Middle Level Grade Configuration: Impact on Hawai'i's Schools

Policy Analysis

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the years, a variety of changing influences have impacted the configuration of schools for middle-level students. Since 1915, the most basic system has consisted of elementary schools with grades kindergarten to 8 (K-8) and secondary schools with grades 9 through 12. In the early 20th century, the junior-high school came into being to meet the needs of young adolescents. The 10-14 junior-high age group was given a subject based curriculum. In 1963, in response to concerns that the junior-high had too closely emulated the senior high school, and that a more child-centered focus was needed, the movement toward middle-schools began.

In 1973, the National Middle School Association was founded by a group implicitly critical of the junior-high school, and throughout the 1980s and the 1990s the middle-school concept gained increasing prominence and popularity in educational circles. In 1989, Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents released what became the landmark report *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century*. The report fueled organizational and curricular change in middle-schools across the nation.

In 2000, *Turning Points 2000: Educating Adolescents in the 21st Century* appeared, revising the 1989 recommendations. This report urged grounding the middle-level curriculum in standards, and employing instructional methods enabling all students to reach high standards. Some have since been concerned that this has taken the middle-school movement too far in the direction of standards and away from its original path. In the 1960s and '70s, the implementation of middle-school models had led to new curricular trends marked by greater student-centeredness and stronger focus on the developmental traits of young adolescents. There was also more integration and connection to the school and daily life experiences of middle-level youngsters. The introductions of standards-based curricula and high-stakes testing in the 1980's and '90's, however, tended to impede these efforts.

Tracking, or the grouping of children by ability and achievement levels, has also impacted the middle-school.   Researchers in Hawaii found that social positions are associated with the course-taking patterns of students, and that tracks, i.e. formal structures, differentiate students. They found that over-representation in the lowest tracks leads to a greater likelihood of noncompletion of high school at the end of four years. Through Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, the federal government extended assistance to the schools of economically disadvantaged students -- those often assigned to lower tracks. But the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001, which ostensibly continued ESEA, threatened these schools with punitive consequences.

Since middle-school students represent more than half the students tested nationally under *No Child Left Behind*'s aegis, reauthorization proposals call for reallocating funding so that these schools receive more. Current scores appear to be very low among this age group. To increase achievement at this age level, the National Middle School Association in 2003 listed six programmatic components for a successful

middle-school. Although relevant longitudinal research is rare, several such studies have shown that implementation of the middle-school framework has a positive effect on student achievement. Recommended reforms include *Success for All Middle Schools,* which was a response to the Carnegie Corporation's 1989 Report, *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century*. A review of one hundred studies on the achievement outcomes of mathematics programs for middle- and high school concluded that when cooperative learning programs were introduced, gains in learning increased.

There is no 'one' grade configuration for middle-level. Hawaii currently has seven of them serving middle-level students: K-8, K-9, K-10, K-12, 6-8, 7-8, and 7-12, with 6-8 being the most frequently used, followed by 7,8. The evidence is inconclusive on whether students achieve better in K-8 elementary schools or in middle-schools that are attached to elementary schools than in separate middle schools. This points to the need for studies in the area of configuration.

An area that has been extensively studied and well documented concerns meeting the social and psychological developmental needs of students aged 10-14 years (Hough, 1995). Much attention has been focused on the issue of school safety following the events of Columbine and other school violence tragedies. Bullying, in all of its various forms, is of particular concern - to students as well as to school personnel. And a recent national study indicates that bullying occurs as frequently among girls as boys. Particular classes of students, including those who are thought to be gay, lesbian or bisexual are among the most vulnerable to becoming victims of bullying. Hawai'i has experienced an increase in bullying and other forms of physical and verbal violence among middle-level students, including girls. The data established that for one in five youths in Hawai'i, gang involvement is a significant part of their lives. These populations include girls as well as boys, with a large number of middle-level students involved.

There is overwhelming evidence that violence is much less likely to occur in small schools than in large ones. Students are more likely to feel a sense of belonging in small schools and dropping out occurs less frequently. Charter schools, often smaller in size than regular public schools, have fewer discipline incidents.

An analysis of data on school size and disciplinary infractions in Hawai'i charter and regular public schools was conducted for this study. There were stark differences in numbers and degree of disciplinary infractions by middle-level students in Hawai'i charter and regular public schools - both in numbers of incidents and types, and in the severity of the infractions. Regular Department of Education public schools serving middle-level students had more than twice the rate of offenses per student as charter schools serving middle-level students. The disciplinary infractions by regular public school students were of a more serious nature and involved a much higher percentage of schools.

Nationally, dropping out is a significant problem at the middle-level. This is so in Hawai'i as well, with many disengaged Native Hawaiian youngsters leaving school without completing it. Research indicates that school-to-school transitions -- e.g. elementary to middle-school and middle-school to high school at 9th grade -- are critical times for adolescents.

<u>Statement of Findings</u>

   This report highlights the need for support for the unique set of needs of middle-level students. Middle-grades do much more than serve a set of students from ages 10-15 during their transition from elementary to high school. This is a period when crucial social and physical development occurs. Thus, a middle-level foundation that takes students successfully to a secondary education, and later to a post-secondary education with a successful career as productive citizens, needs to be reinforced, regardless of school configuration.

   The research indicates that school configuration *is not what matters*. What impacts school achievement most -- and school safety as well -- is school size. How do we build stronger communities for learning in schools? We in Hawai'i live amidst a culture that values *ohana* over all, yet our schools represent huge factories. Thus, it is irrelevant to struggle over grade configuration when what is critical is community. When economic pressures occur within school districts, issues of efficiency may clash with issues involving quality and equity: building usage may need to be rethought to accommodate smaller learning communities, with specific criteria clearly in the interests of child wellbeing.

Overview

Policy decisions on school configuration by grade have been influenced by
history (Ravitch, 2000) and by psychology, sociology, and pedagogy (Caskey, 2002;
Garbarino, 1999; Garbarino, 2006; Ravitch, 2000; Seller, 1994; Tyack & Cuban, 1995).
Although what is best for the student is central to the question, issues related to finances,
transportation, space usage and other economic factors can, and often do, affect final
decisions. Thus, 'what is best for the student' has often been subject to different
interpretations. While academic achievement and social development are cited as
primary concerns when discussing grade span for school configurations, different grade
span patterns enhance different goals. From the late 1890s to the present, a series of
education reforms have directly and indirectly impacted the young adolescent. These
include the formation of the junior-high school (the predecessor to the middle-school),
the movement to create a middle-school framework, the standards based reform
movement, and most recently, the current Bush administration's *No Child Left Behind*
(NCLB, 2001) policy.   The impact of these policies on the middle-level adolescent
learner is delineated in the following report.

History of United States Elementary/Secondary Grade Configuration

Prior to 1948, the majority of schools in the United States were one-teacher
schools serving small rural communities, and enrolling about 30 children in the
elementary grades. High school was not considered particularly important for most of the
population (Howley, 2002). In situations where high schools were thought desirable,
small schools encompassing grades 1 through 12 in one building were a common
response, particularly in rural areas (Howley, 2002; Seller, 2004).

After 1915, the most basic system consisted of elementary schools containing grades kindergarten to 8 (K-8) and secondary schools containing grades 9 through 12. Until the middle of the nineteenth century, most secondary education was supplied by thousands of private academies offering a classical education (Ravitch, 2000). At the end of the nineteenth century, nearly every community had an elementary school, but public high schools were sparse. The K-8 framework was perceived as the basic education needed by all citizens and sufficient for most of the jobs in society at the time, while a high school education was seen as preparation for a more specialized world of work (Seller, 2004).

As the economy changed from agrarian to industrial and commercial, Americans debated the future direction of education (Ravitch, 2000). Education reformers proposed that large schools in central locations could provide more and better education and resources (Howley, 2002; Seller, 2004). The result was consolidation across larger geographic areas, leading to the closure of many small, rural K-12 schools (Howley, 2002).

The Junior-High School Reform 1900s

A dilemma common to many public school districts at the turn of the 20th century concerned educators' fundamental beliefs about the value of education. One view was that the job of schools was to keep open the ladder of opportunity from kindergarten to the university; thus, the goal was to teach a basic curriculum to students from every kind of neighborhood and home. The other position was that the job of school was to provide a different education for those children not likely to go to college, so the task was to place them in the 'right' program for their future life course. This latter approach allowed the

academic track to remain 'literary' for the few while most other children were directed into vocational programs (Ravitch, 2000). The invention of the junior-high school was a response to the dilemma. Advocates for the junior-high believed that the common elementary course should be only six years (K-6), followed by three years in which students would be 'guided' to the right curriculum for their future occupations (Ravitch, 2000). Proponents of this course were progressive educators and allegedly some efficiency experts, who advocated separate junior-high schools where the prevocational needs of students could be ascertained and most would get industrial training (Gill & Schlossman as cited in Ravitch, 2000). It is now more egalitarian to believe that all kids should learn to use their minds well, and educators agree that schools in the past indulged in a 'dumbing down' to accommodate some learners.

Attrition during this period was higher, with most children completing fifth grade, one-half completing seventh grade, and only one in ten students completing high school (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Education reformers blamed the high rates of attrition on the narrow academic emphasis of the educational structure, requiring all students to take the same subjects in the same ways, with examinations for promotion. Reformers, supported by social investigators, developmental psychologists, and foes of child labor, designed the junior-high school as a structural and pedagogical solution to the problem of attrition by challenging academically capable students (Tyack & Cuban, 1995).

Junior-High Design

The junior-high school included grades 7 to 8 or 9, and was structured to allow students to explore their vocational opportunities in a setting adapted to the particular needs of adolescents (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). The junior-high school concept appealed

to people who analyzed educational problems from three lenses: (1) those primarily concerned about dropouts; (2) those who were interested in transforming the curriculum of the entire educational system – and wanted to introduce new subjects and forms of pedagogy, and (3) those, including psychologist G. Stanley Hall[1] who wanted to tailor the work of the school to the particular stage of development of young teenagers.

