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ABSTRACT
        The transition from elementary school to middle
school or junior high school can be exciting, stressful, scary, and
fun all at once for young ado.escents. The stress of this transition
can either be diffused or aug ented by school procedures for
introducing these students to the school. In this study, a needs
survey was given to a heterogeneous class of 23 fifth-graders in a
middle school. It was found that social and procedural needs were
considered the most important by the students, and lack of assistance
from adults was perceived as highest for certain social needs. The
results indicate that needs of early adolescents are not always
adequately addressed during their transition to middle school. An
appendix provides a copy of the student needs survey instrument.
Contains 19 references. (MDM)

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A Needs Assessment of Fifth Grade Students in a Middle School

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STUDENT NEEDS

ABSTRACT

The transition from elementary school to middle school or junior high school can be exciting, stressful, scary and fun all at once for young adolescents. The stress of this transition can either be diffused or augmented by school procedures for introducing these students to the school. This study suggests that the most effective and efficient way to determine what the needs are of a particular population is to go to the source and ask the students.

In this study a needs survey was given to a heterogeneous class of twenty-three fifth graders in a middle school. For analysis the needs on the survey were placed into categories of academic, procedural and social needs. Results were then analyzed for each gender group as well as the total sample.

It was found that social and procedural needs were found to be most important for this sample, and lack of assistance from adults was perceived as highest for certain social needs. Generalizations were not possible for the small sample size, however it is suggested that a study with a larger subject group could be highly beneficial for determining which needs of the students in this population may need more adult attention.

INTRODUCTION

Determining the needs of students in their early adolescence who are making the transition from elementary to middle school has become a topic of concern for educators today. This particular population of students has changing needs and concerns of its own which need to be addressed in the schools, especially during this transition period. This study was done to determine what needs fifth grade students in a middle school setting perceive to have been important needs during their transition from elementary school, and how much assistance they feel they were given with these needs.

The premise upon which this research is based is that students needs can only be determined by asking them directly. As adults we may perceive situations differently than our pre-adolescent or adolescent students. Previous research has been done on middle level students and their characteristics and needs, as well as research on how schools can and should address these needs. The intention of this study is to look specifically at one heterogeneous class of fifth graders to determine what they feel their most important needs to be and how these results compare to

what the literature says about the middle grade
student. This study intends to illustrate that the
best way to determine how to meet the needs of a
particular group is to ask actual members of the group
what those needs are.

Their are two major purposes for doing this study,
the first of which is to find out which needs from a
list of common needs of students in middle schools are
perceived as having been most important to fifth grade
students upon entering a middle school. Students will
be asked to determine which needs they think are
important and which they think are not as important.
By analyzing the data it is anticipated that certain
needs will be found to be important by a majority of
students while others will be considered less
important. The second major purpose of this study is
to determine how well assisted by teachers and other
adults in the school students felt they were with needs
they consider to be important or unimportant. It is
hoped that the results of this study will be helpful in
deciding the areas in which students are being well
assisted during the transition process and in which
areas some improvement may be necessary.

It is hypothesized that certain needs will be

considered more important than others by the students on the whole. Student responses will no doubt vary, however it is predicted that commonalities among responses will exist. Because social roles and situations are of increased importance for the middle level student (University of the State of New York [USNY], 1984; Campbell, 1991) it is hypothesized that social needs such as knowing how to make new friends will be seen as having great importance. In regard to levels of assistance provided for each need, it is hypothesized that, according to students, adequate assistance has been given for certain needs and that certain needs may need to be given more attention by teachers and administrators. Because past literature has stated that friendship and peer relations are often seen as the most important aspect of school for young adolescents (Campbell, 199?.), it is thought that certain social needs in particular will be perceived as not adequately addressed.

A large body of research has been devoted to studying developmental needs of preadolescent and adolescent students including physical, social, intellectual and emotional needs. The literature stresses that middle level schools need to be carefully constructed in order to address these needs (Dorman,

1985; Dorman, 1983; Lake, 1991; Smith, 1991). School environment, teacher accessibility and social support systems have been identified as some factors that may ease the transition from elementary to middle schools (Felner, Ginter & Primavera, 1982; Hirsch & Rapkin, 1987; Elias, Ubriaco, Reese, Gara, Rothbaum & Haviland, 1992; Schlosser, 1992). This study is being conducted in a fifth and sixth grade upper elementary school in Central Virginia. This school was chosen because of the young age of the fifth graders who are being assimilated into a middle school setting for the first time, most of whom are coming from non-departmentalized, self-contained fourth grades in the elementary schools. It is hoped this study will be useful in taking the first step toward ascertaining which needs should be heavily concentrated on in this particular school in order to best ease the transition of fifth graders beginning middle school.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The adolescent years can be frustrating, confusing, challenging, and exciting for students and educators alike. This particular group of students is in the process of experimenting with different

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identities, developing socially and intellectually ,
and forever striving for more and more independence.
Current literature in education has focused on the
particular characteristics and needs of students in the
middle grades (grade 5 through grade 8). In this
section recent studies and journal articles will be
explored that discuss characteristics of middle grade
students, stressors during transition to a middle
school setting, specific concerns within a middle
school setting, and suggestions for what schools can do
to ease the transition process.

Characteristics of Middle Grade Students

Middle grade students (grades 5 through 8) have
certain characteristics that are unique to this phase
of life (Campbell, 1991). Physically, student's growth
varies more during this time than at any other time
(Campbell, 1991). In fact studies have shown that at
the middle level it is not unlikely to find a six to
eight year span in physical maturity in a single grade
classroom (Lipsitz, 1980). This period of growth is
the most dramatic, aside from infancy, in the human
life span (USNY, 1984). Physical maturity occurs now
at a younger age than in the past, with growth spurts
beginning for some girls at age 10 and for some boys at

age 11 (USNY, 1984). Partially because of all the changes going on with their bodies, middle level students develop a heightened concern for their appearance (Campbell, 1991). Some students develop a self-consciousness about awkwardness caused by differing rates of growth in different parts of their bodies (USNY, 1984). Students at this age often experience extreme restlessness and need some kind of physical release during the day (USNY, 1984; Dorman, 1985). At the same time they also have a tendency to tire quickly, for example in gym class, due to their growth spurts (Campbell, 1991). Because of the restlessness of early adolescents, and the fatigue, attention span is seriously affected in middle grade students (Campbell, 1991; Dorman, 1983).

Along with the physical maturity of students in the middle grades, students are also beginning to develop socially. Studies have shown that students at this age are increasingly seeking approval from peers rather than adults (USNY, 1984). Campbell (1991) has stated that for the middle grade student friendship and belonging are the most important aspects of school. He goes on to say that students at this age will go far to gain a friend or access into a social group.

Differences in the social development of students vary
widely for this age group, more so than for students
either younger or older (USNY, 1984). Students at this
age need positive social interactions with both their
peers and adults (Dorman, 1983), especially because
students at this age are beginning to resent adult
restrictions more and more (USNY, 1984).

