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ABSTRACT

This paper presents findings of a study that explored the link between school reform and classroom practice. Two interdisciplinary teacher teams comprised of a total of 11 teachers were studied at Cross Keys Middle School in Flourissant, Missouri, to understand how school-level reform becomes translated into classroom practice. Data were collected through formal and informal interviews; school, team, and classroom observations; and document analysis. Five a priori categories from an earlier phase of the research were used to discuss the mission, change, decision making, culture, and professional development in the two teams. A shared mission to fit content to students resulted in the development of integrated units that were presented with active instructional strategies in both teams. Both teams moved away from traditional curriculum and instruction in favor of a more integrated, active approach. How the visionary, prestigious, instructional, and positional leaders in the school worked in and through the teams to support innovation and to mediate disruptive school forces provided insight into the conditions necessary for translating school-level reform into altered classroom practice. One figure and one table are included. Appendices contain a summary of the Carnegie recommendations for middle-school development, a summary of contacts, the formal interview protocol, and a bibliography of documents. (LMI)

THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

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Culture and Climate

DV-0003

Curricular and Instructional Decision-Making
Snapshots of Team Innovation at Cross Keys Middle School

by: Mary M. Polite, Ph.D.

The National Center for School Leadership

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Curricular and Instructional Decision-Making: Snapshots of Team Innovation at Cross Keys Middle School

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Abstract

This report presents the findings of research conducted at Cross Keys Middle School in Florissant, Missouri, related to innovation and decision-making at the team level. Two interdisciplinary teams in the school were studied in order to understand how reform at the school-level gets translated into classroom practice. A set of field notes was developed from the formal and informal interviews, school, team, and classroom observations, and impressions gathered in the school between December, 1992 and June, 1993. School documents, curriculum guides, and unit plans were also analyzed for the report.

Five a priori categories from Phase I research (Polite, 1993) were used to discuss the mission, change, decision-making, culture, and professional development in the two teams in the school. A shared mission to fit content to students, rather than students to content, resulted in the development of integrated units presented with active instructional strategies in both the core and encore teams. Teams negotiated decisions and accommodated personal preferences in a culture of collegiality and support. The opportunity to learn and grow together as a team was instrumental in moving the change effort forward.

Both the core and encore teams had moved away from traditional curriculum and instruction in favor of a more integrated, active approach. How the *visionary, prestigious, instructional, and positional* leaders in the school worked in and through the team to support innovation and mediate district and school forces which could have interfered with their progress provided insight into what was needed to translate school-level reform into changes in classroom practice.

Curricular and Instructional Decision-Making: Snapshots of Team Innovation at Cross Keys Middle School

Introduction

The making of a middle school is more than simply changing the name of the school, grade configuration, or organizational pattern (Lounsbury, 1992). The real work of the school begins when the traditional curriculum is challenged and innovative instructional practices are introduced. Curricular and instructional innovation requires a redefinition of what is important to teach and how it can best be learned. And although integrated, interdisciplinary curriculum has been identified as a common practice in effective middle schools, many still cling to traditional content-specific curriculum and teacher-directed instruction (George, Stevenson, Thomason, & Beane, 1992). Schools that were able to negotiate changes in "what to teach" and "how best to teach it" amidst state, district, and school forces which might make maintaining the status quo easier, needed to be studied to determine how curricular and instructional innovation could be achieved.

Lessons learned from research conducted at Cross Keys Middle School in 1991-1992 indicated that the school was one that might enlighten others on how curricular and instructional innovation could be accomplished. The school had made initial progress towards implementing many of the principles associated with the national middle school movement, including curricular and instructional innovation (see *Appendix A*). It remained unclear at the end of the first year of study, however, how school-level reform was translated into classroom practice. This study explored the link between school reform and classroom practice by examining two interdisciplinary teams in the school.

Research Method

Site Selection: This study was Phase II of a broader research project conducted by the National Center for School Leadership (NCSL). Phase I of the project occurred during the 1991-92 school year. Case study research was conducted at four sites to broaden our understanding of school leadership and change (Diedrich-Rielly & Zenz, 1993; Grant, 1993; Johnson, 1993a; Polite, 1993). While the case studies provided insight into the distribution of leadership across each school and the role of that leadership in promoting school-level reform, little was revealed about how leadership impacted curricular and instructional change at the classroom level. In an attempt to expand the dialogue about the

link between school leadership and curricular reform, two of the four sites, Cross Keys Middle School in Florissant, Missouri, and Hollibrook Elementary School in Spring Branch, Texas, were selected for further study. Both sites had gained national recognition for the progress they had made in their reform efforts; had been successful in bringing about substantive school-level change; and had expressed a willingness to continue participation in the project. Based on Phase I findings, the second phase of research was designed to explore the link between leadership at the school-level and curricular and instructional innovation at the individual classroom (Hollibrook Elementary School) and interdisciplinary team (Cross Keys Middle School) levels. This report presents the findings of Phase II research at Cross Keys Middle School (see Johnson, 1993b for findings at Hollibrook Elementary School).

