teachers who are not prepared to teach students of this age. Others have become "miniature senior high schools" in which over-emphasis is placed on athletics, dating, dances, and extra-curricular activities.

At the time of its inception, the educators and administrators who organized the junior high school movement failed to formulate definitions and a philosophic rationale on which to base the grade reorganization. It is the feeling of this writer that the junior high school has outlived its usefulness. A new approach is needed: The Middle School.
CHAPTER II

NATURE OF THE TRANSESCENT STUDENT

A review of the literature on human development, and of studies by psychologists reveals that the age range generally referred to as preadolescence has been more less neglected. There is little evidence of scientifically documented data on children who are bridging the gap between childhood and adolescence—approximately ages 9 to 12, or 10 to 13. Redl¹ has said, "This uniquely awkward age range is the period of time when the nicest children begin behaving in a most awful way."

Children of this age are difficult. Their unconventional mannerisms and their unpredictable behavior make them a very difficult group to research. Teachers find them uncooperative. Parents find them annoying. In general, it is easier to deal with youth that are either younger or older than with the preadolescent. Yet, this should not fail to make us recognize the need for more knowledge about children within this age group.

Eichhorn, in his justification of the Middle School grade organization, defines the preadolescent as within the stage of "transescence":

"(Transescence) is the period in human development which begins in late childhood prior to the onset of puberty and

extends through the early stages of adolescence. Since puberty does not occur precisely at the same age for all individuals, transescence is based on the many physical, social, emotional, and intellectual changes that appear prior to the puberty cycle at the inception of this period until the time when the body gains a practical degree of stabilization over these complex changes.¹

What Eichhorn and others are referring to is the separation between childhood and adolescence. This is a time of gradual development and learning changes involving the physical, intellectual, and social life of youth. Through this maturation youths experience identifying behaviors with other youths, and thus move toward adolescence. Alexander² found from a sample of middle school programs now in existence, that 44.6 per cent stated "to provide a program specifically designated for students in this age group" as a reason for establishing such a school.

The author hopes that, through the presentation below of developmental and learning problems which youth encounter during transescence, a justification for the Middle School will emerge. This should provide a basis for more realistically organizing an educational program based on meeting student needs.

Intellectual Functioning of the Transescent

At ten and eleven years, children develop an interest in organ-


izing and structuring their knowledge. At this stage, the transescent is capable of reasoning about concrete objects, experienced within his environment. By the fifth and sixth grade, the preadolescent is not as dependent on immediate concrete objects in systematizing relevant phenomena and objects. Once the meaning of an object is established through experience, the 10 to 11 year old is capable of comprehending it without any current reference to the concrete object. Therefore, the intellect has developed to the point where it is increasingly independent of concrete objects, which suggests that the individual is ready for more advanced intellectual thought.

Within the structure of the middle school, learning experiences can be structured for these students so that there is an easier transition to advanced stages of thought. Specific recommendations as to how this should be done are found in the subsequent chapters. The point to be made here is that by grades seven and eight most students are capable of reasoning and deducing conclusions.

It has been shown that the transescent experiences a widening of his interests. He begins to take an interest in particular academic subjects. This moves him into the realm of experimentation. The significance of this for the middle school is that by the sixth grade, the intelligence is functioning on a higher level than that of the elementary school, where most sixth-graders currently are. It indicates that the sixth-grader, or eleven-year-old, can derive more benefit from placement in a school geared to his level of intellectual

1Eichorn, op. cit., p. 56.
Physiological Changes During Transcence

Preadolescents begin experiencing several physiological changes during the transitional period of childhood to adolescence. The term "pubescence" is applied to such changes, and indicates that the body is rapidly approaching puberty which is characterized by sexual maturation.

Physically, the average girl has her growth spurt after 10, with the peak being reached around 12. Girls experience the beginning of breast development about 10.5 years, pubic hair development around 11, and menarche about 12. Approximately 80 per cent of all girls reach menarche between 11.5 and 14.5 years.¹

Boys initially experience growth in the testes and penis around 12, and pigmented hair at 13. Involuntary rigidity of the penis and irregular seminal emissions may be experienced at this age. All such activities are part of the male growth spurt which begins about 12.5 and peaks around age 14.²

Thus, if students age 11 to 13 are grouped together in a middle school they will be primarily among peers experiencing similar physical changes to themselves, and separated from much less mature, and more mature students. This has shown to be a period of personal anxiety, which can be reduced if the transescent has an awareness of what

¹loc. cit., p. 113.
²loc. cit., p. 115.

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physiological changes are taking place. If preadolescents are made aware that different rates of growth are not abnormal, they can learn to accept their physique better. The middle school could help them learn this if it can put physical and physiological changes into terms they can understand and deal with. Specific recommendations on how this should be incorporated into the curriculum will be found in a later chapter.

Social Behavior During Transcence

Our culture sets patterns of accepted social behaviors throughout childhood and adolescence. In early childhood this has meant aggressiveness in boys and dependency in girls. Boys are expected to be rough, active, adventurous, and rugged. On the other hand, girls are expected to be docile, ladylike, and interested in household or domestic type activities.

Thornburg states that these traditional sex-roles can, and should be changed:

"In the past, through perpetuation, the sex roles unfolded into the traditional work role for men and the wife-mother role for women.

In today's society, some varying social-sex roles are being suggested. By preadolescence, most youngsters have had exposure to role behaviors that are not as distinctly masculine or feminine as they once were. The hair of little girls is shorter and of little boys is longer. Both have learned to play and accept mannequin dolls, i.e. G.I. Joe and Barbie. In the case of girls, Barbie represents a sexy teen-ager who is involved in all types of social events as her diversified and descriptive wardrobe indicates. While it is hardly fair to give Barbie credit for accelerating female social interest, it is true that one's fantasies may later be transferred more readily to reality.
if such fantasies have been rewarding.\(^1\)

In essential agreement with Thornburg, other writers have also pointed to the increasing unisexuality and flexibility for women in the American social structure that confronts today's 10 to 13 year old. Less distinct masculine-feminine roles exist in our society. There is less emphasis on the developing girl to accept the traditional wife-mother role.

It is not intended to minimize the importance of identifying with contemporaries of the same sex. What is being brought out here is that transescence is not the period of quietly accepting one's own sex role as it once was.

Other societal changes reflected in different pressures on the preadolescent center on heterosexual contact. Research indicates that many transescents are feeling pressures from their parents and peers to be involved heterosexually by grade six.\(^2\) This makes it even more important that the middle school address itself to the problem of learning appropriate social-sex roles. There is no doubt that what is learned during this period will have significant effects on the emerging adolescent and eventually adult.

It is quite possible that the middle school movement may contribute to earlier adolescent socialization. It seems likely that having 10 to 13 year olds together will increase earlier socialization.

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\(^1\)Thornburg, Hershel, "Learning and Maturation in Middle School Age Youth" *The Clearing House*, 45, 1970, p. 151.

\(^2\)Alexander, et al., op. cit., p. 209.
Peer Relationships During Transcencence

Most peer relationships that are formed during transcence are with those of the same sex. Typically boys express a dislike for girls and girls show general lack of concern for boys in their environment. The importance of transcendent peer groups has been noted frequently. Many of their behaviors are shaped by their peers. "Even though children may resist inwardly or feel threatened they attempt to produce the behavior they think the group expects of them."^1

As transcents move into grades seven and eight, their peer associates may begin becoming heterosexual, although on a more limited basis than in later adolescence. Such heterosexual interaction is often done cautiously and is often only undertaken within the security of group settings where members of the same sex are also present.