Intellectually, middle grade students are in the
process of shifting from concrete to formal operational
thinking (Dorman, 1983; Piaget & Inhelder, 1969).
Students approaching and in adolescence are beginning
to develop the ability to think and reason in more
abstract ways, however the rate at which this occurs
differs greatly among individuals (USNY, 1984). Along
with this cognitive shift that is occurring, it is also
characteristic of the middle grade student to be a
fairly shallow thinker (Campbell, 1991). Campbell
contends that students at this age have difficulty
thinking in terms of long-term goals, but rather see
all situations in the short-term. They need help in
developing the ability to think beyond the short-term.
Campbell further asserts that it is often the general
disorganization of adolescents that adds difficulty for
teachers in the process of teaching and for students in

the process of learning.

Emotions of students at the middle level can be very delicate and need to be treated as such. Pre-adolescents and adolescents are struggling with defining their own concepts of themselves and their place in their world, which can put a strain on their emotional states (USNY, 1984; Campbell, 1991). Stress levels are high in students at the middle level due to peer pressure, characteristic self-consciousness, defining of social and sex roles, and physical development, or lack thereof (USNY, 1984; Campbell, 1991). Coping with these stress factors while attempting to gain increased independence and maturity can be very confusing and all consuming for 10 to 15 year olds (Dorman, 1983). The high stress emotional state of the pre-adolescent and adolescent student often results in unpredictable, erratic behavior patterns and personalities that fluctuate from cheerful to belligerent (USNY, 1984). Students at this level have an extreme sense of fairness as well which results in excuses and "righteous indignation" when they feel they have been treated unfairly (Campbell, 1991).

Transition Stressors

Combined with the characteristics of the middle

grade student discussed in the previous section, the
transition to middle school or to junior high school
can be a stressful event for many students.
Transitions involve adaptation to a set of psychosocial
tasks which include a variety of factors (Elias et al.,
1992; Elias, Gara & Ubriaco, 1985). An unfamiliar
environment, shifts in role definition, new sets of
peers and adults, uncertainty about rules and
procedures and lack of knowledge of how to access
support resources are all factors that need to be
adapted to (Elias et al., 1992; Elias, Gara & Ubriaco,
1985). The transition into middle school often signals
the end of childhood and the beginning of adolescence
(Hirsch & Rapkin, 1987). This shift can have a serious
impact on role definition and self-esteem. It is a
time when some students will be displaced from the
social and academic mainstream. For some students this
displacement may be the beginning of a cycle of
negative interactions and experiences that may be
difficult to break (Elias, Gara & Ubriaco, 1985).

Satisfaction with school life has also been
studied in middle school students. Studies have found
that perception of the quality of school life declines
from elementary to secondary grades, with a large

decline occurring around the time of transition to
middle school (Hirsch & Rapkin, 1987). This decline
was found to occur regardless of academic ability
(Hirsch & Rapkin, 1987; Elias et al., 1992). Poorer
academic performance has been observed in students that
have undergone a transition as well (Felner, Ginter &
Primavera, 1982). Peer social support has been found
to be one factor in determining success of adjustment
(Hirsch & Rapkin, 1987; Elias et al., 1992). Students
who have the support of a best friend or social group
were shown in these studies to be more successful in
adjustment.

Felner, Ginter and Primavera (1982) have suggested
that preventive efforts be targeted at groups that are
undergoing stressful life transitions. Students who
are entering the middle school or junior high setting
are one such group. Felner, Ginter and Primavera
describe the transition to high school as a "state of
flux" with all incoming students given the task of
adjusting to a new physical environment and a larger
set of peers and school personnel. These factors can
hinder the adjustment process for students. This
description also fits the transition to middle school.
Students coming to a middle school are often coming

from a variety of feeder elementary schools, therefore

this same scenario is occurring. Elias, Gara and

Ubriaco (1985) suggest that of great importance in

studying transition to middle school is the recognition

of the possibility that administrators may misperceive

problems of the transition and undervalue out-of-school

and peer relationships as sources of support. By

targeting this group and attempting to understand the

transition process from a student's standpoint,

administrators may be able to develop a program that

will ease the transition and decrease or remove extreme

sources of stress (Felner, Ginter & Primavera, 1982).

Specific Concerns in the Middle School Setting .

Friendship

Friendship begins to take on a special

significance for middle grade students. Friendship

becomes more intimate and intense during this time

(Berndt, 1982). Berndt offers three explanations for

this intensification. The first explanation is that

the onset of puberty may cause adolescents to turn to

their peers for comfort and support during what is

often a confusing and troubling time. A second

explanation offered is that the social environment for

adolescents if different that the environments of

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students either younger or older. Adolescents are in
the process of gaining independence from adults. No
longer are they treated as little children, however
they are also no where near adult status. Berndt
suggests that this confusing social position may be the
cause of stronger relationships with peers. Thirdly,
cognitive changes are occurring at the onset and
throughout adolescence. Students at this age are
attempting to define themselves and are also beginning
the development of understanding of and empathy for
others. Berndt suggests that this may also lead to
more meaningful relationships with peers.

Rejection

As young adolescents are highly concerned with
developing friendships and group acceptance (Campbell,
1991), it follows that peer rejection is also a strong
concern for students at this age. Studies have been
conducted to determine relationships among aggressive
behavior and peer acceptance. Parkhurst and Asher
(1992) found the profile of popular middle school
students to be students who are low on aggressiveness
and disruptiveness, average in assertiveness, and
perceived by peers as kind and trustworthy. Rejected
status was found to be associated with aggressiveness

or lack of prosocial qualities. Students who were

identified as either a bully or someone who was "easy

to push around" were seen as somewhat neglected by

peers (Parkhurst & Asher, 1992). It has been found

that although aggressive adolescents may alienate many

peers, the friendships that they do have are no less

meaningful than those of non-aggressive students

(Cairns, Cairns, Neckerman, Gest & Gariepy, 1988).

Peer rejection has been associated with risk of

becoming the victim of a bully (Boulton & Underwood,

1992). Victims are less likely to report being happy

in school, and are more likely to report feelings of

loneliness and a tendency to be alone during playtimes

(Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Parkhurst & Asher, 1992).

Submissive-rejected students are most often found to be

the victims of bullying (Parkhurst & Asher, 1992).

Teacher distance and student alienation

Schlosser (1992) studied teacher engagement with

students as related to students disengagement from

school or alienation resulting in non-participation,

misbehavior and poor achievement. Because of

departmentalization of subjects students in the middle

grades experience less contact with individual teachers

than in elementary school and there is a greater

emphasis on teacher control (Schlosser, 1992).
Schlosser's data indicates that teachers' beliefs about
the needs of young adolescents can positively or
negatively effect their relationships with marginal
students.   Teachers who engage themselves with the
students and teach them skills leading to autonomy are
much more successful than teachers who assume this
autonomy should already exist.   Schlosser's study
concludes that reducing teacher distance from students
and increasing understanding of developmental needs is
crucial in the education of adolescents, especially
marginal students.