Team Selection: Cross Keys Middle School was originally selected for the project because it had made initial progress toward implementing many of the practices associated with the national middle school movement. The school had undergone major changes in moving from a traditional junior high school to a middle school, and as such, was organized into interdisciplinary teaching teams rather than subject-matter departments. Four to six teachers, placed either on core teams (math, science, social studies, language arts) or encore teams (art, industrial technology, home economics, foreign language), were provided a daily common planning period in the school schedule. This time in the schedule provided teams with the opportunity to work together, design and plan curriculum, share instructional ideas, discuss student issues and make important decisions regarding their students. The team, then, represented an intermediary level between the school as a whole and the individual classroom, and needed to be studied to understand its role in curricular and instructional reform.

Given that the focus of the research was on the team rather than school level, criteria were established to determine which of the school's teams would participate in the study.

(1)Recognition by Peers: In June, 1992, teachers in the school were asked to respond in writing to the following question posed by the researcher at a school-wide faculty meeting: "If the Secretary of Education were to visit your school for one day next year, which team or teams should he visit?"

(2)Willingness: The two teams which were both noted by teachers in their response to the question above, and which were willing to participate in the study, were

selected. Team leaders were contacted so that the researcher could answer questions related to the project and confirm participation by all team members prior to data collection.

Data Collection and Analysis: Between December, 1992, and June, 1993, the researcher and an assistant spent a total of 14 days at the school collecting impressions, making observations of school, team, and classroom activities, and conducting informal and formal interviews (see *Appendix B*). Signed consent forms were collected for each of the 12 formal interviews conducted for the project. The 11 teachers on the two teams in the study and the building principal were interviewed using a formal protocol developed by the researcher (see *Appendix C*). The leadership on the team was explored by focusing on the team's shared commitment, how curricular and instructional decisions were made on the team, and the ways in which school-to-team and team-to-individual decisions were negotiated. Follow-up probes were used for each question depending on the initial responses. Each interview was taped, transcribed, and returned to subjects for review. While the school was not guaranteed anonymity, individuals were assured confidentiality, and no information about specific interviews was shared with other members of the team or school. Edited transcripts of formal interviews were combined with notes of impressions from both the site researcher and assistant, informal interviews, conversations, and school, team, and classroom observations to develop a 350 page set of field notes for analysis.

School and team documents were also reviewed to provide supportive evidence for data gathered during interviews and observations (see *Appendix D*). Specifically, curriculum units and plans which related to classroom observations or team discussions were gathered for review.

Data were analyzed using content analysis based on a priori categories from Phase I research (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). The a priori categories included mission, change, decision-making, school culture, and professional development (Polite, 1993).

Table 1

Data Analysis Categories and Questions

School-Level Question	CATEGORY	Team-Level Question
What did the school believe?	MISSION	What did the team believe?
What did the school transform?	CHANGE	What did the team transform?
How did the school make decisions?	DECISION-MAKING	How did the team make decisions?
What did it feel like to be part of the school?	SCHOOL CULTURE	What did it feel like to be part of the team?
How did the school assist individuals in the change process?	PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	How did the team assist individuals in the change process?

The field notes were read, reread, and sorted around these five categories. "If the categories sought or discovered in the research site match categories described in the borrowed classification scheme, [they]...may be used inductively for both descriptive and generative purposes" (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p. 184). Since the purpose of the study was to determine how school-level themes translated into classroom practice, the researcher determined that sufficient compatibility existed between purpose and perspective to use a priori categories for data analysis. The results of the analysis were shared with the participants at the school for a final validation of the research.

Site Description: Cross Keys Middle School was one of three middle schools, fifteen elementary, and three high schools in the Ferguson-Florissant School District. The 666 students in grades 7 and 8 were 40% African-American; 58.5% White; 1% Asian, .3% Hispanic and .2% Native American. Twenty-nine classroom teachers on six interdisciplinary teams, eleven exploratory staff, two full-time counselors, two assistant principals and one building principal provided the educational program.

The two teams which participated in the study represented both the core and encore program. The five member core team consisted of teachers of math, science, social

studies, language arts and special education. Teachers on the team each taught classes in their primary content area, reading/writing workshop, and rotated team time among the team. One member served as the team leader during the year and coordinated team meetings and activities. The team was in their second year of a plan initiated in 1991-92 as a two-year, multi-age team. Due to changes n enrollment and staffing, and intervention by the district office, the team had to be reconfigured the second year as a straight 8th grade team. Students who were on the team as 7th graders were reassigned to the team for the second year and additional 8th graders were added to make a full team. Many of students and three of the teachers, however, had already worked together as a team for a full year. The inclusion of the special education teacher also prompted changes on the team. A veteran teacher, new to the school, served as the resource teacher to integrate special education students. While the time spent in the resource room by each special needs student varied, the goal was for students to spend the majority of their time in regular classes. The resource teacher was considered part of the team for planning purposes and was often in regular classes providing instruction alongside her colleagues on the team.

