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State-wide Middle Level Implementation: Lessons Learned

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Abstract

This paper examines the progress of one state in implementing the middle school concept. Results of a survey distributed in 1990 were compared to results of a similar survey distributed in the spring of 2004. Progress or the lack thereof has been noted. Implications from this survey can serve to heighten awareness and continue to improve the quality of middle level education.

State-wide Middle Level Implementation: Lessons Learned

Many people involved in organizations, political forces, and schools have believed in and worked hard to advance the middle level concept. Their goal is to implement a philosophy of teaching young adolescents in a more caring and supportive environment than currently exists in the traditional junior high school. This paper surveys the progress of one state over the last fifteen years to implement that philosophy and identifies lessons that can be learned from the experience.

"In 1989, The Carnegie Corporation of New York issued *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century*, a landmark report that recognizes the need to strengthen the academic core of middle schools and establish caring, supportive environments which value adolescents." (Turning Points History, n.d.) While governor of Arkansas, Bill Clinton served on the *Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents*, which developed this report. (*Turning Points*, 1990) As a result, implementation of the middle level concept became a priority for the state of Arkansas. Clinton formed the *Arkansas Middle Grade Policy and Practice Task Force* with the purpose of studying how best to implement the middle level concept in Arkansas public schools.

In January of 1990, the *Arkansas Middle Grade Policy and Practice Task Force* commissioned a survey to assess the status of middle level education in the State of Arkansas. The survey was distributed to all Arkansas superintendents and all principals of schools with grades five to nine. Six hundred surveys were distributed and 343 surveys were returned for a return rate of just over 57 percent. One of the major findings was identifying the need and willingness for training in middle level programming. Almost 67 percent of superintendents and principals indicated that their faculty needed training, and just under 76 percent indicated that their staff would be willing to be trained/in-serviced in middle level programming. (Pederson & Totten, 1992) Based on the conclusions of this study, the Arkansas Department of Education, in conjunction with the University of Arkansas, established the Center for Middle Level Education Research and Development in 1990. The Center provided a one week summer training institute that would train educators in middle level programming. School teams consisting of four to five teachers and the principal were trained in middle level philosophy and interdisciplinary teaming. The school teams were also involved in planning for implementation of the middle level concept in their respective schools. Approximately 12 teams from various public

schools across the state of Arkansas participated each summer. The Center provided training for six consecutive summers, until the funding ended in 1996. This progression of events was the initial catalyst for the middle level movement in Arkansas.

On another front, the Foundation for the Mid South was established in 1989. This private philanthropic organization, which receives no government funds, includes Arkansas, Mississippi, and Louisiana. One of the foundation's programs, Middle Start, is designed to provide a comprehensive effort to improve the middle grades. In the Middle Start 2001-2002 school year report, 68 Arkansas schools, approximately 23 percent of Arkansas middle schools, were participating in this initiative (Mid South Middle Start: Arkansas Progress Report, 2002). Positive outcomes were noted in the report. The report indicated that "teachers in (participating) Arkansas schools who are teaming with high common planning time report more positive attitudes about best middle grades practices, higher levels of team practices, more quality interactions among team members, and more parent involvement (Mid South Middle Start: Arkansas Progress Report, 2002).Middle Start has had and continues to have an impact on the implementation of the middle school concept in the State of Arkansas.

On January 1, 2002, the State of Arkansas requirements for teacher licensure changed from 1-6 generalists and 7-12 specific content to P-4 early childhood, 4-8 math/science or 4-8 language/social studies, and 7-12 specific content. This change in licensure addresses both *Turning Points'* and *This We Believe's* recommendations to provide teachers who are specifically trained to work with young adolescents. (*Turning Points*, 1990; *This We Believe*, 2003) Even though overlap exists between the mid-level (4-8) and the secondary (7-12), the Arkansas Department of Education has licensed 1,356 mid-level teachers out of a total of 19,910 teachers from all licensure areas since middle level licensure was added in January of 2002. (personal communication, October 20, 2004) Thus, less than seven percent of licensures go to middle level.

The *Arkansas Middle Grade Policy and Practice Task Force*, Center for Middle Level Education Research and Development, the Foundation for the Mid-South, and the addition of middle level licensure have all had an impact on advancing the cause of middle level education in the State of Arkansas. In an effort to measure this progress, a new survey was developed using the 1990 survey as the template. The 2004 survey was expanded to gather additional information that did not appear on the original survey. In the spring of 2004, the Arkansas Association of Middle Level Education and the Arkansas Association of Middle Level Administrators used the updated version and surveyed all of the principals of Arkansas public schools housing fifth through ninth graders. The 2004 mailing was distributed to 301 principals. Seventy-one surveys were returned for a return rate of 23.6%.