What Schools Can Do to Ease the Transition

An effective school climate for the middle grade
student is student-centered, active, caring, warm and
positive (Lake, 1991; Dorman, 1983).   Educators at this
level must have a clear understanding of the diversity
that exists within this age group in order to teach
them effectively.   Students in the middle grades need
ample opportunities to try out their new physical,
social, and cognitive abilities to determine what they
do well (Dorman, 1983).   A variety of teaching methods
and learning opportunities are crucial in aiding
students in their pursuit of self-discovery (Lake,

1991; Dorman, 1983). Physical movement should be incorporated into classroom activities because it is both uncomfortable and unproductive for adolescents to sit still for long periods of time (Dorman, 1983; Campbell, 1991; Dorman, Lipsitz & Verner, 1985).

While engaging in a quest for independence, middle grade students still have a strong need for the security provided by clear limits and expectations from adults (Dorman, 1983; Dorman, Lipsitz and Verner, 1985). Dorman, Lipsitz and Verner (1985) suggest that students have an active role in determining at least some of the rules and expectations so that a greater degree of understanding and ownership of those rules exists for the students. At the same time rigid structure and excessive limits should be avoided because of the tendency of adolescents to become hostile or rebellious toward authority (Dorman, Lipsitz and Verner, 1985; Campbell, 1991).

Studies have shown that an advisor-advisee program is crucial for the adjustment of middle school students (Campbell, 1991; Dorman, 1983). These programs provide students with someone to whom they can turn in times of confusion or trouble with other students or teachers. These programs also provide students with someone who

is monitoring their progress and can intervene early
when trouble signs begin.

Smith (1991), ; principal at a middle school in
Massachusetts, outlines a program that has proven
effective in his school in easing the transition for
entering fifth graders. He describes a student-
centered program consisting of three major steps: 1.
Visits, 2. Information and 3. Orientation programs.
Visits involve field trips for fourth graders to the
middle school where they are able to meet fifth grade
teachers and receive a tour of the school from a
current fifth grader. Information is given to the
students in the form of a booklet that describes.
programs, schedules and other topics of concern to
entering students. Finally the orientation program is
a four-day summer program at which any imaginable
aspect of middle school is addressed. Smith claims
these steps have helped incoming fifth graders to feel
more comfortable and better adjusted when they arrive
at the middle school.

Summary of Literature Review

Because of the particular needs of the middle
grade student, it is important that schools become
aware of these needs and provide adequate support for

these students. Students at this level are in the
process of developing socially, intellectually,
emotionally and physically and are therefore not
particularly stable individuals. It is during this
stage of life that students are first experiencing a
degree of independence and self-exploration that they
have not experienced before. Schools for middle grade
students need to become aware of the particular needs
of their students and develop methods of adequately
addressing these needs, This study is intended to
provide a method for assessing important needs for a
middle school population and determining which needs
the school may need to address more fully in the.
future.

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Sample

The sample group in this study consists of 23
fifth grade students at an Upper Elementary School in
Central Virginia. The class was chosen because of its
heterogeneous nature, both in sex, academic ability and
ethnicity. Eleven of the students surveyed are male
and twelve are female. Of the males five are African-
American and six are white. Of the females five are

African-American and seven are white. Heterogeneity

exists in the academic ability and socio-economic

status of the students as well.

Measure

A survey was designed based on a compilation of

needs cited in the literature as common needs of

students entering middle school. The four teachers of

the students surveyed were asked to choose from a list

of forty-five needs which ten they considered to be

most important for students entering their school as

fifth graders. Teachers were also asked to write down

any additional needs not listed they felt to be

important for these students. Based on the replies of

the teachers, a survey of 21 items was constructed (see

Appendix A). For each need students were given four

replies to choose from: A) _is_ an important need and I

did receive help with it, B) _is_ an important need and I

did not receive help with it, C) _is not_ an important

need and I _did_ receive help with it, and D) _is not_ an

important need and I _did not_ receive help with it.

Design

Surveys were given to students during one forty-

five minute period. The instruction page was read to

the students and an example item was done. Students

were then instructed to take their time and answer each
item as honestly as possible. Students were asked not
to talk to one another during the time surveys were
being completed. This process was monitored by the
researcher and the student's teacher to be certain that
students understood directions and were able to ask
questions at any time. At the end of the survey
students were asked to identify their gender.

Each item will be analyzed in terms of both the
degree of importance to the students and the students
perception of assistance from teachers or other adults
in the school with these needs. First each item will
be looked at to determine how many students gave each
answer (A, B, C or D). A percentage will be calculated
for each answer within each item. This will be looked
at both in terms of gender of respondents and total
response. The next step will be to determine how many
students found this need to be important (answers A or
B) and how many found it to be unimportant (answers C
or D). Each item will then be assessed as to whether
or not the students felt assisted in this need.
Answers A and C indicate the students felt assisted and
answers B and D indicate inadequate assistance as
perceived by the students. This will also be looked at

in terms of gender response and total response. The
last step will be to look for trends or most common
answers both within each gender and in the sample as a
whole for each need to determine whether some needs are
overwhelmingly viewed as important or unimportant, and
adequately or inadequately assisted.

Analysis

For analysis, all items on the survey were first
placed into one of three categories: 1. Academic
Needs, 2. Procedural Needs, and 3. Social Needs. Some
items were placed in more than one category if
applicable (see Appendix A, Table 1). Academic needs
were defined as needs that had to do with school work
and/or teacher expectations. Procedural needs were
defined as needs that had to do with ways of doing
things in the school (i.e. rules, routines, knowledge
of the building, etc.). Social needs were defined as
any need that had to do with peer or adult interactions
during or related to the school day (not including
academic interactions with teachers). Data was then
separated into male response, female response and total
response. Results will be discussed in terms of
percentage responses within each group in respect to
the two main goals of this study: 1. To determine

which needs are considered most important in this
sample of students, and 2. To determine which of the
needs deemed important are perceived as lacking adult
assistance. Trends will be discussed for the different
categories of academic, procedural and social needs, as
well as trends for the two gender types and total
response.

Summary

In summary, for this study a heterogenous class of
fifth grade students were given a needs survey that was
designed with input from their teacher.. The students
completed the survey during one class period, monitored
by the researcher and the student's teacher.

In chapter IV results will be presented
graphically showing responses in terms of both
importance of each need and degree of assistance with
each need. Items will be placed into categories of
social, procedural and academic needs and discussed in
terms of these categories. Results will be presented
for total response and for gender responses. Results
will be discussed in relation to the hypotheses
presented in Chapter I.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

In this section data will be discussed in two

sections: 1.   Perception of the importance of
individual needs, and 2.   Perception of the adequacy of
adult assistance given for individual needs.   For each
section results of male, female and total response will
be presented.

Perception of the Importance of Individual Needs

It was hypothesized in this study that certain
needs would stand out as being more important than
others according to the fifth graders in the sample
studied.   Graphic representations of the results for
all the needs addressed (divided into categories of
academic, procedural and social needs as defined in
Chapter III) can be found in Appendix B.   In this
section results that indicate the needs found to be
most important for each group of respondents (male,
female, and total) will be discussed.   Degree of
importance was determined by the percentage of students
that responded in the affirmative when asked whether or
not they felt a particular need is an important one.