The six member encore, or exploratory, consisted of two teachers of art and one teacher each of industrial technology, home economics, Spanish and French. This team served all students in the school, both 7th and 8th grade, and had also experienced a reorganization. One of the art teachers and the French teacher had been on core teams the previous year and were reassigned to the encore team due to changes in enrollment and staffing. This team also had an assigned team leader who organized and coordinated activities of the team. Students in the school were assigned to a core team in addition to their exposure to the exploratory curriculum through the encore team. The schedule provided for approximately 42 minutes of instruction in the encore area per student per day, with the 7th grade curriculum required and some choice provided at the 8th grade. Eighth graders could elect a year of Spanish or French, or were rotated through the Allied Arts program which was being developed and refined by the encore team. All of the school's 7th graders were exposed to each of the encore areas in a rotation and also participated in the team's interdisciplinary unit.

The opportunity to study both a core and encore team in the school provided the researcher with a broad view of the curriculum. A variety of teaching styles, years of experience, and specializations were represented by faculty on the two teams who are to be acknowledged for their willingness to spend time thinking about questions and talking

with the researcher so that a better understanding could be gained of how school-level reform translates into classroom practice.

Results

Results were organized around the five categories used for data analysis: mission, change, decision-making, culture, and professional development. Snapshots of each category were developed from the field notes to illustrate findings and represent the major results of the study.

Mission: What Did the Team Believe?

February, 1993. The encore team meeting focused on the Cookie Kompany Unit underway for the 7th graders in the school. The six teachers, representing art, home economics, industrial technology, Spanish and French, sat comfortably around three tables in the home economics classroom, as they did for most team meetings during the year, and discussed their unit.

"We've researched middle school and have bought into the idea that this is a time for exploration for kids. They need a lot of exploration...and if we do thematic teaching, they hook in. We hope this [unit] ties it all together for the students."

As teachers we have to "step back and see the whole picture." "We're not [art teachers, or home ec teachers, or foreign language teachers, or shop teachers]. We're Cookie Kompany teachers" and "kids are starting to see the connections."

This excerpt of dialogue from an encore team meeting illustrates the mission of the team in meeting the needs of their students. The school as a whole had loosely defined their mission around middle school philosophy while allowing for a broad range of interpretations of what being a middle school actually meant. The teams, however, appeared to be able to more clearly define and articulate middle school beliefs as their common platform. Their commitment to middle school practices, such as teaming,

integrated curriculum, and active instructional strategies, emerged from formal and informal dialogue and observations. The *Cookie Kompany Unit* represented only one of their efforts to integrate the curriculum across traditional subject-matter lines and to actively involve students in the classroom. They appeared committed to exposing students to a variety of subject areas and experiences. As one teacher said during a formal interview, "As a team I think we need to give kids an overview of the exploratory area without necessarily giving specialization. We have to show them how everything really does dovetail with each other and that what you love in one area can transfer into another area...We need to show them that everything ties together and that it all ties to life as well."

Just as the encore team appeared to focus on a mission of meeting student needs through a middle school approach, so too did the core team in the study. Their commitment to "success for all kids"; to "having kids feel good about themselves and what they have done here at [school]"; to "having kids experience the curriculum as well as observe it"; and to "make them think and stretch themselves...to discover meaning out of what we're doing" appeared to represent the shared mission of the team. In both individual interviews and team meetings, teachers commented that the team structure provided the vehicle needed to reach their students. They valued each other and obviously understood how to work in and through their team to benefit their students. As one teacher said, "The team has developed into a sort of micro-organization in the school and at this point in time [we] feel fairly comfortable that we own the clock...we can manage the distribution of kids and manage what we're going to do with them on a given day or in a given year."

Thus, the mission of both the core and encore team in the study appeared to be clearly identified as a shared and well-articulated set of principles. They were able to discuss their philosophy with a common language within the team, and both teams used a student focus to define the changes needed in curriculum and instruction to move them closer to actualizing their mission for their students.

Change: What Did the Teams Transform?

Enter Rooms 105-106. Student desks have been removed for the simulation on the French Revolution and the movable walls which normally separate the two classrooms have been pulled back to create a large open space for instruction.

The schedule has been adapted to provide 84 minutes rather than 42 minutes for the lesson, and Mr. E., Ms. S., Ms. R and their student teacher await the arrival of their students.

As they enter, these 8th graders take their places as peasants, bourgeoisie, clergy and nobility in circles on the floor. Reference materials are on the cart in the corner of the room, and computer programs with on-line resource information are available for students to use as they work through the simulation activities. RIPS (Revolutionary Influence Points used as play money in the simulation) are earned both through individual and group effort and are distributed at the end of each class to reflect progress for the day.

While these students were learning about the French Revolution as part of the *Liberte Unit* (Interact, 1970), another quiet revolution was taking place in the curriculum and instruction on the team. This snapshot illustrated the direction both teams had initiated to develop a fully integrated curriculum, and was representative not only of the many changes which had occurred during the past several years in the school, but also of those changes which were implemented on the teams during the year of study. Both teams were obviously moving towards a fundamental change in determining both "what was taught" and "how it was taught."

Core Changes. The core team provided interdisciplinary units of core subjects with full team participation in addition to the units which dyads on the team had developed. Some of their units were commercial products, such as the *Liberte* and *Newscast* simulations (Interact, 1970), while others were teacher developed. The work the school had done on integrated curriculum, represented in the publication *A Place of Our Own* (1991), was used as a model for the development of integrated units used on the team. For example, a unit called *Hello, I Love You, Won't You Tell Me Your Name* was written to develop a sense of community on the team. Other units of shorter duration, such as the *Math Renaissance Unit*, integrated two subjects in addition to the specialized units individual teachers on the team developed for their own content area.

