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**A study of five diverse middle schools and their efforts to bring about positive changes with at-risk students through invitational education**

**Chance, Deborah Cecil, Ed.D.**

**The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1992**

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A STUDY OF FIVE DIVERSE MIDDLE SCHOOLS AND THEIR EFFORTS  
TO BRING ABOUT POSITIVE CHANGES WITH AT-RISK  
STUDENTS THROUGH INVITATIONAL EDUCATION

by

Deborah Cecil Chance

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the Faculty of the Graduate School at  
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Approved by

  
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**APPROVAL PAGE**

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CHANCE, DEBORAH CECIL, ED.D. A Study of Five Diverse Middle Schools and Their Efforts to Bring About Positive Changes with At-Risk Students Through Invitational Education. (1992) Directed by Dr. Charles M. Achilles. 221 pp.

This qualitative study included an analysis of the efforts of five North Carolina middle school Connection Teams (CT). These CTs participated in a project funded by the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation entitled: Connecting with the Disconnected Student-An Invitational Approach. CTs were comprised of the school principal, a guidance counselor, and one teacher representative from the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. CTs were trained in Invitational Education and formulated strategies to deal with their school's at-risk population through the use of the Five P's of Invitational Education. The Five P's are: people, policies, places, programs, and processes. Invitational Education is a theory of practice that emphasizes the relatively unlimited potential of all students and the importance of self-concept building practices.

Connection Teams' efforts were presented in five case studies. Recurrent strategies, practices, and behaviors were assimilated and presented in terms of the Five P's.

After the CTs initiated Invitational Education (IE), all five teams reported an increased "family-type" atmosphere in their schools, increased teamwork and collaboration, and modifications in discipline policies that

included clear consequences and more positive reinforcement. The faculties at all five schools adopted IE as a school philosophy. The CTs also reported improvements and beautification of school facilities, more community involvement, and increased use of incentives, praise and rewards. All five CTs cited examples of how inviting mannerisms, behaviors and teaching styles were integrated into the curriculum. In this study, IE provided a vehicle for total school participation in the process of encouraging school success.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Researchers who have completed a comprehensive analysis of students who are at risk have concluded that "nationwide one in four students drop out of school before graduation" (Sinclair and Ghory, 1987 p. 34). Although many programs exist to curb the dropout rate, few comprehensively define the behaviors, beliefs and practices needed to manage this problem successfully. Invitational Education (IE) is one system of beliefs and practices that can be used to meet the needs of dropout-prone youth. This belief system is comprised of components to improve students' self-concept through the use of high expectations and encouragement. IE focuses on five forces within the school environment (people, policies, places, programs, and processes) to support student growth and achievement. Purkey and Novak contended that "educators as well as everybody and everything involved in the educative process can and should invite success" (1984, p. 2).

Defining the problems of students at risk is not an easy task. Slavin (1989) identified students who were at

risk as basically those who have experienced a history of one or more of the following:

1. academic failure
2. discipline problems
3. retention(s)
4. drug and/or alcohol abuse
5. pregnancy
6. suspensions from school
7. chronic truancy.

These students were frequently "disconnected" from the school environment (Strahan 1988). They felt alienated, alone, and were many times academically and socially unsuccessful. Occasionally, their reputations as "troublemakers" became integral parts of their identities. In such cases, they tended to live up to these labels through actions of defiance and recalcitrance. Others, however, suffered a quiet form of alienation and simply went unnoticed.

Ralph (1988) indicated that those who were silently at risk refrained from social interaction, and exhibited poor work habits and/or low attendance. Typically, these students had a poor self-concept and expected themselves to experience academic failure, retention, and discipline problems. These preconceptions restricted the student's personal view of his/her ability to be successful. Low

teacher and school staff expectations of the at-risk student perpetuated the cycle of academic defeat and lowered self-esteem.

### **Background**

#### **Programs for Youth At-Risk**

Effective programs utilized with at-risk youth consistently employed policies and programs to increase student participation in school and/or to improve self-concept. According to Smith (1987), collegiality, choice, and ownership were the lenses to use in viewing the degree of commitment and engagement that teachers have in implementing programs for dropout-prone youth. Sergiovanni (1990) maintained that school effectiveness transcended mediocrity when school leaders (administrators, teachers) created an environment of bonding and high expectations for one another, as well as for the students they served. "Transformative leadership" created a bond between faculty and staff and a fusion of collaborative goals.

Glasser (1990) stressed collaboration in the principles of "lead-management". He explained that many administrators have emphasized student and teacher coercion, that leads to a climate of alienation and non-participation. Lead-management includes: problem solving, worker input and evaluation, and a cooperative atmosphere. Glasser



maintained that these variables were the keys to school success.

Programs that are currently used to address the problems of disconnected students typically aim at the intervention process. Madden, Slavin, Karweit, and Livermon (1989) contended that the Chapter 1 Program, funded by the Federal Government, was designed to focus remediation on improvement in reading. When students' ability in reading progressed successfully, students exhibited greater academic and personal success. Madden et al. (1989) maintained that an extension of the Chapter 1 Reading Program entitled "Success for All" provided major and immediate interventions for elementary school students. By improving the quality of student reading ability through one-on-one tutoring, this program aspired to increase the probability of students staying in school. The basic design for this program included: reading tutors, early intervention (beginning in pre-school and kindergarten), family support teams, and teacher training.

Other programs focused on motivational techniques to create a sense of connection in students who, many times, felt "disconnected" and "disengaged". One such program Newmann (1989) described as involving "participation, connection, attachment, and integration in particular settings and tasks"(p.34). Newmann asserted that students

must feel competent and confident within the school setting in order to "engage" in learning.

Educational institutions can contribute to the learning capabilities of students who are at risk of dropping out of school. Proponents of IE focus on positive teacher/student interaction and strive to provide a framework for increased student confidence and engagement in learning.

### Invitational Education

Initially articulated by Purkey (1978), IE provides the necessary components to create a climate of collaboration, high expectations, and an emphasis on student participation in school. These components appear crucial for the academic and personal success of at-risk youth. IE focuses on school-wide participation and interaction that Finn (1989) addressed in the participation/identification model. Finn (1989) suggested that dropout-prone youth were frequently disengaged. These students refrained from full participation in many school activities such as: decision making, extra curricular activities, and "class related initiative." When at-risk youth begin to identify with their school through participatory decision making and classroom initiative, connection with school begins to occur.

The successful practice of IE is based on the teacher's ability to transmit messages of care, respect, and

acceptance to the learner so that he/she will be more likely to engage in the learning process. This theory of practice is based on four basic principles:

(1) people are able, valuable, and responsible and should be treated accordingly; (2) teaching should be cooperative activity; (3) people possess relatively untapped potential in all areas of human development; and (4) this potential can best be realized by places, policies, and programs that are specifically designed to invite development, and by people who are personally and professionally inviting to themselves and others. (Purkey and Novak 1984, p. 2)

IE enhances the vital relationship between human perception and behavior. When a teacher perceives a student to be valuable, capable, and responsible, the student tends to live up to the teacher's expectation. Since IE is a theory of practice, many educators translate its ideas of acceptance, love, and mutual respect into a variety of classroom behaviors.

Based on extensive educational research, Brophy and Good (1974) concluded that "When teachers had higher expectations for students, they actually produced higher achievement in those students than in students for whom they had lower expectations" (p. 80). Good and Weinstein (1986) suggested that when students were viewed as less capable, "they begin to internalize lowered expectations and behave accordingly" (p. 20). Purkey and Novak (1984) maintained

that "there is a tendency toward self-actualization and development so long as this is permitted and encouraged by an inviting environment" (p.34).

### School Environments

Researchers who have studied the variables of effective dropout prevention programs consistently refer to the school "environment". Webster (1990) defined "environment" as all the conditions, circumstances and influences surrounding and affecting the development of an organism. Snygg and Combs (1949) concluded that all behavior was completely determined by the phenomenal field of the behaving organism. This means that how a person behaves depends on his/her perceptions of the environment blended with his/her perception of self. Successful dropout prevention programs provide an environment of programs, conditions, responses and influences that effect positive student self development. These components in turn lead to engagement in learning and a commitment to education.

IE provides an holistic approach to the educative process. It stimulates the entire school environment and creates a "gestalt." All forces within a school environment impact and interact with one another to create a whole picture.

Purkey and Novak (1984) wrote:

Everybody and everything involved in the educative process can and should invite school success. This involves the people (teachers, bus drivers, aides, cafeteria staff, secretaries, librarians, nurses, counselors, custodians, crossing guards, administrators), the places (classrooms, offices, hallways, commons, rest rooms, playing fields, gymnasiums, libraries), the policies (rules, codes, procedures), and the programs (curricular or extracurricular) (p. 2).

Through the field of inviting people, policies, places, programs and processes an optimal environmental condition is created. The people (students and teachers) begin to interact and connect with one another and with the places, programs, and policies that are designed to support and encourage positive growth and development. A "synergy" function emerges in which the whole (school environment) is greater than the sum of its parts.

#### **Overview of the Z Smith Reynolds Project**

Five middle school Connection Teams (CTs) introduced their schools to IE during the fall of 1989. CTs were composed of the principal, guidance counselor, and one teacher from each of the middle school grades (6,7,8). This research project was funded by a grant from the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation of Winston Salem, North Carolina, and was entitled: "Connecting with the Disconnected Student: An Invitational Approach." Data concerning attendance, California Achievement Test (CAT) scores, Inviting School

Success Survey scores, discipline referrals and student self-concept (as perceived by the teachers in the project) were collected prior to the introduction of IE and compared to the same data after each CT initiated IE. This project involved the assessment of how each school utilized IE to meet the needs of at-risk youth.

#### Statement of the Problem

A functional model of the methods educators use to invite success with at-risk students is needed. Methods and strategies need to be articulated explicitly and particular events described. Individual school "plans of action" that describe the school-improvement processes will be beneficial in order to hone in on concrete experiences. IE is one theory of practice that provides promise in school improvement. This theory, however, needs third-party assessment of its efficacy and a description of how IE promotes improvements.

#### Purpose of this Study

The CTs initiated school-wide IE programs at each of their schools. They were provided with access to IE literature and information; however, CTs in each school tailored their knowledge of IE to the needs of their own particular environments. The purpose of this study is to identify the strategies used by the CTs for at-risk

students, to examine their processes of collaboration; and describe how the "spirit" of these middle schools developed over time.

### Research Questions

1. Have the people, places, policies, programs, and processes of these five schools changed through their participation in these efforts? If so, (A) How has the "spirit" of camaraderie changed within each school? (B) What particular programs, events, activities, etc. at each school have contributed to this change?
2. How has each Connection Team initiated IE?
3. Are there similarities in the types of internal methods, policies, strategies and procedures employed between and among the five schools?
4. How do results from these five schools relate to the conceptual framework of IE and improved school programs?

### Significance of the Study

Kennedy (1988) reported that nearly 4,000 students dropped out of school every school day in 1985-1986. More than half of all U.S. dropouts are unemployed, and 70% of all prisoners are school dropouts.

Many educators are seeking viable interventions that will reduce the number of at-risk students who may choose to drop out of school. This study will address those key methods and behaviors that educators may use to increase students' self-concept, participation in school achievement, and motivation. IE focuses on competence-building variables,

and could increase school success experiences with potential dropouts, and thus decrease the dropout rate. This study identified distinct methods and strategies that invited students to perceive themselves as competent and capable.

#### Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

This study was delimited to an interpretive analysis of five North Carolina middle schools selected for this study and examined the dropout prevention efforts of school-based CTs during the 1989-1990 and the 1990-1991 school years. Interview, observation, and survey data were collected. Data applied to these North Carolina teams and the findings were not intended to be generalized to a larger population. This research addressed the particular concerns, behaviors, and methods that these CTs used in issuing invitations to at-risk students.

The researcher has been involved with IE as an intervention to reduce dropouts within a secondary school in North Carolina. Objectivity is an important concern because of the researcher's prior interaction with the use of IE. Although bias cannot be totally dismissed, the researcher was careful to reduce subjective assumptions. This previous participation with IE should be observed as a potential limitation. All data were analyzed and coded by the researcher alone. Since other sources were not used in the analysis of these data, this may be a possible limitation.



### Design

This study is a descriptive and qualitative analysis of the beliefs and practices of middle school educators. A multiple case study design was employed to provide a rich description of these efforts. Data were presented in terms of the Five P's of IE, (people, policies, places, programs, and processes).

### Definition of Terms

1. Assistance Team, A Team (also called CORE Team) - An intervention team composed of teachers, counselors, administrators and the school social worker. This team met weekly to discuss problems concerning students at risk and provided interventions for these students. (Interventions were on three levels: Level 1 - classroom interventions; Level 2 - parent contact; Level 3 - referral to an outside agency.
2. At-Risk - Students who because of academic or discipline problems, retentions, drug and /or alcohol abuse, pregnancy, suspensions, and/or chronic truancy, are more likely to drop out of school. (Slavin, 1989)
3. Connection Team - Comprised of the school principal, one teacher each from the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades, and the school counselor. CTs were responsible for channeling IE through the Five P's at each of the five schools.

4. Home Base Teams or TAG (Teacher Advisory Group) - The TAG was a part of the Middle School Concept. Students were divided into groups of 20 or 25 and assigned to a teacher. During the first period of the school day they met and discussed personal concerns. The teacher of Home-Base focused on self-concept building exercises and interpersonal interaction. Students were provided with information concerning decision making, study skills, goal setting etc. These teams frequently participated in extra-curricular activities, developed a team spirit and experienced interdependence.

5. Interdisciplinary (or Grade Level) Teams - These teams were a part of the Middle School Concept. Comprised of the language arts, social studies, science and math teachers from each grade level (6,7,8), this team shared students from the same grade during blocks of time. Grade-level teams had common planning times to design interdisciplinary lessons, brainstorm solutions to discipline problems, or to individualize programs to meet student needs.

6. Invitational Education - "A mental health approach to the educative process based on respect, trust, optimism, and intentionality. Its purpose is to create total environments where people want to be and want to learn." (Stanley, 1989)

7. Invitational Expert - Each of the five schools in this study was assigned two consultants to monitor its progress.

The Invitational experts made one visit to each school and provided feedback on its progress with the concepts of IE.

8. Invitational Metaphors (blue cards and orange cards).

Blue cards - An Invitational metaphor for supportive language and behaviors such as: smiles, hugs, affirmations and general caring behaviors. Orange cards - An Invitational metaphor for non-supportive language and behaviors such as: put-downs, destructive criticism, threatening language, and angry remarks.

9. Inviting School Success Survey - A survey that provided assessment of inviting behaviors, policies, places, programs, and processes. Pre- and post-assessments were done at each of the five schools to investigate improvements in each school's IQ (Invitational Quotient).

10. Self-concept - A complex and dynamic system of learned beliefs, attitudes, and opinions that each person holds to be true about his or her personal existence. (Purkey and Schmidt, 1990)

11. Spirit - Disposition; mood: as in high spirits; or enthusiastic loyalty: as, school spirit. (Webster 1990)

12. Thematic Analysis - A method of critically examining the elements or essential features of a subject through identifying its central concern or idea. (Gray 1986)

### Organization of the Study

Chapter I includes a brief introduction and background on at-risk youth and IE, an overview of the Z. Smith Reynolds Project, the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, significance and delimitations of the study, and definition of terms.

Chapter II includes a review of the literature related to the study: At-risk youth, Invitational Education, a synopsis on Effective Schools research and the Middle School Concept.

Chapter III describes the methodology: the study sample, selection and instrumentation, project assessment, design, coding procedures, and analysis of data.

Chapter IV includes a within-case analysis of findings. Five case studies are presented and responses to research questions one and two.

Chapter V consists of an across-case analysis of findings and responses to research questions three and four.

Chapter VI includes a summary of the study, findings, discussion of the findings, the developmental stages of IE, and recommendations and ideas for future studies.