The middle school could provide a structural framework where its students can develop a meaningful and cooperative relationship with peers. Within the middle school it may be possible to create an environment conducive to this development better than in the existing junior high school, where many social activities approximate high school behaviors.

Independence During Transcencence

In The Middle School Child in Contemporary Society, Havighurst characterizes transcencence as that time when preadolescent youth are expected to become physically independent. He stresses that this

^1loc. cit., p. 219.
should not be equated with emotional independence, but that it is strictly physical independence. Havighurst\textsuperscript{1} asserts that such independence is obtaining the ability to be away from home at night or to go to a summer camp without being terribly homesick or needing mother in his environment.

The transescent should begin looking upon himself as a maturing individual. He should see his parents in a new relationship. While maintaining emotional dependency the transescent should not exercise blind faith in his parents such as he did during childhood. His behavior does become increasingly independent of adults. However, this should not lead teachers and educators to conclude that he does not need guidance and support.

How can the middle school help its students in this area? First it should provide a more independent and complex structure than the elementary school. (Havighurst\textsuperscript{1} does point out that all youngsters 10 to 12 years have enough self control to get along in this structure.) Thus the middle school, while addressing itself to the problem of aiding in the process of becoming an independent person, should also be primarily transitional, i.e. structurally less complex than the junior high school.

Development of Conscience During Transcence

The transescents increasing identification with his peers and

\textsuperscript{1}Havighurst, Robert, "The Middle School Child in Contemporary Society," Theory into Practice, 1968, p. 121.
\textsuperscript{2}loc. cit., p. 122.

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lessening identification with his parents affects the way his conscience develops. The activities of peer groups induce higher values of truth and fairness.

In today's society much stress is placed in individuality. This corresponds to the development of self-responsibility. The middle school is in a good position to aid students in this task. Students can learn responsibilities through many different approaches, since they are exposed to several different teachers and students in one day.

Probably the most detrimental factor in the student's learning self responsibility is adult moralizing. Many junior high school teachers attempt to deal with stealing, lying, laziness, cruelty, and bullying by moralizing with the student. As Thornburg\(^1\) succinctly states:

"If teachers are really interested in helping youths develop moral concepts and values, they might better help children (1) make free choices whenever possible; (2) search for alternatives in decision making; (3) weigh the consequences of each available alternative; (4) consider what they prize and cherish; (5) affirm the things they value; (6) do something about their choices."

Conclusion

Discussion has focused on the physical, intellectual, and social development of 10 to 13 year old youths during their transitional period from childhood to adolescence. The ability of the middle school to facilitate this development should strengthen and enable the trans-

\(^1\)Thornburg, op. cit., p. 154.
escent to acquire increasingly more complex maturation and learning during adolescence. Learning to cope with bodily changes, exercise a new mode to intellectual functioning, and becoming an independent person presents a tremendous challenge to the youngster from 10 to 13. The challenge is significantly as great to the middle school to develop and implement an educational program which will foster greater maturation and learning on the part of its students.
CHAPTER III

MIDDLE SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Educationally, the middle school concerns itself with continuing the acquisition of knowledge and basic skills initiated in the earlier grades, but also attempts to extend and reinforce its studies by giving applications to actual situations where the students may have the opportunity to become increasingly self-directing. Particularly the curriculum stresses the changes taking place in the world as well as the current world situation, and tries to relate the youth with these changes. It also provides its instruction in such a way that the student is motivated to study further; the opportunities for further study are revealed and made interesting, and the student develops studying techniques. Further, the middle school curriculum emphasizes the accomplishments and characters of well-known contemporary and historic individuals, so that students may identify with such persons and develop desirable goals. At this stage, theoretical, political and moral concepts are introduced; social mores and values are examined; and democratic ideals are explained and emphasized.

For example, in earlier grades the student is taught that the United States is a republic; but in the middle school he first ana-

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1 Moss, op. cit., p. 175.

lyzes the system of representative government in depth and discovers the intricacies of the American electoral and governmental processes.

There have been some suggestions that the rise in middle schools necessitates a more standardized curriculum so as to avoid confusion and ill-preparedness for senior high schools. On the other hand, several prominent writers have proposed that individual middle school curricula be chosen and personalized or made subjective for each school. Alexander, et al.,¹ suggest that many factors enter into this proposition; such as the fact that every locality and population has its own peculiarities and develops an individual pattern of learning opportunities. These authors also note that each middle school inherits the traits (and often the physical facilities) of the lower or higher schools it serves. They conclude, "the plan must be one . . . that fits into the community's total program of schooling, anticipates the characteristics of the population served, and squares with the realities of personnel and physical facilities. Thus, it is best made by the faculty of a particular middle school for that school." Stradley,² similarly, notes that " . . . the old idea of giving the same assignment to all students, the same explanation to all students who have differing backgrounds, limitations, and potentials will not work." To illustrate this point, there exists the contemporary example of the middle school teacher who has lived in the North all her life and moves


to the South to teach. As the story goes, she instructs her students that birds tend to fly south in the fall and thus are not seen in the winter. Her pupils, however, living in the South, would know from observation that the birds arrive in the fall and stay all winter. Thus, each middle school should have a curriculum suited to its needs. It should delve not primarily into theory, but into applicable facts which are meaningful to the situation in which the student finds himself. Problem-solving should be emphasized.¹

The general curriculum should be divided between the analytical and the physical and cultural studies to form the overall socio-psychological model, as shown on the following page. Each area is subdivided into four distinct content areas. The physical/cultural area, ostensibly, fulfills the ingredients missing from the traditional "three R's" approach and rounds out the student's education. This area supplies the esthetic viewpoint missing in the analytical areas of study.

Middle school curricula are changing and becoming more flexible for good and sufficient reasons. For example, in recent years, cultural vicissitudes have caused old values, norms, and beliefs to be replaced by new ones as our cultural patterns continually change. Also, teaching methods are becoming more modernized—today's class uses movies and slides as well as television; the class of yesteryear had none of these implements. Finally, the body of knowledge applicable to students has expanded tremendously. This is especially true of the

¹DeVita, et al., op. cit., p. 67.
sciences and of mathematics. Today's middle school students learn New Math, a concept indefensible just several years back. History also keeps advancing, and with today's better communications, history becomes more detailed when concerned with recent events. Therefore, middle school curricula cannot remain static.¹

FIGURE 1

One facet of the individualization of middle school curricula is the matter of required versus elective courses. Heretofore, all or almost all courses were required and the middle school student, unlike


²Eichhorn, op. cit., p. 65.
the high school student, had little or no influence in determining his program. The use of elective classes has increased, however, precisely for the purpose of adding the element of motivation to learn. Stradley recommends four possibilities for judicious use of electives:

1. Substitution of an elective for a particular required course in the case of a slow learner who obviously has little, if any, possibility of passing the course and who, most likely, will find practical use for it.