By the end of World War II, dropout numbers had decreased in elementary and junior-high schools and had become primarily a problem in senior high schools, due in part to the influence of compulsory attendance laws, child labor legislation, and technology that eroded the need for youth labor. Thus, it is questionable whether the introduction of the junior-high school was a major factor in lowering the dropout rate for adolescents. Policy talk after the end of World War II and in ensuing decades shifted away from the retention of students and vocational exploration to transforming the entire education system through the development of new forms of curriculum and instruction, and to meeting the psychological needs of the early adolescent age group (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Although there was much discussion, the actual number of junior-highs remained quite small, with a subject centered curriculum, until after World War II (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Repeated studies conducted during the ensuing decades detailed persistent criticisms, including excessive departmentalization and an academic curriculum modeled on the high school; teachers who were inadequately trained to understand or guide young adolescents, and tracking by ability (Tyack & Cuban, 1995).

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[1]Hall's student was John Dewey (1859-1952), a progressive educator, who believed that education must engage with and enlarge experience. He was also concerned with thinking and reflection by educators; with interaction and environment in education; and democracy for educating so that all may share in a common life.

In other words, instead of the hoped for panacea, junior-high schools mirrored what progressives considered to be the defects of senior high schools (Tyack & Cuban, 1995).

<u>Middle Grades Framework</u>

In 1963, William Alexander first used the expression *middle school* to describe the schools between elementary and high school (McEwin, 1992 cited in Caskey 2005). Alexander, regarded as the 'father of the middle-school,' led the movement to create middle-schools and a middle-level curriculum that would meet the unique needs of young adolescents (Caskey, 2005). The emergence of the middle-school concept led to new educational trends during the 1960s and 1970s. Developmental responsiveness to middle school students and a balanced curriculum were at the center of these early models (Caskey, 2005).

The middle-school philosophy has been advanced primarily by early position statements of the National Middle School Association (NMSA), founded in 1973. In 1977, the NMSA adopted the following goals (NMSA as cited in Merten et al, 2007):

1. Every student should be well known as a person by at least one adult in the school who accepts responsibility for his/her guidance.

2. Every student should be helped to achieve optimum mastery of the skills of continued learning, together with a commitment to their use and improvement.

3. Every student should have ample experiences designed to develop decision-making and problem-solving skills.

4. Every student should acquire a functional body of fundamental knowledge.

5. Every student should have opportunities to explore and develop interests in aesthetics, leisure, career, and other aspects of life.

In 1982, the NMSA released its first position statement, *This We Believe* (NMSA, 1982), which examined the rationale for the middle-school and provided a descriptive definition of a middle-school. This position statement presented and discussed the ten essential elements of a 'true' middle-school. *This We Believe* has been revised twice, once in 1995 with the subtitle*: Developmentally Responsive Middle Level Schools* and again in 2003, subtitled: *Successful Schools for Young Adolescents* (Caskey 2005; Mertens, Anfara & Caskey, 2007).

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the middle-school concept gained national attention. The Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy published *A nation prepared: Teachers for the 21st century* (1986), which defined a *clinical*[2] school as a teaching school that would accept responsibility for training teachers, principals and others in the area of curriculum, instruction, organization and other areas related to middle grade education reform. A task force was formed by the state of California in 1987 to make recommendations for a middle-school reform effort. The task force outlined 22 principles of middle grade education for California's public schools and presented a reform agenda for grades 6, 7, and 8. The task force proposed the creation of 100 state-of-the-art middle schools (California Middle Grade Task Force, 1987).

The Carnegie Corporation of New York established the Carnegie Council of Adolescent Development, which in turn formed the Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents. The Task Force advocated that middle-schools ensure student success through cooperative learning and other instructional approaches suitable for young adolescents. The Task Force stated that:

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[2] The Carnegie Report defined a *clinical school* as one that had the same role as a teaching hospital, with teachers in these schools holding adjunct appointments in schools of education (1986).

…a volatile mismatch exists between the organization and curriculum of middle

grade schools and the intellectual, emotional, and interpersonal needs of young

adolescents. For most young adolescents, the shift from elementary to junior-high

or middle school means moving from a small, neighborhood school and the

stability of one primary classroom to a much larger, more impersonal institution,

typically at a greater distance from home. In this new setting, teachers and

classmates will change as many as six or seven times a day. This constant

shifting creates formidable barriers to the formation of stable peer groups and

close supportive relationships with caring adults (Carnegie Corporation, 1989).

The Task Force reported that the chances of young adolescents feeling lost and alienated

as they transitioned from elementary to middle- or junior-high schools increased

enormously. The Task Force warned that as a result of this movement, drug abuse,

absenteeism and dropping out began to rise (Carnegie Corporation, 1989).

The Task Force's landmark report, *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the

21st Century* fueled organizational and curricular changes in middle-schools across the

nation (Carnegie Corporation, 1989). The report critiqued the rigid traditional structure

of middle schools and advocated reforms intended to make middle grades education more

personalized, supportive and active (Daniels, Madden & Slavin, 2005). The following

eight recommendations were included in the report:

1. Create small learning communities.

2. Teach a core academic program.

3. Ensure success for all students.

4. Empower teachers and administrators to make decisions about the experiences of middle grade students.

5. Staff middle grade schools with teachers who are expert at teaching young adolescents.

6. Improve academic performance through fostering health and fitness.

7. Reengage families in the education of young adolescents.

8. Connect schools with communities.

Standards Based Reform Movement

Carnegie Corporation sponsored a second report in 2000: *Turning Points 2000: Educating Adolescents in the 21st Century*, (Jackson and Davis, 2000), which revised the 1989 Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development recommendations. The researchers suggested that middle-schools focus on practice by: (1) incorporating a curriculum grounded in standards, addressing the concerns of young adolescents, and focusing on how students learn best, and (2) using instructional methods that prepare all students to achieve high standards. A 2001 report by California's Middle Grades Task Force , *Taking Center Stage*, outlined sixteen key recommendations that were aligned with middle-level standards. And recently (August, 2007), the New York City Council Middle School Task Force published its report containing a detailed set of recommendations for the standards that should be present in middle-grades schools throughout the city. In the coming year, the New York City Department of Education will undertake a radical restructuring that places primary accountability for meeting the educational needs of students on school principals (New York City Department of Education, 2007). Thus, the middle-school movement has interwined with the nation's

standards-based reform movement[3] and its emphasis on measurable academic outcomes

(Juvonen et al., 2004 as cited in Greene, Caskey, Musser, Samek, & Olson, 2006).

Researchers developed standards-based curricula[4] for middle-schools (Wiggens and

McTighe as cited in Caskey, 2005). Greene, et al (2006) report that the standards-based

reform movement and its emphasis on testable academic outcomes, fueled by the *No

Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB, 2001), contributed to a surge of middle-level

research on raising standardized test scores, though few studies addressed successful

middle-grades models for dealing with such challenges as engagement, aspirations,

school climate or discipline (Juvonen et al, 2004 as cited in Greene et al, 2007). Thus, "a

growing concern surrounds the effect of standards-based reform on middle-grade

teaching practices and teacher preparation" (Greene et al, 2006). For example, Greene et

al (2006), in a recent study of 162 core subject middle-school teachers in 13 middle-

schools in Oregon, found that the results of implementation of consequence based

accountability, such as that in the national NCLB policy, including focusing on testing

and teaching for testing, interferes with their ability to collaborate and to provide a more

stimulating, discovery-based, critical thinking curriculum. Greene et al (2006) report that

the daily practice of teaching and middle-school organization "appear to be moving

reluctantly away from a commitment to the tenets of the [middle-school] framework" (p.

27). With the mounting political pressure to establish higher standards for all students

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[3] The standards-based reform movement surfaced from public dissatisfaction with low student achievement of American students compared to students from other industrialized countries. Standards-based reform efforts swept the nation as influential private, political and public sectors converged to work toward improving student achievement (Caskey, 2005). The intent of a standards-based curriculum is to ensure excellence and equity for all students.

[4] Stages in the backward design process include: identifying desired results, determine acceptable evidence of understanding, and planning learning experiences and instruction. In the backward design process, adopted standards and acceptable evidence of learner understanding are identified prior to planning educative experiences (Caskey, 2005).

and teachers' expressed desire to provide a developmentally sound education for middle-school youngsters, a tension has occurred.

The current Bush administration's Department of Education definition of teacher quality focuses primarily on 'content knowledge' (NCLB, 2001). The Act stated that by the end of the 2005-06 school year, each state educational agency receiving assistance under Title I should have developed a plan to ensure that all teachers teaching in core academic content areas were "highly qualified" in each subject he or she teaches (NCLB, 2001a [Sec 1119(a)(1) and (3)]). This means teachers must have a bachelor's degree, be fully certified, and demonstrate their knowledge and skills in the subjects they teach by having sufficient subject matter coursework, passing a state test, or meeting other state criteria. The Act also requires that states ensure that low-income and minority students are not taught by inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers at higher rates than other children. Since 2002, the Center on Education Policy (CEP), has been conducting a comprehensive study of the No Child Left Behind Act. The researchers surveyed states[5] and school districts separately. The findings on year five of NCLB implementation indicate that "two-thirds of states and about one-fifth of school districts reported difficulties complying with the highly qualified teacher requirements for middle-school teachers (22% of districts) and teachers in rural schools (20% of districts)" (CEP, 2007, p. 12). Even when districts were able to find enough 'qualified' teachers under the Bush administration definition, this did not necessarily mean the teachers were 'highly effective' (CEP, 2007, p. 21). Other difficulties for middle-schools in reaching

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[5] Although all 50 states responded to the overall survey, 47 states responded to the question of compliance with having high qualified teachers in middle schools (CEP, 2007, p. 10).

compliance were confusing requirements and difficulty interpreting guidelines,

particularly for middle-level teachers who teach multiple subjects (CEP, 2007, p. 14).