### Summary

The basic tenets of IE encourage the creation of a comprehensive school environment based on collegiality, collaboration and interaction of all school staff. This

philosophy of collaboration emerges into many inviting behaviors that include: teamwork, encouragement, and high expectations. These behaviors satisfy the prescription that leading researchers in the area of dropout prevention identify as crucial components for decreasing school dropout rates and for creating comprehensive achievement.

An Invitational model for the implementation of these key components tailored to the needs of at-risk youth is needed. This functional model should address the particular methods, strategies and collaborative devices that prove to be successful with at-risk students. A comprehensive "road map" with clear directions for other educators to use with at-risk students is needed.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Introduction

This review of the literature focused on: A) the description of at-risk students and programs that have been used to prevent these students from dropping out of school; B) the concepts of Invitational Education (IE) and how this theory of practice may provide an appropriate intervention for at-risk students; C) an overview of Effective Schools research; D) an overview of the Middle School Concept. These four variables were analyzed and integrated into a conceptual framework for the study.

#### At-Risk Youth

Weber (1988) pointed out that every year, "700,000 to one million youth walk away from school" (p.36). Since the 1983 report, A Nation At-Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform, the focus on improving the quality of education and reducing the number of high school dropouts has increased. This report emphasized a nation at-risk of being surpassed by foreign competitive markets in the areas of industry, science, and technological innovation. The National Commission on Excellence in Education concluded

that education had the potential to re-shape our nation's competitive future. Although the initial emphasis on the reduction of the at-risk population in the United States appeared to be a means of regaining a first place position in the world market, the social/cultural problem of the at-risk population became evident:

Well-meaning citizens reached a consensus: excessively high dropout rates threaten the nation's productivity and represent a tragic waste of young lives. (Hahn, 1987, p.256)

Kennedy (1988) asserted that dropouts earned less money, had more unemployment, suffered more health problems than non-dropouts and were dissatisfied with their personal lives:

Over the lifetimes of one year's "class" of dropouts the nation loses 240 billion in foregone earnings and taxes. Add the billions spent for crime control, welfare, health care, and other social services unproductive citizens require, and it becomes clear that when students dropout of school, we all lose. (p. 34)

Trevino (1991) stated:

Today 20 percent of all school-age children live in poverty. This year 20 of every 100 children will be born out of wedlock, 13 to teenage mothers, 12 to parents who will divorce before the child is 18, 15 into households where no parent is

employed, and 15 into households where income is below the poverty level. By the year 2000, as many as one third of the nation's children may be disadvantaged and at-risk.(p. 31)

Youth at risk of dropping out of school are typically identified as demonstrating symptoms of disconnection from the school environment. These signs include: academic failure, discipline problems, retention(s), drug and/or alcohol abuse, pregnancy, suspensions from school, and chronic truancy (Slavin, 1989).

Weber (1986) indicated that at-risk students were frequently termed "alienated", "disconnected", and "marginal." They were unaware of their hidden potential, and frequently at war with themselves as well as with those around them. Jung (1954) defined the problem of alienation as "being out of touch with oneself" (p. 48).

### **Deficiency Orientation**

Many at-risk students fall through the cracks because of a deficiency orientation (Strahan, 1988). Parents, teachers, and students themselves adopt the perception of what the student cannot accomplish rather than what he/she can achieve. As deficiencies are identified for remedial purposes, students project negative orientations that inhibit their ability to experience academic success.



Strahan (1988) described one example of this dilemma in the following case study:

Keith's situation is typical. His permanent records showed that he was identified as a "remedial reader" in first grade. He was given a diagnostic test that provided a list of the skills he could not perform. Over the next five years, he was given similar tests and placed in a series of lower reading groups to develop these identified skills. While his skill performance improved somewhat, his overall reading performance showed little gain. In spite of many remediation efforts, he arrived at the middle school with very little understanding of the purposes of reading and almost no personal interest in reading. Perhaps most significant, he became convinced that he was a poor reader and was therefore different from many of his peers. (p.3)

This deficiency orientation inhibited Keith's self perception. When his teachers identified the fact that Keith could process information through movement, drawings, and diagrams, and initiated this proficiency approach, Keith responded with a sense of proficiency and enhanced academic self-esteem. When teachers expect high achievement and focus on student proficiency, these proactive behaviors translate into the increased likelihood of student academic success.

Good and Weinstein (1986) elucidated this premise in their comprehensive study of teacher expectations. They noted that when teachers perceived a student as less able,

the student performed in accordance with these lowered expectations.

Reglin (1990) reiterated this premise:

Students' attitudes toward education are influenced by their personal experiences and the experiences and attitudes of others. (p. 212)

### Self Esteem and Increased Participation In School

At-risk students may withdraw from school because of an impaired self-view that has resulted from their own perceived failure to connect with school and a lack of support from significant others (parents, friends, teachers, etc.) Finn (1989) described this experience in the Frustration Self Esteem Model. In this model, (a) poor school performance is hypothesized to lead to (b) an impaired self-view and, in turn, to (c) the student's opposition to participation in school. Students begin to perceive themselves as ineffective and powerless and become alienated from school. Finn stated that the frustration incurred from low test grades, retention, and poor school performance could be avoided by providing an "adequate instructional and/or emotional environment" (p. 123). This type of environment creates a commitment to schooling through participation and identification with school. Thus, the Participation/ Identification Model described the

behavioral antecedent of participation in order to create an environment conducive to students' academic and personal success. When teachers modified class assignments to meet the needs of at-risk students and encouraged active participation in classroom activities, the process of identification with school began.

### Teacher Behavior

Damico (1990) discovered that at-risk students were stimulated and encouraged by teachers who answered their questions without negative feedback, encouraged class discussion and who liked students. In Damico's study to identify inviting teacher behaviors one student responded;

The teacher I learned the most from didn't yell if you raised your hand. She wouldn't get upset. You could ask anything. She would stop whatever she was doing to help you. Here it's: "Can't you see what I'm doing!" You sit there with a blank piece of paper. They have a super [superior] attitude. You raise your hand. "Wait until I finish." And then you forget what you were going to ask and then you're totally lost. I already read it at home before I asked and she tells me to read it when I already have. (p. 20)

According to Johnston (1985), teachers who were person-centered, flexible and optimistic (as opposed to rule and procedure-oriented) helped to reduce the feelings of alienation that fed potential dropouts. The Perry Preschool Project (Berrueta-Clement, Schweinhart, Barnett, Epstein,

and Weikart 1984) provided data to reinforce the Participation/ Identification Model. Three and four year old black children (n=123) identified as at-risk were randomly assigned to an intensive pre-school program or to no pre-school program. The intensive program included activities in which teachers showered students with positive student/teacher interactions and provided them with a high rate of success on tasks. The students were followed to age 19. Students who received the intensive care program exhibited a higher graduation rate, reduced teen pregnancy, reduced detention, and fewer arrests by police. The authors identified one key variable that emerged as a result of this early intervention. These students had acquired a commitment to school. The Perry Pre-school Project evaluation findings concluded:

On the basis of these internal and external factors, social bonds develop between persons and settings in the course of human development. Strong social bonds to conventional settings, such as school, are seen as making delinquency less likely, whereas weak social bonds make delinquency more likely. (Berrueta-Clement et al., 1984, p. 3)

### **Effective Programs for At-Risk Students**

This section reviews several programs that have been judged as effective for at-risk youth.

#### **TOPS**

Van Hoose (1989) described the TOPS (Teaching Our Pupils Success) as "a demonstration of a high degree of commitment and a labor of love and professionalism." (p. 2) This middle school program targeted 28 at-risk students who were plugged into small-focus classes. Teachers provided these students with one-on-one tutoring, small-group activities (like the affective skills building Ungame) and an atmosphere of mutual support. Other teachers from this middle school volunteered one planning period per week to help out in the TOPS class. The TOPS teachers worked hard to develop a bond with their students and became strong advocates for them. TOPS teachers also "began to press for a different set of behaviors from the other teachers" to encourage their groups' success (p. 8).

Soon these isolated TOPS classes developed into a network of parent, community, and local school support. Teachers volunteered to meet in early morning meetings before school to share successes and discuss program efforts. Parents came to a school-sponsored picnic to share testimonies about their child's improvements. Speakers from the community shared their own stories of success and the importance of staying in school. The principal actively supported the TOPS program and met with individual TOPS students to encourage school success. The results of this program were staggering: "The year before TOPS, this group of students compiled 38 F's among them in the last nine

weeks. In their first nine weeks after the TOPS program was in place, there were only five F's among them in the entire group."(Van Hoose, 1989 p. 8)

### **FOCUS**

Casebolt (1987) described FOCUS as a program that provided a learning environment that highlighted self-concept building activities. Program results were improved grades, increased attendance, and reduction in antisocial behavior. Students were assigned to a small class (15 students) and provided with intense one-on-one assistance in core academic discipline areas: English, social studies, math, and science. The FOCUS teacher, FOCUS students, and the school guidance counselor met to talk about school and home problems that posed barriers to students' school success. Parent/ teacher/ student meetings insured important parental support for this program. FOCUS teachers received instruction in group dynamics, behavior modification, and crisis intervention. An aide helped the FOCUS teacher provide individualized instruction. Guidance counselors provided career exploration as an integral part of the curriculum. Students significantly increased their proficiency in language arts, science, social studies, and health/physical education. Attendance also improved.

**LSYOU**

Louisiana State Youth Opportunities Unlimited (LSYOU) was an eight-week, summer dropout prevention program for eighth and ninth grade at-risk students. Teachers provided students with an environment comprised of academics, work experience, counseling, study skills, and recreation. The project's major focus was to create a nurturing environment through positive and supportive interactions with staff, and the use of reading materials that validated self-concept. For example, the reading class text entitled You Are Somebody Special included stories like IALAC "I Am Lovable And Capable". The program emphasized self-concept enhancement. During this project "students were constantly being told by the reading teachers that they were lovable and capable." (Michael, 1990, p. 205) The student's overall rating of the LSYOU program was "1 1/2" (1-excellent, 2-good, 3-average, 4-poor). Students indicated that this program significantly influenced their attitudes toward the importance of staying in school.

**An Invitational Education Intervention**

Faustino (1989) reported a 44% decrease in the dropout rate at East Davidson High School in North Carolina. The faculty at this school created a total school environment structured in their commitment to IE as a school philosophy. This secondary school's success with at-risk students was

related to some key programs that were out growths of this school's philosophy:

When you see all the programs we're doing, they are like flowers on a tree. But the roots and strong trunk of the school is our philosophy of Invitational Education. Everyone in the school takes an active part in the growth of this tree. (Faustino, 1989, p.13)

Programs that teachers implemented at East Davidson included:

1. Teacher/Buddy System - Every teacher adopted an at-risk student. Teachers called their "buddy" when he/she was absent from school and provided support and encouragement.
2. Peer Helper Program - Twenty-five students were trained in helping and leadership skills. Peer helpers were available to talk to at-risk students concerning family problems or personal concerns.
3. SMART (Student Management and Referral Team) - This team composed of teachers, counselors, a social worker, and an administrator held regular meetings to develop interventions for students at risk of dropping out of school. These interventions included: assignment to a peer helper or teacher buddy; referral to an outside agency; or an instructional intervention performed by the classroom teacher.



4. Nurturing Class - At-risk students were placed in a small class (10-12 students) designed to provide study skills, goal setting procedures, counseling, stress management, and one-on-one tutoring.

5. Business Partnerships - Local businesses supported the school by providing incentives like: T-shirts, radios, gas coupons, discounts on purchases, etc. for improved grades.

Chance (1990) stressed that the results of these efforts to reduce the dropout rate were attributed to a total school approach. Teachers, bus drivers, business partners and cafeteria staff expressed a sense of ownership in the Invitational philosophy of this school.

Effective programs for at-risk students reflect concentrated efforts to increase students' participation and identification with school. The TOPS, FOCUS, and LSYOU programs provided students with a small group environment structured with high expectations, intensive guidance with personal problems, academic tutoring, and goal setting.

At East Davidson a small group component was used. At-risk students were provided with an "intensive care" class that reflected high expectations, advocacy, and a network of support. The learning environment and family atmosphere, however, were extended through peer helpers, teacher buddies, and business partnerships. The approach at East Davidson was a total school process. The TOPS, FOCUS, and LSYOU proponents suggest that intensive care, advocacy, and

a supportive self-concept building environment are critical in engaging at-risk students in school. The East Davidson program efforts suggest that student engagement can be enhanced when all resources within the school environment are fully utilized.

The learning environment at East Davidson included not only a small-scale nurturing class but also a large scale school and community commitment to the Invitational theory of practice. Thus, the efforts to engage the at-risk population were spread across a wider spectrum of participation and involvement.

### **Invitational Education as a Total School Environment**

This review of the literature of IE explains the roots of IE (i.e., self-concept theory) and develops this theory of practice. "Proficiency" teacher orientations are assimilated into an overall framework for school success that addresses both the needs of the at-risk student and of all students within the school setting. Finally, the spirit of the school setting is isolated as the primary impetus for growth and positive change.

Invitational Education (IE), initially articulated by Purkey (1978), is a theory of practice that emphasizes a climate of collaboration, high expectations, and total school participation. Purkey (1978) stressed the importance of understanding self-concept and how it relates to the education of all students:

Rather than viewing students as physical objects to be moved about like puppets on strings, the teacher's primary role is to see students in essentially positive ways and to invite them to behave accordingly. (p. vi)

IE has evolved into a transforming vehicle to create a balanced ecosystem, a type of homeostasis or steady state in a school's over-all environment. Purkey asserted that everyone and everything in schools should invite the realization of human potential. Thus teachers, bus drivers, librarians, teacher aides, community members...everyone

contributes to the give and take of this system of interchange. Sale and Lee (1972) defined an ecosystem as "a basic ecological unit comprising living and nonliving components interacting to produce a stable system." (p. 26) IE provides the platform for establishing a balanced school ecosystem.

According to Novak (1989) schools are "message systems" that send out messages of proficiency or deficiency and either encourage or discourage self-esteem. When teachers, administrators students and community network together to create a stable productive environment schools become self-renewing ecosystems (Goodlad 1984). Beane (1991) argued that enhancing self-concept is a "moral imperative for schools." For at-risk students as well as all children, a positive self-concept can increase feelings of worth and thus further affiliation and connection with school. The stabilization and optimization of each student within the school setting are structured in each individual student's perception of self.

### Self-concept Theory

Self-concept theory can be traced to numerous psychological foundations. Adler's (1958) theory of psychotherapy suggested the importance of an individual becoming more responsible through the development of self as he/she interacted with the world. According to Adler, self-

esteem was developed through one's perceived successes and failures within his/her phenomenal field. Rogers (1954) believed that the self was the primary component of human personality, and was influenced by social interaction and interpersonal relationships. He addressed the individual's basic need for "unconditional positive regard" as the platform for one's ability to succeed in life (p. 233).

When a teacher perceives a student to be valuable, capable, and responsible, the student tends to live up to the teacher's expectation. Many teachers use inviting behaviors in the classroom as a natural method of encouragement.

Purkey and Aspy (1988) reported that infrequent attention was given by professional organizations in counseling and related educational fields to raise a "clear voice of concern" about the importance of self-concept. Teachers are frequently too busy to focus on self-concept building practices.

Inviting teacher practices, however, are crucial to positive academic outcomes. In a series of studies done with dental hygiene students Amos et al. (1985) found a high correlation between inviting teacher practices like consideration [coefficient alpha (.88)] and commitment [coefficient alpha (.84)] with student attitudes toward the subject matter and their self-concepts as learners.

### Framework for Success

Within the framework of IE, high teacher morale and positive teacher self-concepts are key components.

Early literature in IE emphasized the importance of the inviting process. Russell, Purkey and Siegel (1982) outlined inviting behaviors in terms of "environmental signs," "body language," and "physical and verbal communication." Novak (1984) examined the question "How does a person behave invitingly?" He explored the process of inviting skill development, and emphasized self-monitoring, intentionality, and managed emotion. Purkey and Novak (1984) maintained the importance of making invitations attractive and "reading the situation," thus increasing the educator's ability to support competence and confidence within the learner.