The purpose of this 2004 mailing was to again assess the status of middle level education in Arkansas and to compare the results with the baseline established by the first survey. Where comparisons were possible, independent t tests were conducted on the data from both the 1990 and the 2004 surveys. From the independent t test results the researchers were able to determine whether a statistically significant difference was present. (Stepka & Meeks, 2004) The results of these two surveys are divided into three major categories, i.e. *Capacity for Change, Taking Inventory, and Challenges and Opportunities*.

Capacity for Change

Before change can be implemented with a moderate level of fidelity, conditions need to be such that the culture will support the desired change. Both the 1990 and the 2004 surveys sought to determine whether there was awareness that early adolescents are unique and also to measure the level of support for the middle level concept as a way of meeting those unique needs of this population of students.

The following shows the tables and discusses the results on the questions from the 1990 and 2004 surveys.

TABLE 1. Do you agree with the concept that early adolescents (10-15 years old) are unique in reference to other age groups emotionally, intellectually, physically, and socially?

		Response	
Survey	Yes	No	Maybe
1990	94.15%	1.60%	4.26%
	n = 177	n = 3	n = 8
2004	98.59%	1.41%	not an option
	n = 70	n = 2	on this survey

There was no significant change in principals' perception as to the uniqueness of the early adolescent. In 1990, 94 percent of principals indicated that they recognized the unique nature of early adolescents and 94 percent did so in the 2004 survey.

In an effort to determine the principals' level of support for change the second question was asked:

TABLE 2. Would you support the development of a middle level program in your current structure?

		Response	
Survey	Yes	No	Not Applicable
1990	55.78%	17.08%	27.85%
	n = 87	n = 27	n = 44
2004	42.03%	2.90%	52.17%
	n = 29	n = 2	n = 36

In 1990, 56 percent of principals were supportive of developing a middle level program. In 2004, only 42 percent indicated that they were supportive of developing a middle level program within their current structure. In Table 2 it appears that there was a decline in support of the middle level program between 1990 and 2004. However, in 2004, 52 percent responded "not applicable" because they already had a middle level program in their school. Only slightly less than three percent indicated that they were not supportive of developing a middle level program in their current structure. When the schools that already have a middle level program are factored in with those schools open to developing a middle level program, then there is a significant difference between 1990 and 2004 surveys. It is evident that principals in 2004 are much more supportive of the middle level concept than 14 years ago.

The final question referred to the capacity for change relating to the level of district level support:

TABLE 3. Would or does your district office support making changes deemed appropriate for early adolescents?

		Response	
Survey	Yes	No	Maybe
1990	48.68%	3.29%	48.03%
	n = 74	n = 5	n = 73
2004	94.03%	5.97%	not an option
	n = 63	n = 4	on this survey

The perception of district level support for making changes that would be beneficial to early adolescents has increased over the last 14 years. In 1990, 49 percent of principals perceived district level support. Forty-eight

percent were not sure if there was district support. This uncertainty may have been a result of the middle level concept being new to many principals and they just didn't know where their superintendent stood on the issue. By 2004, a statistically significant increase in perceived district support was evident. Ninety-four percent of principals felt that their district office would be supportive of such changes.

Taking Inventory

The surveys also attempted to assess the level of implementation of the middle level concept in Arkansas public middle schools. Grade organization, implementation of middle level programming, training in middle level philosophy, and middle level certification were examined.

To determine what grade levels school districts were including in their middle schools, the following question was asked, "How are the middle grades in your district organized?"