Conversations in the Field

The literature suggests two main conversations are currently being conducted

regarding the middle-level education configuration. One concerns the K-8 structure, or

some other variation of an *elemiddle* arrangement. The second discussion involves the

middle-school/junior-high school structure. However, probably because the literature is

so thin -- and there is a paucity of longitudinal studies on the impacts of either mode --

what has resulted has been mostly 'ideas' on 'what are best practices' *with no definitive*

conclusions about which one, if either, configuration would best serve middle level

students.

Tracking by 'Ability'

The underlying assumption of American educators is a belief in 'ability': and

value judgments are made about children who meet highly selective, standardized

definitions of intelligence, as measured by an aptitude test. Value judgments are also

made about which schools are 'achieving on a high level,' which ones are 'achieving in

the middle,' and which schools (and their students) are 'achieving at a low level.'

Children internalize these judgments of themselves as being high, middle, and low and as

being 'smart' or 'not so smart' (Oakes, 1985; Sacks, 2007). In 1985, Oakes reported that

80 % of high schools and 60 % of elementary schools engaged in some variation of

tracking[6]. By the late twentieth century, tracking in American schools had become more

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[6] *Tracking*: A system that assigns some students to honors classes and others to remedial sections, that places some students in college preparatory programs and others in vocational courses. In this sense, schools become places of sorting for the future, with the college selection process beginning in elementary school and virtually sealed by the time students finish junior-high (Talcott Parsons, as cited in Sadker &

concealed than in previous decades, often obscured by a more egalitarian-sounding rhetoric among educators (Sacks, 2007). But in recent years, scholars have observed a distinction between the formal tracking methods of the past and the more subtle forms of tracking that have continued to sort children by class and race. Ronald Heck, Carol Price and Scott Thomas (2004), used mathematical network analysis of an urban high school in Hawaiʻi to uncover seven dominant patterns of course-taking among students. The resulting patterns differentiated students quite sharply by race —results similar to previous studies examining student tracking. The primary difference, however, was that the student course-taking *profiles*[7] emerged out of actual patterns examined for all students, as opposed to imposing a particular student track identification (e.g., vocational, technical, college) before examining the course work. 'Profile 1' consists predominately of students who took regular world history, low English in ninth grade, low English in eleventh grade, applied mathematics, geometry, marine science, low physical science, physical education, 'self and society,' food science, and food service. This group, which constituted 30% of the school, was made up mostly of Native Hawaiians, working-class students, who would presumably follow their parents into low-paying jobs in the food service and tourist industries in the state.

'Profile 2' students' course taking patterns constitute honors U.S. history, honors English in ninth and tenth grades, geometry, third-year algebra, trigonometry, pre-

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Sadker, 1997). Now, in the 21st century, tracking still exists. When most American students make the transition from sixth to seventh grade, they are effectively labeled *remedial*, *regular*, or *accelerated*, depending on standardized test performance and teacher recommendations (Sacks, 2007).

[7] Profiles: Heck et al propose that the relationship between course taking and track, e.g. formal structures that differentiate students, is qualitatively different. They reconceptualize tracks as social positions that emerge from the course-taking patterns of students, as opposed to more static academic locations to which students are assigned. Thus, tracks are designated as sociocurricular positions (i.e., social positions that result from the curricular organization of the school). The researchers call these patterns 'profiles.' (Heck et al, 2004).

calculus, biology, chemistry, physics, Japanese and band. These students, constituting 8% of the school, were mostly affluent and Japanese.

The social demographics of the students in these two course-taking 'profiles' were starkly different: one-fifth of 'Profile 1' students were poor, while there was no measurable poverty among those in 'Profile 2.' Just 1.8 % of 'Profile 1' students planned to later attend four-year colleges, compared to 95.5 % of those in 'Profile 2.' Eighty-four percent of 'Profile 1' planned to attend community colleges, while only 4.5 % of 'Profile 2' planned to follow a similar higher education path.

The authors stated (Heck, et al, 2004):

> For Hawaiians, this finding is discouraging because social and cultural policies in Hawai'i over time have resulted in their prolonged social marginalization through reduced access to education…This marginalization unfolds educationally over a period of years through selective course differentiation and leads to a greater likelihood of not completing high school at the end of four years.
>
> Overrepresentation in the lowest academic profiles also leads to a greater likelihood of not completing high school at the end of four years (pp. 321-353).

The most common defense of tracking is that it results in educationally appropriate learning opportunities for students with different academic abilities and skills. But Sacks (2007) says this amounts to a zero sum game: gains in academic achievement among high-track students are offset by losses among low-track students.

Useem (as cited in Sacks, 2007) conducted a study in the early 1990s of twenty-six public school districts in the Boston area, where very restrictive placement practices were adopted in the middle-grades. The study found that the 'exclusive and elitist'

character of course assignment policies in many school districts virtually guaranteed that the pool of mathematically capable students leaving high school would continue to be both underrepresented by diversity in social class and racial backgrounds.

The nation's preoccupation in recent years with standardized test scores and public school accountability belies more than forty years of social research, including that of James S. Coleman who had led a major federal study (*Equality of Educational Opportunity*, known as 'the Coleman report'), which states that schools themselves contribute insignificantly to student achievement relative to what children bring with them to school from the first day of kindergarten. Coleman (1966), whose study grew out of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, maintained that what they do bring with them is derived largely from the socio-economic class background of their parents and grandparents and from other aspects of their life beyond school (Ravitch, 2000; Sacks, 2007). On one side of a debate were social scientists who concurred with Coleman, thus advocating integration including court ordered busing. The implications were that curriculum and standards of learning did not make much difference (Ravitch, 2000). On the other side of the debate was a small number of educators who said that under the right circumstances, schools could educate nearly all children to higher standards than had ever been achieved in the past, no matter their race or social background (Ravitch, 2000).

Sociologists since the Coleman report's 1966 publication have reiterated in the research literature that contributions of schools pale in comparison to the influences of a child's family background and other components of socio-economic class – in accounting for the educational achievements and outcomes of children (Jencks, 1972). Another key finding of the Coleman report was the extent to which student attitudes explained

differences in academic performance. Coleman found that motivation, interest in school,

self-concept and control over the environment were related to one's class background.

Schools seemed largely powerless to affect these attitudes (Coleman[8], 1966).

According to Peter Sacks (2007), the evolving model of public schools, particularly those

that serve wealthier families, is at best that of privatization of the public school mission to

the benefit of wealthier families.

In 1983, *A Nation at Risk* warned that the schools had not kept pace with the

changes in society and the economy, and the nation would suffer if education were not

dramatically improved for all children. The discussion following *A Nation at Risk*

revealed what Ravitch (2000, p. 415) called a "major fault line" in education: on one side

were those who believed that the schools had little influence on children's ability to learn;

on the other were those who believed that schools had the responsibility to educate all

children regardless of their social circumstances or home lives. This debate, essentially,

has continued throughout the entire twentieth century, and to the present day. It lies at

the crux of the current Bush administration's passage of *No Child Left Behind* (2001). *A

Nation at Risk* firmly entrenched the notion among state and federal policy makers, from

the first President Bush through the second administration of George W. Bush, that

targeting schools and penalizing the ones that did not perform up to par on standardized

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[8] Subsequent to the publication of the Coleman report in 1966, Coleman supported bussing as a
desegregation measure. In 1975 Coleman recanted his views on bussing and desegregation, saying that not
enough attention had been paid to the effects in increasing disorder, conflict and absence from school. He
explained: "If schools' attention is focused on compliance with a court's edict or HEW administrative
orders, then it must be less focused on educational goals" (as cited in Ravitch, 2000, p. 417). In 1981, in a
major study on federal and private schools, Coleman reversed himself on the crucial issue of whether
schools make a difference. He found that private schools promoted higher academic achievement,
regardless of academic curriculum and high academic expectations (Coleman et al as cited in Ravitch,
2000).

tests would be better for American education than improving social and economic conditions for families (Sacks, 2007).

Present policy seems to negate the concept behind the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, which it ostensibly continues. ESEA initially supported economically disadvantaged kids by making the schools they attended the beneficiaries of Title I funds. But the passage of NCLB in 2001 ties proficiency of these kids to their receipt of Title I funds. In theory, NCLB sounds plausible: schools must make 100% of their students proficient on standardized tests in math and language by the year 2014 or face sanctions that can lead to the school's closure or seizure by the state. What have resulted, however, are punishing consequences for low-income schools. Sacks (2007) reports that schools in higher income areas, where parents want enriching experiences for their children, are not impacted by the 'carrot and stick' approach of withdrawal of federal monies. However, low-income schools are under immense pressure to aim instruction at improving test scores.

With a change in tests, 170 Hawai'i schools, or 60.3 % achieved the goals mandated by *No Child Left Behind* in 2001 (Moreno, 2007), while last year, just 35.5% of the 282 tested public schools met the goals.

Current Legislation

Research from the Center on Education Policy (CEP, 2005) noted that middle-school students represent over half of all students tested under NCLB parameters, yet they receive only 10 % of Title I funding. Scores on the National Assessment on Educational Progress (NAEP, 2005), show that 70 % of 8th grade students scored below proficient in reading and writing; only 30 % of students in 8th grade performed at the

proficient level in math, and nearly one-third scored below the basic level in math.