According to White (1959), "shaping the world, and getting that which one wants from it" creates what he calls the "competence motive" (p. 289). This "competence motive" is not fixed for life, but depends upon the successes and/or failures one incurs during his/her life experiences. The power of self-fulfilling prophecy usually takes over and the competent get better while those who feel incompetent demonstrate less skill. The IE methodology specifically focuses on creating self-perceived competence, acceptance, and success within the student.

### Perception and Environment

Purkey and Novak (1984) suggested that "through myriad encounters with the world, particularly those with significant others, people develop fundamental perceptions that serve as organizing filters for making sense of the world" (p. 24). IE encourages teachers to help students to perceive themselves as competent and valuable. Purkey and Novak (1984) noted that the inviting process involved the blending of four basic behaviors:

(1) being personally inviting with oneself, (2) personally inviting with others, (3) being professionally inviting with oneself, and (4) being professionally inviting with others. (p.87)

As educators experience these behaviors, a balance must be maintained in order to facilitate a complete and smooth pattern of functioning. Purkey and Novak (1984) suggested that psychological and environmental factors also played a key role in inviting school success. The "inviting family" model includes: positive expectations, respect for the individual, and a cooperative and participatory spirit.

Firestone (1989) indicated that effective schools research emphasized a positive environment and high expectations; however, "an expanded view of school effectiveness must be taken if we are to serve at-risk students well" (p.41). This expansion involved many

inviting behaviors that included: explaining and re-explaining ideas that students did not understand the first time, and nurturing students to find the right answer without "getting mad". According to Damico (1990) the importance of student "engagement" in the learning process was critical. She underscored that many general curriculum students were not encouraged to ask questions of their teachers. One student said, "You ask them a question, they don't have any time for it. You say the simplest thing, and they say 'I already went over that'" (p.20). Firestone (1989) stated that, "because teachers and students share the school environment... teacher alienation and student alienation feed each other" (p. 42).

Deal (1990) stressed that "the telltale phrase 'I'm just a teacher' reflects an erosion of significance and meaning that has left many schools empty and joyless." He asserted that "the core problems of schools are more spiritual than technical" (p. 11). According to Sarason (1972), the "Zeitgeist" is the spiritual energy of a setting. He stated that "the setting reflects what is in the air and what is in the air derives from the existing social structure" (p. 25). If students and teachers feel alienated the school environment will reflect this dysfunctionism.

Sergiovanni (1990) maintained that "transformative leadership" was an absolute necessity in order to reduce



alienation and meet higher-order needs. These needs include: esteem, autonomy, and self-actualization. IE provides a platform for total school transformation and self-actualization.

### A Balanced School Environment

Purkey and Novak (1988) explained IE by using the "jello principle" (p. 21). In this metaphor the classrooms, gymnasium, library, cafeteria and all students and staff in a school are interconnected like a big bowl of jello. Any touch to one part affects the whole and causes movement or reaction throughout.

IE is similar to a woodland pond where fish, plants, rocks and sunlight interact in a symphony of give and take - "a balanced exchange of energy" (Chance, 1991, p. 8). Schmidt (1990) referred to this type of equilibrium in his description of living an Invitational life. In order to create balance people must live intentionally to create a kind of homeostasis or steady state. When one area is out of balance, Schmidt asserted, "it consumes more than it's fair share of energy and detracts from our success" (p. 77).

In Positive Discipline: A Pocketful of Ideas, Purkey and Strahan (1986) supported this balanced system approach and stated that discipline should be a collaborative effort between student and teacher. According to Purkey and Novak (1988) individuals who were excluded from the decision

making process became lethargic and at times hostile to those who denied them opportunities to make choices.

Chance (1991) reiterated that much like the ecosystem of a woodland pond, a balanced school evolves into a homeostasis of give and take. In this balanced system, "interactions among staff and students are dynamic, and the exchange of energy is optimal" (p. 10).

Strahan (1991) contrasted IE with the factory model in educational theory. The factory model emphasizes quantity over quality, an "everyman for himself" atmosphere (p.5). In contrast, IE stresses a family atmosphere. This family model reinforces Barth's (1990) conclusions that the most outstanding predictor of student achievement is the quality of the relationships among staff. Novak (1989) described the optimal school setting as a "community of inquiry" (p. 229). This notion suggested a "doing with" relationship between students and the school community rather than "doing to" students in a didactic sense. This "doing with" process was strongly emphasized in the second edition of Inviting School Success (1984). A "doing with" educational process underscores Bernstein's notion of dialogical communities. Bernstein (1983) suggested that through participation and mutual recognition, individuals interacted and developed a "wisdom of practice" that increased their successes in life (p. 230).

Attempts to reform education have failed because of an emphasis on the surface aspects of school environments such as recruitment of parent volunteers, organization of tutoring programs and schedule revisions (Deal, 1990). These types of changes are "first order" changes and do not address the cultural patterns or mind-sets involved in making "second-order" changes (Cuban 1984). Deal emphasized the need to transform the character of the entire school environment. This transformation touches what Tye (1987) calls "the deep structure of schooling" (p.281). Tye suggested that effective reform occurred when the basic values and attitudes concerning education were shifted. The deep structure is hard to shift. Many reform efforts touch only the surface structure. Changes on the surface level rarely withstand the test of time. School reform is significant when the fundamental values and assumptions concerning schooling are transformed throughout the environment. This element of environmental transformation is evident in Purkey's (1991) definition of IE:

Invitational Education is a theory of practice designed to create a total school environment that intentionally summons people to realize their relatively boundless potential in all areas of worthwhile human endeavor. Its goal is to address the global nature of schools, the entire school gestalt, and make schools a more exciting, satisfying and enriching experience for everyone involved in schooling. (p. 1)

Ilya Prigogine (1980) won the 1977 Nobel Prize in Chemistry through his work in the "irreversible processes" in nature. These "irreversible processes" in physical science can be compared to deep structural changes in social science. Prigogine noted that people are living in an "open system" and involved in a continuous exchange of energy with the environment. A closed system, however, has no energy loop. For example, a cup of coffee, a rock, or a log have no internal transformation of energy. Prigogine referred to open systems as dissipative structures. An open system's structure is maintained by a constant consumption of and return of energy. When a critical mass is reached, the open system is transformed into a new structure that is stronger and more resilient than the previous one. IE provides a "dissipative structure" for school reform.

This theory of practice provides an open system where school staff members and community members can mold their school into a stronger, healthier environment. This inviting environment is conducive to self-concept enhancement and student engagement in the learning process.

The term "invitation" means "to summon cordially, not to shun." The word "education" derives from the word "educare," which is to "draw out" or "call forth" (Purkey and Novak 1984 p. 2). Therefore, IE means to "summon" or "draw out" that which encourages the realization of

potential and maximum exchange of energy between teachers, students, and the total school community.

### School Reform

Over the past half century educators, legislators, and researchers have urgently sought to identify the characteristics of effective schools. The looming cloud of poor economic and social conditions in the United States created pressure to find the solution for the ills of our society. The desire for positive educational reform has resulted in numerous school improvement movements. Ronald Edmonds (1982) emerged as a primary figure in the "Effective Schools movement." Edmonds described the following widely accepted characteristics of Effective Schools:

1. The principal's leadership and attention to the quality of instruction.
2. A pervasive and broadly understood instructional focus.
3. An orderly, safe climate conducive to teaching and learning.
4. Teacher behaviors that convey the expectation that all students are expected to obtain at least minimum mastery.
5. The use of measures of pupil achievement as the basis of program evaluation.

Edmonds maintained that all children were educable and that successful schools created a climate of collaborative interaction. According to Brookover and Lezotte (1979) Effective Schools' educators emphasize basic skills mastery and continually strive to improve their teaching practices.

On April 26, 1983, the United States Department of Education released a "A Nation At-Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform." This document stimulated much controversy and many reports on excellence in education soon flooded the educational market. As a follow-up to this report, Wayson (then Chair of the Phi Delta Kappa Commission for Developing Public Confidence in Schools) was asked to study and analyze these reports on "excellence." As a means of collecting data for this project, all 50 state education departments were asked to identify schools of excellence. Wayson et al. (1988) assimilated these findings and described the characteristics of an excellent school as flexible, innovative, energetic, and confident. Truly excellent schools displayed a positive climate actively constructed by a common commitment by all members of the school environment.

### Climate

Consistent attention to importance of the climate of schools implies that schools have environmental climatic conditions that are either favorable or unfavorable to teaching and learning. According to Anderson (1983), the school climate is the personality of a school. A favorable school climate reflects a community of teachers, administrators, and students working together to develop a sense of belonging (Cuban, 1989). Newmann (1989) professed that an important condition for the production of a thriving

school environment was student "engagement." Engagement occurs when educators:

fulfill students' needs for competence, extrinsic rewards, intrinsic interest, social support and a sense of ownership. (p. 34)

Wayson et al. explained that excellent schools encourage a "team approach" to problem solving and competence building. Teachers, administrators, and community members should take responsibility for the whole school setting.

According to Wayson et al. the Effective Schools model was too "simplistic," the research base sketchy, and the outcomes of effectiveness (as measured by standardized achievement test scores) too narrow. Firestone (1989) indicated that Effective Schools research emphasized a positive environment and high expectations; however, "an expanded view of school effectiveness must be taken if we are to serve at-risk students well" (p.41).

Although Edmonds, Lezotte, and Wayson suggested some avenues for school reform, the details of school reform must be tailored to meet the needs of the situation. The reform movement brought about the restructuring of many school settings. A major wave of reform focused on the middle school grades approach. This developmental approach was fashioned to meet the needs of adolescents.



### **The Middle School Concept**

In 1986 the Carnegie Corporation established the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development. This task force investigated the literature on middle grade research and recommended that "the middle grade schools must be restructured in a more human scale" (p. 37):

The student upon entering middle grade school should join a small community in which people, students and adults get to know each other well to create a climate for intellectual development. (Turning Points, p. 37)

This task force stated that early adolescence was a time in which youth grapple with many physical, social and psychological changes. Critical choices must be made concerning lifestyle, values, and furthering one's education. The Carnegie Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents reported:

Middle grade schools, junior high, intermediate, and middle schools are potentially society's most powerful force to recapture millions of students adrift, and help every young person thrive during early adolescence. (p.8)

The Middle School Concept includes an emphasis on understanding the needs of adolescents; a team approach to the learning process (collaboration of two or more teachers); the formulation of a cogent school philosophy;

and ongoing staff development to encourage further growth and professional development of all teachers (Merenbloom 1988). In successful middle schools, teacher advisory groups (also called Home-Base units) are provided for all students. In these small groups, teachers act as facilitators and guide students through the trials and tribulations of early adolescence. The Home-Base teacher also teaches units on life skills such as conflict resolution, study skills, decision-making and self-concept development. Students are encouraged to have close affiliation with their Home-Base group. They are frequently involved in intramural programs and develop symbols of their affiliation such as team colors, logos and mascots. The teacher advisory class is usually scheduled for the first period of the school day so students can start the day with a family-type atmosphere structured in mutual trust and positive interaction.

### **Interdisciplinary Teams**

Teachers are divided into interdisciplinary teams (usually comprised of English, math, social studies and science teachers) and are assigned to the same group of students (Merenbloom, 1988). Team planning time (in addition to individual planning time) is recommended in order for the team to correlate their curriculum. The teacher is encouraged to stress the wholeness of learning

and the interrelationships between subject areas. Merenbloom (1988) suggested that the team approach made it possible to create a family-type atmosphere in an age when fewer and fewer students experienced the meaning of the word "family."

### Summary

Students who are at risk of dropping out of school typically exhibit symptoms of marginality. Alienation, disconnection, and withdrawal from school manifest as symptoms of lack of school success and reduced self-esteem. According to White (1959) teachers need to help students develop competence in school. Glasser (1986) alleged that "successful experiences", encouraged by "significant others" increased self-worth and affiliation with school (p.39). IE is a vehicle for participation and affiliation with school. Through the Five P's (people, policies, places, programs and processes), students are provided with numerous connection experiences. School staff who successfully practice the Invitational theory of practice create a gestalt of practices and behaviors that nurture and support student engagement in learning.

High expectations, the creation of a nurturing and connective climate, and an emphasis on student self-concept are common characteristics of Effective Schools, the Middle School Approach, and IE. The possibility of increasing

successful school experiences for at-risk students is greater when these forces work in concert with one another. IE provides a flexible framework for structuring a climate conducive to student self-concept enhancement through total school participation. Goodlad (1984) stated that productive schools exhibited a system of interacting parts (teachers, administrators, and community) working together to reform and revitalize the system. Reform efforts were effective when faculties incorporated change structures into the traditions and culture of their school. Wayson et al. (1988) criticized the Effective Schools movement for its failure to acknowledge the elements of ownership and integration of change with school traditions. According to Novak (1989), schools are "message systems" structured in the values and mores of the school as a whole. The "medium is the message" in all school settings. If teachers and administrators are not given the opportunity to create their own system of messages, reform efforts may not be successful.

IE is a theory of practice that provides a flexible and malleable vehicle for change. School staffs can mold their own people, places, policies, programs, and processes to meet the needs of their individual cultures. The school climate that Anderson (1982) cited as the personality of the school becomes a reflection of each school's uniqueness when IE is used as a change vehicle. For schools using this

model, the foundation of each school's reform structure rests on the basic principles of IE. These principles reinforce the valuable and responsible nature of people, the importance of cooperation and collaboration, and the necessity of positive self-concept building beliefs and practices. The principles of the IE model serve as catalysts for establishing the "communities of support" proposed by Middle School enthusiasts and the "positive climate" emphasized by proponents of Effective Schools (Figure I). In this example the major concepts of the Middle School Approach, Effective Schools movement, and IE are shown with similar emphasis. This emphasis reflects the importance of a positive community of support and a total school environment. The people, policies, places, programs and processes of IE provide vehicles to transport the emphasis of these major educational concepts.

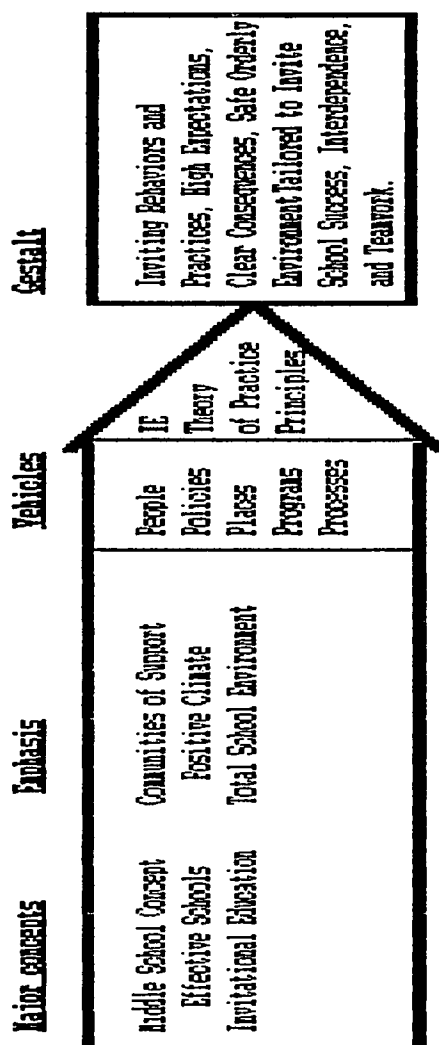


Figure 1 Invitational Education - A Vehicle for School Reform

The Invitational theory of practice supplies the principles that point the way in creating a school gestalt. This gestalt includes: people using inviting behaviors and practices, policies designed with high expectations and clear consequences; places conducive to safety and order; programs tailored to encourage success; and processes that create interdependence and teamwork. IE can equip schools with a versatile model to produce a climate conducive to student engagement, teacher empowerment and reform reflective of the personality of each school. The basic principles and Five P's of IE complement and provide a solid foundation for school reform.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

This investigation involved a thematic analysis of the Invitational Education (IE) implementations initiated by Connection Teams (CTs) at five North Carolina middle schools. A qualitative methodology was chosen to study the strategies/ methods used within each individual school to invite school success. Recurrent themes and perceptions were assessed and placed in the following categories: (1) people, (2) places, (3) programs, (4) policies, and (5) processes. Common themes and perceptions were then compared among all five schools based on the same five categories.