FIGURE 1
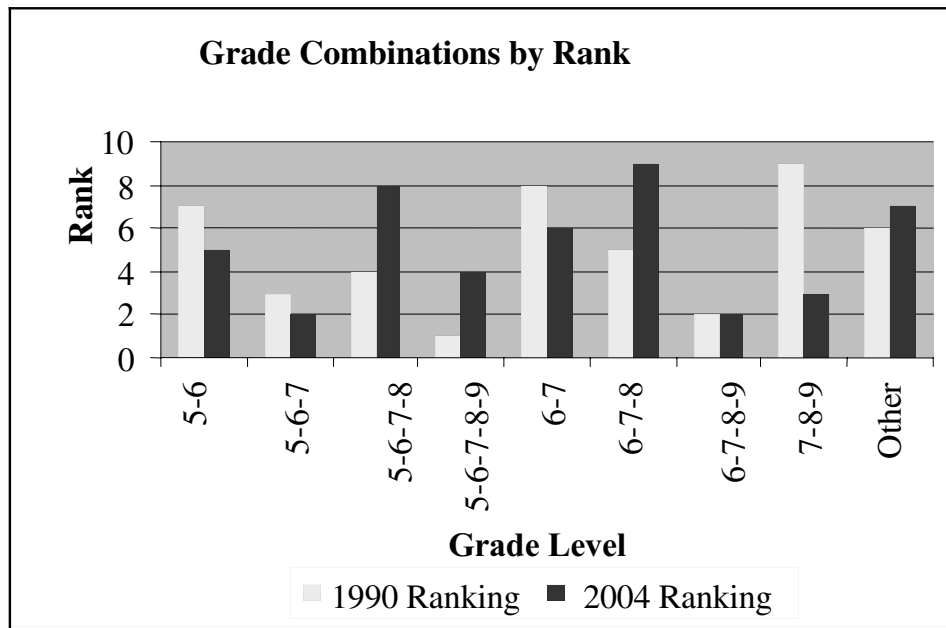
In 2004, 60 percent of principals surveyed reported that their districts had reorganized within the last 10 years to an identifiable middle level grade organization. In 1990, the number one ranked configuration for the middle grades was the traditional junior high configuration, i.e. 7-8-9. In 2004, the number one ranked configuration was 6-7-8. The 2004 data indicated that only 19 percent of schools now include ninth grade with their middle level grades. Furthermore, an additional three percent indicated that they had plans for moving the ninth grade out of the middle level school beginning in the fall of 2004.

Participation in middle level professional organizations is an indication of the level of concern educators have for middle level issues and a desire to stay abreast of new developments in middle level education. Principals were queried as to their participation in national and regional middle level professional organizations.

TABLE 4. Membership in National Middle School Association

| | Response | |
Survey	Yes	No
1990	26.03%	73.97%
	n = 19	n = 54
2004	59.14%	40.85%
	n = 42	n = 29

In 1990, only 26 percent of principals indicated their schools had membership in the National Middle School Association. By 2004, a statistically significant increase was noted. Membership had more than doubled to just over 59 percent. Data was not collected on state level professional organizations in the 1990 survey, but it was collected in the latter survey. In the 2004 survey, principals reported that slightly more than 63 percent were members of the Arkansas Association of Middle Level Education and slightly more than 73 percent were members of the Arkansas Association of Middle Level Administrators. Membership in state middle level organizations far outpaced membership in the state elementary principals' association (25.54%) and the state secondary principals' association (21.13%).

To determine the degree of implementation of middle level programs, principals were asked about the specific programs they had in their schools. Both the 1990 and 2004 surveys inquired about the utilization of three programs, i.e. interdisciplinary teams, advisor/advisee programs, and flexible scheduling.

TABLE 5. Percent of Schools Utilizing Interdisciplinary Teams, Advisor/Advisee Program, and Flexible Scheduling

| | Survey | |
Middle Level Program	1990	2004
Interdisciplinary Teams	33.78%	71.83%
	n = 25	n = 51
Advisor/Advisee	31.51%	36.62%
	n = 23	n = 26
Flexible Scheduling	27.14%	50.70%
	n = 19	n = 36

Statistically significant gains were made between 1990 and 2004 in the implementation of interdisciplinary teaming. In 1990, only 34 percent indicated that their teachers were teaming. However, by 2004, 72 percent of principals indicated that their teachers were involved in interdisciplinary teaming. Furthermore, in 2004, 88 percent of principals indicating that they had interdisciplinary teaming also reported that their schools had a common planning time for those teams.

In 2004, principals indicated that almost 37 percent of their schools had advisory programs in their schools compared to almost 32 percent in 1990. With this small statistically insignificant gain, it is evident that this middle level program has not been a priority for most principals.

In 1990, principals indicated that 27 percent of the schools had some form of flexible scheduling. By 2004, the number of schools utilizing flexible scheduling had risen to 51 percent. Pederson and Totten (1992) indicated that the results from the 1990 survey may be more than the actual practice.

> …while a number of the principals and superintendents claim to use flexible scheduling in their everyday practices, few provided evidence that they were truly doing so. When asked to convey what was occurring in the schools, few took the time to answer the question, or provide information that would lead us to believe that this middle level concept was understood. (p. 49)

It could be inferred that fewer schools than reported were actually using flexible scheduling in 1990. Some of this misunderstanding of the concept of flexible scheduling is also evident in the 2004 survey. Almost 70 percent reported having a six, seven, or eight period day, but 51 percent indicated that they had a flexible schedule. This would indicate that there continues to be some misunderstanding of this concept. When asked to convey what their schedule looked like in practice, responses did indicate that some schools were using flexible scheduling. Furthermore, a variety of flexible schedules was being used. It is also noteworthy that seven (9.8%) schools provide teachers or teams to adjust or set students' schedules as needed.