Ninety-six % of 8th grade English language learners scored below the proficient level of

the reading portion of the 2005 NAEP. Numbers of students in middle-level schools

represent 23% of the nation's student population (NAEP, 2005). Overall, students in

grades 5 through 8 represent 58% (approximately 15 million) of the nation's annual test-

takers under the amendments made by the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001. According

to the 2005 NAEP, only 6 % of students in 8th grade who have disabilities scored at or

above proficiency in reading as compared with 31 % for non-disabled students. To stem

a dropout rate twice that of students without disabilities, students with disabilities in the

critical middle-grades must receive appropriate academic accommodations and access to

assistive technology; high-risk behaviors such as absenteeism and course failure must be

monitored, and problem-solving skills with broad application must be taught (U.S.

Library of Congress, 2007). If funds provided under Title I of the Elementary and

Secondary Education Act of 1965 were distributed on the basis of student populations,

middle-schools (representing 23% of the nation's student population) would receive

approximately $2.92 billion of the current Title I allocation. Yet, of the $12.7 billion

appropriated in FY 2005 for Title I, only $1.27 billion (10 %) is allocated to middle-

schools (U.S. Library of Congress, 2007).

Parents, educators, and researchers have made calls to federal policy makers to

advance national middle-level policy in an effort to help raise student achievement in the

middle-grades (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005; EDC, 2007; NASSP, 2006;

NMSA, 2006). In response, U.S. lawmakers sponsored legislation to address identified

gaps in funding for middle-level education (Grijalva, 2007). H.R. 3406 was introduced

August 3, 2007, and is intended to be part of the reauthorization of *No Child Left Behind*.

H.R. 3406 will provide $1 billion in formula grants to target low performing middle-

schools (Grijalva, 2007). The legislation also authorizes the U. S. Secretary of Education

to create a national clearinghouse[9] for research in best practices at the middle-level;

create a national middle-level database; and it requires a research agency to develop a

strand of field-initiated research designed to enhance the performance of those middle-

level schools and students most at risk of educational failure (U. S. Library of Congress,

2007).

Instructional Practices

The National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform (2002) challenged

teachers to use instructional approaches that are culturally responsive (Caskey, 2005).

The 2003 version of the NMSA position statement, *This We Believe: Successful Schools*

for Young Adolescents (2003) presented 14 essential elements or characteristics of a

successful middle-school and included developmentally responsive characteristics such

as a curriculum that is relevant and challenging, students and teachers engaged in active

learning, and assessment and evaluation programs that promote quality learning. The

report also recommended organizational structures that support meaningful relationships

and learning through establishing interdisciplinary teams of two to four teachers working

with a common group of students. According to the position statement, this structure is

the building block for a strong learning community with its sense of family, where

students and teachers know one another well, feel safe and supported, and are encouraged

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[9] There is currently no national data base on middle-level best practices, thus, if this legislation is enacted, a research base can be developed.

to take intellectual risks (NMSA, 2003).   The NMSA listed the following 6

programmatic components for a successful school:

1. Curriculum that is relevant, challenging, integrative, and exploratory.

2. Multiple learning and teaching approaches that respond to students'

   diversity.

3. Assessment and evaluation programs that promote quality learning.

4. Organizational structures that support meaningful relationships and

   learning.

5. School-wide efforts and policies that foster health, wellness and safety.

6. Multifaceted guidance and support services.

Cultural characteristics included:

- Educators who value working with this age group and are prepared to do

  so.

- Courageous, collaborative leadership.

- A shared vision that guides decisions.

- An inviting, supportive, and safe environment.

- High expectations for every member of the learning community.

- Students and teachers engaged in active learning.

- An adult advocate for every student.

- School-initiated family and community partnerships (NMSA, 2003).

Several longitudinal studies have documented the impact of the middle-level

framework on student achievement. In a six year study of urban, suburban and rural

schools in Illinois, Felner and his colleagues (1997) found that schools with high

implementation of the middle-level framework in the *Turning Points* Recommendations (Carnegie Corporation, 1989), (referenced above) had higher student achievement scores than schools that either did not implement or only partially implemented the framework. The study reported that participating schools "represent the full-range geographic, demographic, and size characteristics of all schools in Illinois" (Felner et al, 1997, p. 542). Thus, differences in achievement were not due to socioeconomic status, but were due to the level of implementation of the middle-level framework. The data showed that, across subject areas, adolescents in highly implemented schools achieved at much higher levels than those in non-implemented schools and substantially better than those in partially-implemented schools (Felner et al, 1997, p. 544). The data showed that student behavior is also affected by the implementation of the framework:

> …in the most fully implemented schools, teachers report far lower levels of student behavior problems than do teachers in less implemented and non-implemented schools. Similarly, teachers in partially implemented schools still perceive students as showing fewer behavioral problems than those in less implemented schools…Specifically, students in the more fully implemented schools are less fearful of being victimized, are less worried about something bad happening to them at school and about the future, and are having higher levels of self-esteem…because the groups of schools are comparable with regard to important variables of school and community contexts, it is not the case that, for example, the 'fearfulness' of youths in non-implemented schools might be justified because of unsafe conditions in the neighborhood. (Felner et al, 1997, pp. 344-345).

A study that looked at the relationship between instructional practices and student achievement (Mertens & Flowers, 2003), as recommended in a middle-level framework, was conducted in 121 southern U.S. schools. Most of the schools in the study had high percentages of poverty level students. The researchers determined that it was only when they examined the combined effects of family poverty level, teaming and common planning time and duration of teaming, that they found a relationship between teaming and classroom practices and student achievement. The degree of implementation of the *Turning Points* ecommendations impacted the schools' ability to prevent decline or enhance outcomes for 'at-risk' students. However, absence of declines do not appear until "implementation is quite mature, comprehensive and being conducted with a high degree of fidelity" (Felner et al, 1997). Another longitudinal study (Mertens et al, 1998 as cited in Greene et al, 2006) looked at the relationship between middle-school practices and student achievement and reported that teaming and common planning influenced higher scores in reading and math achievement. Although policy statements and papers on the purposes of the junior-high school structure were written prior to the publication of *Turning Points* (1989), no empirical studies have been identified in this review of the literature that specifically address the impact of the traditional junior-high school structure[10].

Challenges to a clear analysis of the effects of the tenets of *This We Believe* (NMSA, 1982 1995, 2003) and *Turning Points* Recommendations (Carnegie Corporation,

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[10] One of the major debates about the junior-high school was the degree of differentiation that should be undertaken with early adolescents. This was one of the issues considered by the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education in *Cardinal Principles* (1918 as cited in Spring, 1986). In general, vocational education, vocational guidance, and the junior-high school were all answers to national concerns about international economic competition (Spring, 1986).

1989), on student achievement is the extent to which the recommendations were implemented – if at all (Greene et al, 2007). Joseph Murphy (1993) states that very little of the current understanding of restructuring efforts has come from studies of what is actually happening in districts, schools, and classrooms. According to Murphy, "there is a notable paucity of empirical studies and research on school restructuring" (Murphy, 1993).

Despite the decades of discussions, and many articles on curriculum and pedagogy, there have been few longitudinal mixed-method policy studies on the results of middle-school practices. According to Greene et al (2007), this scarcity, as well as the lack of a national data base, has resulted in a "shallow research foundation" (p. 6). In addition to the lack of empirical research on the middle-level reform, the theoretical linkages between structural changes (e.g., middle-level reform) and the bridging variables (e.g., teacher attitudes) that connect them to important outcomes (e.g., enhanced student learning) "are neither direct nor dependable, simple nor linear" (Malen et al., 1989, p. 29 as cited in Murphy, 1991). Malen and her colleagues also concluded that "the relationship between formal structural adjustments and stated objectives cannot be taken for granted. They must be subjected to empirical verification" (1989, p. 30 as cited in Murphy, 1991). The middle-level reform represents alterations to the fundamental structure of the education system. According to Murphy (1991) "the path between these macro-level reconfigurations and micro-level processes is long, many-jointed and loosely linked in a number of places" (p. 77). In addition to the 'thinness' of the empirical evidence, much of the monitoring and assessment have been conducted by site level advocates for restructuring (Murphy, 1991).

Curriculum

The implementation of middle-school models resulted in new curriculum trends in the 1960s and 1970s. Interdisciplinary teaching teams and advisory programs facilitated more student-centered curricula, and curriculum models focused on the developmental i.e. physical, cognitive, social and cultural characteristics of young adolescents (Topfer as cited in Caskey, 2002). Caskey (2002) recommends authentic middle-level curriculum that encompasses the key concepts of being "integrated, coherent and democratic" (p. 107). An integrated curriculum "empowers teachers and their students to make connections between their school learning experiences and real life" (Caskey, 2002, p. 106). Curriculum that is coherent helps students to connect school experiences to their daily lives outside of school and encourages them to reflect on the totality of their experiences (National Middle School Association, 1995). Caskey notes that teachers and students are capable of co-developing coherent curricula that deliberately connect purposes, learning experiences and assessments (2002, p. 107). She also states that a democratic curriculum allows students to actively participate in curriculum development, which allows them to experience the social processes of democracy. Beane notes that a democratic curriculum treats students as "real people who live in the real world, and care about its condition and fate" (as cited in Caskey, 2002, p. 107). Caskey and other researchers report, however, that tension created by high-stakes testing, and other facets of standards-based reform, may impede efforts to create relevant, integrated curriculum for young adolescents (Caskey, 2001; Vars & Bean, 2000).

Grade Span Configuration

Hough examined the early evolution of basic middle-school configurations in the nineteenth century:

Some systems favored eight years of elementary and four years of secondary education, but most had six years of each to better facilitate the movement of children into the labor force. With the passage of child labor laws early in the twentieth century, the need arose to prepare many more students for secondary schools. Accordingly, junior-high schools, patterned after high schools, were conceived (1995, p. 10).