Encore Changes. The encore team had developed a 7th grade interdisciplinary unit of unified arts subjects called the *Cookie Kompany* with full team participation; had

implemented an additional 7th grade paired interdisciplinary rotation; and were developing an integrated 8th grade Allied Arts program. Teachers on the team discussed their commitment to integrated curriculum during interviews and these discussions were verified through observations of units which were implemented during the year.

Following an initial rotation of all unified arts classes at the beginning of the year, all 7th graders were regrouped for the *Cookie Kompany* unit.

> The Cross Keys Cookie Kompany is an interdisciplinary unit integrating curriculum from art, home economics, foreign language, and industrial technology. We used the Cookie Kompany theme to help students see the relationship between subjects and give them a more realistic idea of how their lives are affected by these subjects...Students will explore the operation of business and demonstrate productive work habits, both as individuals and within cooperative groups (Cookie Kompany Unit, 1992, p.1).

This unit was followed by a rotation of three paired units: (1) *French Impressionists* (French and art); (2) *Quilt Making* (home economics and art); (3) *Woodworking* (Spanish and industrial technology). Students rotated through the units in three week cycles and two teachers teamed for each of the units.

The 8th grade Allied Arts curriculum was being developed during the year of study to move towards a more integrated curriculum for art, home economics, and industrial technology. Spanish and French were taken as one year electives and operated under the constraints required for movement into a high school foreign language.

The value of change. The changes the teams had initiated appeared to have emerged from forces both inside and outside of the school; however, in large part, the changes appeared to be a direct reaction to their mission of meeting students' needs. "[We do the interdisciplinary units] because of the response of the kids. Attendance is up when we do a unit...They don't think of it as learning. It's fun....They pay attention better and are willing to risk more." Prompts in the literature spurred other changes. "I try to keep up on current readings in middle school...and I see indications that things need to be integrated...theme, not team, but theme teaching is something that I read about last

summer." And others appeared to be motivated by "pressures all around us" to meet the needs of the "different kids and different society" they served.

One teacher described two criteria used to determine if changes were needed in curriculum and instruction.

> I guess there are two ways [to know when changes need to be made in curriculum or instruction]. One is when we ourselves get bored with it. I think each of us have discovered at some point in time when we're not enthused about what we're doing, that the lack of enthusiasm carries over [to the kids]....The other way is how the kids respond....[We want them to] willingly participate and take some risks in trying to do what they need to do...The most important thing about 7th and 8th grade is that the kids experience some things and are allowed to grow.

It was clear that teachers understood state and district curricular and assessment requirements, as these were mentioned as issues which are "sort of filed someplace" or "minimal sorts of things" that "just have to be done." One teacher said, "It will make the state happy if the children do well on the [standardized test]", yet state and district mandates did not appear to be the driving forces for change on the teams. Both teams acknowledged the reality of state and district expectations, and used them as a "broad framework" for planning. They did not, however, allow outside forces to side-track them from their vision of an integrated, active program for students. They wanted students to generally understand and appreciate various disciplines in the program, yet they did not focus exclusively on the details associated with a single-subject approach. They determined their success by responses from both their current students and from their graduates who sometimes returned to let their teachers know what their experiences there had meant to them.

> Kids come back from high school and ask if we are still doing units because they say it was the best part of their middle school experience.

> I don't judge my success on the basis of how many kids get As. I judge myself, or my performance, on things that are more

> nebulous; kids being here regularly; kids having a look on their face that they're enjoying what they're doing; kids asking if we're going to do something again.

The two teams had made numerous changes in their curriculum and instruction and placed less emphasis on textbook driven curriculum and drill-and-practice instruction and more on integrated, active techniques. While remnants of a more traditional program and teacher-centered practice remained, the teams had broken out of the mold and had traversed new ground. How they came to move in that direction evolved from decisions made in the school, on the team, and by each of them as individuals as they confronted the questions about what should be taught and how it could be presented to students.

Decision-Making: How Did the Team Make Decisions?

> *The really neat thing about curriculum and instruction here is that it is teacher driven. OK? I mean it really is. My wife teaches at [another middle school] and we have a lot of friends who are teachers. I work at a camp all summer with teachers from different parts of the country, and they are all astounded when I talk about this school and say that we get together as a group and decide our curriculum. They are operating under curriculum [guides] written by a district committee, or a state committee, and they follow that curriculum. They're somewhat amazed that we sit down here and decide ourselves. We really do.*

This excerpt from a formal interview illustrated that the teams were allowed to make many of the important decisions related to curriculum and instruction in the school. While Phase I findings indicated that perceptions varied across the school as to how much a team could be involved in decision-making and how much the school's committees and administration dictated decisions (Polite, 1993), Phase II findings showed that these two teams, at least, did not feel limited by the school committees or administration. They proceeded to work together to determine what would be taught on the team and how it would be presented to students.