The 1990 survey inquired only about the utilization of interdisciplinary teams, advisor/advisee programs, and flexible scheduling. However, the 2004 survey also gathered additional information on the following middle level programs: integrated curriculum, exploratory curriculum, heterogeneous grouping practices, intramural athletics, student portfolios, peer tutoring, and peer counseling. A breakdown of these statistics follows in Table 6:

TABLE 6. Utilization on Other Middle Level Programs

Middle Level Program	Principals Indicating Utilization	
	Percent	Number
Integrated Curriculum	52.11	37
Exploratory Curriculum	43.66	31
Heterogeneous Grouping	60.56	43
Intramural Athletics	39.44	28
Student Portfolios	47.88	34
Peer Tutoring	32.39	23
Peer Counseling	16.90	12

Fifty-two percent of principals reported that their schools had an integrated curriculum. Forty-four percent indicated that they had an exploratory curriculum. Sixty-one percent of principals indicated that their schools were grouping heterogeneously. Thirty-nine percent indicated having an intramural athletics program. Forty-eight percent of middle level principals indicated that their teachers were using student portfolios. It was also reported that 32 percent had peer tutoring programs and 17 percent had peer counseling programs.

Another question added to the 2004 survey that did not appear on the 1990 survey attempted to determine the extent to which principals encouraged staff to be trained in middle level concepts:

TABLE 7. What percentage of your staff has received training in and/or has studied middle level philosophy?

Percent of Staff Trained	Responses	
	Percent	Number
0% -10%	14.00	10
11% - 20%	7.00	5
21% - 30%	7.00	5
31% - 40%	5.60	4
41% - 50%	15.50	11
51% - 60%	5.60	4
61% - 70%	1.40	1
71% - 80%	12.60	9
81% - 90%	7.00	5
91% - 100%	23.90	17

Slightly more than 51 percent of principals indicated that at least half of their staff have studied or have been trained in middle level philosophy. Forty-nine percent of principals indicated that less than half of their staff have studied or had been trained in middle level philosophy.

Challenges and Opportunities

With each challenge there is an underlying opportunity. By identifying the obstacles that stand in the way of implementing the middle level concept, educators can draw a clearer understanding of how to recognize the opportunities that will carry them to the next level of implementation.

In 1990, when principals were asked the most difficult task in designing, implementing, improving, and advancing a middle level program, 12 items emerged from the responses. From most frequent response to least frequent response, principals identified the following:

1. teacher attrition
2. building space
3. money
4. training
5. staffing
6. certification
7. middle level program design vs. traditional design
8. parent/community support
9. time
10. sharing teachers with the local high school
11. state standards
12. administrators' attitudes.

In the 2004 survey, six items emerged from principals' responses:

1. middle school philosophy (17%)
2. scheduling conflicts due to shared personnel (17%)
3. shortage of personnel (14%)
4. administrative support (8%)
5. need to better understand adolescents and instructional techniques that are successful with this age group (7%)
6. lack of time (6%)

Responses in the 1990 survey were more typical of early implementation responses, i.e. the informational stage as measured against Hord and others (1987) *Stages of Concern* for a new innovation. Responses in the 2004 survey were more typically at the management level of the *Stages of Concern*, which indicates a higher level of implementation of the middle level concept in Arkansas public schools.

Principals were also asked, "Other than money, what further assistance would you use to make your middle grades program more thorough and effective in all areas?" In 1990, six areas emerged that principals thought they would need assistance in if they were to develop, implement, or improve their middle level education program. From most common response to the least common response those results were as follows:

1. meeting state standards
2. implementing the middle level program's components
3. flexible scheduling
4. advisor/advisee
5. interdisciplinary teaming
6. staffing the middle schools with certified middle level educators

In 2004, principals' responses were as follows:

1. content areas (17%)
2. facilitating collaboration between schools facing similar challenges (6%)
3. middle level concepts training and implementation (4%)
4. parental involvement (4%)
5. personnel (4%)
6. discipline (4%)

To determine if training was an obstacle or an opportunity, principals were asked if their staffs needed training in middle level programs and whether or not they thought their staffs would be receptive to any such training.