From the review of the literature, several features of the middle-school configuration become apparent. The first is that the basic K-8 and high school structure had its roots in economics; not in the academic or intellectual abilities or needs of the students (Seller, 2004). It is also important to note that the pivotal age group for alternative age span models is the 10 to 14 year old age group. With the beginnings of the junior-high configuration, curriculum was oriented toward a subject based model. When the purpose changed from academic learning to meeting the needs of young adolescent learners, it was realized that a more child centered environment was required (Pardini, 2002). Students needed to be with teachers who were trained to recognize learner needs and adapt the curriculum accordingly. This environment was more likely to be found in elementary schools than in secondary schools; therefore, the movement away from junior- high and toward 'middle-schools' began (Hough, 1995). However, the question of

whether the grade span configuration employed is to meet the complex learning and developmental needs of young adolescents or to prepare students for high school is more complex. As Seller (2004) reported, some of the purposes for grade span configuration include:

1. academic achievement

2. social adjustment

3. high school preparation

4. increased parental involvement

5. beneficial effect on the community

Administrative purposes that are often part of the reason for trying different models include:

1. cost effectiveness

2. transportation efficiency

3. building usage

4. personnel deployment

According to MacIver and Epstein (as cited in Paglin and Faber, 1997), there are over thirty documented middle-school grade span configurations in use. Research further indicates that any particular purpose may be served by more than one configuration (Paglin & Fager, 1997; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Although the literature suggests that the two most common purposes for a particular grade span are academic achievement and student development, Paglin and Fager (1997) provide a caveat: "No particular sequence of grade spans is perfect or in itself guarantees student achievement and social adjustment" (p. 12). McEwin and colleagues cautioned against districts with

unsuccessful middle-schools moving young adolescents to elementary schools as a 'quick fix' instead of taking the steps necessary to make their middle-school highly successful (McEwin, Dickinson & Jacobson, 2004).

Hawai'i's Grade Span Configuration.

Hawai'i's regular public school middle-level grade span configurations currently include K-7, K-8, K-9, K-10, K-12, middle (6, 7, 8), intermediate (7, 8) and intermediate/high-school (7-12). There are a total of seven configurations for middle-level students. Middle-school (6, 7, 8) is the most frequently used configuration at twenty-five schools, followed by intermediate (7, 8) at eleven schools. Configurations including lower grades, involving twelve schools, are most frequently found in rural schools on Oahu, and small schools on the outer islands. Four schools combine intermediate grades (7, 8) with high school (9-12) (Hawai'i DOE, 2006).

Hawai'i has twenty-eight charter schools, whose middle-level grade span configurations include grades (4-8) at one school and (6-8) at two schools. Two schools combine middle-grades (6-8) with high school. Three schools combine intermediate grades (7-8) with high school (9-12). Another twelve schools have configurations of elementary with high school (K-12 and combinations)[11].

Rethinking the K-8 Configuration

According to Hough, an *elemiddle* school can best be described as "one that attends to the needs of young adolescents, aged 10 to 14, in any combination of grades 5 through 8, but is also part of an organizational structure that includes lower grades" (1995, p. 62). While the names junior-high, middle, or intermediate do not define a

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[11] Data from Superintendent's Update, Hawai'i State DOE, June 22, 2006.

school's program, different grade-span configurations can be linked to three separate

organizational groupings: *elemiddle* (any combination of K-5 and 6-8), *middle* (6-8), and

junior-high (7-9) (Hough, 1995). However, Craig Howley, the then-director of the ERIC

Clearinghouse on Rural and Small Schools[12] believes that reformers should redefine the

underlying issues when pondering reconfiguration:

> …interest in grade-span configuration rests on the dubious assumption that
>
> segregating students by age is a natural law of schooling…We ignore the
>
> underlying issue when we think like that. The underlying issue is how should we
>
> configure educational institutions, not what grade-span configuration is best
>
> (Howley, 1998, p. 6 as cited in Howley, 2002).

Howley also states:

> …many students could finish a K-12 curriculum in 10 years. Many might profit
>
> from 15 years…we think the former route, 10 years, is better than the latter, 15
>
> years. It's not! Both are worthy. However, resources not spent on the former
>
> route could be profitably redirected toward the latter. It makes practical and
>
> ethical sense. And it would realize the public purpose of education a whole lot
>
> better than the configuration of our present system (1998, p. 6 as cited in Howley,
>
> 2002).

    Recently, larger urban districts, that have middle-school and intermediate

configurations, have wanted to take a second look at grade level configuration to try other

types of schools, e.g. K-8. Reeves (2005) explains this as the failure of largely urban

school systems to properly implement the initial research on middle-school education.

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[12] Though the ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools is now closed, links to ERIC Digests related to small or rural schools can be found at the following site: http://www.ael.org/eric/

When urban school boards and superintendents embraced the middle-school model during the 1970s and 1980s, they did so without developing a deep understanding of the purpose of middle-schools or the support they required to be effective. Thus, school leaders simply fell in line with the national movement and responded to advocates for middle-schools within their school system (Reeves, 2005).

<u>Student Achievement</u>

Howley (2002), emphasizing the need for further study, referenced two studies in which student achievement in grades 6 and 8 was higher when these grades were associated with elementary rather than secondary schools. In Connecticut, grade 6 students achieved higher scores when grade 6 was configured with lower grades – e.g. K-6, K-8. This was especially true when grade 6 was associated with high school -- e.g. grades 6-12. In a Maine study, the researchers found that grade 8 student achievement was higher when grade 8 was associated with elementary schools -- e.g. K-8, 3-8, K-9 -- than when grade 8 was part of junior or senior high schools. Alspaugh (1998) found lower performance among students who had left an elementary school and entered a middle-school in grade 6. Grade 9 students who had changed from an elementary school to a middle-school, and then from a middle-school to a high school, experienced a greater loss than students who moved from K-8 to a high school. Alspaugh called this additional loss for students experiencing two school transitions "*double jeopardy,*" making these students at higher risk of dropping out later in high school (1998, p. 23). Seidman et al (1994) gave the following insight in what students face when they transition to middle-schools or junior-high, explaining the achievement loss:

The transition to a middle or junior-high school typically requires accommodation to an increasingly large, impersonal, and bureaucratic educational milieu. Youth need to adjust to dramatic increases in disciplinary specialization, rules and regulations, and the number of teachers and other school personnel with whom they have only limited and circumscribed contact. Similarly they are confronted with a new set of school peers and interpersonal 'tests.' Such disruptions in daily social regularities require a restructuring of social roles (p. 508).

Studies in Louisiana and Texas report positive effects on student achievement in K-12 schools[13]. Students achieved equally well when their classes were in a K-12 school as they did when the classes were in an elementary school. Students in grade 6 and 7 in K-12 schools had higher achievement records than those in middle-school configurations. Howley (2002) relates the strong scoring of the K-12 schools to the fact that these schools tend to be rural and smaller. He also attributes these schools with improving the performance of students with low socioeconomic status.

The percentage of K-8 schools is higher in rural areas than in suburban areas, e.g. 10 % rural vs. 4% suburban (Howley, 2002). However, when San Antonio School District shifted to K-8 academies in 2003, it was because of success of the city's Catholic schools. A 2005 sampling of K-8 administrators indicated that 84% of those surveyed said they considered middle-schools to be more effective (Reeves, 2005).

Several case studies have addressed the question: 'Is academic achievement better among middle-grades students in K-8 schools compared to students in 6-8 schools?' In January, 2002, a case study involving two Cleveland schools that had converted to K-8 in

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[13] Texas, like Louisiana, is one of the few states with a large number of K-12 schools. In fact, every K-12 school in Texas constitutes the only school in that district (Howley, 2002).

response to the statement by the then-CEO of the Cleveland Municipal School District that declared the district's system of 25 middle-schools 'failing.' One of the schools was a Montessori school; the other is a gifted and talented school serving regular and special education students. Security officers were added to the staffs to address questions about 'safety' and class sizes were reduced to 20 in one school and 19 in the other. Additional monies were invested to secure Montessori certification for all teachers in the Montessori school. Results of the comparison analysis of test scores suggest that students in grades 6 and 7 in K-8 schools have a modest but significantly higher academic performance than same grade students in 6-8 schools, although this difference was not observed in grade 8 students. Another finding of the study was middle-grades students perceive their K-8 schools as caring communities, a very different view from what they believe occurred at the traditional middle-school (Cleveland Municipal School District, 2002).

The research on the benefits of the K-8 concept is limited and remains inconclusive. As with the middle-school framework, few empirical studies on the K-8 configuration have been conducted. There is a need for longitudinal and mixed-method studies in this area.

Social and Psychological Development

While student achievement is a consideration when making decisions about grade span configuration, meeting the social and psychological developmental needs of students at various ages are important factors as well. Among the changes occurring in young adolescents aged 10-14 years are:

> …physical growth, moral reasoning and social issues….Because these
>
> transformations occur "suddenly and simultaneously, often for the first time in

their experience, giant gaps emerge between maturation and children's ability to

cope (Hough, 1995, p. 10, as cited in Seller, 2004).

It is for these reasons that schools with more of a child-centered philosophy where

teachers have more training in how to meet the social and psychological needs of the

students are increasingly favored (Seller, 2004). While no single configuration has

proven most effective, those which keep grades 6-7-8 together are most common. A

national trend over the past thirty years has meant a shift toward the middle-school

configuration (Reeves, 2005).   This means that application of the middle-school concept

is increasing, while the junior-high concept is decreasing in use (see Table 1 below).