"Negotiation", "coaxing", "accommodating" and "simply requesting" were terms used to describe the decision-making processes used on the teams. Teachers reported that at first they worked on things that were "tried and true", but as trust and rapport developed among team members and they gained familiarity with their students, they addressed issues which required shared decision-making. This process was described by one teacher as a fairly simple matter.

> It's usually a pretty straightforward question.[We'd say], here is the material. Look it over. Let's talk about it. Do you feel you can be involved in this with us or not?

Some decisions were negotiated between two or three teachers on a team and did not require full team participation. These decisions were quietly made between the individuals involved, although they generally shared their ideas and decisions with their colleagues. For example, when the science and math teacher on the core team decided to do a short integrated unit on famous mathematicians, they worked out the details of the content and schedule between themselves, but kept their colleagues informed of their progress.

Other times, ideas for changes in curriculum or instruction were brought to the team as a whole. Open dialogue occurred about what the proposed changes meant, how they might be implemented, and what impact the changes might have on students. They worked to build consensus; however, they allowed each individual on the team to determine if they would be involved in any given project. The following excerpt from a formal interview with one teacher demonstrated this flexibility in decision-making.

> We fought a lot of battles several years ago trying to get people to do stuff they didn't want to do. Even when we were successful at getting them to do it, the product wasn't very wonderful. So, each of us has the right to say no and I think that's an important part of teamwork; to allow people to say I can't, I don't want to, or I don't like it; whatever their objection is. Honesty is real important for success...We're better off letting the ones that want to do something do it and those that don't can do something else.

As teams came to know one another, however, the "chemistry of the group," as one teacher called it, influenced even the more reluctant members of the team to change. The need for honesty and trust, for open communication, and a willingness to try certain ideas for "the sake of the group" did move some individuals to try new strategies that they might not be willing to admit they tried in a public forum. "I've worked with people that have the reputation of not buying into things at the school level, but back on the team, they'll do it." The support the team supplied and, in some cases, the protection it provided individuals from public scrutiny, allowed some to take risks that their teammates believed they might not have otherwise taken.

This risk-taking was identified as an important factor by many of the teachers in the study. They talked about the support they felt from their team as a whole, and in some cases of the support they felt from a given individual on their team. They also acknowledged, however, that part of making a decision to risk or to change was very individual and personal.

> Some of being able to [do something different] is having permission from other folks on the team and some of it is giving myself permission to do it. The biggest step was giving myself permission and saying it will be OK if I just didn't teach [the old way] all the time. This has been evolutionary....I would not have jumped into the pool [all at once] and I would have hated it if someone had pushed me.

The decisions that the teams made ranged from the easy and painless to the difficult and traumatic. Individual choices, values, attitudes, styles, and experiences had to be taken into account as each team operationalized its mission for students. And while the decision-making process at the school level appeared fraught with conflict and tension (Polite, 1993), the climate on the two teams in this study was collegial and comfortable.

Culture: What Did It Feel Like To Be Part of the Team?

Being the new teacher on a team can sometimes be a challenging position, especially when the team is in its second year of a two year plan. That was not the case, however, for Ms. R.

Before school even started, the team met with Ms. R. to begin planning how they would implement their shared vision for a full inclusion team. Special needs students identified for Ms. R's caseload would be in regular classes as much as possible, yet still receive all the services they needed.. Ms. R. would be a full member of the team and would work alongside her colleagues when students were in regular classes. They would share their classroom materials and students. Right from the start, Ms. R. said she felt like an important part of the team.

Ms. R. reported that her students too felt like part of the team. They knew that people were keeping an eye on them so they wouldn't "get lost in the cracks." They were not isolated from their friends and they were not isolated from other teachers. Neither was Ms. R.

This snapshot captured the essence of the dialogue from a formal interview during the year of study. The teacher's feelings about the team, and the comfort level which had been established on the team for teachers as well as for students, seemed to exemplify the culture of both teams in the study.

At the school level, Phase I findings indicated that conflict and tension were pervasive (Polite, 1993). This was attributed not only to the number and types of changes being implemented in the school, but also to the perceptions of individuals as to the manner in which the changes were accomplished. Some felt that conflict was a natural by-product of reform, while others believed it was an unnecessary evil attributable to certain individuals in the school. While links have been identified between school-level reform for the preceding three categories analyzed for this report, namely mission, change, and decision-making, there was disconfirming evidence that the culture of conflict and tension prevalent in the school was translated into the culture of the team.

Instead, it appeared that the culture of the teams was very personal, collegial and supportive. They did not always agree with one another, yet they were able to debate, discuss, and question issues, suggestions and ideas without the same level of tension which emerged from the disequilibrium at the school level. Each team appeared to be more philosophically aligned as a unit than the faculty as a whole had appeared during the

previous year's research. Both teams wanted to change and generally believed that integrated curriculum and hands-on instruction were best for middle grades students so the major issues which created widespread disagreement among the faculty as a whole were accepted by team members as effective practice. Instead of focusing on *what* was important, they concentrated on *how* they would get the job done.