2. Substitution of elective time for additional time needed, and desired, for a required course.

3. Change of emphasis in a social studies course, for example, to include areas of learning essential to locally identified student needs in the culturally deprived areas.

4. Postponement, of elimination possibly, of certain locally required courses for students who cannot, because of mental or physical limitation, accomplish the necessary skills--foreign language and shop, for example."

Middle school students learn in analytical courses two important principles, among others, which will carry over to later education. First is the principle of reversibility. In other words, the student is taught that the mathematical problem $10 \times 2 = 20$ may also be expressed $20 \div 2 = 10$; and that certain causes lead to certain effects so that removing or reversing these causes will eliminate or change the effects. There is also the principle of associativity; for example, a relationship between three factors (A, B, and C) may be analyzed by observing the relationships between A and B, A and C, B and C, etc. Development of the capacity to apply these principles

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1 Stradley, op. cit., p. 81.
will facilitate further learning.¹

Curricula should be designed by measuring the projected level of importance to the future needs of the student of each type of information. For instance, questions such as the following should be asked:²

1. How important is Latin for a youngster aged 11-14?
2. How important is it for a student to know how to diagram a sentence or to know all the prepositions in the English language?
3. How important is it for a student to be able to compute from base 5 in mathematics?
4. How important is it for a middle school student to know all the chemical elements by name?
5. How important is it to know the date of the Boston Tea Party?

Ostensibly, the second subject matter in this list would probably be most important of the five. Every student will have need of the spoken language, while few would require Latin or advanced mathematics, etc., later in life. Historical facts may seem crucial to some, but are actually of little importance in the everyday world and in business. This is not to say, of course, that subjects deemed less necessary than others should be disregarded altogether. But since the student's time spent in school is limited, the major emphasis should be placed on the subjects required for application in adult life.

Teachers in middle schools may coordinate their instructional activities by two distinct methods, among others, which are of par-

¹Eichhorn, op. cit., p. 73.
²DeVita, et al., op. cit., p. 71.
ticular interest; namely, by the use of subject area teams or interdisciplinary teams. Under the former method, teachers plan together and instruct on the same subject. The latter method involves teachers of different subjects who plan together to present a coordinated approach to their individual subjects. Subject area teams seem to be in greater use than interdisciplinary teams at present, but both methods are used more frequently in the upper half of the grades 5-6-7-8 level than in the lower half. Small group instruction seems to be found in greater frequency in middle schools, also, than large group instruction. Middle school students, then, may be taught by various means, but it must always be kept in mind that they are not placed in shells protected from environmental problems and influences.

Currently, there is a great deal of discussion about the use of modern teaching materials such as television and other electronic devices and programmed materials. Most writers in this field recommend such methods. Some, on the other hand, contend that the extended use of mechanical devices would lead to a depersonalization and dehumanizing of the educational system. Certainly the situation of the teacher worrying about being replaced by a machine is well-known. But similar fears were expressed when movies were introduced as teaching aids, and

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2 Ibid.
it cannot be denied that not only has their use not usurped the role of human instruction; but it has enhanced it, making the explanatory task of the teacher easier as well as adding fun for the students.

Instruction in the analytical areas may be facilitated by the use of carefully planned laboratory experiments which will yield results calculated to stimulate further student interest. Baillie, for example, has formulated a group of this type of experiments which may be used without elaborate laboratory facilities. In any event, some laboratory facilities should be provided for a middle school so that practical and demonstrable applications of theory may be obtained and observed.

One middle school teaching method of increasing controversy in recent years is the track system, whereby students are assigned to different tracks, or planned curricula adjusted to their learning abilities, according to test results on certain key examinations. Tracking has been criticized by advocates of integration, since black and other minority students under it tend to be placed in the lower tracks (due to inferior education in lower grades, lack of educational motivation leading to poor grades, an impoverished environment, and the middle-class bias of standardized tests). Tracks are usually formulated for particular study areas, so

1 Baillie, John H., "Laboratory Experience for Disadvantaged Youth in the Middle School," School Science and Mathematics, Vol. 70, pp. 704-06.

2 Moss, op. cit., pp. 82-3.

3 ibid.
often a student will be placed on varying track levels for different subjects (commonly, a student will score well on English and Spelling but low on Math, or vice versa). This leads to a large amount of paperwork and detail, so frequently such students may be assigned to 'average' track levels, which do not reflect his capabilities.

As its advantages, the track system can claim higher learning achievements for students with average or good capacity. In the proper tracks, they need not waste time waiting while the teacher instructs the lower-level pupils on material which is basic to the upper-level students. The learning experience in the track system proceeds at a faster pace for these students. Conversely, average students under a tracking system will not be pushed to keep pace with bright students. Some have argued that due to the preoccupation with turning out brilliant scientists ever since Sputnik, the average students have been neglected.¹

An example of a four-track middle school mathematics program is shown on the next page.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Track</th>
<th>First Year</th>
<th>Second Year</th>
<th>Third Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>computational skills and modern math</td>
<td>computational skills and modern math</td>
<td>modern math and consumer math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>modern math</td>
<td>modern math</td>
<td>modern math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>modern math</td>
<td>modern math</td>
<td>history of math and algebra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>modern math</td>
<td>history of math and algebra</td>
<td>geometry and/or computer math</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Moss, p. 85.
CHAPTER IV

TEACHING

The most important element in the middle school concept is the teacher, who is the person with which the student will have the most contact. As the Michigan Association of School Boards\(^1\) notes:

"The middle school teacher must be a warm, friendly individual, concerned about each child as a person. He is patient, sympathetic, tolerant, yet firm. The human quality of her personality provides the atmosphere and climate most conducive to learning."

School teachers of earlier days were noted for strictness and disciplinarianism; their methods were rote memory and repetition forms of this type. Modern teachers, however, aware of psychology and motivational studies, strive to inculcate in their students the desire to learn. Motivational studies long ago revealed that the amount of effort a person is willing to put into an endeavor varies directly with the size of expected reward to be obtained for doing so. Such rewards need not be monetary, as Maslow\(^2\) has pointed out, since the highest level (most important) human needs are those of "belongingness" and love, esteem, and self-actualization.

Consequently, creative teaching has the following characteristics. There is less domination of the students and more belief that they can find answers satisfying to them. There is less time taken up by


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teacher talking and more listening by the teacher to the students. They are allowed to use the class as an audience where ideas are explored, and the instructor in such cases acts as part of the class. There is not so much direct questioning by the teacher in search of correct answers, but instead more open-ended questioning in search of different opinions and leading to a logical process for obtaining adequate answers. Many alternative answers are considered. Thus, the correctness of the answer is not the sole criteria for judgment, but the thought processes by which the students arrive at their answers is important also.

There is much less destructive criticism by the teacher; students are not chastised for not knowing an answer, but helped to find it instead. Criticism is constructive. Further, there is less emphasis on failure—mistakes are accepted and the process of searching begins anew when a mistake is made. The work of the students is appreciated by the teacher so that the students know that praise will be forthcoming upon satisfactory performance of a task.

Motivational studies reveal that children desire to live in "a predictable, lawful, orderly world." Therefore, class objectives are defined clearly and understood by the group. Goal-setting as a technique is highly favored by motivational psychologists and managerial theorists, since it strikes at boredom and gives a person something to strive for. Maslow, indeed, has noted that man is a wanting animal, and as soon as one of his needs is satisfied, another takes its place.