Male response

Needs indicated as important by the highest
percentages of male subjects, in order of importance,
are as follows: 1. To know how to get my books and
supplies ready for different classes, 90%;   2. To know

a teacher I could talk to if I was confused about
something, 90%;   3. To know how to make new friends,
90%;   4. To know how I am expected to behave in
different classes, 90%;   5. To know the school rules
and consequences for breaking those rules, 80%;   6. To
know what is expected of me in P.E., 80%;   7. To know
how to get extra help from my teachers, 80%;   8. To
have a chance to talk to some of my friends from
elementary school on the first day, 80%;   9. To have
ways to get to know some of the other students on my
team, 80%;   10. To know who I could talk to if I had a
problem with another student, 80%;   11. To know what to
do if another student tries to start a fight with me,
80%.

Of these eleven needs, two are academic needs, two
are procedural needs, six are social needs, and one is
both an academic and a procedural need. The need
indicated as least important according to male response
is " To know how I will be treated by the sixth
graders", a social need, which only 50 % of the male
subjects marked as important.

Female response

The ten needs considered most important according
to the highest percentages of female response, in order

of importance, are as follows: 1. To know how to find
my classes and my way around the school, 100%; 2. To
know the school rules and consequences for breaking
those rules, 100%; 3. To know a teacher I could talk
to if I was confused about something, 100%; 4. To know
travel patterns between classes, 100%; 5. To know what
to do if another student tries to start a fight with
me, 100%; 6. To know who I could talk to if I had a
problem with another student, 91.7%; 7. To know how to
get involved in clubs and other after school
activities, 91.7%; 8. To know how to get extra help
from my teachers, 91.6%; 9. To know how to make new
friends, 91.6%; 10. To know what is expected of me in
P.E., 83.4%.

Out of these ten needs considered most important
two are academic needs, three are procedural needs, and
five are social needs. The need considered least
important by female subjects is "To know how much
homework I will have from each teacher", an academic
need, with only 33.3% responding to it as an important
need.

Total response

The ten most important needs according to total
response of both male and female subjects are as

follows: 1. To know a teacher I could talk to if I were confused about something, 95.4%;   2. To know the school rules and consequences for breaking those rules, 90.9%;   3. To know how to make new friends, 90.9%;   4. To know what to do if another student tries to start a fight with me, 90.9%;   5. To know how to get extra help from my teachers, 86.4%;   6. To know who I could talk to if I had a problem with another student, 86.4%;   7. To know travel patterns between classes, 86.4%;   8. To know how I am expected to behave in different classes, 86.4%;   9. To know how to find my classes and my way around the school, 86.3%;   10. To know how to get my books and supplies ready for different classes, 86.3%.

Of these needs, one is an academic need, four are procedural needs, four are social needs, and one is both an academic and procedural need. The least important need based on data from the entire sample is "To know how much homework I will have from each teacher", an academic need which only 50% of the students found to be important.

Perception of the adequacy of adult assistance

A second hypothesis in this study was that certain needs that were considered to be important would be perceived by students as lacking adequate adult

assistance. The results for each survey item are
separated into categories of academic, procedural and
social needs and are presented graphically in Appendix
C. In this section results will be discussed according
to the percentage of students who found the need to be
important who also indicated that they felt they were
not adequately assisted with this need. As in the
previous section, results will be broken down into male
response, female response and total response. The
three needs perceived as most lacking in assistance and
the three needs perceived as least lacking in
assistance will be discussed for each group, as well as
the categories of academic, procedural and social that
have been determined for each need.

Male response

In 24% of the twenty-one needs on the survey, over
50% of male subjects who marked the need as important
indicate a lack of assistance. The three needs found
lacking in assistance by the highest percentage of male
respondents were: 1. To know how my work will be
graded by different teachers, 57.1%; 2. To know how
much homework I will have from each teacher, 57.1%; 3.
To know how to get involved in clubs and other after
school activities, 57.1%. Of these needs, two are

academic needs and one is a social need.

The three needs indicated as lacking assistance by the least number of male subjects that perceived the need to be important are as follows: 1. To know where the library is, 0%; 2. To know how to get my books and supplies ready for different classes, 11.1%; 3. To know how to find my classes and my way around the school, 14%. All three of these needs fall into the category of procedural needs.

Female response

In 14% of the twenty-one needs given on the survey, over 50% of the female subjects who marked the need as important indicated a lack of adequate assistance. The three needs perceived as lacking in assistance by the highest percentage of female respondents are as follows: 1. To have a chance to talk to some of my friends from elementary school on the first day, 87.5%; 2. To know how to make new friends, 63.6%; 3. To know where the library is, 60%. Of these needs, the first two are social needs and the third is a procedural need.

Needs that are perceived as lacking in assistance by the lowest percentages of female subjects are as follows: 1. To know lunchroom routines and procedures,

11.1%;   2. To know how to find my classes and my way
around the school, 16.7%;   3. To know how much homework
I will get from each teacher, 25%;   4.To know what to
do if another student tries to start a fight with me,
25%. Of these needs one is an academic need, one is a
procedural need, one is a social need and one is both
an academic and a social need.

Total response

For 14% of the twenty-one items on the survey,
greater than 50% of the subjects who marked the need as
important indicated a lack of assistance. The three
needs indicated as lacking in assistance by the
greatest number of subjects are: 1. To have a chance
to talk to some of my friends from elementary school on
the first day, 68.8%;   2. To know how to make new
friends, 60%;   3. To know who I could talk to if I had
a problem with another student, 52.6%. All three of
these needs fall into the category of social needs.

The three needs indicated as lacking in assistance
by the lowest percentages of subjects are: 1. To know
lunchroom routines and procedures, 13.3%;   2. To know
how to find my classes and my way around the school,
15.8%;   3. To know how to get my books and supplies
ready for different classes, 26.3%.

SUMMARY

Results for the different groups studied vary to a degree, but as was hypothesized many commonalities were found in student responses. Social needs make up the majority of the ten most important needs for both male and female subjects, followed by procedural needs and then academic needs. For total response social and procedural needs are indicated as equal in importance and academic needs are once again least represented in the top ten.

In terms of assistance for important needs responses also varied to a degree, but commonalities exist as well. For the three needs perceived as most lacking in assistance by male subjects two out of the three are academic needs and the third is a social need, for female respondents two out of the three are social needs with the third being a procedural need, and for total response all three are social needs. For all three groups the category of needs that are seen as least lacking in assistance are procedural needs.

In the following section these results will be discussed in relation to previous research conducted on adolescent needs and needs of students entering a

middle school situation.   Implications of these

responses and suggestions for further exploration will

also be discussed.

DISCUSSION

Findings from this research are significant in

that they provide a glimpse into the self-perceived

needs of a small sample of early adolescents. Results

from this study are fairly consistent with what are

described in current literature are pervasive needs of

middle grade students, especially those experiencing

the transition from elementary to middle school. In

this section specific findings will be discussed as

well as their implications for the particular school

setting in which this research was conducted.