Table 1: U.S. Public School Grade Configuration – Number of Schools and Percentages
Of Configurations, 2000-2001

	Pre-K, K or grade 1 to grades 3	Pre-K, K, or grade 1 to grade 5	Pre-K, K or grade 1 to grade 6	Pre-K, K or grade 1 to grade 8	Grades 4, 5, or 6 to grades 7 or 8	Other grade configurations	Total
Number of schools	4,883	22,572	14,445	5,198	11,696	5,807	64,601
% of total schools	7.6	34.9	22.4	8.0	18.1	9.0	100

 Source: Digest of Education Statistics, 2002. Chapter 2. Elementary and Secondary
Education. Found at: http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d02/tables/dt98.asp

The Issue of School Safety

A tension exists between the middle-level school reform advocates and those who

advocate a return to a standard K-8 curriculum. Some of this tension centers on the issue

of safety, following the events of Columbine and other school violence tragedies

(Garbarino, 2006; Garbarino, 1999; Garbarino & DeLara, 2002; Raywid & Oshiyama,

2000).

Violence comes in forms of bullying and teasing as well as in physical acts. In a series of five video tapes that they made before their shooting spree at Columbine High School, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold spoke bitterly of verbal harassment that they had been subjected to for years by other students as the main precipitant of their violent rage. The justification offered by one of the students who engaged in the 'teasing' and verbal harassment of the Columbine shooters was the upholding of some kind of social norm (Garbarino, 2002).

According to Garbarino (2006), bullying, threats and counter-threats occur frequently in middle-schools, and as often among girls as boys. Although middle-school students surveyed in a 2007 poll conducted by Phi Delta Kappa International and the National Association of Secondary School Principals indicated that they did not perceive racial or ethnic tracking in their schools, 77% of respondents reported that students in these schools have a negative attitude toward people who are or are thought to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual. This suggests that educators need to protect this vulnerable group of students (NASSP/PDK, 2007).

<u>School Size</u>

There is overwhelming evidence that violence is much less likely to occur in small schools than in large ones. In fact, students behave better generally in small schools where they are known (Raywid & Oshiyama, 2000). According to James Garbarino, one of the nation's top scholars on juvenile delinquency, "If I could do one single thing [to stop the scourge of violence among juveniles], it would be to ensure that teenagers are not in high schools bigger than 400 to 500 students (as cited in Raywid & Oshiyama, 2000). Garbarino also states in *Lost Boys*:

…[small schools] encourage participation by teenage students – particularly those

students who are at risk of dropping out because of their family background,

personal characteristics, and prior school history. In a small school, these

marginal students are needed to make school activities function. In a large

school, such students are not needed because there are plenty of other, more

socially and personally desirable, students to do what needs to be done to make a

go of the sports teams, choirs, student government…As a result of being needed,

marginal students in a small school are more likely to feel that they belong and

have a stake in the school and are more likely to care about the school. Thus,

there is less delinquency and dropping out in small schools (1999, p. 204).

Imberman (2007), using longitudinal data from a large urban school district,

found that charter schools were effective in generating improvements in discipline,

attendance and retention. Start-up charters, or schools that open as charters, provide

larger improvements in discipline than conversion charters, which are traditional public

schools that convert to charter status. Imberman concluded that one possibility for the

large discipline impacts in start-up charters is they are much smaller than non-charters

and conversions, providing administrators with the ability to closely oversee their schools

and students. A second possibility is that peer influences may make an impact on

discipline.

School Violence

Violence has traditionally been associated more with boys than girls, but the gap

is narrowing. Garbarino (2006) reports in *See Jane Hit* that twenty-five years ago for

every ten boys arrested for assault, there was only one girl. Now, there are four boys

arrested for each girl arrested. Hawai'i is not exempt from these figures (McFarland &

Davidson, 2005). A study by researchers at the Center for Youth Research at the

University of Hawai'i at Manoa (Chesney-Lind, Pasko, Marker, Matsen & Lawyer, 2005)

reported that whereas boys' arrests have decreased since 1992, girls' arrests have

increased by more than 18%, with the largest increases occurring in simple assault, drug

abuse and liquor law violations (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2003, p. 239 as cited in

Chesney-Lind, et al, 2005). The study also reported that in Hawai'i, girls' arrests account

for nearly two-fifths (42 %) of overall juvenile arrests (compared to 29 % nationally) and

represent 40 % of juvenile cases referred to Family Court (Department of the Attorney

General, 2003 as cited in Chesney-Lind et al, 2005). In these cases, girls account for

nearly one-third of 'other assaults' and 'offenses against the family.' Additionally, girls

in Hawai'i represent over one-quarter of juveniles arrested for drug law violations

(Department of the Attorney General, 2003 as cited in Chesney-Lind et al, 2005).

Middle-level students – e.g. 6th and 8th graders – on the Big Island, Maui, Lanai and Oahu

reported *percentage of gang involvement* between 28.5 and 37.5 % (Chesney-Lind et al,

2005, pp. 41-43). The data establish that for one in five youths in Hawai'i, gang

involvement is a significant part of their lives. Significantly, these populations are from

all the islands, include girls as well as boys, and middle-level students are included in

these high percentages.

Chesney-Lind and Selden (2003) recommend comprehensive counseling to

address multiple problems, including sexual abuse and exposure to violence; support for

educational and vocational development; and special support for girls separated from

their families and in need of surrogate parental figures. While these three factors

recognize some of the forces at work in the development of violence in girls, none particularly differentiates delinquent girls from delinquent boys.

Garbarino and deLara (2006) state that it is unrealistic to expect that as soon as kids enter middle-school, they will have coping skills adequate to the task of dealing with the interpersonal problems of harassment that may confront them on a daily basis. They recommend in-service training for school personnel on verbal abuse and the consequences of bullying, harassment, and emotional violence (Garbarino & deLara, 2006).

The Issue of Discipline

A recent study sponsored by Phi Delta Kappa International and the National Association of Secondary School Principals polled more than 1,800 middle-school students (NASSP/PDK, 2007).   Ninety-seven percent of the students polled said it was important (either *very important* or *somewhat important*) that the high school they attend be a safe and orderly place. They listed *discipline*—a broad topic that includes inappropriate behavior, bullying, gangs, social pressure, and fights—as the number one problem in their schools. This isn't news: for more than three decades, opinion polls have shown that the public considers lack of discipline among the most serious problems facing schools (Baker, 1985).

School Size and Discipline in Hawai'i's Middle-Level Charter Schools.

Data on disciplinary infractions in Hawai'i's public schools were reviewed for 2005-2006[14]. Charter school and regular public school data were analyzed separately to determine differences between the two types.

In 2005-2006, twenty-seven charter schools averaged 207 pupils per school and served 5,596 students. They represented 3% of Hawai'i's total public school population. Smaller numbers of students typically attend Hawai'i's charter schools, and their middle-level configurations usually involve some combination of elementary with middle-level (K-8), elementary with high school (K-12), or middle-level/intermediate with high school (6-12, 7-12). Only two charter schools—one on the Island of Hawai'i and one on Oahu—had typical middle-level grade configurations. Nineteen of the charter schools served some configuration of middle-level students that combined middle-level students with either elementary or high school students (or both), with an average population of 193 students per school (Appendix A).

Thirteen of the nineteen charter schools with middle-level populations had no disciplinary infractions in the twelve categories reviewed in this study.[15] Six charter schools with middle-level populations of various configurations reported 155 disciplinary infractions in Classes A through D, with Class A and B offenses representing 35% of the

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[14] Data reviewed for this study included 12 categories of infractions reported by the Hawai'i DOE for 2005–2006; *Honolulu Advertiser*, March 18, 2006. Class A (the most severe) = sexual offense, assault, dangerous weapon, dangerous instrument. Class B = physical, verbal, racial, sexual, sexual orientation harassment. Class C = truancy. Class D = physical contact, teasing & taunting. The Hawai'i DOE has no policy on creating anti-bullying programs.

[15] Incidents of *disorderly conduct*, a Class B offense, were not included in this report because of school discretion in reporting resulting in ambiguity among the data. Principals may cite an incident as *disorderly conduct,* a Class B offense, when it should be a *physical contact*, Class D offense. This study looked at offenses that are specifically defined in the categories of *assault, harassment*, *truancy*, and *teasing* and *taunting* -- the areas that most impact school safety, violence, and dropping out (*Honolulu Advertiser*, March 18, 2006).

reported offenses (Appendix B)[16]. Two schools were responsible for most of the Class A and Class B infractions while a third school accounted for nearly all of the Class C truancies[17]. There was only one report of a *dangerous weapon* among the six schools.

School Size and Discipline in Hawai'i's Middle-Level Regular Public Schools.

Fifty-four regular Hawai'i DOE public schools served a middle-level population of nearly 40,000 students in three configurations (Appendix B). The average size of all regular public schools serving middle-level students was 740 students per school, making them more than three times larger than the average charter school with middle-level students.

Thirty-six of these regular public schools had a typical middle-school or intermediate school configuration (6-8, 7-8), and served approximately 29,500 students, averaging more than 800 students per school. This means that most (74%) middle-level students in Hawai'i's regular public schools attended schools four times larger than the average charter school with middle-level students in attendance.

Analysis of Hawai'i DOE Discipline Infractions – Charter and Regular Public Schools, 2005-2006.

Disciplinary infractions by middle-level students in Hawai'i's regular public schools and charter schools showed stark differences, both in the numbers of incidents within the two groups, and in the degree of seriousness of the offenses. A review of 2005-2006 data showed that regular DOE schools serving middle-level students had more

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[16] Note: Only one school of those reporting disciplinary infractions, i.e., a conversion charter school, had a regular middle school configuration.

[17] Class C offenses included 49 *truancies* reported by a single school. This may be a mis-reported figure, as the school has fewer than 50 students (*Honolulu Advertiser*, March 18, 2006).

than twice the rate of offenses per student as charter schools[18] serving middle-level students and these events were of a more serious nature. Seventy-eight percent of all infractions by middle-level students in regular DOE schools occurred in the 36 schools with the regular middle-level configuration (6-8, 7-8) serving about 74% of the DOE middle-level population. Two-thirds (66%) of these offenses represented Class A *sexual assaults* and *physical assaults* and Class B cases of *harassment*. Most of the harassment cases were *verbal* and *physical*. When they were combined with the reported Class D *teasing* and *taunting* cases, they represented 60% of the offenses in the regular middle-level configuration. And it is these kinds of harassments that precipitated the events of Columbine and other middle and high schools.