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1Maslow, op. cit., p. 40.
2loc. cit., p. 38.
Children under creative teaching situations are given responsibility and freedom to work; hence the satisfaction of personal accomplishment may be experiences. It is not surprising to note that the need to feel that one has accomplished all that one is capable of in life is the highest level of human need. In other words, an artist must paint, and a poet must write poetry in order to feel happy. Children, too, can experience self-satisfaction through accomplishment.

Finally, creative teaching stresses that students should be free to express their feelings without fearing that the teacher would hold this against their favor; in other words, the teacher likes them for what they are. The overall attitude is one of mutual exploration, curiosity, and satisfaction of discovery.¹

The emerging concept of "team" teaching has been considered by some teachers as threatening to their effectiveness. The individual teacher's ideas about what is best for a particular group may be sublimated to the will of the team group.² Each teacher under this plan no longer has complete responsibility for his group of students, so his self-concept may be damaged. Team teaching, however, has distinct advantages. It permits more competent teachers to play a larger role in overall instruction and gives them recognition. It allows flexibility in class sizes and more opportunity for student self-direction. Subject-matter boundaries may be crossed with greater ease and there is less routine clerical chores. Extensive use of

¹Alexander, et al., op. cit., p. 94.
²loc. cit., p. 95.
resource persons and technological aids is permitted.¹

The major objective of team teaching was to avoid limiting the talents of highly skilled teachers to one group of students. Arbitrary methods of dealing with this problem met with little success. Now, the team-teaching program has two major objectives at the junior high school level; to make maximum use of teacher time and to allow the subject matter to be geared as closely as possible to the abilities of the students.²

Team teaching, by its focus on planning, affords teachers the opportunity to suggest and develop experimental teaching methods and techniques. The emphasis on evaluation of teaching allows the team to control its procedures and opt for maximum results once an acceptable routine is found by trial and error.

One method of scheduling middle school classes is horizontal scheduling, where classes are scheduled to teams of teachers who are responsible for all subject areas. One method is where one teacher would be responsible for all science taught while other teachers instruct other subjects. A typical sixth grade program for this type of schedule would appear as in Table 3 on the following page.

Vertical scheduling is the plan by which, for example, a mathematics teacher would teach all grade levels, or at least, most of them. In other words, teachers are assigned across grade levels by subject.³ The primary advantage to this plan is that it allows

¹Howard and Stoumbis, op. cit., p. 400.
²loc. cit., p. 394.
³DeVita, et al., op. cit., p. 121.
specialization to be taken full advantage of. A teacher may concentrate on one subject and develop a high degree of knowledge in that field as well as teaching skills in the area. This avoids out-of-license instruction; the students are bound to receive expert instruction in all areas. The disadvantage, of course, is that such programs limit the abilities of teachers and tend to confine them.

**TABLE 3**

**HORIZONTAL SCHEDULING OF A TYPICAL SIXTH GRADE PROGRAM**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>SECTION</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Art, Music</td>
<td>Home Econ.</td>
<td>Phys., Ed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ind. Arts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Art, Music</td>
<td>Home Econ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ind. Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Art, Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Phys., Ed. Health</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>Math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Home Econ.</td>
<td>Phys., Ed. Health</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ind. Arts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Art, Music</td>
<td>Home Econ.</td>
<td>Phys., Ed.</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Ind. Arts</td>
<td>Health</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another scheduling method is the diagonal method, whereby each

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DeVita, et al., op. cit., p. 120.
group of students attends the same subject class at different times of day for different days of the week. Although inherently more confusing, this schedule helps to provide for common times to schedule large groups.\(^1\)

The "period exchange" schedule permits a double period one day per week, enabling the teacher to schedule a field trip, film, or so on. Similar arrangements involve sharing class periods between two subjects as necessary.

Similar also is the rotating schedule, where there are a greater number of subjects than periods. This is illustrated below.

**TABLE 4**

**ROTATING SCHEDULE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>History</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td>xxxxxxx</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The free period shown on Friday may be used for assemblies or so forth.

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\(^1\)loc. cit., p. 126.
For greater variety, a rotating schedule with varying period lengths may be used, as shown below.

TABLE 5

ROTATING SCHEDULE WITH VARYING PERIOD LENGTHS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period Length</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30 min.</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Soc. Studies</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td>Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 min.</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Soc. Studies</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 min.</td>
<td>Soc. Studies</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85 min.</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70 min.</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>Art</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each subject = 330 min. (5 1/2 hrs.) per week; total school day, with lunch, recesses, and between-class periods = normal 6 1/2-6 1/2 hours.

The process of scheduling may be facilitated by considering some important factors. First of all, all single classes should go on the schedule first. This means all classes for which there is only one section (such as the school newspaper staff, the band, etc.). These classes should also not be scheduled at the same time, since students wishing to take both will be unable to do so.

Second, there should always be alternative courses at every period of the day if at all possible. It is poor policy to have, for example, only specialized courses as alternatives for a general course.
It may be wise to schedule general types of courses—such as languages, speech, art, and so on—which are similar, for the same time slots.

Classes should not be assigned on the basis of whichever teacher is free that period, since this wastes teacher capabilities. The instructors should be involved in any scheduling attempts; their interests and abilities will be noticeable through such efforts.

The curriculum should be devised first and the schedule second, otherwise education will be sacrificed in favor of convenience.\(^1\)

For example, if a middle school finds itself in possession of a group of teachers skilled in English, Social Studies, foreign languages and the like but lacking mathematics teachers, an overemphasis may be placed on the former subjects.

Personnel

Because transescents have unique needs, the recruitment of personnel is a major factor in middle school success.\(^2\) Unfortunately, it has traditionally been easier to attract qualified, trained personnel for elementary or high school training than for middle school teaching.\(^3\) After all this time, furthermore, only a very few states have recognized that junior high school is worthy of separate teacher certification.\(^4\)

\[\text{References}\]

2. Eichhorn, op. cit., p. 91.
Ideally, the middle school teacher should have, according to Eichhorn, seven characteristics:

"Personal security: The insecurity of transescents requires daily examples of adults who exhibit confidence and faith in themselves.

Understanding: Teachers should be good listeners and show an interest in their students.

Resourcefulness: Since experiences are said to be crucial at this age group, teachers should provide a diversity of needed experiences.

Adaptability: A middle school teacher should be able to continually alter his daily schedule, since this may indeed be necessary.

Enthusiasm: This will motivate rather than stifle curiosity and stimulate the students.

Cooperation: Middle school faculties must offer full cooperation to each of the other members for optimum effectiveness.

A Sense of Humor: This will aid in communicating with transescents."

Another view states that middle school teachers, first of all, should know themselves, be able to accept their own weaknesses, and be able to solve their own problems without involving their students, thus setting a good example for them. Teachers should also have a positive attitude toward their students, showing consistency and firmness but patience as well.