Social development and relationships have often

been identified as primary concerns for the adolescent

student. For this reason it was hypothesized at the

outset of this study that needs categorized as social

needs on the survey instrument would be considered

highly important by the fifth grade participants. This

hypothesis proved relatively accurate, as results for

the total sample as well as individual gender results

illustrate. Out of the ten needs found to be most

important for the total sample, four are social needs.
For the male portion of the sample, six out of their
top needs are social needs, and for the female portion
of the sample five out of the top needs are also social
needs. Needs related to peer interaction that were
identified as highly important by the total sample
included making new friends, having the opportunity to
talk to old friends, and knowing what to do in a
negative situation with another student (i.e.
threatening behavior, stealing, teasing, etc.). One
need that girls identified as highly important that
boys did not was to know how to get involved in extra-
curricular activities. Needs that were among the top
ten in importance for boys but not for girls were the
opportunity to talk to elementary school friends on the
first day and ways to get to know other students on
their team. Despite these differences, most of the
social needs considered important by girls were also
considered important by boys.

Interestingly, the one social need that was
considered most important by the total sample, with
95.4 % of the sample marking it as important, is not a
peer related social need, but rather one that has to do
with the student / teacher relationship. To know a

teacher to talk to if confused about something was
identified as important by one hundred percent of the
girls surveyed and ninety percent of the boys. Even in
their quest for increased independence and heightened
peer relations it seems that these students truly
desire an adult mentor to help them through confusing
times. Schlosser (1992) asserts that teacher proximity
to students is crucial in providing a positive
educational experience for middle grade students and it
appears that the students in this sample would support
this assertion. A "teacher advocacy program", as
described by Campbell (1991), addresses this important
need of students by providing a one-on-one relationship
with a particular teacher becoming an individual
student's advocate. This teacher checks on students
progress periodically, talks to the student both
formally and informally, and basically becomes the
adult in the school who most closely monitors the
progress of the student.

One stressor that occurs during the transition
from elementary to middle school is the requirement of
learning and adapting to a whole new set of procedures
and rules. Many of the needs identified as procedural
needs in this study are things that may cause some

difficulty and stress for students who are not yet used
to their new school. Knowing the school rules and
consequences, knowing travel patterns between classes,
knowing behavior expectations of different teachers,
knowing how to find classes and ways around the school,
and knowing how to get books and supplies ready for
different classes are all needs that were identified as
highly important by this sample. All of these
procedures are likely to be different in the middle
school than at the elementary schools from which the
students have come. In the needs that girls identified
as most important, their primary procedural concerns
are to know the rules and to have a clear concept of
how they are to travel around the building. Boys agree
that knowing the rules is important but they are also
highly concerned with teacher expectations in terms of
behavior and getting books and supplies ready for
different classes.

Academic needs that were placed high on the scale
of importance involved knowing behavior and performance
expectations of different teachers and knowing how to
get extra help from teachers. Students in this sample
were less concerned with knowing how they were going to
be graded or how much homework they would have. In the

transition to middle school, students need to learn how to cope with what is often a new experience of having more than one primary teacher. For this reason adjusting behavior to please different adults at different times during the day and finding time to get help from someone who is not available all during the day can be major causes of stress for students involved in the transition to middle school.

Perhaps even more useful than the results for the needs students find important are the results for their perception of the assistance that they received from adults for different needs. By exploring the needs which students identified as lacking in assistance appropriate solutions can be determined to make sure these needs get met in the future. In the total sample none of the needs were identified as lacking in assistance by greater than seventy percent of the population, however certain needs were identified by more than fifty percent of students who found the need to be important. One need was identified as lacking in assistance by 87.5 percent of the girls surveyed, but no others exceeded a negative response of sixty-five percent of the girls sampled. According to the male response, none of the needs were considered lacking in

assistance by more than fifty-seven percent of those
who found the need important.

All three of the needs that were considered most
lacking in adult assistance according to the total
sample are social needs. Several different
explanations may be offered for these results. The
first such explanation is that perhaps because early
adolescence is a time when peer relations are all
important and adults are often believed to get in the
way of these interactions, students are more inclined
to perceive adults as wanting to block their social
interactions rather than helping them to occur.

A second explanation that could be offered is that
perhaps teachers and administrators have overlooked the
importance of peer support during transitions. Hirsch
and Rapkin (1987) have found a strong association
between peer support and perception of school life.
They have found a large decline in perception of school
life from elementary to secondary school with the
largest decline occurring during the transition to
middle school or junior high school. This effect may
well be caused by the fact that students entering
middle school are encountering a new, larger peer group
than ever before and often are placed away from former

elementary school friends. Hirsch and Rapkin have
found that students with best friends or membership in
a social group are often better able to cope with the
stress of transition. The needs identified as most
lacking by this sample, being given a chance to talk to
elementary school friends on the first day and knowing
how to make new friends, relate directly to Hirsch and
Rapkin's research. By addressing these needs more
fully and encouraging peer support systems during the
transition to middle school schools may be able to help
decrease the negative view of school life that Hirsch
and Rapkin have found in these middle grade students.

All of the needs considered least lacking in
assistance by the total sample are procedural needs.
Because teachers and administrators are actively
involved in the procedures and routines in the
classroom and around the school building, perhaps this
is why these needs are the ones that are perceived as
best assisted.

Although for the total sample the needs most
lacking in assistance were all social needs, the gender
samples differed somewhat. Boys in this sample appear
to feel a lack of assistance with academic needs, such
as knowing how work will be graded by different

teachers and knowing how much homework to expect from
each teacher. Of the male sample, 57.1 percent found a
lack of assistance for these needs along with knowing
how to get involved in clubs and other after school
activities. Girls, on the other hand did not identify
a lack of assistance with academic tasks at all, rather
the results for the female sample were close to those
for the total sample, with 87.5 percent of the girls
indicating a lack of assistance in getting to talk to
elementary school friends on the first day and 63.6
percent indicating a lack of assistance in knowing how
to make new friends. Sixty percent of the female
sample also indicated a lack of assistance with knowing
the location of the library (a procedural need).

Implications and recommendations for future research

The results of this study indicate that needs of
early adolescents are not always adequately addressed
during their transition to middle school. Because of
the small sample size in this study generalizable
conclusions can not be accurately drawn. However, the
results of this study do suggest that similar future
studies with a larger sample of the fifth grade class
would be useful in determining what steps are necessary
to help improve the transition process. Ideally it

would be very useful to administer a survey of this sort to all fifth graders a month or two into the school year. The results obtained from a study of this magnitude would be extremely useful for designing programs that would make fifth grade students more comfortable and more easily transitioned into what is often a stressful environment of a middle school.

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APPENDIX A:
Survey instrument

INSTRUCTIONS:
For each item you will be asked to decide whether
or not you feel the given need was important to you
when you first entered the fifth grade **AND** whether or
not you feel you received help in dealing with that
need.   For each item you will have the same <u>four</u>
answers from which to choose.

    A.   <u>Is</u> an important need and I <u>did</u> get help with
         it.
    B.   <u>Is</u> an important need and I <u>did not</u> get help
         with it.
    C.   <u>Is not</u> an important need and I <u>did</u> get help
         with it.
    D.   <u>Is not</u> an important need and I <u>did not</u> get
         help with it.