TABLE 8. Training in Middle Level Programs

| Survey | Responses | |
	Need Training	Willing to be Trained
1990	70.27%	78.99%
	n = 104	n = 109
2004	80.28%	92.96%
	n = 57	n = 66

Seventy percent of principals in 1990 indicated that their faculty needed training in middle level programs. A 10 percent increase in the 2004 survey was noted over the 1990 survey, but the increase was not statistically significant. In 1990, 79 percent of principals thought their faculty would be willing to be trained. However, by 2004, the percent of principals who felt their staff would be receptive to training had increased to 93 percent, a statistically significant increase.

As follow-up to the above mentioned training questions, the 2004 survey asked principals to rank the top five areas of middle level training from which they felt their staff would most benefit. Since this was not a part of the 1990 survey, no data exists for comparison.

TABLE 9. Most Beneficial Training for Staff

| Area | Ranked | | | | | |
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	Total Percent
Interdisciplinary Teaming	24%	11%	4%	1%	0%	40%
Integrated Curriculum	10%	15%	6%	6%	3%	40%
Flexible Scheduling	7%	6%	6%	4%	0%	23%
Advisor/Advisee	4%	6%	7%	1%	1%	19%
Classroom Management	3%	6%	3%	3%	3%	18%
Middle Level Philosophy & Curriculum	1%	6%	3%	4%	3%	17%
Adolescent Characteristics	10%	1%	0%	1%	0%	12%
Peer Tutoring	3%	0%	1%	3%	4%	11%
Student Portfolios	0%	1%	6%	1%	1%	9%
Exploratory	0%	1%	3%	3%	1%	8%

Training in interdisciplinary teaming and integrated curriculum are the two areas that unmistakably emerge as being perceived as being beneficial to faculty. Twenty-four percent of principals ranked training in interdisciplinary teaming as number one. A total of 40 percent identified this in one of their top five rankings. Integrated curriculum trailed with 10 percent identifying it as their number one ranking, but 40 percent of principals ranked it in one of their top five. Training in flexible scheduling, advisory, middle level philosophy, adolescent development, peer tutoring, student portfolios, and exploratory curriculum were also areas that

were identified as training needs for faculty to a lesser degree. Although not specifically a middle level programming concept, classroom management/discipline was listed by 18 percent of principals in one of their top five ranks.

To help staff to better understand what a middle level program actually looks like, and to generate interest and capacity for change, principals were asked if they thought their staff would be interested in visiting an exemplary middle level program.

TABLE 10. Would your staff be interested in visiting an exemplary middle level school?

	Response	
Survey	Yes	No
1990	80.00%	20.00%
	n = 116	n = 29
2004	85.29%	14.71%
	n = 58	n = 10

In 1990, 80 percent of principals thought their staffs would be interested. Fourteen years later, 85 percent of principals indicated the same. Although a small gain was noted, it was statistically significant.

Moving Ahead

Many factors have helped contribute to the progress in implementing the middle level concept in the State of Arkansas since the publication of *Turning Points*. Behind each of these initiatives are people who care about early adolescents and who seek to promote a school environment that will educate them in a more caring and supportive way. As a result of their efforts, good progress has been made in accomplishing this goal. Currently, 50 percent of principals report having implemented middle level programs and of those who have not implemented them, 41 percent are supportive of doing so.

Not only is administrative support present, but there are a number of other things that contribute to conditions being ripe for additional progress. By the fall of 2004, 80 percent of schools will be configured in some combination of fifth through eighth grade. The organizational structure of these Arkansas schools is poised to support a middle level program if they have not already implemented one. There is also the perception of support at the district level, which is critical when it comes to committing resources for successful and sustainable change. Principals report that they believe teachers are willing to be trained in middle level programming. To take advantage of this situation and to avoid the growth of the middle level movement in Arkansas from plateauing, it is critical that teachers receive sufficient and appropriate staff development. Increases in middle level professional organization membership since 1990 indicate that educators see value in being kept abreast of what is happening in middle level education.

In January of 2002, the Arkansas licensure requirement for middle level was implemented. Current trends indicate that slightly less than seven percent of new licensures are for middle level. This rate of licensure will be inadequate to sustain future needs in this area. Although middle level licensure will help ensure that teachers are prepared to work with early adolescents, there is a need to recognize that there is a problem. Further study is needed to determine why future teachers are not opting to pursue middle level education. Serious consideration also needs to be given to the overlap between the secondary (7-12) and the middle level (4-8) licensure, and what impact this has on future teachers opting for secondary licensure.

Beginning the fall of 2004, Arkansas has designated an additional 370 million new dollars into education. This new money will allow districts to commit the resources necessary to initiate and sustain change. Given this environment in the State of Arkansas, further advances in middle level program implementation are possible.