#### **Study Sample**

Five middle school teams were selected from a random stratified sample of 39 schools that were nominated by school superintendents across North Carolina. These five middle schools were representative of geographic region, racial variety, size, urban/rural, and socioeconomic status (SES). This study focused on the middle school because many school attitudes and propensities are being molded during these formative years. Reports have indicated that many



high school dropouts make the decision to do so during the middle grades.

These middle schools participated in a pilot project entitled "Connecting with the Disconnected Student: An Invitational Approach." This project was funded by the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation of Winston Salem, North Carolina and directed by Dr. William W. Purkey, Professor of Education at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Each school had a CT comprised of the principal, one teacher from each of the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades, and the school counselor. The focus of each CT was to bring about changes in the total school environment through attention to people, places, policies, programs and processes within each school.

#### Selection/Intervention/Instrumentation

Three data sources were used; these were consistent with the triangulation criteria set forth by Denzin (1978). These data sources included: (1) Surveys of team members, (2) interviews and observations of all team leaders and each school principal (plus other team members who were available at the time of visitation), and (3) collection and analysis of unobtrusive data that included: team reports, public displays, IE "expert" reports, and school records.

### Selection Process

Five North Carolina schools were chosen to be involved in the Z. Smith Reynolds project to invite school success with at-risk students. All 140 North Carolina superintendents were given the opportunity to select a middle school to become involved in this project. Of the 39 superintendents who responded, these middle schools were divided into three regions: mountain (8), Piedmont (21), and tidewater (10). Two schools were randomly pulled from each regional distribution; however, because of a sparse population, only one school was chosen from the mountain region. These schools were contacted to confirm their interest in participating in this endeavor. Personnel were given detailed instructions regarding their roles in the project. Principals were asked to choose a guidance counselor and a classroom teacher from each of the three middle school grades (6,7,8) to join the principal as the school's CT.

### Connection Teams

The CTs attended an intensive training session in IE in the fall of 1989. Five consultants who were knowledgeable in IE worked with each of the five schools teams. These consultants instructed the members of each team in the tenets of IE, made one follow-up visit to each school and observed for one full day. These observations and

recommendations were presented to all school personnel in after-school meetings.

### Design

This study used a multiple case study design. The case study approach provided a comprehensive examination of the details, processes, and connections that existed within and between each school. According to Stake (1978) results of this type of design "move us toward a fuller understanding of the natural experience acquired in ordinary personal involvement" (p. 5). The multiple case study design provided a full perspective of the experiences/ interactions that occurred within each school.

### Qualitative Research

Since this study addressed those specific Invitational behaviors that the Connection Teams formulated to use with at-risk students, a qualitative mode of inquiry was primarily used. This mode of research was more appropriate for this study and more flexible than a quantitative methodology. It provided the foundation for a detailed description of those activities and/or behaviors identified by team members. This method allowed the researcher to probe more deeply into the identification and evaluation of the specific inviting methods CTs developed to use with at-risk students. Rogers (1984) defined qualitative research

as "direct observation of human activity and interaction in an ongoing, naturalistic fashion" (p. 86). The way people talk about their lives is of significance. Gilligan (1989) contended that "the language they use and the connections they make reveal the world they see and in which they act " (p. 2). The subjects in a qualitative study are not treated as objects or numbers but as an essential part of the phenomena that shape reality. In naturalistic inquiry, the individual becomes the primary focus of the research. Rogers (1984) noted that "The qualitative researcher's laboratory is the social setting under question as it is functioning; one does not alter variables or otherwise change the situation under study" (p.87). Grace (1972) maintained that "the impersonal and limited nature of questionnaires as instruments of social research makes it necessary to use, where possible, interviews in order to explore the thinking, nuances, and qualifications that lie behind the objective responses" (p.33). Through the descriptive tools of naturalistic inquiry, interviews and observations were evaluated and assessed in a comprehensive fashion.

### Survey Development

Surveys were sent to all team members. The results were analyzed for common perceptions and themes. The surveys were developed by focusing on each of the research questions. Survey questions were evaluated by a panel of

three experts in IE and one "expert" in the field of evaluation. All four panel members were given a set of "sample questions" to read and discuss with the evaluator. Through this collaborative process, inadequate survey questions were omitted and pertinent questions remained as part of this instrument.

### Interviews

Interviews were conducted with all five CT leaders, many of the CT members and with school principals. The interview data were compared with the survey findings. All survey questions were also asked during the interviews in order to check the reliability and consistency of survey and interview feedback.

### Unobtrusive Measures

Various unobtrusive measures were used in this study and resulting data were analyzed for common functions, activities, etc. These measures included:

- (1) "Connection Team" reports,
- (2) public displays from the "Connecting with the Disconnected Student" conference,
- (3) memos from the "Connection Teams", and
- (4) Invitational experts' reports from an on-site visit.

### **Data Analysis**

Data were collected and analyzed according to qualitative research guidelines. Comparative analysis as described by Glaser and Strauss (1967) was used to analyze interview, survey, and experts' findings to identify common themes and issues. This system included inductive data analysis. All interview and observation data were coded and labeled. This "unitizing" process transformed data into smaller units that provided precise descriptions of content characteristics. The personal realities of team members were analyzed and compared for commonality through this process. The qualitative paradigm offered an enriched inductive methodology, and was an effective means of gathering and synthesizing data for this study. Common practices and themes were identified through the analysis of these "units" of data. For example, a common practice of at-risk student intervention included a team approach. Each school's choice of approach was divided into various units such as: A. Assistance Teams, B. Connection Teams, C. Interdisciplinary Teams, D. Home-Base Teams. All five schools were analyzed and compared using these criteria.

### **Grounded Theory**

Grounded theory, as explained by Glasser and Strauss (1967), provided the structure for inductive analysis and emergent design. Grounded theory is the result of inference

through observations, interviews, and other sources of descriptive data analysis. For example, the researcher observed that many teams repeated the same approach with at-risk students. A theory, at this point, began to emerge. Through inductive data analysis the theory became "grounded" through the process of repetition. Guba and Lincoln (1985) explained that the process of an emergent design involved:

iterations which are repeated as often as necessary until redundancy is achieved, the theory is stabilized, and the emergent design fulfilled to the extent possible in view of time and resource constraints (p. 188).

Throughout this inquiry, the data and interpretations were compared with those who were interviewed and observed for consistency in interpretation. Guba and Lincoln (1985) stressed that this triangulation process substantiated that "no single item of information unless coming from an elite and unimpeachable source should ever be given serious consideration unless it can be triangulated" (p. 187). The technique of triangulation involved multiple sources of data in order to increase the validity of the interpretation. For example, the CTs' surveys from Alpha indicated that the faculty at this school was working on increasing trust and faculty cohesiveness. The Invitational expert report described the same element: "The school is at a rebuilding stage. There is much energy there and they are working on

building trust." When interviewed, Administrator A commented on the same element, "Our school is in a sad state of affairs, trust is missing between many faculty members." The key theme of building trust was reflected in three sources: survey reports, the Invitational expert report, and during interviews with both Administrator A and other CT members. All data in this study were triangulated in this fashion, by using three or more sources.

#### Coding Procedures

Interviews with team leaders, team members, and school principals were tape-recorded and transcribed. Interview data were collected and coded to produce categories as described by Guba and Lincoln (1985). Field notes of the Invitational experts and survey data were analyzed, coded, and included in the descriptive categories. Initial categories included the Five P's of the IE model. Data were sorted into the following categories: (1) people, (2) places, (3) policies, (4) programs, (5) processes. These categories provided a sorting framework so that each school could be classified.

Secondary categories emerged as data were assimilated from interviews, observations, survey results, experts' reports, etc. For example, data that were entered under the "people" category resulted in various recurrent themes. Invitational experts' reports, interviews and survey reports



indicated repeated references to "the family atmosphere" that developed at all five participating schools. This secondary category emerged from the comments of CT members, data from Invitational School Success Surveys, faculty members, Invitational Expert reports, etc. A total of 68 comments were cited from these sources. Thus, "the family atmosphere" emerged as a prominent finding. All 14 secondary categories are contained in the Findings section of Chapter VI.

#### **Presentation of Data**

One descriptive case study was developed for each school. Then, the five case studies were analyzed to determine common themes or elements that were consistently displayed. To protect anonymity, the five schools in this project are called Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta and Epsilon.

## CHAPTER IV

### WITHIN CASE ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

#### Introduction

This was a study of the implementation of Invitational Education (IE) in five North Carolina middle schools, 1989-1991. The data collected in this study came from a variety of sources: (1) surveys of team members, (2) interviews of all team leaders and each school principal (plus other team members who were available at the time of visitation), (3) observations of team members, and (4) unobtrusive data that included team reports, public displays, IE "expert" reports, and school records. Data reported in Chapter IV include responses to research questions #1 and #2. These two research questions addressed the people, places, policies, programs, processes, and the Connection Teams' (CTs) efforts within the settings of each of the five schools participating in this project.

#### Research Questions presented in Chapter IV:

1. Have the people, places, policies, programs, and processes of these five schools changed through their participation in these efforts? If so, (A) How has the "spirit" of camaraderie changed within each school? (B) What particular programs, events, activities, etc., at each school have contributed to this change?

2. How has each Connection Team initiated IE?

**Definition of Terms Used in Data Analysis and Reporting**

1. Assistance Team (also called CORE Team or "A" Team) - An intervention team composed of teachers, counselors, administrators and the school social worker. This team met weekly to discuss problems concerning students at risk and provided interventions for these students. (Interventions were graded on three levels: Level 1 - classroom interventions; Level 2 - Parent contact; Level 3 - referral to an outside agency.
2. Connection Team (CT) - Comprised of the school principal, one teacher each from the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades, and the school counselor. CTs were responsible for channeling IE through the Five P's at each of the five schools.
3. Home-Base Teams or TAG (Teacher Advisory Groups) The TAG was a part of the Middle School Concept. Students were divided into groups of 20 or 25 and assigned to a teacher. During the first period of the school day they met and discussed personal concerns. The teacher of Home-Base focused on self-concept building exercises and interpersonal interaction. Students were also provided with information concerning decision making, study skills, goal setting, etc. These teams frequently participated in extra-curricular

activities, developed a team spirit and experienced interdependence.

**4. Interdisciplinary (or Grade Level) Teams** were part of the Middle School Concept. They were comprised of the language arts, social studies, science and math teachers from each grade level (6,7,8). This team shared students from the same grade during blocks of time. Grade-level teams had common planning times to design interdisciplinary lessons, brainstorm solutions to discipline problems, or to individualize student needs.

**5. Invitational Expert** - Each of the five schools in this study was assigned two consultants to monitor school progress. The Invitational experts made one visit to each school and provided feedback on their progress with the concepts of IE.

**6. Invitational Metaphor Blue Cards and Orange Cards. Blue Cards** - An Invitational metaphor for supportive language and behaviors such as: smiles, hugs, affirmations and general caring behaviors. **Orange cards** - An Invitational metaphor for non-supportive language and behaviors such as: put-downs, destructive criticism, threatening language, and angry remarks.

**7. Inviting School Success Survey** - A survey that provided assessment of inviting behaviors, policies, places, programs and processes. Pre- and post-assessment were done at each

of the five schools to investigate improvements in each school's IQ (Invitational Quotient).

### Alpha Middle School

An inner-city school serving 550 students, Alpha Middle School had a high at-risk population. This school's racial composition was 50% white and 50% black. The students were described by the principal as lower socio-economic status (verified by 1989 Southern Association report). Alpha was having problems before Administrator A became school principal in the fall of 1989. During the 1988-1989 school year parents were "up in arms," and the school board was putting pressure on the previous school principal to resign. Teacher morale was low and students wandered the halls undisciplined. Three teachers were arriving at the school at 10:00 instead of the required 8:00 arrival time. Classes were unsupervised during this time. Expectations were unclear and school personnel had little direction. At Alpha IE was used as a vehicle for raising expectations and developing team spirit.

#### **Alpha's People**

Administrator A introduced IE at Alpha to bring people together, to create communication and to develop a sense of community. One CT member commented:

I was in shock when I first came to this school three years ago. There was a lot of back stabbing here. They (other faculty members) pretended to have a "we care" attitude, but

then you hear rumors, yuck-oh type things, lies to get attention. You know you're not going to be friends with these people, yet it would be nice to talk about something other than school when you are together; but then you take the chance of it getting all over the school (laughter)...

The Invitational "expert reports" resulting from a visit in November of 1989 reflected that Alpha was a school "in transition." One expert's report noted that "the school is at a rebuilding stage. There is much energy here and they are working on trust."

The principal at Alpha came to a school with broken windows, broken-down policies and broken trust. "We need a common goal and a mission." Administrator A contended: "It's going to take being a team member. You cannot go around tearing down people or we're never going to get there."

During faculty meetings staff members talked freely about disinviting practices, for example, one faculty member commented:

I can't believe Ms \_\_\_\_\_ would send a kid out of the room for not having a pencil and paper; and the way some teachers talk to students, like they are dogs...

Administrator A emphasized the use of inviting messages;

We have to model inviting behavior by our tone of voice, nonverbal cues, etc. How we say things

when we discipline a student is so important. We can be firm, yet kind.

The expectations that this principal made to her staff were clear:

This is my expectation - to be inviting professionals in a middle school working with middle school kids. If you are happy, they (the students) will be happy. If you are not happy here I can help you get where you need to go.

Administrator A provided all faculty members with staff development relating to the Middle School Concept. As a result, various teams were formed to address the needs of children at Alpha. The CT members assisted in the creation of a nurturing and supportive environment by introducing the faculty to the inviting school model. The grade-level team worked with the same group of youngsters. All grade-level teams had a common planning period. This way, they could all meet with the parent of a troubled student, brainstorm ways to work with this student, and develop a plan of action. One grade-level team member noted that "If I can't devise a way to reach a child, one of my team members can. Because we are a team we support and encourage one another."

Common support was acknowledged as an important variable within the "A" Team (Assistance Team). This team, comprised of six faculty members from all grade-levels and



guidance, met weekly to create interventions to assist students in need. This was a team of teachers trained in drug and alcohol intervention methods. "A" Team members stated that "drugs were running rampant in our school."

This team identified students who were abusing drugs and helped them to connect with resources to help with their problem. Other teams developed at Alpha included the Discipline Committee, a Community Relations Committee, and the School Leadership Council. Administrator A sought to join these teams in an all-out assault on any disinviting activities at Alpha. The result was a faculty actively engaged in problem solving and team building.

### **Alpha's Policies**

Administrator A focused on clear expectations for both student and teacher behavior. After collecting the data from surveys sent out to students, faculty, and parents the faculty established the following priorities:

1. A positive and supportive school climate conducive to nurturing school pride and fostering teaching and learning.
2. A clear and focused mission understood by the faculty, students, and community.
3. Strong instructive leadership by the principal and the administration.

**Mission Statement:** The faculty, staff, students and community of Alpha Middle School are committed

to academic excellence and the development of individual strengths and talents. We are also committed to establishing and maintaining a positive, supportive and nurturing environment where individual differences, respect for the rights of others, and pride in our environment guide school and community behavior.

Administrator A maintained that IE was a wonderful vehicle for supporting the school mission. After the Inviting School Success Survey data were analyzed, Administrator A identified those areas of the school practices and policies that were most disinviting and established a plan to overcome them. Administrator A emphasized the use of a written plan complete with objectives and strategies to improve the school's "Invitational Quotient" (IQ).

"I want tools, not just theories floating around," Administrator A emphasized. Faculty members assessed and re-developed existing policies and practices. A Leadership Council composed of faculty representing all grade-levels, guidance, and support staff met weekly and published its minutes to all staff members. This team and the school CT worked together to brainstorm new ideas, policies, and practices to invite school success. Administrator A noted that the emphasis on IE effected change:

Invitational Education changed the atmosphere, the policies, the things we did because I think kids

and teachers and parents felt like they were more a part of the improvements and accomplishments.