For example, if the need given was:

**To know how to act in the auditorium before
homeroom.**

First you need to decide whether or not you think
this is something that it is important for an entering
fifth grader to know.
    * If you feel it <u>is</u> an important need you will
choose either **A** or **B**.
    * If you decide the need <u>is not</u> important you will
choose either **C** or **D**.

The second decision you need to make is whether or
not you feel this is a need you received help with from
your teachers or other adults at your school.

    * If you have decided the need <u>is</u> important:
      - circle **A** if you feel you <u>did</u> get help
      - circle **B** if you feel you <u>did not</u>.
    * If you have decided the need <u>is not</u> important:
      - circle **C** if you feel you <u>did</u> get help with
        it anyway,

- circle **D** if you feel you <u>did not</u> get help.

For each item you will have to make these same two decisions. If you are unsure about what answer to put for an item, put the answer that <u>best fits</u> your feeling.

Thank you for participating in this survey. All answers expressed here will be kept completely anonymous, so no one will know which answers <u>you</u> gave and it will in no way affect how you are graded in this class or any other class. Please be honest!!

PRACTICE ITEM: We will do this one together.

To know what happens on the first day of school.

A. <u>Is</u> an important need and I <u>did</u> get help with it.

B. <u>Is</u> an important need and I <u>did not</u> get help with it.

C. <u>Is not</u> an important need and I <u>did</u> get help with it.

D. <u>Is not</u> an important need and I <u>did not</u> get help with it.

NOW YOU ARE READY TO BEGIN. If you have any questions at any time, <u>do not</u> hesitate to ask a teacher. Please do not discuss your answers with your neighbors.

To know how to find my classes and my way around the school:

    A.   <u>Is</u> an important need and I <u>did</u> get help with it.

    B.   <u>Is</u> an important need and I <u>did not</u> get help with it.

    C.   <u>Is not</u> an important need and I <u>did</u> get help with it.

    D.   <u>Is not</u> an important need and I <u>did not</u> get help with it.

To know the school rules and consequences for breaking those rules:

    A.   <u>Is</u> an important need and I <u>did</u> get help with it.

    B.   <u>Is</u> an important need and I <u>did not</u> get help with it.

    C.   <u>Is not</u> an important need and I <u>did</u> get help with it.

    D.   <u>Is not</u> an important need and I <u>did not</u> get help with it.

To know how to get my books and supplies ready for different classes:

    A.   <u>Is</u> an important need and I <u>did</u> get help with it.

    B.   <u>Is</u> an important need and I <u>did not</u> get help with it.

    C.   <u>Is not</u> an important need and I <u>did</u> get help with it.

    D.   <u>Is not</u> an important need and I <u>did not</u> get help with it.

To know when I am allowed to go to my locker:

   A. <u>Is</u> an important need and I <u>did</u> get help with it.

   B. <u>Is</u> an important need and I <u>did not</u> get help with it.

   C. <u>Is not</u> an important need and I <u>did</u> get help with it.

   D. <u>Is not</u> an important need and I <u>did not</u> get help with it.

To know how my work will be graded by different teachers:

   A. <u>Is</u> an important need and I <u>did</u> get help with it.

   B. <u>Is</u> an important need and I <u>did not</u> get help with it.

   C. <u>Is not</u> an important need and I <u>did</u> get help with it.

   D. <u>Is not</u> an important need and I <u>did not</u> get help with it.

To know what is expected of me in P.E.:

   A. <u>Is</u> an important need and I <u>did</u> get help with it.

   B. <u>Is</u> an important need and I <u>did not</u> get help with it.

   C. <u>Is not</u> an important need and I <u>did</u> get help with it.

   D. <u>Is not</u> an important need and I <u>did not</u> get help with it.

To know how to get extra help from my teachers:

   A. <u>Is</u> an important need and I <u>did</u> get help with it.

B. <u>Is</u> an important need and I <u>did not</u> get help with it.

C. <u>Is not</u> an important need and I <u>did</u> get help with it.

D. <u>Is not</u> an important need and I <u>did not</u> get help with it.

To know how much homework I will have from each teacher:

A. <u>Is</u> an important need and I <u>did</u> get help with it.

B. <u>Is</u> an important need and I <u>did not</u> get help with it.

C. <u>Is not</u> an important need and I <u>did</u> get help with it.

D. <u>Is not</u> an important need and I <u>did not</u> get help with it.

To have a chance to talk to some of my friends from elementary school on the first day:

A. <u>Is</u> an important need and I <u>did</u> get help with it.

B. <u>Is</u> an important need and I <u>did not</u> get help with it.

C. <u>Is not</u> an important need and I <u>did</u> get help with it.

D. <u>Is not</u> an important need and I <u>did not</u> get help with it.

To have ways to get to know some of the other students on my team:

A. <u>Is</u> an important need and I <u>did</u> get help with it.

B. <u>Is</u> an important need and I <u>did not</u> get help with it.

C.   Is not an important need and I did get help with it.

D.   Is not an important need and I did not get help with it.

To know a teacher I could talk to if I was confused about something:

A.   Is an important need and I did get help with it.

B.   Is an important need and I did not get help with it.

C.   Is not an important need and I did get help with it.

D.   Is not an important need and I did not get help with it.

To know how to make new friends:

A.   Is an important need and I d.. get help with it.

B.   Is an important need and I did not get help with it.

C.   Is not an important need and I did get help with it.

D.   Is not an important need and I did not get help with it.

To know who I could talk to if I had a problem with another student:

A.   Is an important need and I did get help with it.

B.   Is an important need and I did not get help with it.

C.   Is not an important need and I did get help with it.

D.   Is not an important need and I did not get help

with it.

To know lunchroom routines and procedures:

A.   Is an important need and I did get help with it.

B.   Is an important need and I did not get help with it.

C.   Is not an important need and I did get help with it.

D.   Is not an important need and I did not get help with it.

To know who I can sit with at lunch:

A.   Is an important need and I did get help with it.

B.   Is an important need and I did not get help with it.

C.   Is not an important need and I did get help with it.

D.   Is not an important need and I did not get help with it.

To know travel patterns between classes:

A.   Is an important need and I did get help with it.

B.   Is an important need and I did not get help with it.

C.   Is not an important need and I did get help with it.

D.   Is not an important need and I did not get help with it.

To know how I am expected to behave in different classes:

A. <u>Is</u> an important need and I <u>did</u> get help with it.

B. <u>Is</u> an important need and I <u>did not</u> get help with it.

C. <u>Is not</u> an important need and I <u>did</u> get help with it.

D. <u>Is not</u> an important need and I <u>did not</u> get help with it.

To know what to do if another student tries to start a fight with me:

A. <u>Is</u> an important need and I <u>did</u> get help with it.

B. <u>Is</u> an important need and I <u>did not</u> get help with it.

C. <u>Is not</u> an important need and I <u>did</u> get help with it.

D. <u>Is not</u> an important need and I <u>did not</u> get help with it.

To know where the library is:

A. <u>Is</u> an important need and I <u>did</u> get help with it.

B. <u>Is</u> an important need and I <u>did not</u> get help with it.

C. <u>Is not</u> an important need and I <u>did</u> get help with it.

D. <u>Is not</u> an important need and I <u>did not</u> get help with it.

To know how to get involved in clubs and other after school activities:

A. <u>Is</u> an important need and I <u>did</u> get help with it.

B. <u>Is</u> an important need and I <u>did not</u> get help with it.

C. Is not an important need and I did get help with it.

D. Is not an important need and I did not get help with it.

___

To know how I would be treated by the sixth graders:

A. Is an important need and I did get help with it.

B. Is an important need and I did not get help with it.

C. Is not an important need and I did get help with it.

D. Is not an important need and I did not get help with it.

___

Please circle one:

I am a: **BOY**   **GIRL**

THANK YOU!! YOU'RE ALL DONE!!!