The two other middle-level configurations also had high percentages of Class A and B offenses. Intermediate with high school configurations (7-12) listed more than three-fourths (76%) of their offenses as Class A and Class B. Elementary and middle-school (K-8 or other combinations) or elementary and high school configurations (K-12) reported that sixty percent of offenses were Classes A and Class B. However, no matter the grade configuration, offenses in regular public schools serving middle-level populations had greater numbers of the most serious offenses and these offenses averaged nearly 70% of all the offenses in the regular public schools, across the three configurations. This contrasts sharply with disciplinary infractions in the charter school middle-level configurations, where the most serious Class A and Class B offenses totaled 35% of all offenses. While charter schools have smaller school sizes over-all, with fewer numbers of all offenses in all categories, regardless of configuration, this study does not

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[18] Regular DOE public schools offenses were reported at a rate 1 per 9.35 students vs. 1 per 23.6 students for charter schools.

reveal <u>why</u> charter schools have fewer numbers of offenses and why those reported are of a less serious nature.

Table 2 shows the middle-level population in Hawai'i's charter and regular public schools, and the class and frequency of disciplinary infractions.

Table 2: Hawai'i DOE Discipline Infractions – Charter and Regular Public Schools, 2005-2006

Number of Schools with Middle-Level Students[19]	Middle-Level Pop., Schools with Offenses	Class A	Class B	Class C	Class D	Total # Offenses in Middle-Level Schools	Rate of Offenses per Students
Charter (19 schools[20])	3,664 ave. pop. = 193	17	37	52	49	155	1:23.6
Regular public (54 schools)	39,958 ave. pop.=740	746	2069	397	1,061	4,273	1:9.35

Source: State of Hawai'i, DOE, 2005-2006; *Honolulu Advertiser*, March 18, 2006).

The Hawai'i Department of Education has no system-wide anti-bullying policy. In September, 2007, the Safe Schools Community Advisory Committee, a group of educators and consultants, recommended such a program be implemented by 2010 (State of Hawai'i, BOE, 2007). The program would include annual mandatory school assemblies on strategies to address bullying for students and presentations and workshops for parents.

Dropping Out in Middle-School

Absenteeism, the most common indicator of overall student engagement, and student discipline problems are both associated with dropping out of school (Rumberger,

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[19] These schools represent all schools with middle-level students, with all configurations.

[20] Six of the nineteen schools incurred disciplinary infractions. The total population in the six schools was 1,145 students; school size averaged 191 in the six schools.

1997; Rumberger & Larson, 1998; Wehlage & Rutter, 1986). Several longitudinal studies (Alexander, Entwisle, & Horsey, 1997; Alexander, Entwisle & Kabbini, 2001; Barrington & Hendricks, 1989; Jimerson, Egeland, Stroufe & Carlson, 2000) found that early academic achievement and engagement in elementary and middle-school predicted eventual withdrawal from high school. Rumberger (1995) found that students who were retained in grades 1 to 8 were four times more likely to drop out between grades 8 and 10 than students who were not retained, even after controlling for socio-economic status, eighth-grade school performance and other factors.

According to the PDK/NMSA (2007) report, 93% of middle-level students said there was *no chance* they would drop out of school and fail to earn a diploma. Although high school dropout rates are hotly contested, it is questionable that 93% of middle-level students, particularly African-American, Latino, and in Hawai'i, Native Hawaiians, Samoans and other Pacific Islanders, go on to earn a high school diploma. Ninety-two percent of the students indicated that they will *definitely* or *probably* attend college; however statistics show that the percentage of students who actually begin attendance at a two-year or four- year institution after high school graduation is roughly 66%.

The Issue of Dropping Out in Hawai'i.

According to a 2003 study, Hawai'i was one of twelve states with the worst loss of students between the ninth and tenth grades, a loss of 15.9% (Haney, Madaus & Abrams, 2003). Many of these disengaged students are Native Hawaiian; thus, programs aimed at recruiting and preparing teachers from these under-represented minorities might improve education experiences for these minority student populations and might well be a goal of education policy reform (McFarland, 2006). In Hawai'i, 46% of the total prison

population are dropouts (Tito, personal conversation, 2005). However, this dropout rate is a 'self-reported' figure, and the real rate is thought to be much higher, as prisoners often report they have completed high school when they have not (a condition of parole is that they attain a GED) (Tito, personal conversation, 2005). Of course, the social tragedy of dropping out is not limited to high school students in Hawai'i. While the average age of dropping out for incarcerated females is 10th grade, the same age as that of non-incarcerated females, the average age for dropping out for incarcerated males is 6th grade, with some reporting dropping out as early as 3rd grade (Interview, Tito, 2005, as cited in McFarland, 2006). Native Hawaiians represent 12.5% of the state's population, yet they represent 39% of Hawai'i's prison population. Hawaiian males represent 38% and females represent 44% of the state's prison population (Office of Hawaiian Affairs, 2005).

Impact of Transition

At the institutional level, the disengagement process has brought increased attention to the transition from middle school to high school. Research indicates that school-to-school transition is a critical time for adolescents (Mahoe, 2003). School transitions introduce students to two general types of school discontinuities: organizational and social.

As the Carnegie Report (1989) cautioned nearly three decades ago, the transition period from elementary to middle school is a critical period for young adolescents. Another transitional period comes when middle-school students enter high school in 9th grade. According to Kerr & Legters (2004), for ninth graders, the pressure of making a school transition is amplified by the developmental struggles they are facing as

adolescents, leading to a greater chance for negative outcomes. In her review, Legters

(2000) reports that many ninth graders have a difficult time adjusting to the demands of

high school, resulting in lower grades, more disciplinary problems, higher failure rates,

and feeling that they don't 'fit in' to the high school community. Organizational reforms

such as small learning communities, detracking in favor of a common core curriculum,

and interdisciplinary teaming have been promoted as key reforms in the movement to

create more personalized and responsive learning environments (Kerr & Legters, 2004).

This view aligns as well with NMSA (2003) tenets advocating teaming. However, current

research fails to address whether and how schools are using these ideas to meet the needs

of ninth graders, and what impact, if any, those efforts might be having.

Teaming

Robert Slavin and his colleagues' *Success for All Middle School* reform, a

replicable model that works to enhance achievement, was a response to the Carnegie

Corporation's report, *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century*

(1989) (referenced previously on page 8 of this report). The *Success for All Middle*

School model recommends grouping into interdisciplinary teams, cooperative learning

groups[21] and specially designed curricular components that focus on reading (Daniels,

Madden, & Slavin, 2005). Slavin, Lake, & Groff (2007) conducted a review of 100

studies on the achievement outcomes of mathematics programs for middle and high

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[21] Cooperative learning refers to a set of strategies in which students work in pairs or small groups to help one another master academic content (Slavin & Lake, 2007). Slavin and Lake (2007) report that extensive research on cooperative learning in many subjects and grade levels has found that cooperative learning increases student learning if it provides the groups with a common goal that they can only achieve if all group members do well on independent assessments. Thus, cooperative learning enhances achievement when children are motivated to teach each other, in a setting in which teammates know that their own success depends in part on the learning of their teammates (Slavin & Lake, 2007).

schools. They concluded that when cooperative learning programs, e.g. instructional process programs, were introduced, gains in learning increased. Positive effects were similar across programs for students of different social classes and different ethnic backgrounds. Thus, ethnicity and socio-economic status of students in cooperative learning programs had little effect on their achievement (Slavin, Lake, & Groff, 2007).

Aronson (as cited in Garbarino & deLara, 2006) also argued in favor of the systematic introduction of cooperative structures in the classroom. His research demonstrates success in transforming the social relationships among children in a more accepting direction by involving them in teams that demand and reward cooperation.

Implications for School-University Partnerships

Over twenty-five years ago, Sanders (1981, as cited in Smith & Lim, 2007), warned university professors and researchers about languishing in the ivory towers:

…practitioners are generally expected to depend on the results of research 'disseminated' to them. The consequence is that scientific studies tend to be reported to the specialized subgroup with which the investigators identify. Researchers identify with, and publish for, communities that do not include practitioners and vice versa (p. 10).

Researchers employing participatory research, community action research, and action research frameworks attempt to counter the traditional university, research-centered model (Greenwood & Levin, 2005; Shulman, 2000, as cited in Smith & Lim, 2007). In an effort to meet the need for more qualified middle-level teachers, a collaboration between the University of Hawai'i, College of Education; the Hawai'i Department of Education (DOE); and the Hawai'i Association of Independent Schools

(HAIS) was formed in the 2006-2007 school year to study the feasibility of implementing a Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Middle-Level Education (CMLE) in the College of Education. Students who complete this initial basic teacher licensure program would be able to apply up to 12 course credits from the CMLE to a Master's Degree program in Curriculum Studies (i.e. the Middle-Level Education Program (MLMED). The Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Middle-Level Education program is geared to include a curriculum grounded in standards, while focusing on addressing the needs of young adolescents.