In addition to their shared commitment, the teams also had developed a common acceptance and understanding of one another that created a personal, more intimate atmosphere on each team. Teachers in the school as a whole spoke highly of one another and appeared to genuinely regard one another as friends; teachers on the same team had daily, direct contact and could therefore build closer, more personal relations. They talked about the importance of "integrating people before you can integrate curriculum" and that "it's not so much knowing each other's curriculum as it is knowing each other." Teachers on both teams identified the support they felt from having "people who are willing to take some chances and want me to take some chances...so I don't feel like [they think] I'm off the wall because I try [new things]" on their team. The foundation that was provided by both the personal understanding and professional assistance teachers gave to one another created a personalized culture of collegiality and support. It appeared that this culture was instrumental in promoting individual learning and growth.

Professional Development: How Did the Team Assist Individuals In the Change Process?

When the encore team sat down to evaluate the Cookie Kompany Unit in the spring of the year, they took advantage of the opportunity to review both what they had done and how they felt about the project. They reviewed where they had been and looked ahead to the future.

Issues related to the presentation and organization of activities and materials in the unit prompted lively discussion. Teachers talked about those activities which they wanted to repeat, those they did not, and why. They talked about the value they saw in integrating content for students, and the value students placed on their participation. They used the integrated curriculum model they had worked with at a school-wide inservice from

> *A Place of Our Own (1991) to make modifications and discussed the "nitty-gritty problems of staffing and scheduling" which had to be resolved before a final decision could be reached for next year.*
>
> *And when one teacher raised questions other staff members had brought to her about the real value of the unit, teachers quickly rallied together to reaffirm their commitment to providing an interdisciplinary curriculum in the exploratory program. "After all," one teacher commented, "isn't this what we've learned being a middle school is all about?"*

At the school level, the professional development opportunities provided for the staff at Cross Keys included a variety of formal and informal activities, ranging from *Adult Learner* strands presented regularly at faculty meetings on current educational trends, to district and school institutes. Teachers were provided information and research through readings as well as activities, and released time was also provided through resources the school had gathered from external grants. In addition to a focus on providing staff with needed cognitive information, attention was also given at the school-level to opportunities for individuals to enhance their affective understanding of proposed innovations.

While individual teams did not organize their own professional development activities during the year of study, it appeared that the team was an important place for analysis and synthesis to occur. Information which had been presented at the school-level on learning styles, for example, was discussed by one team in relationship to an individual unit Teachers easily asked questions about the material with their team, where the culture promoted risk-taking. In addition to the opportunity to discuss content, however, it appeared that the team provided an important forum for teachers to explore their feelings about issues and therefore more fully embrace an idea because it had personal meaning.

Prior to implementing new ideas in their classrooms, teachers could use the team as a sounding board for their questions and concerns. They were not left alone to tackle issues that might arise when trying a new technique or strategy in the classroom the first few times. At team meetings, they could share with each other strategies that worked and those that didn't. When teaching a new interdisciplinary unit for the first time, for

example, one teacher said she felt better just knowing she could go to her teammates for help when she needed it.

Clearly, teachers appeared to grow and learn from one another on the teams. The opportunities they had to discuss both the cognitive and affective elements of an innovation they were attempting to implement strengthened their confidence and their classroom practice.

Implications

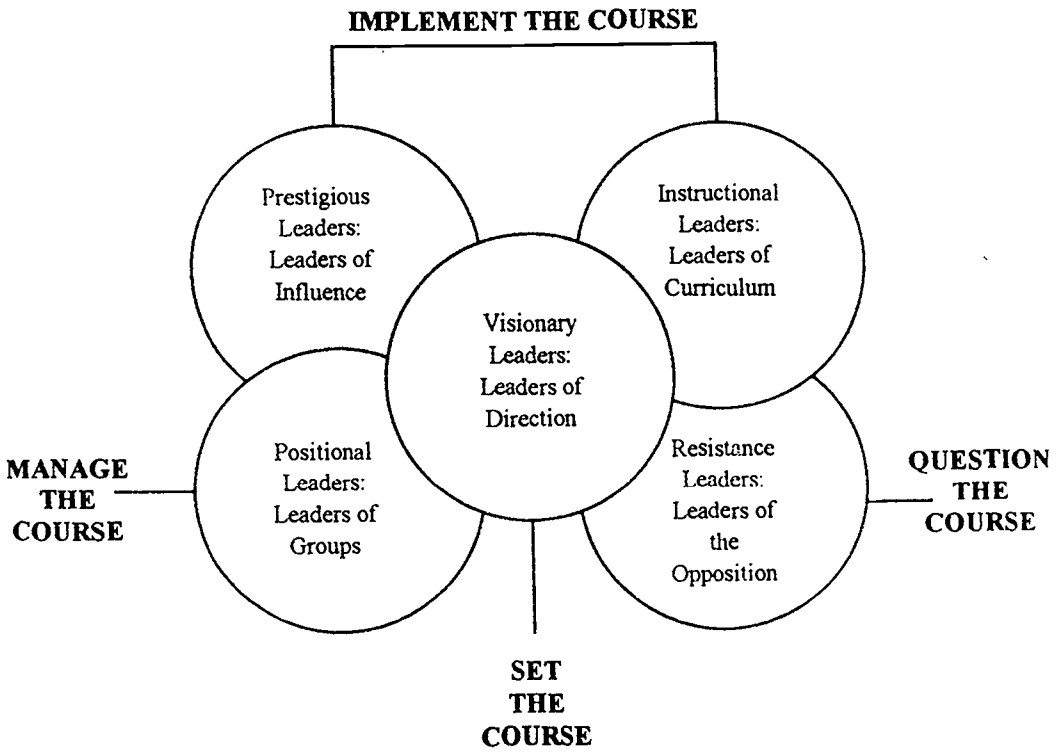
The middle school movement has gained national attention since the publication of *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century* (1989), and many schools are heeding the call to change from a traditional junior high school to one which embodies the middle school philosophy. Yet many schools which have undertaken a change initiative have fallen short of making the curricular and instructional innovations needed (Bean, 1993, 1991, 1990). While several models are available to help schools develop interdisciplinary, integrated curricula (see for example Bean, 1990; Fogarty, 1991; Jacobs, 1989), and the benefits of active, hands-on instruction have been documented (see for example Muth & Alvermann, 1992), widespread use of these practices has not yet been realized. A better understanding was needed of how core and encore teams negotiate and make decisions to move away from a content-specific curriculum to a more integrated, interdisciplinary approach using innovative instructional strategies.