TABLE 1: Categorization of needs

ACADEMIC NEEDS	PROCEDURAL NEEDS	SOCIAL NEEDS
1. to know how my work will be graded by different teachers	1. To know how to find my classes and my way around the school	1. To have a chance to talk to some of my friends from elementary school on the 1st day
2. To know what is expected of me in P.E.	2. To know the school rules and consequences for breaking those rules	2. To have ways to get to know some of the other students on my team
3. To know how to get extra help from my teachers	3. To know how to get my books and supplies ready for different classes	3. To know a teacher I could talk to if I was confused about something
4. To know how much homework I will get from each teacher	4. To know when I am allowed to go to my locker	4. To know how to make new friends
5. To know how I am expected to behave in different classes*	5. To know lunchroom routines and procedures	5. To know who I could talk to if I had a problem with another student
	6. To know who I can sit with at lunch*	6. To know who I could sit with at lunch*
	7. To know travel patterns between classes	7. To know what to do if another student tries to start a fight with me
	8. To know how I am expected to behave in different classes*	8. To know how to get involved in clubs and other after school activities.
	9. To know where the library is	9. To know how I would be treated by the sixth graders

* Appears in more than one category

APPENDIX B:
Graphic representations of perceived importance of
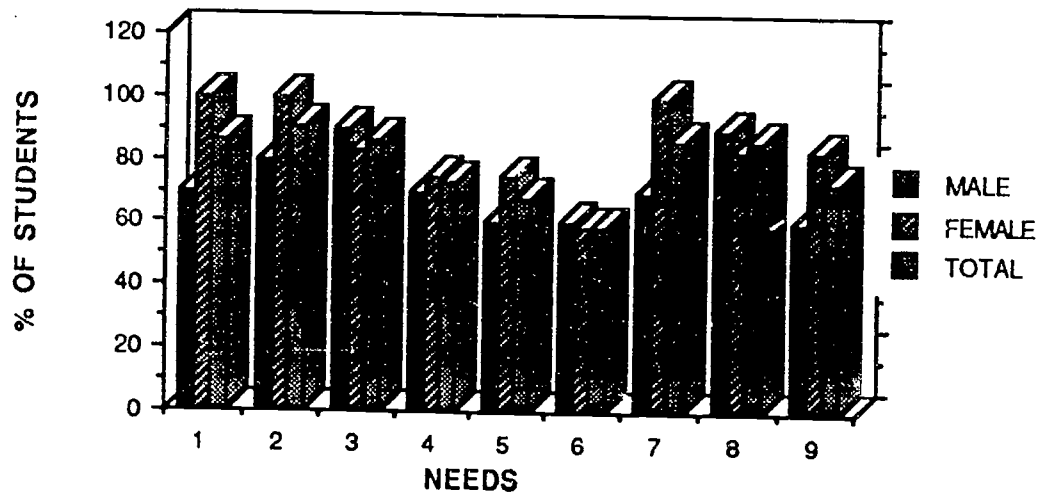needs

ACADEMIC NEEDS
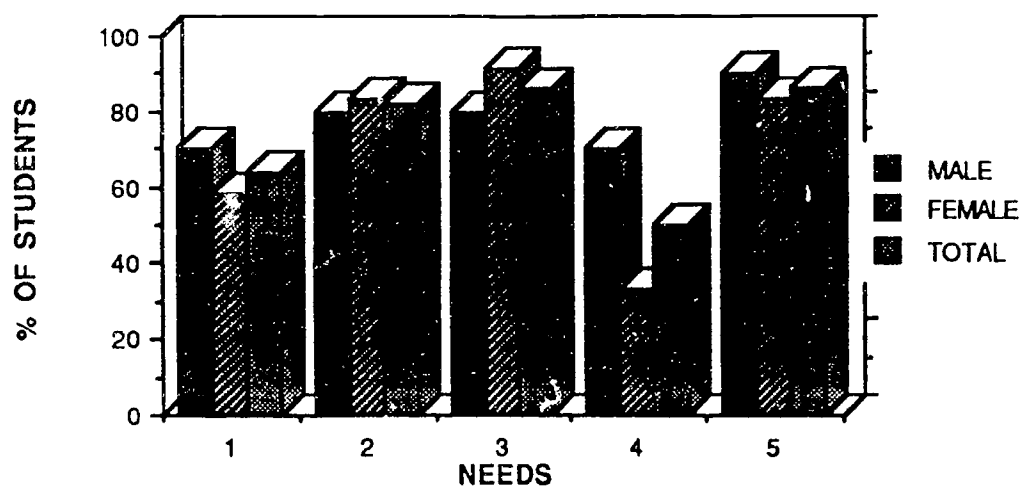
KEY

1. To know how my work will be graded by different teachers
2. To know what is expected of me in P.E.
3. To know how to get extra help from my teachers
4. To know how much homework I will have from each teacher ·
5. To know how I am expected to behave in different classes

PROCEDURES AND ROUTINES

KEY

1. To know how to find my classes and my way around school
2. To know the school rules and consequences for breaking those rules
3. To know how to get my books and supplies ready for different classes
4. To know when I am allowed to go to my locker
5. To know lunchroom routines and procedures
6. To know who I can sit with at lunch
7. To know travel patterns between classes
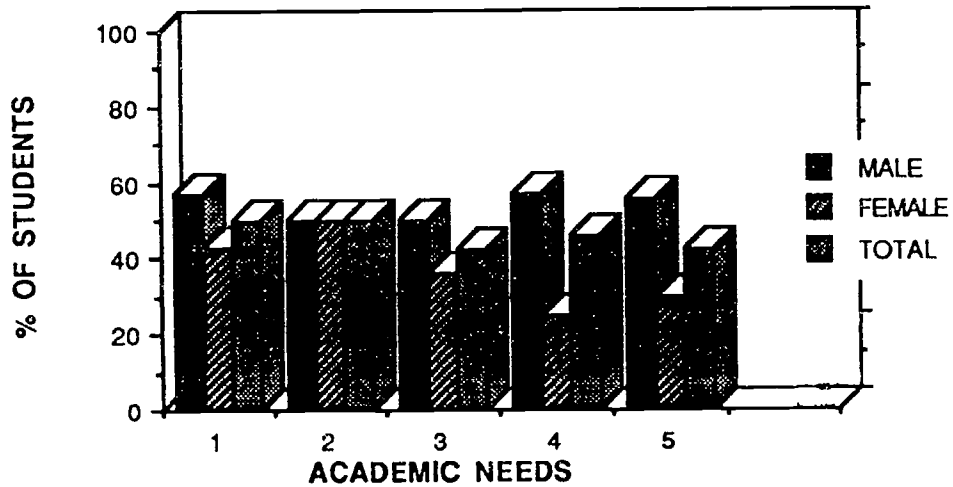8. To know how I am expected to behave in different classes
9. To know where the library is