Clear policies were outlined by a seven-member Discipline Committee to reduce discipline problems at Alpha Middle School. All grade-level teams created their own sets of behavioral expectations and enforced these expectations with clear consequences. Grade-level teams began to work with students by making behavioral contracts, providing parent conferences, and by telephoning parents to provide positive reinforcement for students who had learned to control inappropriate behavior. One discipline committee member exclaimed:

By the end of first semester our discipline problems were reduced to a bare minimum. We backed up our high expectations with clear consequences and improved behavior with praise and encouragement.

In a memo to teachers, Administrator A made the following comment concerning well disciplined teaching:

It has been my experience that effective teachers don't have many discipline problems because they are well planned and provide exciting and interesting lessons that involve students in actively meeting their needs. These teachers don't yell at students or put them down with sarcastic, degrading remarks in front of their peers. Although they establish high expectations for student achievement, they establish rapport

even with the most severe discipline problem. We all need to do some soul searching about the way we interact with the people we work with and the students we provide for.

### **Alpha's Places**

As parents and faculty worked together, school improvements were made. Central office personal provided funds for the repair of broken windows, broken sidewalks, and for fresh paint. Administrator A noted that "we could see the change" in the newly decorated cafeteria (a project taken on by parents) and in the student art work and team logos displayed throughout the school. Students were invited to "adopt an area" for sprucing up. Two classes adopted a nursing home and visited their adopted elderly friends on a regular basis. Students took favors and read and sang to their new "grandparents."

Parents contributed to the improvements around the school by taking on various improvement projects, and by volunteering to help with the "brag boards" that teachers began to put up around the school building to highlight successful students.

One CT member decided to turn off the "high beams" (fluorescent lights) in her office. She created a cozy niche of lamplight, carpet on the floor, and green plants. She commented that kids felt more "invited and comfortable" in the setting she had recreated. "We haven't reached the

summit yet, nobody thinks that at all, but we've gone up it a ways. "

When asked what was the one thing that contributed most to the inviting atmosphere Administrator A quickly replied:

The Middle School Concept has contributed most to our inviting school climate. This concept supports a nurturing, supporting, and respecting environment. It doesn't matter if you are big or little, the same human principles apply.

#### **Alpha's Programs**

Alpha focused on building connections for the disconnected student. One CT member reported that an A Team (Assistance Team) was formed to help assist students with problems, special needs, etc. This team comprised of six faculty members, studied the needs of at-risk students and developed strategies to meet those needs. Strategies included interventions by the social worker, referrals to mental health or family counseling, and classroom strategies to improve academic performance. One CT member at Alpha commented:

I'm on the A Team. We hear the pleas and complaints and I see the problems in my class...parents who are divorcing in their faces and saying it's time for you to grow up, boy... The girl who is pregnant without a soul to tell... The boy whose behavior yesterday was belligerent but today is giggly... he is drugged out...She (the principal) is trying to make sure every student learns and has an equal opportunity for

that learning... Does every teacher have a responsibility to teach every child? Yes... but, my God, where does it end? Where does something or someone intercede? How can I modify my lesson plan to meet the needs of all when every other student in my classroom is at-risk?

This voice of frustration reflected the intensity of the at-risk problem at Alpha. Another CT member stated that 40% of all students at Alpha were at-risk. Six faculty members who became an Assistance Team were trained in substance abuse intervention and counseling in order to affect the drug problem at this middle school . The community was tapped to assist with students in need. "I've Got Better Things to Do" was a program offered by Community firefighters that provided positive role models for at-risk students. Administrator A reported that firefighters did some group counseling and took these kids "places they had never been." They taught the students to be health conscious and use appropriate decision making skills. "Willpower" was another program designed to meet the needs of high risk students. A local radio station provided a camp experience with group counseling for students who were having trouble in school. Race car drivers from the community, firefighters, and a feather weight champion boxer made efforts to help troubled youngsters learn to deal with home/personal problems and to focus on school. A full-scale

community effort was made at Alpha to address the problems of drugs, alcohol, pregnancy and the dysfunctional family.

The administration started the **HOTS** (Higher Order Thinking Skills) program for at-risk students. Alpha was one of ten middle schools in the U.S. chosen to have this new **HOTS** curriculum. By using computers and stimulating "think it through" discussions, students were taught how to connect with the curriculum and to have fun in the process. One faculty member enthusiastically commented, "I can't hold my kids back from going to the HOTS program. They are so excited about learning with this "new hands-on approach!" Administrator A asserted that:

The best place to help at-risk students is in the classroom where they can achieve academically, the old junior high school idea was beam it out to all and if you got it ok, if not, tough! The Middle School Concept invites school success by exciting hands on involvement, active learning related to the interests of the student, in a warm supportive place.

#### **Alpha's Processes and the Spirit of the school**

As a result of the open airing of ideas concerning the school climate, new programs, policies, and processes emerged. Faculty members went out together on Friday after school for dinner and an "attitude adjustment". One teacher created an "incentive lunch" complete with checkered table

cloths and flowers on every table, as a reward for students who had improved in school.

Administrator A noted that teachers who were formerly hesitant to accept the Middle School Concept were "jumping on board." A few teachers, however, could not relinquish their of ingrained junior high school mindset:

We have teachers here who are traditional junior high. They don't have the mind set for middle school. I hope I lose some of those; they are not incompetent, they just don't have the stuff for middle school. They see the writing on the wall.

During Administrator A's time at Alpha three teachers transferred and five were on probationary status. Administrator A focused on recruiting "star teachers" and bragged about a new teacher for the upcoming year:

I've got one of the top five teachers in Tennessee coming in next year. Personnel has been very supportive. We are increasing the number of star teachers. My stars just want to get on with the show. I feel their respect.

CT members praised Administrator A for her clear communication of the school's mission, her desire for positive change, and her professionalism:

Our principal has made a big difference. She has the philosophy that you are a professional person and you are trusted to follow through to do your



job. Yet we know where we stand if we don't follow through. She's supportive, yet firm.

Alpha evolved on many levels in order to create a more inviting school. Administrator A commented that they could have started "just about anywhere" because of the plethora of problems that taunted this school. Administrator A admitted that she worked a minimum of six days a week, twelve hours a day when she first started. After time passed and expectations were made clear, however, everyone started to experience the payoff. "Students were no longer roaming the halls anymore and teachers knew what was expected of them."

The climate at Alpha underwent a renewal. Grade level teams telephoned parents to invite them to a covered dish dinner, a Middle School Concept seminar, and/or a conference concerning their child. According to Administrator A, through the combined efforts of the CT and the Leadership Council the policies, people, places, programs and processes transformed Alpha into a more inviting environment. At the end of their first Invitational year, the faculty went on a retreat to share successes and to set goals for the following year. Administrator A reflected on this experience:

We made sure that they (the teachers) had wonderful meals and we played some neat games

together (laughter)...They (the faculty) shared where they had seen changes and growth. We were clearly more cohesive, more like a family.

The second Invitational year built upon the first. Many of the programs to target the at-risk population were put into place during this year. Visually, the school became transformed from a dark and broken-down building into a school filled with student art work, team logos, and a renovated atmosphere. Administrator A made the following comment when reflecting on the transformation at Alpha:

I know when I go home at night and go to sleep I've done the best for my kids. I don't pass trash, I deal with the situation. I tell them (inadequate teachers) it's nothing personal, but I have an obligation to the kids.

The Invitational Model provided this middle school with the spirit of honest communication that sparked a rebuilding process. Administrator A commented that:

Invitational Learning brought our faculty together and created dialogue, important planning, and consensus building at a crucial time in the history of our school. We developed our school mission together, and we reminded each other to stick to it.

### **Alpha's Connection Team**

Administrator A chose her CT based on how well she thought that the individuals could collaborate. She noted that the team members were energetic, dynamic and focused. Initially they met weekly, but as they developed their Invitational plan meetings were not as frequent. All six CT members remarked that they enjoyed the one-day IE in-service provided in Greensboro, N.C., in October of 1989. Many, however, expressed apprehension concerning the process of introducing their faculty to the concepts of IE. Two tapes on IE made by Dr. William Purkey were used to introduce the faculty to the basic concepts of IE. Administrator A remarked that "the faculty loved Purkey and his tapes." The CT members followed up by asking each grade-level team for suggestions on how to invite school success more readily. The response was overwhelming. The CT decided to focus on improved school climate, better staff interactions/communication, and parent awareness and involvement. These components were identical to those outlined in the school's comprehensive school plan. One CT member commented, "Alpha's comprehensive plan and IE went hand in glove to set the stage for school improvement."

Fortunately, the CT included faculty who worked well together and believed in the promotion of positive faculty relationships. One CT Member commented, "We were genuinely interested in supporting one another and building trust

within our school." The CT introduced the faculty to the concept of "blue cards" and "orange cards". One team member responded:

Our language and the messages that we were sending to one another and to the students were very orange, at times. We talked about this on many occasions during faculty meetings and gave examples to one another. Some people were pretty hard on each other, but I think the honesty paid off.

One major obstacle faced by the CT was a disinviting atmosphere that periodically clouded the school environment. Even the principal said that she had to be "orange" at times. Administrator A told certain teachers that she would help them find another place to work if they could not model the nurturing and supporting elements of the Middle School Concept. Although administrator A perceived this as an "orange message", it was not. She told her less-than-inviting faculty members, "I don't worry about the kids 'cause they are going to make it, but I do worry about some of you."

Administrator A was direct and to the point, and all of the CT members supported her openness. One CT member remarked that she enjoyed learning about IE, but felt that she needed more support from the consultants who were assigned to Alpha as facilitators for their first Invitational year:

I felt like we were left in limbo, I wanted them to act like a mystery shopper at our school, writing down what they saw happening or not happening and giving us feedback - a definite idea of where we needed to improve.

Other CT members mirrored this concern about feedback.

"They came in November of 1989 and it was a one shot deal.

I was not happy with the feedback. It was minimal."

Although the CT members unanimously felt that more feedback was needed, they perceived IE as a vehicle for unifying their faculty at a time when trust and cohesiveness were desperately needed. The IE model also gave them a language to use in order to build more cohesiveness.

## **Beta Middle School**

### **Brief Overview**

Beta Middle School, with a 1989 population of 267 seventh and eighth grade students, is located in Avery County, North Carolina. This rural, mountaintop school is in an area called the "Christmas tree capital of the world." The student population is predominantly white with four black students. The average per capita income is low but property values are high. Income is created by tourism, the Christmas tree industry, and local ski resorts. Administrator B has been at this school for eight years. Because of the high number of at-risk students in this area, Beta's CT focused on creating a "safety net" for students with special needs. One team member remarked:

We looked for opportunities to celebrate every day. Many of our students come from bad home lives, and we wanted them to feel special and to have a group identity because if they got it here, maybe going home wouldn't be so bad.

### **Beta's People**

In Beta Middle School faculty members consistently commented on the close family relationships they had created at their school. Administrator B remarked:

We've always been like a family here. Before every faculty meeting we do calisthenics. We've got some clowns on our faculty... comedians... we support one another and have a lot of camaraderie here. I guess the kids feel it too.

In an Invitational "expert report" made on November 30, 1989, the evaluator noted:

The general atmosphere of the school is very positive. The faculty and students seem to know each other very well and enjoy their time together. The classes we visited were engaged in interesting activities and the teachers reported several innovative approaches to instructions. Most of the teachers are involved in staff development activities at nearby Appalachian State. They pride themselves in their involvement in statewide middle school activities.

The close family bond at Beta was reemphasized by a CT member:

The key to our success is a good faculty to work with. We have bonded with each other and the result is a better environment for the kids. I like being here and I think the faculty likes being here. We have real positive, tight communication. Even though I'm not on a team (grade level teacher team) we are able to communicate. As a guidance counselor I need a lot of help with our large at-risk population. Interventions take place prior to any referrals to me. This shows the level of professional team-working we have at this school.

Teamwork was consistently mentioned as the primary vehicle to insure school success. All faculty were involved

in comprehensive middle school training sessions provided by Dr. Ken McKewin, the director of middle school education at Appalachian State University. In these sessions, teamwork and communication skills were emphasized. Faculty members demonstrated a keen awareness of how to discipline, communicate, and interact with the middle school student. One CT member commented:

I see very few students playing the teacher against the student. You know, it can get to be a game where both parties lose. Our teachers here know how to re-direct the possible negative energy into a more positive type communication. Of course these are exceptions, but for the most part, we use this communication technique.

Another faculty member reported:

I like the team approach with the kids I serve because three heads are better than one. When I'm stuck and can't figure out how to handle a child, one of my team-mates always seems to have the answer.

Although the faculty had previously focused on communication and respect for one another and for students, IE provided them with some new "handles" for the doors to communication. After the CT members returned from their training session in IE in November of 1989, they decided to organize a full-scale assault on any disinviting practices at Beta. They began with a school assembly to demonstrate



the concepts of blue (inviting practices) and orange (disinviting practices). One CT member recounted:

I remember coming back from our October meeting in Greensboro, North Carolina and making loads of blue and orange cards. We presented the concepts during a big student body/faculty assembly. From then on we were constantly reminding one another of our blue versus orange interactions. Kids would say to me, "Whoa Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_ you're being orange to me!" I would catch myself and monitor my interactions more frequently both with students and with my co-workers.

Administrator B commented on his "orange" practices:

I remember one boy that I had to discipline saying to me "But Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ you're being orange" and I retorted, "you better believe it!"...laughter... Sometimes being strict and providing consequences for actions can be interpreted as disinviting, however, inviting practices can sometimes be quite assertive. Kids want and need to be disciplined.

### **Beta's Policies**

During the 1989-1990 school year, faculty were doing a self-study for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). Many policies were being evaluated and remodeled. The faculty at Beta decided to present their revised school concept complete with new inviting practices to the school board. The following philosophy was adopted:

### **Beta's Middle school Philosophy and Program**

We believe that the middle school is a unique part of the education process. The role of the middle school is to provide each student with a gradual transition from elementary school to high school, and, at the same time, effect a smooth transition from childhood to adolescence.

We are aware that these years are crucial in the development of a student. We believe that the middle school should provide a strong basic skills program balanced with other educational opportunities which will facilitate the student's intellectual development, enabling the student to assess his or her strengths and weaknesses and to develop a positive self-concept.

We believe in the dignity, worth, and uniqueness of every student. We also recognize the need for a varied, flexible, and challenging curriculum which will provide both stimulating experiences and realistic goals for each student.

Beta's faculty also focused activities of their first Invitational school year on:

1. Student handbooks that clearly defined the policies in a positive manner.
2. Class rules displayed in a positive manner.
3. Consistent systematic methods for policies to be carried out.

Three CT members noted their appreciation of the revised discipline policy. One team member said, "Our discipline problems have been reduced by 50 percent. We very rarely send kids to the office anymore. Interdisciplinary team members handle discipline themselves." The faculty devised the following disciplinary steps to which all team members adhered:

1. Conference with parent

2. Call in another team member to confer with the students or refer to another teacher for counseling
3. Team conference with parent
4. Refer the case to principal

At Beta all 10 teachers who were interviewed for this study claimed that the discipline steps gave more power and control to the teacher, and proved to be very successful in solving discipline concerns. One teacher shared the intervention strategy that she and her team mates used for a child at step two of the discipline model:

We decided to send the student to another classroom whenever he misbehaved and gave him lunch detention. Of course we encouraged him to stay in class and behave appropriately, but if not, he would face the consequences. Then if he continued to misbehave we decided to place him in another class with a different teacher. It could prove to be a personality conflict, you know. We have a lot of decision making and power in handling discipline. If we want to move a child to another group of teachers, we can. If a kid needs to go to ISS we can send him, and we can send a severe discipline problem to the alternative program.