In spite of the progress that has been made in Arkansas implementing the middle level concept, 80 percent of principals responded that their staffs needed training in middle level programs. Almost 93 percent indicated their staffs would be willing to receive such training. Many principals indicating that their staff needed training are in schools that have implemented middle level programs and in schools where staff are knowledgeable about the needs of the middle level learner and knowledgeable about middle level concepts. Training is not needed just to implement middle level programs, but it is also needed to sustain and refine those changes. One or two sessions of staff development that focus on middle level programming are inadequate to institutionalize the needed changes in middle level education. Training must be on-going until the middle level concept is firmly institutionalized. It is important that educators be familiar with adolescent development and middle level philosophy, so as to provide a foundation that will support middle level concepts and programming. Principals often do not have the resources to provide meaningful middle level staff development. District offices, educational co-ops, and universities need to be made aware of this perceived need and must position themselves to help meet this need.

Deciding on a focus for training, principals most often identified interdisciplinary teaming and integrated curriculum as areas from which their staff would most benefit. Concentrating staff development efforts on these two interrelated concepts would have the potential for paying high dividends. "Research shows that effective teams lead to improved student achievement, increased parental contacts, an enhanced school climate, and positive student attitudes." (*This We Believe*, 2003)

Training in flexible scheduling, advisory/advisee program, middle level philosophy, adolescent development, peer tutoring, student portfolios, and exploratory curriculum were also areas that were identified as being beneficial for faculty. The lack of progress that advisory/advisee programs have made in Arkansas during the last 14 years indicates that administration has not placed a high value on this programming concept. This could be an indication that there is a need for principals and staff to better understand the underlying principles of advisory/advisee and how this program relates to early adolescent development.

Training in classroom management was identified as being beneficial to staff even though it is not considered a middle level program. Nevertheless, if principals and staff do not have a clear understanding of early adolescent development, then classroom management can become more of a challenge. (Purkey & Strahan, 2002; Feeney, 1980) Again, it is imperative that principals and staff have adequate training in early adolescent development and middle level philosophy. This will lead to a deeper understanding of the rationale behind each of the middle level programs.

It is not enough to focus all efforts on teacher training. If the middle level concept is to be implemented with a strong measure of fidelity, then the principal must be knowledgeable and have strong buy-in to the middle level concept. Blumberg and Greenfield (1980) speak to the importance of the principal's role in any school initiative. "It takes a unique person to help give a school, first an image of what it can be and, second, to provide the drive, support, and skills to make that image approximate reality." Morris and others (1984) identify the principal as the key decision maker, problem solver, and agent of change at the school site. For the middle level concept to thrive, the building principal must play a central leadership role.

The building level principal must be familiar with early adolescent development and middle level philosophy and programming. Furthermore, the principal must be proactive in promoting and supporting the middle level concept in his/her school. Like many other states, Arkansas does not offer a middle level administrative licensure, but rather a K-8 and 7-12 licensure. As a result, there are no guarantees that a middle level principal is knowledgeable about early adolescent development, middle level philosophy, and middle level programming. Therefore, it is imperative that principals take it upon themselves to become educated about the middle level, so that they can cast a vision of what the middle school should look like and provide the necessary support to realize that vision.

Almost 89 percent of principals indicated that they felt support from the district office. However, some principals clearly were not afforded the same level of support. One area where this is evident is in problems created

by the demands of shared personnel on the schedule. For example, the time constraints placed on the schedule by the art or music teacher who teaches both in the middle school and the high school have an adverse effect on adding flexibility to the schedule. District office administrators may be able to work with middle level principals in assigning shared personnel to better accommodate a more flexible schedule.

On a final note, schools that have a high degree of fidelity in the implementation of middle level programming should be identified and recognized for their efforts. A state roster of exemplary middle level schools should be kept for easy reference. Administrators and faculty from schools that are interested in promoting or refining their middle level program should afford themselves the opportunity to visit these schools and collaborate with them.

Many people think that middle school is just an organizational change from 7-9 to 6-8 grades. Those more intimately involved in the middle level movement understand the fundamental differences between a junior high program and a middle level program. Good progress has been made in the State of Arkansas on the journey to differentiate between the two, and there are lessons that can be learned from this State's journey. Some of these lessons include:

Lessons for the State
- It helps to have the support of the governor.
- Adequate funding is needed.
- Requiring middle level teacher licensure will enhance the quality of teachers working with young adolescents.
- If the state does not require middle level licensure for administrators, then it should be considered.
- Identify and keep a database of exemplary middle schools in the state that schools can visit and collaborate with.

Lessons for the District
- District personnel must be supportive of the middle level concept and programming.
- Hire principals and staff who are trained in middle level and who want to work with middle level students.
- Minimize or lessen the effects of shared personnel that would limit the flexibility of the schedule.
- In collaboration with the principal, arrange for appropriate staff development.