The middle school teacher should furthermore understand that his students are products of their environments and treat them accordingly. He should show resourcefulness in providing necessary enthusiasm and

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1 Eichhorn, op. cit., p. 92.
experiences, flexibility, and a sense of humor (in agreement with the above). Finally, the middle school teacher should be innovative and optimistic, possessing a faith in young people and in the future.¹

Alexander, et al.,² recommend that the prospective junior high school instructor ask themselves five questions, affirmative answers to which would indicate teaching ability and desire. First, does the prospective teacher enjoy working with older children and younger adolescents? The teacher should exhibit confidence and security (as above); such traits are evidence of the desire to work with transescents. Second, does the teacher possess the interest and ability to develop scholarship in one of the areas of organized knowledge? The teacher developing his own knowledge of a particular subject is apt to have a healthy attitude towards scholarship and may be able to impart this to his students.

Third, is the teacher willing to use a wide variety of diagnostic influences, automated aids, and programmed materials to help students learn? The field of education should no longer fall behind industry, government, and business in harnessing technology to meet its objectives.

Fourth, can the teacher work effectively in close collaboration with his colleagues in cooperative planning and team teaching? Since it may well be the case that most middle schools will attempt some of these forms of teaching, a prospective teacher should decide whether or not he can accept and cooperate with them.

Finally, does the teacher have an open mind towards innovation and change? Since many teachers find themselves uncomfortable in an atmosphere of continuous searching and experimenting with new teaching procedures, the instructor should confront the question of conformity and continuity verses change.

Stradley mentions a number of points characteristic of a successful middle school teacher which basically correspond to those previously mentioned, with the addition of two important considerations. Stradley believes that the effective junior high school teacher should also (preferably) have training and/or experience at both elementary and secondary levels. Further, he stresses the possessing of the competence to teach effectively at different levels, in order to accept students with differing abilities and levels of achievement.

One survey of students from the first through twelfth grades undertaken some time ago sought to discern their conception of the ideal teacher by inquiring the individual characteristics of the teacher most liked by the students. In order, these were:

1. Cooperative, democratic attitude.
2. Kindliness and consideration for the individual.
3. Patience.
4. Pleasing personal appearance and manner.
5. Wide interests.
6. Fairness and impartiality.
7. Sense of humor.
8. Good disposition and consistent behavior.
9. Interest in pupil’s problems.

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1Stradley, op. cit., p. 118.
2Moss, op. cit., pp. 210-11.

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10. Flexibility.
11. Use of recognition and praise.
12. Unusual proficiency in teaching a particular subject."

A survey of a large number of prospective and experienced secondary school teachers concerning their attitudes towards junior high schools yielded some interesting results. First of all, prospective middle school teachers (students of secondary education) all communicated the desire to teach older students and higher grade levels. The only group of student teachers surveyed who preferred to teach junior high school students was the group that had student taught both junior high and high school students. The rest, who had student taught at limited grade levels only, preferred those grade levels.

Junior high school teachers surveyed were strongly critical of the policy of identical preparation and certification for junior high and senior high school teachers. There was also criticism of the training received by junior high school teachers. Further, those who had taught in middle schools showed strong support for middle school organization of grades six through eight, a sentiment not forthcoming from teachers inexperienced with middle schools.¹

As far as middle school teacher preparation is concerned, it must be realized that there is still a raging controversy over what should constitute adequate preparation for teaching at any level.² However, the ideal preparation for middle school teaching should certainly strive to impart to the teacher the attributes and capa-

¹Howard and Stoumbis, op. cit., pp. 271-72.
²Alexander, et al., op. cit., p. 97.
bilities enumerated on the preceding pages.

In addition to subject matter, the middle school teacher should be professionally competent in areas such as the:

1. Development of the pre-adolescent and the early adolescent.
2. Psychology of the pre- and early adolescent.
3. Philosophy and functions of the elementary school and the junior high school.
4. Reading problems in the elementary and secondary school.
5. Student teaching on the elementary school and the junior high school level.
7. Familiarity with concepts and structures of team teaching, independent study, and continuous progress."

Many writers have compared the fact that preparation for junior high school teaching has produced ill-equipped and ill-prepared teachers with the fact that specialized education designed specifically to prepare teachers for junior high school work has been practically nonexistent.² Many colleges feel that the extra effort required to begin specialization in preparation for middle school teaching would be not worth their while. Clearly, there is a need to actively promote specialized education for middle school teachers. The feasibility of maintaining separate structures for middle school teacher education should be investigated. Although at present this might seem a waste of

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¹Stradley, op. cit., p. 119.
²Howard and Stoumbis, op. cit., p. 273.
time and effort, the future might well consist of a continuation of
the present trend of specialization and increased sophistication in
almost every endeavor; so much so that separate middle school teacher
education will become a necessity.

The problem of obtaining specialized education for middle school
teachers is confounded by the fact that college curricula in educa­tional programs are based upon state certification requirements, so
as to virtually assure the graduates of automatic certification upon
their leaving school. Therefore, there is little room for exper­
imentation of flexibility. And, as long as there is no difference in
state certification for junior and senior high school teachers, there
can be little hope for separate instruction for middle school teachers.

The prospective junior high school teacher should prepare himself
academically for the position with care. He should be educated in the
social sciences. To wit,

"His work should include history so that he will have a
grasp of the antecedents of peoples and movements; political
science so he can understand the dynamics of political
processes and decision making; sociology and anthropology
so he can understand the different classes and cultures that
make up one society; philosophy so he can view the foun­
dations of diverse thought in today's world."2

The middle teacher should receive training in the humanities as
well, allowing him to appreciate other cultures and the literature of
his own. Education in the sciences and mathematics should be included,
so that he is able to impart the rudimentary understanding of these

1Moss, op. cit., p. 209.
2DeVita, et al., op. cit., p. 139.
principles to his pupils. Finally, the middle school teacher should be educated in the arts so as to be able to instill a sense of enjoyment and appreciation of these forms to his students.¹

The study of adolescent psychology is crucial; so much so that it should ideally span two semesters.² One excellent method of enabling teaching students to acquire knowledge in this field is through participatory experiences (which can be supplemented by classroom study.)

All teachers should take courses in education and educational theory so as to be able to understand how learning actually occurs. Different theories of learning should be compared and contrasted for advantages and disadvantages. The student, for example, should be familiar with the contributions of Mann, Barnard, Sheldon, Parker, the MacMurrays, and Dewey in order to comprehend the nuances of the American education experience.³

Like most other types of administrators, middle school administrators find it necessary to establish control, harmony, and a smooth flow of operations. They must gather all data available, consider possible alternatives, and make decisions.⁴ The junior high school principal, specifically, is expected to plan, control, direct, evaluate,

¹ibid.
²Moss, op. cit., p. 213.
⁴Howard and Stoumbis, op. cit., p. 73.
and make decisions concerning educational programs and policies for early adolescents.\(^1\) Basically, then, the curriculum is his primary concern. He must constantly be seeking ways to improve it. A middle school principal must also be adept at delegating authority. This is necessary since:

1. A principal finds it too easy to become bogged down with paperwork and trivia.

2. Delegation permits a distribution of the work load, thereby taking some of it off of the principal, leaving him free for administrative decision-making; as well as giving everyone a feeling of being involved.

3. The more students and staff members participating in administration, planning, and decision-making, the higher the morale.

4. Potential leadership is discovered and encouraged.

5. The main task of the principal should be the improvement of instruction.\(^2\)

The effective middle school administrator should have a working knowledge of child growth and development (preferably obtained through actual teaching experience.) The successful principal will usually have been a teacher himself. Experience in junior high schools is another plus.