Teachers at Beta had the necessary control to create appropriate disciplinary interventions. Administrator B noted that teachers handled their own discipline problems for the most part. Discipline problems that were at one time sent to the office were now handled in the classroom. For this, Administrator B was quite thankful.

Some students voiced concern about discipline to one of the Invitational experts when she visited in December of 1989. The expert report noted,

Students have some concern over the discipline policy. They talk about corporal punishment even though school records indicate this is very rare but this perception needs to be dealt with.

When interviewing one of the CT members in November 1990, the issue of corporal punishment again emerged: "I don't notice any more corporal punishment; not that there was a desire to do away with it. It seemed to fade away."

Four out of five CT members noted on the Inviting School Success Survey that the policies at Beta were carried out in a more consistent and inviting manner than in previous years.

### **Beta's Places**

Beta Middle School is perched atop conifer-lined mountains in an area filled with crisp clean air, mountain streams, and rural life. The school building itself is designed with windows overlooking the mountain scape. During the last visitation, in November of 1991, a new wing was nearing completion to alleviate overcrowding. An Invitational expert reported the following during a visit in December of 1989:

The present facility is a bit overcrowded but new construction will alleviate this problem next year. Many efforts have been made to make the physical setting more inviting: a lounge area with furniture, a reception area, displays of student art-work in all hallways, a comfortable media center that serves students and staff.

CT members stressed the importance of an attractive setting by encouraging all faculty to display student work, to create bulletin boards, and to increase the home-like atmosphere of classrooms, student commons areas, and offices. Teachers obviously took this advice. Colorful team slogans, interesting bulletin boards, reading niches, and inviting messages abounded.

One very special place in this school was the counseling office. Because of the large at-risk population, this place became a refuge for troubled youth. The counselor, a member of the CT, commented:

I do grief groups, family groups, and growth and development groups. The kids refer themselves. I have a mailbox. These groups are filled up, it's overwhelming. There is no more room. It gives them a place to tell their story. But I wonder, are you (the students) going to do anything to change your situation in life? I'm skeptical. I think okay if I can help you to have some information now; you can plug it in later. I help the students to see they can use these skills later, but now they are too busy surviving.

Another CT member mirrored the same concern by referring to teachers at Beta as "therapists:"

You know we really have had to become therapists to many of our youth. It's so hard to get these troubled kids motivated. It consumes your time, your energy, and taxes your patience. It's a draining kind of thing. Sometimes you go home and you feel exhausted.

The same frustration was voiced in many of the faculty interviews. Teachers felt the demand upon them to create "a home away from home:"

Its hard always to be inviting, and you know there's always going to be those children who are not at all here with us at school (mentally). Things are going on at home... we want them to "be here" so badly, and it can't always be that way. There are other aspects of their lives that are sometimes overruling their school lives.

### **Beta's Programs**

After returning from a day of staff development in IE in October of 1989, the Beta CT decided to have an assembly to introduce everyone to IE. This assembly, paired with the creation of TAG (Teachers Advisory Groups), assisted students and faculty to learn to be interdependent. TAG groups were emphasized at Beta as important share sessions with faculty and students. Each faculty member at Beta had a TAG of 15-17 students. The TAG met every morning at the

beginning of the school day to share problems and concerns. These students were involved in decision making and goal setting. All TAG teams were involved in an intramural program. CT members strongly supported these programs and reported:

All TAG teams were divided up so no one team had all of the athletes. They came up with slogans, TAG team colors, mascots, etc. The score was not the major part of the game. The teams earned one point for winning, one point for participation and one point for good sportsmanship. The goal was for everyone to participate and they did!

The kids love it. I'll never forget the time Danny forgot to bring his shoes for basketball. Every kid in my room was scurrying around trying to find him some shoes. And they did, somehow. I don't know how but the shoes showed up! TAG teams really have a sense of equal participation and mutual respect. We have really bonded with each other. Sometimes on Mondays when we tell about what happened over the weekend, we hear really sad stories by kids who are being abused, put down, or violated in some way. Sometimes we all just break down and cry during these sessions. It's sad, but we hold on to one another.

To assist troubled youth, faculty focused on two special programs. Some faculty members reported that the Student Assistance Team (SAT) and a nurturing class were very effective programs in combatting the at-risk problem. The SAT, comprised of teachers and the guidance counselor, met weekly to assist students who needed some kind of intervention. One SAT member reported:

With two homes for children in our community, we have a lot of emotionally troubled kids at Beta. Our SAT is highly focused. We collect the information we need, and then we act. Whether it is a kid on drugs who needs substance abuse therapy, or a child who is being abused and needs an intervention by Social Services, we pull the right strings to assist them.

The SAT training came from the State Department of Public Instruction in Raleigh, North Carolina. This intervention process, called "Core Team Training," was primarily designed for substance abuse intervention. Teachers, however, found that this intervention process worked in many other areas. This process included the collection of information from teachers, social worker, and parents. The next step involved the presentation of the information in a meeting of three or four teachers, guidance counselor, and school social worker. Next, the team formulated an intervention, or game plan to intercede in the situation. Whether the situation involved a student who needed a teacher as a personal advisor, a student to be placed in one of the counselor's group counseling sessions, or an intervention by a community agency, Beta's SAT took action to assist the at-risk population.

The "nurturing class" conducted by the CT leader, provided "intensive care" to students who were identified at-risk. The goal of the class was "to make students feel good about themselves." All students selected for this



class scored below the 40th percentile on the California Achievement Test and had previously experienced school failure. The teacher suggested, "They have never felt like they were a low group. I don't think they felt a stigma - they almost felt kind of special..."

Students involved in the nurturing class experienced goal setting, journal writing, field trips, study tips, and warm friendly interaction. The two "nurturing classes" (one in 7th grade, the other in 8th grade) had a second teacher who functioned as an assistant. By the reduction of the student-teacher ratio, skills were taught more effectively. The nurturing class teacher focused on skill building through Whole Language and Jr. Great Books: "Through shared inquiry we listened to the story and asked questions. Then we had a follow-up activity to drive home the experience." Through active participation with the story, students were better able to grasp the concepts and feel good about learning. Students involved in this "nurturing class" received a thorough immersion in active participation and social interaction. This class provided them with many new tools to overcome their history of school failure, and with devices to deal with their sometimes very stressful home lives.

### **Beta's Processes and the Spirit of the School**

The philosophy of IE assisted in igniting the spirit of Beta middle school. The processes that developed from an increased supportive climate provided a more family-type atmosphere, and helped spark more parent participation. Beta's faculty also focused on addressing new methods to invite school success in the classroom.

Although many of the teachers interviewed at Beta asserted that they had always been like a "family," they stated that IE increased their feelings of "connection." IE and Beta's accreditation process blended together to create greater awareness of where this faculty needed to make improvements.

CT members stated on the Invitational School Success Survey:

We successfully modeled "blue" behavior. We touched some students in a real way-helping them get help, helping them stay in school. We are consciously working together to make this school the most inviting place around. We developed a "safety net" for our children. We elaborated on our Advisor/Advisee Program and assisted in helping students understand and increase their self-concepts.

Administrator B stated that IE had provided his faculty with increased positive communication, greater teamwork, and a new excitement in assisting young people. This assistance ranged from the comprehensive involvement of all students in

the intramural program (complete with slogans, team spirit, hoopla, etc.) to the use of more progressive and effective teaching tools, such as cooperative learning and whole language. Administrator B noted:

The biggest element in Invitational Education is the positive teacher attitude toward working with each other, working with kids, and working with parents. We are doing much more with parents now. The PTA is becoming more active and is doing a big Christmas fund drive. They are sponsoring the school dances, and parents are volunteering to do clerical work, landscaping, and tutoring.

The key to success, Administrator B contended, was a totally personal process:

This process is intimately woven between teacher and student. The key to success is when a student attains a positive identity. The main key is in the teacher. For some reason, in some way, the teacher establishes this identity where the student feels "I can make it." I never really knew this until a parent came in and told me about her daughter, a poor gal who had been pushed aside until her 7th grade teacher made her feel special. Something clicked between the student and this teacher, a special bond, and it changed her identity, her school career, and her whole life.

As the researcher observed the alternative education teacher working with a student, the element of delicate interaction was evident. Harry was a behavior problem who could not be mainstreamed; a brown-haired boy with aquiline features, Harry was "all over the place" at once. The

teacher was playing Scrabble with Harry, along with some other students. Harry was taking the letters in a very aggressive way and pushing them around on the board. When asked to make a word he rocked back and forth, and frequently put his head down. Although Harry was obviously uncooperative, the teacher maintained her composure. She questioned Harry with soft prodding. She touched his shoulder with tenderness and never allowed herself to get "ruffled." The most important part of her job, she noted, was "to stay calm and endure." She did this with the skill of a long distance runner. Later, another teacher commented on the alternative education teacher, "She runs marathons, you know, and you can see her strength in the classroom; she knows how to hold on until she gets success."

The processes of endurance, patience and love, blended with "family cohesiveness" sparked a warm glowing spirit at this school. Administrator B had the window trim painted blue at Beta to commemorate the active spirit of IE in "the highest middle school in North Carolina."

#### **Beta's Connection Team**

All of the members of the Connection Team (CT) reported that their team leader was highly organized, considerate, and open to the input of others. These characteristics enhanced Beta's IE program because the CT leader "got the job done." When asked the survey question 5, "Please

describe how your team worked as a cooperative unit?," one CT member responded:

One team member was designated as chairperson. She kept us on track and monitored projects to see how they were progressing. Different team members assumed responsibilities. We worked on a consensus basis for making and implementing decisions.

Beta's team leader, however, acknowledged the fact that some teachers appeared "slow to join the crusade," and that there was "still a feeling of apathy among some students." Other barriers listed on the Inviting School Success Survey form were the following:

1. Assigning responsibilities and getting them done is difficult, and time for dialogue is not always there.
2. Extending approaches from the team to the rest of the faculty is a problem.
3. Having a designated meeting time (that would frequently have been interrupted) would have helped.
4. Studying Invitational literature would have enabled us to do productive thinking.
5. We needed to evaluate our projects and our people more regularly.
6. Negative responses over some of the students lives affected the success of IE in Beta.
7. The lack of consistent, systematic follow through inhibited our success.
8. All five CT members indicated that they would have liked more consistent follow through and evaluation of their IE project.

One CT member emphasized the need for "maintaining the blue:"

Last year (1989) the notion was blossoming. Some people were excited about the idea. This voice sticks in my mind. You know Tom Robbins? He says that there are only two questions worth asking. The first one is, "What is there to live for?" and the second one is "How do you make love last?" If you can answer the second one, you never need to answer the first question. If we only knew how to make the blue feeling last and keep it going, the maintenance part: (and I think that's where we are struggling): how to make it last. We need a mechanism for channeling it (blue cards); if not, it dries out. When people hear blue, they pause and reflect. It just needs to be said more, I guess. I know we say it a lot in our faculty meetings, and in our core team meetings, but it can't be said enough.

All five CT members suggested that maintaining the philosophy of inviting school success was difficult.

Another team member mirrored this notion:

I wish we could keep it going, or take it deeper. We say, "well, we've done, it, now we can go back to what we've always done." It's hard to keep a good thing going; people have a tendency to wear down, slow up and take their foot off the gas pedal.

The CT members, as well as the seven faculty members interviewed, reported that they did not have enough time to meet the needs of their students. Many referred to getting "too worn down" and "burned out." Over crowded classrooms,

not enough planning time, and society's demands upon teachers (teachers as "therapists," etc.), were all highlighted as causes for teacher distress.

The CT was characterized by faculty members as "friendly," "inviting," "a good team," and "mutually supportive." Although they accomplished an inviting climate at Beta, they continually challenged themselves to fight against the obstacles and keep "the blue" alive.

### **Gamma Middle School**

Gamma is a suburban Middle School with a 67% white, 33% black ratio of racial diversity. With a school population of 790, Gamma has the lowest number of students on free or reduced lunch out of the six middle schools in the district. This school is characterized as being a "community school" where parents and community members value a good education. Administrator C suggested that Gamma was a "throwback to 20 years ago." The number of homes with two parents is high, although both may not be the natural parents. In many cases two parents are working to support the home. Students are perceived by Administrator C as low middle/middle and working-poor socio-economic status. The Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) is very active. An average of 600 parents attend PTO meetings. This middle school has a lot of community support.

#### **People**

Administrator C was the leader of the CT. He commented on his experiences with IE:

The most important thing I did was to show the Inviting School Success tapes of Dr. Purkey to my faculty. It got people thinking. People began, not in any great tidal wave, to do things that were intentionally inviting not just to kids but to one another. Teachers have traditionally been isolated, they are not used to sharing success. Teaching has been a closed door society where I go in my classroom and you go in yours. If something



happens to cause learning to occur, more often than not it stays behind four walls. IE has made it okay to share, interact, and to connect with one another.

Administrator C attempted to increase connections between faculty by "doing things with staff:"

I had been an assistant principal for three years before becoming principal, but I have one third or more new teachers. I wanted to build closeness with faculty. At faculty meetings I opened the drink machine and had a cafeteria lady who was a wonderful baker to bake treats for us. Every month on payday we had breakfast together. Our Christmas party had the biggest crowd ever. "Ya'll come to my house" I said, even though it was an awful night, just pouring rain. But they came despite the weather. I have really tried to get folks to know one another.

Administrator C felt that Gamma had evolved into a close knit faculty. Even though this administration felt that there were a few "closet oranges," for the most part, faculty members were aware of ways to be inviting with one another and with students.

The assistant principal at Gamma demonstrated this sensitivity to "Teddy," an at-risk student, by issuing careful invitations. Teddy was far from a model student. He was at-risk in many ways, and was continually sent to the office for one reason or another. The assistant principal noted:

Teddy was a small boy and I told him that he had a Napoleon complex. I got a book for him to read about Napoleon and Teddy read it. He Showed up at my office one day and said, "I think I do understand what you mean, Ms. Jones."

That day the assistant principal asked Teddy to organize a success party for other students who scored 3.5 and above on the NC writing test. Teddy took charge of everything. He told his other student helpers what to do, and on one occasion apprehended a student for trying to go through the refreshment line more than once. "You can't do that, you took that test only one time, so you get refreshments only once," Teddy asserted.

Teddy, when given this opportunity to take charge, changed the way he saw himself. The assistant principal recalled that Teddy had not been sent to the office again, "I couldn't believe that one thing could change a child that much." Teddy was invited to become a new person, and he took this invitation to heart.

The assistant principal at Gamma sent Teddy intentionally inviting messages. Her office was filled with positive posters, letters, student work, and symbols of love of her profession. She pointed to one of her favorite posters and smiled:

We think our school is wonderful. Our teachers are grand, they exercise our minds so much. We're smarter than we planned.

Administrator C characterized this assistant principal as everybody's grandmom:

When I want to string someone up, she'll say, "now wait a minute babe, you can't do that." She keeps me in tow , kinda like a second mamma. I think she's my alter ego.

An Invitational consultant stated that people at Gamma were "friendly, enthusiastic, and talking blue." In a report made November 23, 1989, the consultant noted:

This is an upbeat school. Parents come to visit even on days they don't have to volunteer. People really like to be here. This is a very positive school. It might potentially be the prototype for the Inviting Middle School.

In an effort to create home/school involvement the assistant principal at Gamma sent a letter to all parents that encouraged them to attend a series of "community meetings" to be held at a local community center. This outreach program demonstrated the willingness of Gamma's administration and staff to create an inviting stance of people actively seeking to connect with people.

### **Gamma's Policies**

Policies at Gamma focused on increasing academic success. The newly instituted "homework policy" challenged students to create a platform for their success. By providing peer tutoring during Home-Base (Gamma's teacher/advisory groups) students assisted other students in getting engaged in doing regular homework. The homework policy required every student in the school to have a homework assignment book. Students were told what was expected of them. Home base teachers checked the assignment books at the end of each week to make sure students were "keeping up." Teachers turned in the name of one student every week who was doing a good job on keeping his/her homework assignment book. The principal gave this student a certificate for free ice cream.