Lessons for the School
- Principal support is critical.
- If the principal is not trained in middle level, he/she must take it upon him/herself to become familiar with the concept.
- Non-mid-level licensure staff should be encouraged to work toward mid-level licensure.
- Staff should be involved in meaningful and relevant staff development.
- Provide adequate common planning time for interdisciplinary teams.

Lessons for Staff Developers
- Training should include not only the staff, but also the principal.
- Training is needed to transition from a junior high focus to a middle level focus.
- Training is needed to sustain and refine the middle level concept.
- Training in early adolescent development and middle level philosophy are critical for building a foundation that will support all middle level concepts and middle level programming.
- Training in interdisciplinary teaming should be a priority.
- Training in other middle level programming should be available as the need arises.

The story of the tortoise and the hare is an appropriate analogy as educators seek to implement the middle level concept. This is not a race for those who are impatient and easily distracted. Being persistent and keeping focused is critical to being successful in this race. Educators must keep their eye on the goal of implementing a philosophy of teaching early adolescents in a more caring and supportive environment and must press on toward the finish line.

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Appendix A
1990 and 2004 Middle Grades Survey Comparison Matrix

Item Compared	1990 Survey Item	2004 Survey Item
Do you agree with the concept that early adolescents (10-15 years old) are unique in reference to other age groups emotionally, intellectually, physically, and socially?	Item 1	Planning Opportunities, Item 2
Would you support the development of a middle level program in your current structure?	Section B, Item 1	Planning Opportunities, Item 1
Would or does your district office support making changes deemed appropriate for early adolescents?	Section B, Item 16	Planning Opportunities, Item 10
How are the middle grades in your district organized?	Section A, Item 5	District Organization, Item 2
Membership in National Middle School Association	Section A, Item 9	Middle Grades Program, Item 3
Percent of Schools Utilizing Interdisciplinary Teams, Advisor/Advisee Program, and Flexible Scheduling	Section A, Items 3, 4, and 6	Middle Grades Program, Item 1
What do you perceive as the most difficult task in either designing, implementing, or improving a middle level education program?	Section B, Item 11	Planning Opportunities, Item 11
Other than money, what further assistance would you use to make your middle grades program more thorough and effective in all areas?	Section B, Item 12	Planning Opportunities, Item 12
Would your staff be willing to receive training in middle level programming?	Section B, Item 13	Planning Opportunities, Item 5
Would your staff be interested in visiting an exemplary middle level program?	Section B, Item 15	Planning Opportunities, Item 9

Appendix B
1990 Survey

Middle Grades Survey
Principals/Superintendents
Jon E. Pedersen & Samuel Totten
The University of Arkansas
Fayetteville, AR 72701

Survey Questions for Middle Grades
1. Do you agree with the concept that early adolescents (10-15 yrs) are unique in reference to other age groups emotionally, mentally, physically and socially?
   YES_____ NO_____ MAYBE_____

2. Do you have a middle level program (or school) in your district?
   YES_____ NO_____ MAYBE_____

   If YES complete SECTION A & B   If NO complete SECTION B only

SECTION A
1. Does your middle level program have any special programs (e.g. advisor/advisee, exploratory curriculum, etc.) that are specifically for your middle level program?
   If so, please provide the name and focus of such programs:
2. How many middle level programs do you have in your district?
   1____ 2____ 3____ 4____ 5____ or more____
3. Does your middle level program have an advisor/advisee program?
   Yes____ No____
4. Does your middle grades program use interdisciplinary team organization?
   Yes____ No____
5. What combination of grades constitutes your middle level program?
   5-6____ 5-7 ____ 5-8____ 6-7____ 6-8 ____ 6-9 ____ 7-9____ Other____
6. Does your middle level program have "flexible scheduling?"
   Yes____ No____
7. If yes, please succinctly describe how it works:
8. If you currently have a middle level program, what new programs are you currently working on implementing over the course of this school year?
9. Does your middle level program/school/district belong to the National Middle School Association?
   Yes____ No____

SECTION B
1. As a superintendent/principal would you support the development of a middle level program within your present junior high structure?
   Yes____ No____
2. As a superintendent/principal would you prefer a 6-8 organization pattern verses the traditional 7-9 concept?
   Yes____ No____
3. If you do not have a middle program in your district, are there plans to develop one in the near future?
   Yes____ No____
4. Would you be interested in receiving assistance in developing a middle level program?
   Yes____ No____
5. Have you read the Carnegie Report: *Turning Points?*
   Yes____ No____
6. If not, would you be interested in receiving a brochure of the report?
   Yes____ No____