The middle school principal should keep himself aware of all happenings in his school, whether concerning teachers, students, staff, or anyone else. This may be done, for example, by observing classrooms in session and evaluating teachers' techniques. With an effective flow of information, the principal is in the position to keep all his

\(^{1}\)ibid.

\(^{2}\)loc. cit., p. 74.
subordinates constantly informed of objectives. The principal should of course show dissatisfaction with shortcomings in the school, but should avoid direct criticism or chastising individual persons. Rather than appearing distatorial, the principal should be democratic and make it appear as if the teachers and staff participate in decisions (by saying, "why don't we do it this way?" instead of "do it this way.")

Howard and Stoumbis have outlined ten basic tenets of middle school administration, making the following points:

1. The organization of the school must be such as to benefit all pupils who can profit from this type of education.
2. Pupils of junior high age should have a broad program of general education.
3. A wide range and variety of methods should be provided to deal with the extent of individual differences known to exist in transcendent.
4. Standards of achievement must be based upon a recognition of variations in student competency.
5. The costs of inadequate administrative staffing for the junior high school far exceed the costs of adequate staffing.
6. Provisions should be made to allow the students to explore various subject areas as well as learning to understand his personal strengths and weaknesses.
7. Essential is a strong guidance program, one that will assist each student to attain his highest potential.
8. There should be available to each student the services of a health team (doctor, nurse, and dental hygienist); a psychological team (psychologist, social worker, and psychiatrist); and attendance services on a social casework concept.

1 loc. cit., pp. 79-80.
9. The staff should be fully prepared and certified.

10. There must be continual and careful evaluation of all that is attempted in the junior high school."

Moss has envisioned an organizational situation where a middle school principal would have under him a group of coordinating teachers; that is, teachers who serve to coordinate the activities of teachers in a subject area. Moss outlines five such persons to coordinate the areas of core curriculum, science, mathematics, foreign languages, and learning resources. All other teachers would be subordinate, appropriately, to these respective persons. In this arrangement, the principal would himself teach groups of students periodically, thus being in actuality a principal-teacher. He would be aided by an administrative assistant who would handle administrative matters.

Kealy and Alexander recommend that the prospective middle school principal organize a coordinating-steering group to assist him in planning and executing the details of his work. To do so he would select a "curriculum coordinator," a "pupil services coordinator," and a "learning resources coordinator."

Every middle school must have a competent staff of administrative and similar personnel, custodial and lunchroom personnel, guidance and mental health personnel, and so on. While not directly concerned with the curriculum, they are nevertheless indispensible.

In recent years, a new type of personnel has been added, namely

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1Moss, op. cit., p. 183.


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teachers aides or auxiliary or assistant teachers, who may be called paraprofessionals.\(^1\) Such personnel handle teachers' paperwork or supervise students.

Other types of paraprofessions are the custodians, clerks, and so on, but teachers' aides have the most to do with the curriculum. In many instances the paraprofessional can be just as effective for the transescent during the course of a day or a school year as can the professional staff member.\(^2\)

Of great importance in the middle school is the position of librarian. Librarians must be skilled in the art of information retrieval procedures, and should be able to teach these skills to students and teachers.\(^3\) The librarian should be available to students working on class projects, ready and willing to serve as a resource aide.

Guidance and Orientation Programs

Middle school guidance is primarily concerned with helping the transescent to identify, analyze, and satisfactorily resolve his daily problems.\(^4\) Most of these difficulties may be grouped into the following areas:

1. Personal problems associated with body and self-

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\(^1\)Moss, op. cit., p. 174.

\(^2\)DeVita, et al., op. cit., p. 150.

\(^3\)Alexander, et al., op. cit., p. 124.

\(^4\)Stradley, op. cit., p. 131.
identification; handicaps, illness, and physical growth.

2. Social contacts with peers and adults.

3. Family relationships—getting along with parents and siblings.

4. Living conditions—dwelling, environment and their effect on the youngster.

5. Educational status and plans for the future.


7. Leisure time and recreational activities.

Guidance service is provided for all students, not merely for those with serious problems. Normal, well-adjusted children also require guidance in their thinking, attitudes, and personality development. Furthermore, the middle school guidance counselor is not concerned with meeting all individual student needs. More realistically, the counselor strives to assist students in becoming progressively better prepared to face problems and solve them on their own.

Eichhorn has recommended that guidance be primarily provided by instructional personnel. He has noted that in the past, indications reveal that students have not placed much faith in their teachers for this purpose; and that most students with problems have received

1DeVita, et al., op. cit., p. 91.
3Stradley, op. cit., p. 132.
actually little help with solving them from school authorities.

If the middle school guidance counselor is to be successful, he must understand certain things, namely:

"1. Student growth and development patterns and problems at each level.

2. The sympathetic and patient approach needed to work effectively with middle school students.

3. That parent contact plays an important role in guidance functions.

4. That guidance should not be impersonal.

5. That guidance is also a continuous process.

6. That effective guidance utilizes the team approach.

7. That the effective middle school counselor likes and understands the age group with which he works. He wants to work in the middle school."

The effective middle school counselor will make sure that he has plenty of time available for individual counseling sessions, but will make use of group counseling whenever possible. He will work closely with teachers, keeping them well informed of the problems and progress of their students.

Good listening is another essential part of successful counseling. The counselor, honestly interested in children and aware that it is normal for youths of this age to have problems, will treat students with respect and appear to place value upon their opinions and statements. It is more important to know a student as a person than it is to know about him. Students, further, should have a free choice as to

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1Stradley, op. cit., p. 133.
whether or not to participate in guidance programs. A requirement that a student see a guidance counselor a certain number of times a week or a year is contrary to the principles commonly held. When the student initiates the relationship, it is on firmer ground than if it is compulsory. Finally, parents and the community should be kept informed of the existence of the program and the services available.1

Guidance programs may well include socialization programs, based upon the social needs of transescents. One such program would be the social, which stresses the same-sexed relationship. Group activities such as games and dances should predominate; and in this manner relationships based on common interests may develop not only between students of the same sex, but of the opposite sexes as well. The social type of activity, also, allows transescents to engage in leadership-stimulating work, since planning such events requires the participation of many persons, including students. The social also affords an opportunity for students who do not excel academically or physically to achieve recognition.

Another guidance program would be the Interest Activity Program, scheduled as part of the school day. This might include a number of activities: a social work group such as the Junior Red Cross; nature programs; physical activities, science endeavors, such as an amateur radio or model rocketry group; and so on. This type of program offers stimulation of personal interest in a rewarding and educational area; ease of association with one's peers in an informal, relaxed atmosphere; and a start on a possible future career. The Interest

1Howard and Stoumbis, op. cit., p. 63.
Activity Program offers the average or poor student the opportunity to excel in something and achieve recognition.

Another possibility would be a student association such as a student council. The school-wide elections which are usually held for office-seekers for such groups arouse student interest and foster involvement in democratic processes.