SOCIAL NEEDS
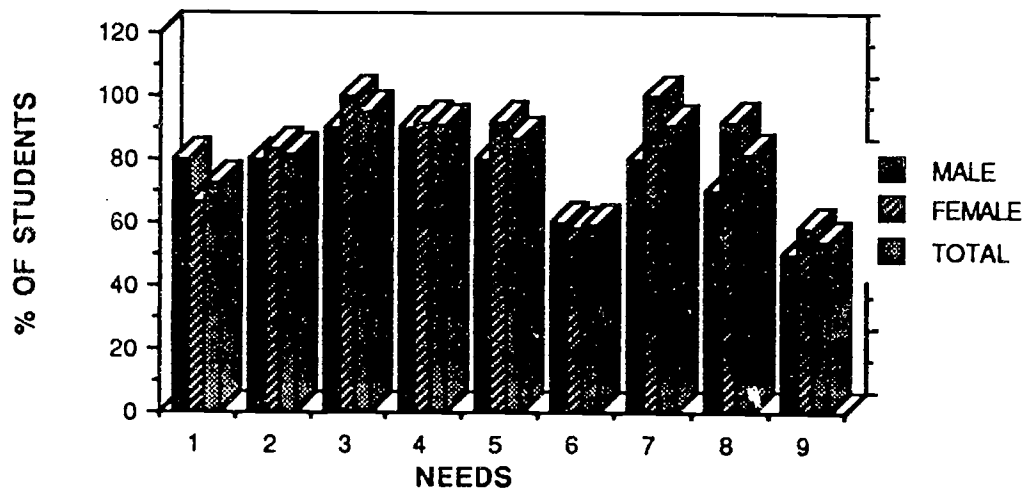
KEY

1. To have a chance to talk to some of my friends from elementary school on the first day
2. To have ways to get to know some of the other students on my team
3. To know a teacher I could talk to if I was confused about something
4. To know how to make new friends
5. To know who I could talk to if I had a problem with another student
6. To know who I could sit with at lunch
7. To know what to do if another student tries to start a fight with me
8. To know how to get involved in clubs and other after school activities
9. To know how I would be treated by the sixth graders

<u>APPENDIX C:</u>
Graphic representation of perceived adequacy of adult
assistance with needs

**% of Students Who Felt They Were Not Adequately Assisted
With Academic Needs They Found to be Important**

KEY

1. To know how my work will be graded by different teachers
2. To know what is expected of me in P.E.
3. To know how to get extra help from my teachers
4. To know how much homework I will have from each teacher
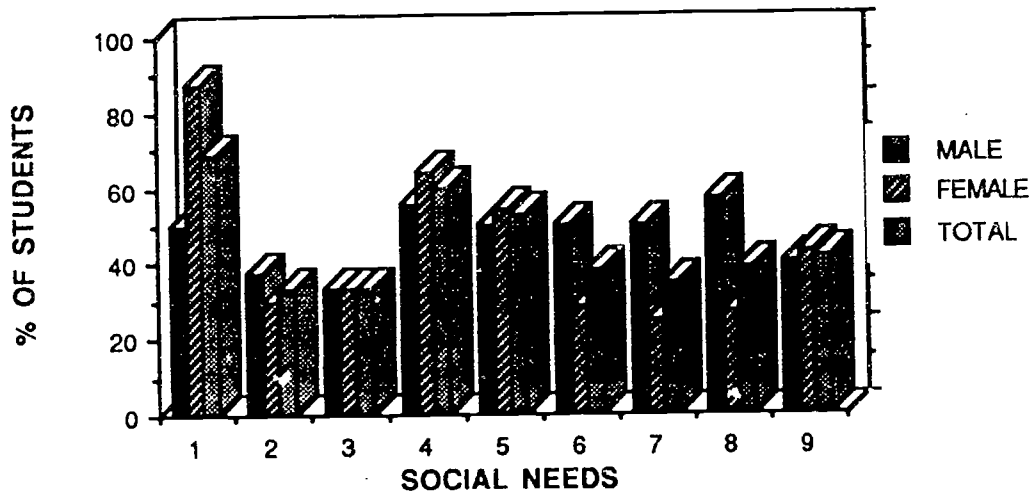5. To know how I am expected to behave in different classes

% Of Students who Felt They Were Not Adequately Assisted With Procedural Needs They Found to be Important
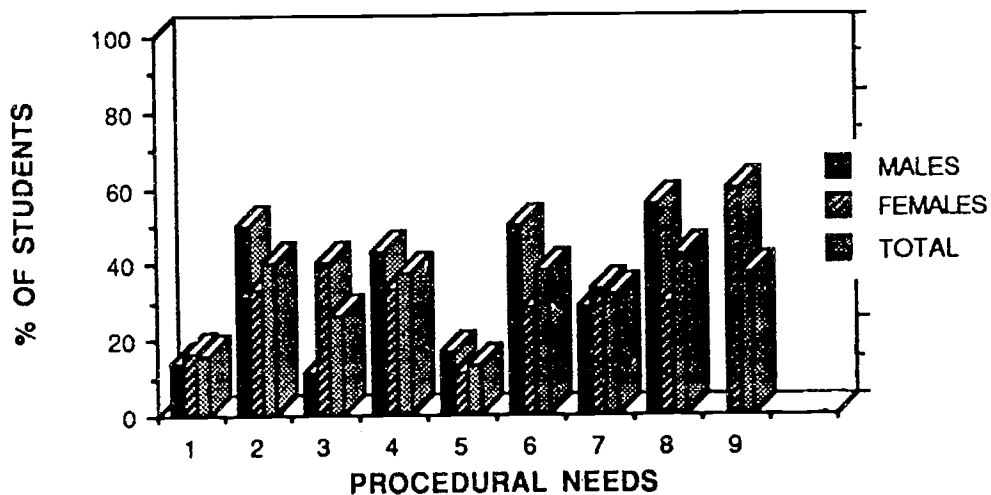
KEY

1. To know how to find my classes and my way around school
2. To know the school rules and consequences for breaking those rules
3. To know how to get my books and supplies ready for different classes
4. To know when I am allowed to go to my locker
5. To know lunchroom routines and procedures
6. To know who I can sit with at lunch
7. To know travel patterns between classes
8. To know how I am expected to behave in different classes
9. To know where the library is

% Of Students Who Felt They Were Not Adequately Assisted
With Social Needs They found to be Important

KEY

1. To have a chance to talk to some of my friends from elementary school on the first day
2. To have ways to get to know some of the other students on my team
3. To know a teacher I could talk to if I was confused about something
4. To know how to make new friends
5. To know who I could talk to if I had a problem with another student
6. To know who I could sit with at lunch
7. To know what to do if another student tries to start a fight with me
8. To know how to get involved in clubs and other after school activities
9. To know how I would be treated by the sixth graders