Other Observations

Major studies have shown that good schools can go only so far in raising the achievement levels of disadvantaged children, and devising policies which improve the social and economic conditions of individuals and families will be more effective than creating policies aimed just at schools (Coleman, 1966; Heck, Price & Thomas, 2004; Jencks, 1972; Oakes, 1985; Sacks, 2007). The question for educators and policy makers today is: what happens when children have no social capital, no economic capital, and a national policy -- *No Child Left Behind* -- is structured to enhance the opportunities of those children *with* cultural and economic advantages and to punish those children *without* such cultural and economic advantages? Major studies have shown that good public schools can go only so far in raising achievement levels of students. What happens to middle- school students who (1) arrive at school -- placed in classes into which they have been tracked -- with virtually no advantages in the form of social or economic capital (Sacks, 2007), and (2) are schooled by teachers who are becoming

increasingly disenchanted with being unable to present their subject matter in a way that represents best pedagogical practices for middle-level students (Sacks, 2007)?

<u>Summary</u>

This report highlights the importance of addressing the unique set of needs of middle-level students. The struggle over structuring and content of middle-level education—the K-8 versus middle-school/junior-high argument–mirrors to a considerable extent the broader recurring battle of traditionalism versus progressivism. There are few empirical studies on what constitutes the 'best practices' for middle-level configuration. This question relates to a complex set of variables that deserve further study. Thus, we recommend a longitudinal study to look at what configuration best serves middle-level students in the state of Hawai'i.

Clearly young adolescents are dealing with some unique issues and need special attention in a school or administrative unit of their own. They also need challenging, demanding intellectual fare and learning how to use their minds well. Middle-grades do much more than serve a set of students from ages 10-15 during their transition from elementary school to high school. This is a period when crucial social and physical development occurs. A middle-level foundation that takes students successfully to a secondary education and later to a post-secondary education and life as a productive citizen needs to be reinforced, regardless of school configuration.

The research indicates that school configuration *is not what matters*. What impacts school achievement most [and school safety as well] is school size. How do we build stronger communities for learning in schools? We in Hawai'i live amidst a culture

that values *ohana*[22], yet our schools represent huge impersonal factories. Thus, it is less important to struggle over grade configuration than addressing what is critical: forming community. When economic pressures occur within school districts, issues of efficiency may clash with issues involving quality and equity: building usage may need to be rethought to accommodate smaller learning communities, with specific criteria that is well implemented and clearly in the interests of the children's wellbeing.

This study provides extensive evidence that small schools have major benefits over large ones, particularly in promoting higher attendance and graduation rates; higher levels of academic achievement; fewer students dropping out; and a stronger sense of connectedness. The study also indicates that creating a stronger sense of community meets the social and psychological development needs of middle-level students. Thus, it appears that the research would strongly recommend downsizing Hawai'i's middle schools and working to create programs that encourage a stronger sense of community. It is these efforts, that work to transform the social relationships among children, that will most benefit middle-level students—regardless of their school configuration.

Policy Implications for Hawai'i

1. Impact of Federal Legislation. Substantial pressures impinge upon middle-level teachers who wish to practice developmentally sound practices and who, at the same time, are subject to macro-level standards-based policies such as those of *No Child Left Behind*. Researchers report that under NCLB parameters (NCLB, 2001), states may define the upper grades within their K-8 schools as elementary schools or as secondary schools. If the state classifies the middle-school grades within the K-8 school as an

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[22] Ohana: A Hawaiian word meaning family, kin group or extended family.

elementary school, then these grades must meet the NCLB standards for elementary school teacher quality. However, if the state defines the upper grades in the K-8 facility as a separate 'school-within-a-school' then the NCLB holds the grades to secondary school standards for teacher quality. NCLB requires new teachers in middle-schools who are not within a K-8 facility to have a major or the equivalent of a major in each subject they teach. Given that the majority of middle-level programs in Hawai'i are not part of K-8 facilities, most of the middle-school teachers will have to meet the more stringent requirements. This presents a challenge as the state tries to recruit and retain middle-school teachers, particularly for high-poverty and/or rural areas.

2. Teacher Preparation and Licensing. Training for middle-school teachers presents an additional challenge. In addition to academic content, middle-school teachers must also have knowledge of the unique developmental issues that their students present (NMSA, 2003). There is a need to provide a Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Middle-Level Education (CMLE) to ensure middle-level teachers in the state of Hawai'i will have an opportunity to receive the quality and level of educational support they need to instruct middle-level students. There is also a need to establish middle-level licensure at the state level, to ensure that middle-school teachers are properly prepared, and that they have an education that includes knowledge of the unique developmental issues of the middle-level students. Veteran middle-level teachers need professional development resources enabling them to become highly qualified in every subject they teach.

3. Reduce Truancy and Dropouts. Hawai'i dropout rates are among the highest in the nation, and the implications for middle-school students are enormous. The impact is not only costly to the individuals involved, but also to the state. Each high school dropout

earns approximately $9,600 less annually in salary, than a high school graduate[23]. He or

she would also be likely to be the first to be laid off when times were financially difficult

for employers. The dropout will likely contribute far less in taxes and be far more costly

in terms of the need for public services[24]. Experience has indicated which processes are

most likely to yield successful school attainment and achievement. These include creating

truancy reduction programs at the school level to help reduce dropout rates.

4. Create and Implement Anti-Bullying Programs. Discipline infractions

involving harassment and other forms of bullying occur frequently in Hawai'i's public

schools. Anti-bullying programs and uniform reporting policies need to be established,

with a designated funding stream so as not to divert from classroom resources.

Recommendations

1. The Hawai'i Department of Education should continue to support improving

the education of the middle-level population. There are currently openings for middle-

level teachers, and teacher shortages presently require unlicensed or out-of-field

placements. Requiring full licensure in a middle-level education program will ensure

teachers have the knowledge to teach students.

2. Create a Post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Middle-Level Education (CMLE) in

the College of Education. Such a certificate provides middle-level educators with the

knowledge they need to teach students with their unique developmental issues. Such a

program should have the depth and the breadth necessary to teach at the middle-level.

Teachers should thus be able to have breadth by having a wide range of subjects e.g.

multiple subject knowledge and have in-depth knowledge shown by passing the PRAXIS.

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[23] The average annual income for a high school dropout in 2005 was $17,299 compared to $26,933 for a high school graduate, a difference of $9,634 (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2006).
[24] Each dropout, over his or her lifetime, costs the state of Hawai'i approximately $283,000 (Rouse, 2005).

3. Provide middle-level teachers with common planning time to improve student outcomes, including achievement, safety, growth and development.

4. Student safety is a primary concern as middle-grade students confront the emotional and social challenges of early adolescence. Thus, the following recommendations are made with regard to school safety:

(a) Develop and implement a state-wide discipline code that is proactively enforced and augmented by school-level strategies that hold students accountable for disruptive and inappropriate behavior. School-level policies should create a culture of high expectations for student behavior, as well as establish clear, firm boundaries and discipline for those who break rules. Faculty, staff, parents and students all need to be assured that safety is a high priority in Hawai'i public schools.

(b) The literature shows a serious gap in how teachers respond to bullying. Bullying comes in both physical and verbal forms and teachers' responses vary from taking proactive measures, to just breaking up physical incidents, to being unaware of incidents of harassment/bullying, to completely ignoring issues. We concur with Garbarino and DeLara (2006), who recommend in-service training for school personnel on verbal abuse and on the consequences of bullying, harassment, and emotional violence. This training should include prevention techniques and ways to foster appropriate communication to promote safety. We concur with the recommendations of the Safe Schools Community Advisory Committee report (2007) that recommended education programs for students and parents.

5. Implement programs that address over-crowding. Fund the repair and maintenance of deteriorating middle schools. Many of the local middle-schools that serve

the most under-achieving, at-risk population are overcrowded and in poor physical

condition. This combination breeds an unsafe atmosphere and should be a high priority

on the state's list for change.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Hawaiʻi Charter School Middle-Level Configuration

Appendix B: Hawaiʼi Middle-School Disciplinary Actions

Appendix A

HAWAIʻI CHARTER SCHOOL CONFIGURATION
NUMBER AND TYPE OF SCHOOLS
2005-2006

TYPE	NUMBER
K-5	1
K-6	5
K-8	2
K-10	1
K-12	9
4-8	1
6-8	2
6-12	1
7-12	3
TOTAL	25

Appendix B

NUMBER & TYPE INCIDENT BY SCHOOL CONFIGURATION - HAWAIʻI DOE - 2005-2006

OFFENSES IN CHARTER SCHOOLS

*WITH MIDDLE LEVEL STUDENT POPULATION**	*# Schools in ea. Config.*	*# Students by Configuration*	*Class A Offense*	*Class B Offense*	*Class C Offense*	*Class D Offense*	*School Configuration*	*School Configuration*
Middle School – Intermediate	2	516	1	3	2	32	38	25%
Middle-Intermediate with High School	5	96	7	7	0	8	22	14%
K12 and Combinations	12	533	9	27	50	9	95	61%
TOTAL	19	1145	17	37	52	49	155	100%

OFFENSES IN REGULAR DOE SCHOOLS

*WITH MIDDLE LEVEL STUDENT POPULATION***	*# Schools in ea. Config.*	*# Students by Configuration*	*Class A Offense*	*Class B Offense*	*Class C Offense*	*Class D Offense*	*School Configuration*	*School Configuration*
Middle School – Intermediate	36	29480	493	1704	296	846	3339	78%
Intermediate with High School	6	5646	148	120	65	21	354	8%
K12 and Combinations	12	4832	105	245	36	194	580	14%
TOTAL	54	39958	746	2069	397	1061	4273	100%

*Hawaiʻi's 2005-2006 charter school middle-level student population was 3,664 in 19 schools. Six schools reported a total of 155 discipline infractions. The other 13 schools with middle level Students did not report discipline infractions in 12 categories.

**Hawaiʻi's regular public school middle-level student population for 2005-2006 was 39,958 in 54 schools = 740 students per school.

Class A = sexual offense, physical assault, dangerous weapon, dangerous instrument

Class B = physical, verbal, racial, sexual harrassment

Class C = truancy

Class D = physical contact, teasing & taunting