A student service organization is another proposal. This group would be responsible for such things as public service announcements, conducting school activities, and/or running a school newspaper. Such organizations, more than any other form of activity, provide opportunities for the development of leadership potential.\(^1\)

Guidance teachers should keep information on each pupil in a cumulative folder, which should include standardized test scores, progress reports and teacher comments, health records indicating any special problems, and recommendations of guidance counselors and school psychologists. The core teacher is primarily responsible, however, for keeping the folders up to date.\(^2\)

The transition from elementary school where one teacher provided security for the student to junior high school with its many teachers may be difficult for the transescent to make. Therefore, a properly planned orientation program will be of great value.\(^3\) Students must be shown what they will face in their new junior high school clearly

\(^1\)Eichhorn, op. cit., pp. 87-90.
\(^2\)Moss, op. cit., p. 190.
\(^3\)DeVita, et al., op. cit., p. 92.
so there will be less confusion on the first few days of class.

Some characteristics of effective orientation programs include the following:

Elementary teacher visitation permits elementary school instructors to visit the middle school and obtain first-hand knowledge of occurrences there so that they may pass this on to their students. Visitation by junior high school principals or counselors to elementary school classes would be one way for incoming middle school students to learn of their new schools beforehand. Parents could also be invited to middle schools so that they might learn what their children will be experiencing.

The orientation day program is perhaps the most important orientation activity of all. Some of the more successful programs of this type have been run almost entirely by middle school student councils. Such things as the reporting system, the lost and found, the cafeteria, bells, schedules, and so on, may be outlined and discussed by the president of the student council, and a student handbook may be passed out. The orientation process should actually be continuous, as more and more activities and events come into being or into the availability of the students. Such things as clubs and membership, homeroom officers, and so forth must be constantly re-explained.

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1Howard and Stoumbis, op. cit., p. 70.
Extra Curricular Activities

Years ago, extracurricular activities were frowned upon by most educators, especially since they were initiated by the students over the opposition of school authorities. But as these activities developed, they gradually became tolerated by schools; and as educators began to see their value for stimulating student interest and heightening student morale, schools came to encourage extracurricular activities.¹

Successful extracurricular activities should follow these basic precepts:²

1. They should have relevance to an institutional offering.
2. No repetition of the content of the instructional offering.
3. Sponsorship by teachers with a background in the activity.
4. Have time allotted in the instructional day.
5. If possible, be open to all students in the grades that experience the instructional offering.
6. Provide, if possible, for a fluid membership.³

Special interest activities which are not part of the school curriculum, such as chess and photography, should be permitted providing they can meet during non-school hours (usually after school).³

¹Moss, op. cit., pp. 99-100.
²DeVita, et al., op. cit., p. 160.
³Moss, op. cit., p. 100.
Some educators have continued to criticize extracurricular activity programs, on the grounds that the business of school is instruction, in the mold of the three R's; and that any activity other than the academic program is a waste of time, money, facilities, and effort. It is of course possible that extracurricular programs could go to extremes and interfere with academic efforts. More often, though, there are more substantial grounds for criticism. Student participation is often limited, but even so, some schools have been forced to seek ways to limit such participation, since some students participate excessively. There are also claims that one or more activities—usually athletics and music—dominate the entire activity program, get more than a fair amount of the share of funds, and are favored in sponsorship, support, and meeting times and places. Some activities, further, have been criticized for tending to be excessively sophisticated, cliquish, exclusive, and unreasonable in dues and initiation rites (fraternities and sororities especially). There is also dissatisfaction over the effectiveness of the organization and the running of such groups.

Such complaints are all the more reason to strive to achieve workable, equitable, meaningful student extracurricular activities. With the proper time and consideration, it can be done. There is a real need for activities of this type. Transescents experience strong urges and feelings about "belongingness," and a student activity group allows even the shy students to fit in somewhere.

Howard and Stoumbis, op. cit., pp. 281-82.
Honor societies are one extracurricular activity that meets with very little, if any, disfavor among educators. They are relevant to the curriculum and encourage high scholastic achievement. Consequently, most schools give tangible rewards for high academic achievement in addition to maintaining honor societies.

Some schools have structured their programs so that a student is forced to join one or more extracurricular activities. This practice, however, is generally frowned upon. A program of this sort should be set up so that students are motivated and self-encouraged to participate.

Building and Facilities

If it came to a choice between a new building or an old one for a middle school, the decision would of course be to occupy a new building. Since a prospective principal of an emergent middle school would ostensibly have little choice in the design if given an old building but perhaps a wide choice of design if granted a new building, the matter of designing the optimum middle school building will be discussed here.

Middle schools, due to their transitional nature, should combine some elements of both elementary and senior high schools. This transitionalism suggests facilities for team teaching, small and large group instruction, independent study, and self-contained centers.¹

¹DeVita, et al., op. cit., p. 201.

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Consideration must be given not only to the currently planned curriculum, but to trends and expectations of the future—also to possibilities for the future. Estimations of the needs of a middle school building twenty years hence are likely to be inaccurate. Therefore, as much flexibility in design as possible should be encouraged. "What is necessary is a built-in flexibility that will permit a district to make maximum adaptation to changing educational thought, methods, and technology, as well as accommodating enrollment and population changes without major structural modifications." Subsequently, a middle school is one building with spaces large enough to permit flexibility would be one answer. "Areas" would be assigned for each group of classes according to subject matter. Thus, if necessary, an area could be enlarged or shrunk without the disruption which would occur if every classroom were specifically designed for one subject or one use only. Large, semi-auditorium sized classrooms would be the answer. Such rooms could be partitioned for different classes by means of movable or sliding wall panels. In this manner a middle school could adapt to changing populations and change the size of any class swiftly.

As far as the matter of thriftiness is concerned, it perhaps might be better to design a new middle school in a square or rectangle shape. Such would conform most strictly to the shape of building lots, and permits maximum use of space in a lot. Further, a square or rectangle shaped building can be designed so that walking

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1Howard and Stoumbis, op. cit., p. 94.
from a class in one part of the building to a class in another is faster. Observe the two designs below. The one on the left may be more exciting and esthetically pleasing, but it wastes space (a bad omen for future needs) and it forces students to take more time and walk greater distances from some classes to others. The building on the right may be enlarged, if necessary, with great ease in any direction.

FIGURE 2

EXAMPLES OF STRUCTURAL DESIGN
OF A MIDDLE SCHOOL
Other Considerations

The accent on community control of schools, heard from both the right and the left in the 1960's, seems to have forged changes in junior college and university curricula in increasing numbers. It may well be expected that as the flair for ethnic pride now in vogue grows, the trend will spread to senior and junior high schools. A school must always relate to the needs of a particular community, whether ethnic considerations are involved or not. In order to receive the full support of the community, the school should show that it is a vital part of the area and respondent to its needs, not a cog in a standardized machine the policy for which is made in some faraway place.

This problem is particularly acute in ghetto areas, where provincialism and separatism are widely felt and where even the children reflect the stubborn neighborhood pride of their parents. Consequently, the middle school can endeavor to appear as a part of the community in such cases by hiring as many teachers as possible from nearby areas.