The discipline guidelines at Gamma were primarily decided by the grade-level individual teams. Each team developed a "Team Discipline Plan." These plans encouraged numerous teacher interventions before sending a student to "the office." Teachers at Gamma encouraged student "ownership" of behavior and focused disciplinary measures on students accepting responsibility for their actions. Positive behavior was encouraged by "good behavior" programs and policies. One CT member noted in the "weaknesses" section of the Inviting School Success Survey form that "discipline is weak and inconsistent in our school." This

teacher suggested that the discipline procedures needed to be more comprehensive and consistent.

### **Gamma's Places**

"Gamma is a place where we have a good time. We laugh and cut up, but it is also a place where we do business. What we do here is important." Gamma's administrator clearly communicated the preceding message to the faculty and community concerning this "place" of business. The culture of this school was reinforced through the attractive physical plant and the sense of ownership that was instilled in students to assist in creating an inviting setting.

Administrator C remarked:

We always try to maintain our facility. Our building is fifteen years old, yet we are always trying to beautify and landscape our grounds. Last year we received a "Keep North Carolina Beautiful" grant. We obtained one hundred azaleas and gave two to each homeroom to plant. Our Science Club painted all of our trash barrels in school colors. They also planted flower beds all around the campus. The handicapped class maintained these beds and pulled the weeds, etc.

Throughout this school campus, students, teachers and community gave their time and energy to foster a beautiful physical plant. Volunteers from a local church helped to create a beautiful setting at Gamma by providing flower boxes. Contests were also the norm at Gamma. One contest

included the best idea for a special mural for American Education Week. The homeroom with the best mural idea got to paint it on the wall. "Students are excited about their involvement in this school," one CT member wrote on her survey form, "They feel that their ideas are important."

Administrator C emphasized the need to keep every aspect of the facility as well maintained as possible:

It is not whether windows get broken but how long they stay broken, that counts. We clean things up right away. We're on the highway, you know, and we want to present a good image.

Gamma's administrator noted that the emphasis on an inviting place extended beyond the physical boundaries of the school building:

An administrator who came here ten years before me was known as a kind and gentle man. He made the remark, "Provide for the children and everything else will work out." This philosophy has been cultivated over a long period of time and I try to maintain it to the best of my ability. Yesterday afternoon I spent two hours with a kid who was having a bad time. I reassured him, encouraged him, and helped him to keep on. I give my time to the students here. I meet with every new kid who enrolls at Gamma.

Administrator C's office was very similar to the inviting office of the assistant principal, Ms. Jones. The bulletin board was filled with student notes, art-work and

positive newspaper articles on Gamma. The bookshelves displayed numerous "bear" mascots wearing red and white school colors. Certificates of recognition, posters and stickers abounded. The setting was comfortable, clean and symbolized the inviting posture of this middle school administrator.

### **Gamma's Programs**

The CT built a network of programs to foster academic success not only with the at-risk students, but with all students. Grade incentives and rewards for academic accomplishment motivated students to excel. A student who maintained a "C" or above average could volunteer to be a peer tutor. Any student with a grade below "C" was required to go to the library for peer tutoring either during intramurals or during schoolwide "academic study time." Both group and individual tutoring was available. The guidance counselors screened the prospective peer tutors for the qualities of responsibility and leadership. They asked students if they would like someone special to tutor them. One student chose a friend in the neighborhood so that he could meet after school for help. Because the faculty emphasized academics, students were continually encouraged by their teachers to set their goals high. With the "homework policy" and time provided for study, teachers gave students the tools and the time to meet their goals.

"Trivia stump" contests in social studies and math and essay contests in English were introduced during American Education Week. Winners received buttons, rulers, savings bonds, and gift certificates. Teachers organized incentive parties for students who scored 3.5 or better on the North Carolina writing test. Teachers provided pizza parties for students who scored well on various "end of course" testing. Faculty used attendance contests to increase Gamma's attendance rates from 94.1 to 94.6.

The CT organized the "Catch 'Em Being Good" program to promote proper behavior, "especially around the holidays." Teachers caught students in the act of being good. Fifteen or 20 pumpkins, Santa Clauses, etc., depending on the season, were chockful of candy and gum for the winners of this contest. Teachers put the name of the student, the good deed, and the middle school team name on the nomination card. All cards were placed in a box in the cafeteria. Teachers held regular drawings, and the team with the most nominations won a party. One team member stated:

You could always count on someone coming up to your lunch table and saying, "May I take your tray for you today?" We would announce the winners over the loud speaker, line 'em up and take their picture. We did this at Halloween, Christmas and Easter. The behavior was topnotch.



Gamma's faculty were richly involved in the Middle School Concept. The programs to accentuate behavior, self-concept, and academic excellence were all an outgrowth of this middle school philosophy that encouraged the growth and fulfillment of the middle school age child.

"To me, if you do the middle school concept," Administrator C contended, "You can't help but be inviting." Gamma provided for the typical middle school framework of "Home-Base" where students discussed their lives, goals, and frustrations. Students were members of grade-level teams, complete with names like "Aquanauts and Pirates." Home-Base included two days of advisor/advisee activities; one day of reading/academic study; one day for test make-up/peer tutoring; and one day for intramurals. CT members demonstrated their support for the Middle School Concept and the team approach:

The attachment to the team really helps kids make the transition from elementary school to middle school. We'll have maybe 90 kids coming over from the elementary school. When they are attached to the same schedule they begin to identify with one particular group of teachers. They sit together in the cafeteria, go to PE at the same time, and have electives at the same time. They are grouped together in one little section of the building - it is theirs - they own it. The teams come up with activities or projects that are all their own. For example, the 6th grade team adopted a poor family who lived in a trailer near the school. They had no electricity - a lot of problems. The students wanted to build a chain to go around the school. Each link was worth a penny.

Home-Base activities brought students together to explore their goals and to develop a sense of group identity. Administrator C stated that he formed the groups by evenly distributing blacks, whites, males, and females. Even distribution was very important. This administrator created a solid group of students who could benefit from cross-cultural experiences. Home-Base teachers took an active interest in their groups. When students were absent from school they called to find out why and to reinforce a caring attitude.

Many teachers sent positive notes and letters home to promote a more positive self-concept in the children under their charge. Students were constantly recognized. The "Student of the Month" program was designed to highlight students who excelled either behaviorally or academically. In "The Achievers" program students were identified who were academically achieving high grades and were profiled in the local newspaper. The Guidance Department organized the "Growing Up" guidance program to provide knowledge to adolescents concerning the process of growth and maturity so students at Gamma could "get a handle" on the process of their own growth and individuation.

The A Team identified youth at-risk of dropping out of school and provided interventions for them. This team, composed of one teacher from each grade level and two

guidance counselors, met weekly to discuss students who were having problems at home and/or school. This team networked with community agencies to provide for the needs of youth. These needs included: mental health and/or social service referrals, academic tutoring, special school counseling, or teacher interventions.

### **Gamma's Processes and the Spirit of the School**

When asked to define the process of inviting school success Administrator C remarked:

We have a button we stole from a middle school conference - "Gamma Middle School is the Difference." Invitational Education is really what makes the difference. It's kind of like two cooks who make the same cake using the same recipe, but the taste is different. It's something about the flour and the knack and the care that goes into blending the ingredients together. And luck, we've been awful lucky here at Gamma.

Inviting school success was apparent in the "flair and the knack" exhibited by the faculty and community surrounding this school. Gamma's handbook stressed "Never miss the opportunity to sell yourself and what you do."

The spirit of commitment had been fostered for many years prior to Administrator C's arrival. The school is located "where the people live and has become a part of everyday life" one CT member related. Another team member recounted, "Our focus here is on continuing the blend of school and community throughout the evolutionary process of

our school." When asked the question, "How many of your faculty members have bought into the IE concept?,"

Administrator C commented:

I'd like to think all of them but I'm not that naive, but I'd like to think that. Sometimes my teachers say I'm trying to control how they think and I say I cannot control their thoughts, but thoughts lead to actions and I do want them to act in accordance with the Invitational philosophy.

When asked about the at-risk population at Gamma

Administrator C responded:

What is at-risk? I don't know what an at-risk kid is. Kids in-school suspension? Kids who you suspend? I've seen so many descriptions of the term. If I were coming along today I'd probably be an at-risk kid. I came from a single family home - I'm male, and was raised by my mom. I guess I was at-risk, but I had teachers who cared about me. I vividly remember the ones who made a difference in my life. Mom was a teacher - that helped too. Kids are kids. Some of 'em you have to really show them you love them more because they can't just be content with the fact that they think you do. When kids need time - I listen. Sometimes I almost apologize for disciplining them - I explain the whys and wherefores. I always expect the best out of all of them. Maybe sometimes it's not realistic to go to college. Just be the best. The kids who are in the military, I'm as proud of them as I am the ones that graduate from Chapel Hill or Duke. Every child literally at this age is at-risk at some point. Here at Gamma we have an open door policy and that says something - no hidden agenda. I have high visibility and walk the halls speaking to kids when I see them. I eat lunch with them everyday, but I worry about them when they move on to high school. Is anybody going to listen to

them there with one thousand five hundred students? Is anyone going to know their names?

This administrator set the tone for professional caring. The CT members reflected their attitudes toward his leadership in the Inviting School Success Survey. When asked the question, "What contributed to the success you had?" One team member responded, "Hard work, and the dedication of our principal to this program." When asked, "What were the characteristics of your team leader?," team members responded, "caring," "dominating," and "hard working."

The process of inviting school success was a continuation of an established procedure with roots in past leadership. This was augmented by the renewal brought about by the Invitational philosophy. One CT member commented that she had begun "to look before I leap" when responding to students. Intentionally inviting responses were preferred over disinviting reactions.

Another team member reported that affective development began to be handled in a more systematic way. More teachers are trying "to create inviting approaches to learning."

Faculty and administrators networked to create a spirit of camaraderie and motivation at this middle school. Responses to Inviting School Success Surveys, however, showed the need for more of these activities. CT members

asserted, "Some efforts have been made to boost teacher morale as well as student recognition, more still is needed:"

Students enjoy getting recognized and have been enthusiastic about rewards, prizes, and incentives. While these things have probably improved self-esteem, I am concerned about motivation and achievement. Some students don't want to learn.

Administrator C emphasized the need for students to become more motivated. He questioned the use of traditional teaching techniques that forced students into mindless memorization or regurgitation of facts soon to be forgotten:

The worst thing we do in education is to make kids do unimportant things - like why do we make kids alphabetize spelling words? The answer better not be, "because that's just the way we do things." Why give kids a hundred two digit by two digit multiplication problems when we can find out what we need to know with ten?

The questioning of teaching techniques and practices was reflected in another CT member's response concerning curriculum and motivation:

Kids remember knowledge gained through skits and projects, touches, and smiles. Whole language was used fifty thousand years ago as a teaching technique using writing, speaking, listening, and reading. It is exciting and stimulating. Kids

can interact and experience the knowledge. This is a most inviting approach - it motivates!

Gamma's faculty appeared to examine the process of learning as part of their plan to initiate more school success. Administrator C repeatedly encouraged teachers to re-think their teaching practices and develop new ways of stimulating academic accomplishment. The spirit of this middle school was affirmed through the dedication of its staff to try new things, to create new programs, and to continue to build faculty bonds.

## Delta School

### Brief Overview

Delta is located in northeastern North Carolina. This rural area is predominately agricultural and many students and their families work on farms. The highest absentee rate is in the fall when the crops are being harvested. Of Delta's 237 students, 85 percent are black. Most students are of low socio-economic status. A teacher and CT member noted:

Our kids are low income for the most part and many have only one parent in the home. Most receive Social Service assistance. Once we get them here, that's a different story. We work together to bring about behavioral changes.

Delta houses grades one through twelve. The teachers and students know each other by name and "a sense of community" is evident at this school. Although 85 percent of the teachers and students are black, no racial problems are evident at this school. One white CT member noted:

If you'll notice, most of our kids look happy. It's a carry-over from our staff. Our staff is predominately black. We get along fine. The kids see that and it just carries over.



### **Delta's People**

This school was filled with warm, friendly people who worked hard to make people feel good about themselves. The first contact any visitor has is with the school secretary. One CT member described this secretary's naturally inviting nature:

When I walk into the school on Monday morning I'm greeted with a big smile and a warm "hello." We share a lot of love with one another here at Delta. It makes Mondays feel like Fridays.

All four CT members felt that Delta had been an inviting school even before they attended the Inviting School Success workshop in October 1989. One team member made this remark:

I'm going to be a little prejudiced and say that we have pretty good people here at Delta anyway. Invitational Education didn't work miracles, but then we didn't need miracles here. What it did do was to reinforce a lot of what we already had been doing, and make us more aware.

The CT leader, who was also the assistant principal, reinforced the notion that IE helped to validate and expand what the faculty had already been doing to promote positive relationships. The CT decided to get everybody on board the Invitational bandwagon: bus drivers, cafeteria workers, everyone. The team leader stated:

A lot of our children are depressed and very stressful. They are not able to receive things like other children (many are economically deprived), so they need everyday-type activities that will enhance their day-to-day performance. Invitational Education has tremendously helped our children in more ways than one.

Daily activities to reduce stress included bus drivers welcoming their students each morning when they got on the bus. Drivers were advised to comment on a child's shirt or blouse. They gave out pencils and candy at Christmas and other holidays; they put up signs in their buses like "Smiles are invitations you never run out of." "You see," the assistant principal emphasized, "Bus drivers get them before we get them. They can set the stage for the whole day."

The CT leader questioned students during a seventh-grade science lab. Students made candy apples while the class observed the scientific principles of this process. Question: "How do you like science class?" Students responded as they eyed the candied apples, "We love it to death." "Great!" "All right!"

"What do you like about this school?"

"Everything."

"The teachers, they're fun."

"Not all of them," one student disagreed.

"Three out of four," another retorted.

"What do they do that is fun?"

"The way they teach."

"They make it fun to learn!"

"They care about us."

Delta's students were bubbling with excitement and enthusiasm as they experienced the "hands on" approach to learning used in the candy-apple lab exercise.

CT members emphasized the "family atmosphere" at Delta repeatedly. One member commented:

The neatest thing that Invitational Education has done here is to foster our family setting. Every month we recognize everybody's birthday, regardless of what job they have: cafeteria worker, teacher assistant, or bus driver. Three teachers bring refreshments. We sing happy birthday and the voices are incredible, most of us sing in a choir. The birthday people get to pick a gift from a goodie bag. Everyone is celebrated at some point during the year.

Other "blue card"-type activities included calling faculty when they were home sick, or leaving blue cards on the desks of faculty members who were absent from school. All CT members and many other faculty members participated in this activity. The principal was continually "monitoring students" and sent blue cards home to parents to offer praise to students who were either improving in behavior or grades. Two members of the CT noted:

The principal fell right in line, sending letters home when a student was doing good. He says the only time parents usually get notified is when a kid is in trouble.

Mr. D is forever walking up and down the halls, talking to children. He is maybe the only principal in the county who knows every student by name. He takes a lot of personal interest in the students.

Other types of monitoring by Delta's principal included frequent visits to classrooms with "daily words of wisdom." This special effort made by this administrator was described by a faculty member:

Our guidance counselor was conducting some "Say No to Drugs" classes. Mr. D came in and shared his views on drugs and alcohol. He shared a touching story of his own life and how his parents became separated and finally divorced. He came from a single parent home. He said that he could have ended up on the street, been a wino, and sat around on the street from day to day and not worked. But this stressful situation in life motivated him to go to college, get his degrees and become a principal. Our children didn't know that a principal, who they visioned so high above them could have been so much like them, frightened, frustrated, and alone. It was truly touching.

This faculty member contended that witnessing of this sort was a "blue card" of personal sharing that brought the faculty closer together as a "family."

### **Delta's Policies**

Each teacher had his/her own particular classroom procedures that were clear and highly structured. One CT member stated:

It doesn't pay to play around. Each teacher has a set of discipline procedures, so kids know what's coming up next. I send this information home to parents as a "contract" so they know what my steps of discipline are. Students sign the discipline infractions in my discipline book. I write down the date, what they did, and then I have the student sign it. If I get their name down twice, they go to the principal.