The core and encore teams at Cross Keys Middle School who participated in this study have moved away from traditional curriculum and instruction in favor of a more integrated, active approach. Their shared mission to worry more about students' needs and less about content-specificity enabled them to more easily negotiate change and accommodate individual preferences. A culture which was personal, collegial, and supportive was described by teachers as instrumental in encouraging and supporting the risk-taking needed for innovation. Professional development at the school level was operationalized at the team level, where teachers felt comfortable enough to share and discuss their questions and concerns.

The leadership which had been identified during Phase I of the research at Cross Keys which supported reform at the building-level was also instrumental in bringing about curricular and instructional innovation at the team level. The typology developed by the

researcher to describe the leadership at the school level identified the **prestigious**, **visionary**, **instructional**, **positional**, and **resistance** leaders in the school (Polite, 1993).

Figure 1.
Cross Keys Middle School
Leadership Typology



Individuals identified by their colleagues as leaders of influence, curriculum, groups, direction, and of the loyal opposition, emerged naturally and by choice to set, implement, manage, and question the course the school had taken. School leaders sometimes took risks and made decisions that were not popular. At other times they were admired by their colleagues for their wisdom, insight and integrity. Some leaders were well-liked; others were not, yet they all played a key role in the reform effort underway in the school.

Likewise, these leaders worked in and through the team to support innovation and to mediate district and school forces which could have interfered with the their progress. For example, when the core team was informed that the district would not support a two-year

team, visionary, prestigious, and positional leaders emerged to identify alternate solutions so that this innovation could be implemented regardless of the opposition.

Individuals on both teams commented on the importance of the building principal as both a *visionary* and *instructional* leader in the school. They told of times when she ran interference for them with the district or with other teams or individuals in the school; of how she found the resources needed to implement their ideas; and they described the value of her moral support when change was hard and progress was slow. While she was not the only leader identified in the school who was influential in promoting team level innovation, she was mentioned often as a key player in the change process both at the school and team levels.

Other *visionary, prestigious, instructional, and positional* leaders in the school impacted the ability of the teams to make changes as well. While both teams had individuals on them who were identified as one type of leader or another in the school, not all types of leadership was provided directly on both teams. One team, for example, had a *visionary* leader who was described by colleagues as the "idea person" who gets "sudden inspirations" to creatively solve problems for the team. Another *positional* leader was described as the "detail person" who moves the team along and gets the "nitty gritty work done for the team." An *instructional* leader on the team was the "resource person" for curricular materials and information.

Not every individual on these two teams was identified as a leader in the school and not every leader in the school was on one of the two teams studied. Yet the leaders distributed across the school were able to influence the work in these two teams through interactions with individuals on the team in a larger setting. Formal and informal meetings, professional development activities, and school committees continued to provide opportunities for leaders in the school to emerge and impact the change process.

Resistance leaders, who had been identified at the school level as those individuals who represented the loyal opposition, were mentioned during the year of study in the context of the school's dialogue regarding student promotion and retention. The involvement of *resistance* leaders in the change process at the school-level appeared to continue to serve an important function; however, their role on the two teams during the study appeared minimal.

The *visionary*, *prestigious*, *positional*, and *instructional* leaders distributed across the school worked in and through the team as an intermediary step between school and classroom reform. The team structure was highly regarded by individuals in the study, and thus changes in classroom practice appeared to be mitigated by decisions made at the team level. And while no direct link can be made to student outcomes from this study, it can be speculated that when team innovation results in changes in curriculum and instruction, that students will be the direct beneficiaries of the reform.

Summary

Real change in schools is hard, and much is required to make the substantive changes called for by the major reform movements of our time. Leaders distributed across the school appeared to play a critical role in setting the vision for change, implementing and managing change, and questioning the course of the reform once underway. Distributed leaders not only influenced reform at the school level, but also worked in and through interdisciplinary teams to ensure that the broader commitments to change were operationalized in the classroom. This new paradigm of distributed leadership challenges our prevailing concepts of what constitutes leadership and provides new insights about the link between school leadership and learning.