Middle schools, being a relatively new phenomenon, should face examination and evaluation to determine their effectiveness so that future growth may take the proper directions. The existence alone of a movement toward middle schools is not justification for evaluation;

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the important questions are how middle schools differ from prior organizations and whether they are more effective educating arrangements for transescents.¹

Middle schools are evaluated for five major reasons. One, to provide information on how well the stated objectives are being achieved; two, to test assertions or hypotheses underlying the middle school; three, to provide feedback for improving practices in the middle school; four, to provide psychological security to staff, pupils, parents, and school officials, and five, to provide a basis for expanding middle schools.²

Quantitative evaluation is perhaps the most important type, since it supplies evidence to prove or disprove hypotheses and thus may be of great use. Some hypotheses which would yield meaningful results if tested are:³

1. Pupils in the middle school will become more self-directed learners than pupils in other schools for the same age groups.

2. Pupils in the middle school will have fewer and/or less intense social and psychological problems than pupils in conventional schools.

3. Achievement of middle school pupils on standardized tests will equal or exceed that of pupils in conventional schools.

4. Middle school pupils will equal or exceed pupils in


²Alexander and Kealy, op. cit., pp. 131-34.

³op. cit., pp. 139-43.
conventional schools on standard measures of physical fitness and health.

5. Pupils in the middle school will have favorable attitudes toward school more often than pupils in conventional schools.

6. Middle School pupils will hold more adequate 'self-concepts' than will pupils in conventional schools.

7. Social acceptance among middle school pupils will be higher than among those in conventional schools.

8. The average daily attendance of middle school pupils will exceed that of conventional school pupils.

9. Measures of creativity among middle school pupils will show an increase rather than a decrease during middle school years.

10. Middle school graduates will compile better academic records in ninth grade than will ninth graders from conventional schools.

11. Middle school graduates will drop out of senior high less frequently than pupils who follow the traditional pattern."

Of all these hypotheses, the third, eighth, tenth and eleventh are ostensibly the most easily measured. Criteria such as attitudes and social acceptance are difficult to measure and interpret accurately. For example, psychologists are not in complete agreement as to whether there is a self-concept, or if so, what it is.¹

Hypotheses on which quantitative information can be gathered, however, would be the most useful. Naturally, any inferences drawn from the results of such data as standardized test scores would necessarily be circumstantial with no direct cause-and-effect rela-

¹Hines and Alexander, op. cit., p. 34.
tionship provable. But if patterns of distinct and strong character develop and predominate in the test and other data, such circumstan-
tial conclusions will nevertheless be worthwhile. The reason why the results would not lead to direct conclusions is that improved student performance and so on may or may not be the result of the middle school's influence; it may be the result of many things. But if enough of the aforementioned hypotheses prove to be affirmative in favor of the middle schools, then meaningful inferences may be drawn.

Fiscal considerations must also be taken into account. A middle school may not be appropriated much money, and often the middle school principal must make do on the little he is given. Funds for expensive laboratory facilities, education machines and television, and so forth are often not readily available. Middle school principals may find themselves battling with school boards, doggedly attempting to secure greater appropriations for their operations. Perhaps one of the best ways to convince a thrift-minded school board of the veracity of the middle school concept is to present favorable statistics of the type discussed above.

One of the best ways in the overall sense to raise money for school construction is by school bonds issued by the municipality in question. This method has been used time and again in the United States and should continue to be used in the future.

Only a small minority of school administrators who have come into contact with the middle school have reacted with
disfavor. However, opponents of the middle school concept have made strong points against it.

One of these points is that grade nine, after all has been said and done, truly belongs in the high school and not in the junior high or middle school. This is in fundamental disagreement with one of the basic assumptions of the middle school concept, as well as with the current trend to make grades 5-8 or 6-8 the junior high or middle school grade levels.

Opponents of the middle school concept can point to the fact that many high school freshmen these days seem physically and emotionally better suited for junior high than for high school. They may cite also the fact that tremendous physiological changes occur around ages 13-14 (normally the age of the high school freshman).

Opponents of middle schools also point out that most teachers are trained to teach in schools other than middle schools, and that retraining them or shifting college teaching curricula, as well as doing all the other things necessary to initiate operational middle schools, will be expensive and troublesome as well as time-consuming. And, since precedence for guidance in planning middle schools is lacking, problems of various natures naturally arise.

Proponents of middle schools maintain that owing to their use,

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eighth graders in middle schools no longer have to compete with ninth graders who would be taught in the same building. Opponents of middle schools of grades 5- or 6-8 offer the proposition that the very presence of ninth-graders in the same building as eighth-graders gives the latter stimulus, in that the eighth-graders are given someone to look up to and imitate. In this manner, opponents of middle schools claim, the eighth graders may be stimulated towards higher academic performance.

There are also those who oppose middle schools since they generally oppose the junior high school concept. Such persons would prefer the 1-8, 9-12 system. Today, however, they are far in the minority.

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CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As has been shown, the middle school concept evolved from the junior high school idea much as Protestantism evolved from Catholicism. Further, the trend in senior high schools to predominate in college preparatory curricula—which require four years—is further proof of the necessity to return the ninth grade where it belongs.

The characteristics of the middle school—not only the middle schools not in existence, but (especially) the ones which could exist in the future if sufficient effort can be put forth—are well attuned to the peculiar needs of the transescent; more so than traditional junior high schools.

Other factors exist in favor of the middle school, one of which is the fact that under such a plan students would spend much more time among members of their own age groups—a situation conducive not only to healthy development of peer group relationships, but preventative of the bullying and so forth which frequently occurs when students of widely varying ages are placed together.

Middle schools have a far greater chance of success if the objectives for establishing and operating the school are not only clearly defined at the outset, but made clear to every member of the administration and the staff. The goals for establishing a middle school may be numerous. One could be to shift the ninth grade back into the senior high school, another could be to aid desegregation,
another could be to better bridge the gap between elementary and high schools, and so on.

Great care should be taken in formulating the middle school curriculum. The middle school is the first opportunity the student has to explore moral, political, and social theories and concepts to any substantial extent; and it is during these years that many of his preconceptions concerning these things are formed. Care should be taken to see that the student is imbued with a sense of hope for the future by instructing him in analytical techniques and problem-solving exercises, so that he learns the value of education in daily life. It is most important at this stage to impart objectivity to the student; to emphasize to him that there are two sides to every issue. Teachers with personal biases in any direction should be placed in courses where their biases (if strong) can do the least harm to objectivity. At all times, they should strive to keep personal prejudices from weighing their subject matter in any particular partisan direction.

The trend towards stressing science in public schools since the early 1960's shows no sign of letting up. Today's world is more science-oriented than ever, and the employment market of the late 1970s and early 1980s seems certain to demand more scientifically-adept applicants. Moreover, the vast advances in science clearly necessitate a thorough understanding of basic scientific principles at an early age so that more complex scientific material may more readily be studied later. Soon, it may be necessary for senior high school students to have (what is now) a college-level understanding
of mathematics, physics, chemistry, and so on. Thus it is growing more crucial that the basics of science be thoroughly comprehended at the middle school age.

Middle schools should also have specialized facilities to offer esoteric instruction to children discovered to be particularly gifted in certain areas. Such concentrated talent certainly must not be allowed to go to waste but must instead be put to full use. The middle school is the perfect facility for the discovery of gifted children, since it covers the transescent age. Guidance counselors can play an active role in the development of gifted children, so that their patterns of further instruction and adult life may be planned to take advantage of their talents. Special motivation may be needed. The track system outlined in Chapter 3 would be one excellent way of making the best use of students' special talents and providing for them the proper special education at the middle school level.