7. To what extent do you have heterogeneous grouping in your school? Please be specific in your answer.
8. Is your district currently part of a restructuring effort?
   Yes_____ No_____
9. How many high schools do you have in your district?
   Junior High _____Middle School _____Elementary School_____
10. What is/are the size(s) (enrollment) in your middle school(s)?
    _____

11. What do you perceive as the most difficult task in either designing/implementing/improving a middle level education program?
    _____

12. If there is any area in which you need assistance in either developing/implementing or improving your middle level education program, what is it?
    _____

13. Does your faculty need training/in-service in middle level programs?
    Yes_____ No_____
14. Will your staff be willing to be trained/in-serviced in middle level programming?
    Yes_____ No_____
15. Would you or your staff be interested in visiting an exemplary middle level program?
    Yes_____ No_____
16. Would your district office support making changes deemed appropriate for early adolescents?
    Yes_____ No_____

Appendix C
2004 Survey

Public Schools of Arkansas:
Survey of Middle Grades

The following questions are specific to the "middle school concept" and may need some clarification of terms. Any questions may be directed to Danny Barnett, Effective Strategies, Inc. at (501)281-0392 or dbarnet1@ipa.net .

District Organization

Question 1:   How many students are in your district?_____

Question 2:   How are the middle grades in your district organized? (i.e. 5-6, 5-8, 6-7, etc.)_____
    Number of students?_____

Question 3:   Does your district have a "middle school building"?
    _____YES _____NO If YES, how many?_____

Question 4:   Has your district reorganized in the last ten years to an identified middle level grade organization? _____YES _____ NO
    Did you build a new building to house it? _____YES _____NO
    If more than one, how many buildings? _____

Question 5:   Are there any plans to change the current middle grades organization in your district?
    _____YES _____NO
    If YES, please describe:_____
    _____
    If NO, please go to section on Planning Opportunities.

Question 6:   Is there a middle grades principal assigned to your middle grades organization(s)?
    _____YES _____NO
    If YES, do they have an assistant(s)? _____YES _____NO
    How many? _____

Middle Grades Program

Question 1:   Which of the following middle level concepts are contained in your middle grades program?

___ Interdisciplinary teaming	___ Advisor/Advisee program
___ Team Common Planning Time	___ Individual Planning Time
___ Homogeneous Grouping	___ Heterogeneous Grouping
___ Athletics(interscholastic)	___ Athletics(Intramural)
___ Flexible Scheduling	___ Exploratory Curriculum
___ Integrated Curriculum	___ Peer Tutoring
___ Student Portfolios	___ Peer Counseling

Question 2:   What type of scheduling do your middle grades use?

___ six period day	___ seven period day	___ eight period day
___ 4x4 Block	___ A-B Block	___ Flexible Block*

    *Please describe _____
    _____

Question 3:   Is your school building represented by membership in any of the following organizations?
    ___ National Middle School Association
    ___ Arkansas Association of Middle Level Education
    ___ Arkansas Association of Middle Level Administrators
    ___ Arkansas Association of Elementary School Principals
    ___ Arkansas Association of Secondary School Principals

Planning Opportunities

Question 1:   Would you support the development of a middle level program in your current structure?
_____YES _____NO _____Not applicable (have one already)

Question 2:   Do you agree with the concept that early adolescents (10-15 years old) are unique in reference to other age groups emotionally, intellectually, physically, and socially?
_____YES _____NO

Question 3:   Academically, do you think any variation of a 5-6-7-8 organization pattern would best support and promote the current accountability standards?
_____YES _____NO _____UNDECIDED

Question 4:   Does your staff need training/in-service in middle level programs?
_____YES _____NO

Question 5:   Would your staff be willing to receive training in middle level programming?
_____YES _____NO

Question 6:   What areas of middle level training would your staff benefit the most from?
List 5 in order of preference (1 is highest) Refer to question 1-MGs Program
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Question 7:   What percentage of your staff has received training in and/or has studied middle level philosophy? _____

Question 8:   How many teachers on your staff have received recent licensure specifically for middle level math/science or middle level language/social studies?_____

Question 9:   Would you or your staff be interested in visiting an exemplary middle level program?
_____YES _____NO

Question 10:   Would or does your district office support making changes deemed appropriate for early adolescents? _____YES _____NO

Question 11:   What do you perceive as the most difficult task in either designing, implementing, or improving a middle level education program?
_____

Question 12:   Other than money, what further assistance would you use to make your middle grades program more thorough and effective in all areas?
_____
_____
_____