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Appendix A
Summary of the Carnegie Recommendations

Goal	Recommendation
Creating a community for learning	- Creating smaller learning environments - Forming teachers and students into teams - Assigning an adult advisor to each student
Teaching a common core of knowledge	- Teaching young adolescents to think critically - Teaching young adolescents to develop healthful lifestyles - Teaching young adolescents to be active citizens - Integrating subject matter across disciplines - Teaching students to learn as well as to test successfully
Ensuring success for all students	- Using cooperative learning and flexible grouping - Scheduling class periods flexibly to maximize learning - Expanding the structure of opportunity for learning
Empowering teachers and administrators	- Giving teachers greater influence in the classrooms - Establishing building-governance committees - Designating leaders for the teaching process
Preparing teachers for the middle grades	- Developing expert teachers of young adolescents
Improving academic performance through better health and fitness	- Ensuring student access to health service - Establishing the school as a health-promoting environment
Reengaging families in the education of young adolescents	- Offering parents meaningful roles in school governance - Keeping parents informed - Offering families opportunities to support the learning process at home and at school
Connecting schools with communities	- Placing students in youth service - Ensuring student access to health and social services - Supporting the middle grade education program - Augmenting resources for teachers and students - Expanding career guidance for students

Note: From "Carnegie's middle school ideals: Phases of program development" by D. F. Quattrone, 1990, Journal of Curriculum and Supervision, 6 (1), p.61.

Appendix B
Summary of Contacts
December, 1992 through June, 1993

Type of Contact	Date
Initial contact for Phase II with school	12/9/93
Negotiation with teams for participation	1/5/93
Phone call for appointments	1/5/93
Classroom observation (CC team)	2/10/93
Informal interviews	2/10/93
Team Meeting (CC Team)	2/10/93
Classroom observation (CC Team)	2/10/93
Team Meeting (FF Team)	2/10/93
Contact off site: Middle Level Educators' Network	2/24/93
Informal interviews	3/2/93
Classroom observation (CC Team)	3/2/93
Chaperoned CC Team Field Trip	3/2/93
Team Meeting (FF Team)	3/2/93
Informal interviews	3/2/93
Classroom observation (FF Team)	3/9/93
Team Meeting (CC Team)	3/9/93
Classroom observation (FF Team)	3/9/93
Classroom observation (CC Team)	3/9/93
Team Meeting (CC Team)	3/9/93
Classroom observation (CC Team)	3/18/93
Team Meeting (CC Team)	3/18/93
Team Meeting (FF Team)	3/18/93
Classroom observation (FF Team)	3/25/93
Informal Discussions with teachers	3/25/93
Classroom observation (FF Team)	3/25/93
Classroom observation (CC Team)	3/25/93
Classroom observation (FF Team)	4/8/93
Team Meeting (CC Team)	4/8/93

Appendix B Continued: Summary of Contacts

Type of Contact	Date
Classroom observation (FF Team)	4/27/93
Team Meeting (CC Team)	4/27/93
Informal Discussions with teachers	4/27/93
Classroom observation (FF Team)	4/27/93
Team Meeting (FF Team)	4/27/93
Chaperoned Field Trip (FF Team)	5/4/93
Classroom observation (FF Team)	5/13/93
Informal interviews teachers	5/13/93
Classroom observations (FF Team)	5/13/93
Classroom observations (CC Team)	5/13/93
Team Meeting (FF Team)	5/13/93
Formal interview with teacher 1 (FF Team)	5/13/93
Formal interview with teacher 2 (FF Team)	5/13/93
Formal interview with principal	5/18/93
Formal interview with teacher 1 (CC Team)	5/18/93
Team Meeting (CC Team)	5/18/93
Formal interview with teacher 2 (CC Team)	5/18/93
Formal interview with teacher 3 (FF team)	5/18/93
Formal interview with teacher 4 (FF Team)	5/18/93
Formal interview with teacher 5 (FF Team)	5/18/93
Formal interview with teacher 3 (CC Team)	5/27/93
Formal interview with teacher 4 (CC Team)	5/27/93
Formal interview with teacher 5 (CC Team)	5/27/93
Formal interview with teacher 6 (CC Team)	5/27/93
Phone call to school	6/4/93

Appendix C
Formal Interview Protocol

1. What do you think you and your teammates are committed to accomplishing this year at [school name]?
   PROBES: What is being done to accomplish this?
   What facilitates your work?
   What hinders your work?

2. What specific changes have been made in curriculum and instruction over the past few years at [school name]? on your team?
   PROBES: When did these changes occur?
   How were these decisions made? implemented? evaluated?
   What role, if any, did the state, district, school, team have in the decision-making process?

3. How do you know when changes need to be made in the curriculum? in instruction?
   PROBES: What course of action do you take?
   What supports do you need?
   What inhibitors do you face?
   How does your team negotiate decision-making?

4. What changes would you like to see in curriculum and instruction in the school in the future?
   PROBES: What supports will be needed to implement these changes?
   What barriers will need to be overcome to implement these changes?
   Who, specifically, will need to be involved to make sure these changes are implemented?

5. What else, if anything, do I need to know to fully understand how curricular and instructional decisions are made on your team?

Appendix D
Bibliography of Documents

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