Another Connection Team member added:

The first time a child is sent to Mr D he talks to them. He doesn't say "If you do this again I'm going to do this or that." His firm voice usually gets the message across. But if they get sent back he gives them a choice of three licks or they are sent home.

Most of the students who made it to the principal's office for the second time chose the licks. Delta's CT leader explained:

Most kids choose the licks because they don't want to be sent home. This is a low income area, you see, and parents don't want their children at home. It means they have to be out of work. Anytime parents become involved we get results.

Delta's school librarian, who was also a member of the CT, reinforced the school's assertive discipline:

If a child is undisciplined, you can't teach him. Mr. D is very strict, firm, and fair. If you don't know him, he comes on of kinda strong. I mean he has a firm voice. When he's serious, the kids know.

The librarian emphasized Delta's policy of encouraging students to behave through praise and "blue cards:"

I buy the blue "post-it" notes and whenever I catch a student being well-behaved I give him/her a blue card. If you have high expectations, you get what you expect. I praise them for straightening the shelves and such, and before I know it they are fixing all the shelves.

Kids here are thinking more about doing things that are going to make teachers happy rather than unhappy. I don't like paddling and I tell kids that this is a last resort.

When the CT members returned from their presentation on IE at the second annual IE conference in Greensboro, North Carolina, on March 29-30, 1990, they presented their school's philosophy in a local newspaper article:

Delta faculty, staff and students participated in a creative approach, where the total environment wanted to achieve and become Very Inviting People. (V.I..P.'s) The approach focuses on bringing about positive changes in the total school

environment, which is the "Five P's" or the People, Places, Policies, Programs and Processes.

There are two reasons given. First, teachers are passionately committed to keeping students in school and helping them to succeed. Second, students in the schools report that they are wanted there, they are contributing members of classes, and they are missed when absent.

Policies focused on the establishment of order and teacher responsiveness to the needs of individual students. Students were aware of what was expected of them in advance. They were reinforced for positive behavior and they responded favorably to these expectations.

#### **Delta's Programs**

The CT worked hard to create a totally "inviting environment." The resulting programs were diverse. One program that all four CT members reported as successful was the "social" for the parents of students who had made the "honor roll" or who had made "improvements" in their grades:

We were so surprised at the turn out. Parents just kept on piling in. We had to send out for more chairs. This program was very, very successful! We sent out invitations to these parents - few had ever been invited to celebrate their child's success in school. Many children had simply made some improvements.

Another CT member related:

This program was a great motivator for all kids. The Beta Club is so selective, and this recognition program is within everyone's grasp.

Tailoring programs to fit the needs of students was a top priority for the CT. A Peer Tutoring program boosted the academic success of students. Seventh and eighth-grade students were trained in helping skills, communication and praise techniques so they could help third and fourth grade students to be more successful in school. The CT member who sponsored this program clarified the program's mechanics:

Dr. Foster from East Carolina University trained two leaders from Delta as well as teachers from other neighboring schools. The content area included training tutors on how to handle their own behavior in response to peer pressure, and how to behave as appropriate role models. They were told that the "tutees" would perceive the tutors as "heros" and that they needed to have good hygiene - keep their hair clean and teeth brushed. Many different aspects were taken under consideration.

This peer tutoring program was yet another way to connect students to school and to one another. Students who were severely at-risk were referred to the school guidance counselor. Although she shared Delta with another school, this counselor made time for a comprehensive guidance program. She did one-on-one counseling with students who exhibited behavior problems or emotional concerns. She also organized a "Just Say No To Drugs" club to teach students



the realities of drug abuse. Police officers came to share their knowledge and expertise on drug abuse prevention as a part of the nationwide Drug Alcohol Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) program.

The librarian organized a Library Club for students who were "a little less likely to be involved in school in other ways." As the hub of the wheel, the library was a place where all students passed at some time so she was able to recruit her candidates from a wide sample.

Some of them have really "blossomed." Next Thursday we are going on a field trip to Roanoke-Chowan Community College. We'll tour the library, then go out for pizza. These students take more responsibility in the library now than they otherwise would have taken.

A school store was in the planning stage as a way to encourage student academic success. The goal of this program was to award points to students who achieved with either high grades or improved grades. Students could then cash in their points at the school store for discounts on items and/or for "freebies."

Faculty members worked hard to provide connections for students who were withdrawing from school either emotionally or academically. Each classroom posted a "Student of the Month" profile on a student who was special in some way and deserved recognition. The CT members praised the Athletic

Department for "working hard to get students involved in school who perhaps were not so successful in academics, but needed athletics as a self-concept builder." Teachers and students alike referred to the female football player they had on the team that year: "She is a pretty good sport," one student observed, "But our team has lost a lot of games this year, not because of her; we're just not with it this year."

Highlighting self-concept appeared to be an important vehicle for increasing student academic achievement at Delta. The CT invited numerous speakers from the community to present information to students to increase their awareness of themselves, and their choices in life. These topics included: Black History, D.A.R.E. Program, I'm Special, Just Say No, dropout prevention, sportsmanship and "Think Smart." Study skills were taught by the Language Arts teachers, the guidance counselor, and the librarian to assist students in becoming more academically successful. One CT member related, "We really need to teach the skills of absorbing and retaining knowledge to our students, so they can score well on the California Achievement Test (CAT)."

Programs were scattered across the various levels of intellectual and emotional functioning of students. Delta's faculty tried to provide stepping stones for academic and personal success for all children.

## Places

Whether on the bus, in the hallway or in the classroom, children were given signals of support and love. Bus drivers created their own "environments" within their buses to invite school success, complete with friendly smiles and warm "hellos." The students laughed and chattered in the cafeteria. The assistant principal explained:

Our children have a built-in talkative pattern. They just love to talk. Some days they go in the cafeteria and they are so loud, especially before holidays or a ball game; but the spirit and pride are so "wide open," so to speak. This is the only way for them to let out their frustrations. We are very structured in terms of behavior patterns. We have very few fights here, maybe a little knit-pickin' here or there.

Hall monitors were "on duty" during class changes and appeared to take their job seriously. A teacher observed:

The hall monitors make sure students walk quietly down the hall and on the right side. No one really ever gives them a hard time because everyone gets a turn at being a hall monitor. So there's a lot of mutual respect.

Mutual respect at Delta developed into mutual responsibility. Teachers corrected the behavior of students in other classes. One teacher's territory was shared by another. As students moved down the hallway two teachers

stood by and observed, "Oh, Henry lost his shoe and Sally is behind him kicking it."

"Sally, pick up that shoe, baby, and give it back to Henry. Thank-you, sweetheart."

As one passed down the hallway, affirming posters and signs greeted visitors and students alike. The bulletin board featured newly inducted Beta Club members. Decorated Christmas trees added warmth to corners. Although Delta was an old building, the posters, trees, and ordered movement of students created an inviting picture.

Teachers informed parents of the Invitational "blue" and "orange" concepts at a parent/teacher meeting in the fall of 1989. As a result, parents decided to re-decorate the faculty lounge as a blue card to faculty. Parents were encouraged to relate to their children in positive ways at home. The CT asked parents to:

Take a few minutes every day to share with your child. If a student comes home and is excited about a paper and says, "Hey, Mamma look at this," take a few minutes to praise your child and put the paper in a place of honor.

CT members spent some time re-decorating the school with hanging baskets and re-wording signs to visitors. One CT member noted:

Like I said, our whole atmosphere changed, even our little notices on the door changed from negative to positive. Before we scraped them off they said, "All visitors must report to the office." Now they say, "We're concerned about our children. Please report to the office so we know who our visitors are."

### **Delta's Processes and the Spirit of the School**

I'm the sponsor for the Beta Club. Yesterday we did the installation of the officers and the induction of the new members. The help that I received from other staff members was phenomenal. I have a self-contained classroom, you see, and it was hard for me to get it all done. Everybody just pitched in! It used to not be that way, teachers on one side or another... Now we do ridiculous stuff, funny things to humor each other and help each other out.

CT Member

All CT members referred to the increased camaraderie that developed as a result of IE. One member compared IE to the process of falling in love:

Now we really facilitate each other's growth. We have high expectations for one another and for the children. It's so much less tiring, to be praised rather than be put down. To be supportive rather than be demeaning. Invitational Education here at Delta has kind of been like falling in love. You can't really say when it happened, it just does. Was it December the 23rd at 2:00 p.m.? You just don't know. It's a gradual thing.

After introducing the faculty and staff to the philosophy of inviting school success, CT members observed an "automatic process take place within Delta."

Invitational Education is something we automatically do now. Everything we created to promote growth and success at this school has its roots in this philosophy. It is a way of living and interacting with one another. It's hard for me to think "orange" now.

Our language that we use with the kids has changed. Less negative things are being said. Now when a kid makes an 85 on a test I say "Gosh, you made an 85 and I bet if you worked just a little bit harder you could bring it up to a 95 next time."

Don't think we are perfect in this area, because we're all human beings and we're gonna say "you shouldn't do so and so," shove out a few orange cards, but I think we are much more conscious of our language and the words we choose to express ourselves.

Awareness of simple kindnesses and encouragements was expanded. Students were courteous and used good manners when interacting with one another or with visitors. Students consistently used "blue" mannerisms like "yes ma'am" "Excuse me please," and "Thank you very much."

The use of social etiquette and positive reinforcement was paired with discipline. Students were encouraged to have appropriate behavior, yet strong consequences were given to students who "broke the rules." The assistant principal had to paddle a seventh grade male student just

before beginning the science class. Although this was an embarrassing experience, the teacher explained that students respected and expected follow-up on inappropriate behavior. This child quickly acclimated to the lesson on "candy apple making," and was observed savoring this lesson with the enthusiasm of the rest of his classmates.

One CT member likened the process of inviting school success to the closing in of a front porch. She said that the structure was already there (meaning that the faculty were receptive to IE):

We were already doing many of the things that Invitational Education was asking us to do. All we did was close in the porch with some extra building materials.

The finished structure was a school constructed with commitment and a strong sense of connection.

#### **Delta's Connection Team**

The principal selected the CT. The principal chose faculty members who were "the go-getters" because they were the ones who would "zoom into things and get the job done." One CT member was asked, "Who was the team leader?"

Ms. \_\_\_\_\_ was the team leader. I say she was the leader, (pause) but we all were. I know it sounds like we were the ideal couple here. I don't mean for it to sound that way, but we were all so

compatible, Ms \_\_\_\_\_ did the paper work, but we all really led each other. One would throw out an idea and we would add to it or if someone threw out a bad idea, we would take part of it. No one was the boss, no chiefs, just all Indians. It worked out good.

The camaraderie of the CT was obvious. The team was very open, friendly, and interdependent. After attending the staff development seminar in Greensboro, North Carolina on October 9, 1989, they introduced IE to the faculty:

We came back from the workshop in Greensboro and put Invitational Education into practice. We presented the video tapes of Dr. Purkey to the faculty and discussed the difference between inviting and disinviting practices. Then teachers made blue and orange cards and told their students about Invitational Education.

When questioned about any obstacles they might have encountered one team member replied:

Last year we were not as close as a faculty. We were different groups of people, not a close bunch. We came together in a faculty meeting and talked together about the concepts of Invitational Education. We started to share, some of us were comical. We laughed together and enjoyed each other's company, suggestions, and ideas. Invitational Education had a great impact on our public relations and personal relationships.

Faculty members shared that the obstacle of faculty isolation began to dissolve as they worked together to



create inviting programs and processes. Another obstacle that a CT member shared was the possible rejection of IE:

I think at first the staff thought that all this would mean more work for them, but then they realized very quickly that it really meant less work because we were in it together.

This CT member clarified that the process of IE doesn't take much time or energy. Restructuring remarks or using inviting phrases takes only a few seconds: "Praise and recognition boost morale and create energy and motivation." One CT member gave examples of the process of re-structuring remarks to invite school success:

Even when you want to say something negative, you can say it in a positive manner. For example, when a student answers a question incorrectly, instead of saying "No, that's wrong" you can say, "Well, someone else may have a different opinion, let's hear theirs." You can let the child know that this is not the answer you're looking for without spoiling their loveable and capable feelings.

The CT functioned as a vehicle for stimulating the environment. Although they didn't push to get the faculty to do a lot, the CT's unified efforts demonstrated the process of Invitational learning in subtle ways.

The faculty held an assembly program in honor of an Invitational consultant's visit. During the assembly,

students shared the meaning of "blue" and "orange," teachers served refreshments and provided handouts on IE. The CT members stated that this assembly reinforced the life and meaning of IE in their school. The Invitational consultant reported that students' responses were overwhelmingly positive toward school and staff. The principal and staff related in a very open and cordial manner. The staff had what the consultant termed "informal professionalism." This quality was demonstrated by the CT members in their responses and interactions with one another. They appeared to enjoy each other's company and engaged in humorous, light-hearted interactions. For example when the team was asked the question, "How has the spirit changed at your school?," One team member said:

Well it has made Ms. \_\_\_\_\_ very hyper everyday. She's hyper enough to be here at 7:00 a.m. every morning - 180 days at 7:00. We were really worried about her at first because she was making us all look tardy. We finally understood it was her quiet time.

CT members frequently joked with one another during the interviews and invited the interviewer to observe a class taught by a very spontaneous and humorous faculty member. Team members laughed and joked as they referred to this teacher. They enjoyed his company and wanted to share his unique teaching style.

The classroom was filled with laughter as this teacher drilled various student teams in an "analogy contest" (Every time a student from the five-student team answered an analogy correctly, the team earned a point). The students were laughing about their teacher's ridiculous story to explain the word "accomplice." In this farfetched example, one teacher was portrayed as an accomplice in a crime. In this fabricated crime, both parties were attempting to steal a ham from a local curb market. In the process of this fiasco, the teacher was trying to hide the ham under her shirt and it fell out onto the floor of the store. Each detail in the story had the students thoroughly mesmerized and laughter resounded in the classroom.

This teacher's class substantiated the emphasis on the type of learning that invited student participation and encouraged fun and merriment as part of this process. The CT members enjoyed each other and the company of their fellow faculty members. Because of the apparent esprit de corps, the barriers to the process of inviting school success at Delta were few.

## **Epsilon Middle School**

### **Overview of the School**

This middle school is located in the Piedmont of North Carolina. A suburban school with 443 students, Epsilon's predominantly white students are described as middle class. A "working class" minority of poorer students come from neighboring housing project areas.

Epsilon's faculty has been using the Middle School Concept for four years. Faculty and staff have a thorough working knowledge of the components of this system, and put it to use in this school.

### **Epsilon's People**

Teachers were described by CT members as "going all out" to do extra things to invite school success. During the 1989-1990 school year, Administrator E encouraged an "all out" attack on disinviting practices. During the following school year (1990-1991), Epsilon's incumbent administrator was moved to a new elementary school. Epsilon's new administrator invested her energy in continuing to emphasize inviting practices. [For reporting clarity, the 1989-1990 administrator is designated as Administrator E and the 1990-1991 administrator is designated as Administrator F.]

Teachers at Epsilon actually competed with one another to see who could reward the most achievement. Administrator E remarked:

I didn't realize I was changing the climate so much at my school until I saw teachers trying to give more success to their students. Our attendance rate increased from 91.5 in 1989 to 94.3 in 1990. One of our biggest problems now is with transfers--58 students wanted to transfer to our school this year--I had to turn some away for lack of space.

Many interviewees referred to a bonding between one another, to students, and to the community. One teacher stated,

I don't just see my room, I see a total school, a community--a blended balanced program where the custodial staff, county office, community, and the building-level administrator support and encourage one another.

Even the not-so-enthusiastic teachers started to participate in the program to invite school success at Epsilon. Administrator E stated:

Even teachers I would call the prune-faced lemon types found themselves saying "Gosh I'm going to have to do something because my kids keeping coming in saying 'Ms. So and So did this for us.'"

On one occasion the researcher was interviewing two faculty members in the school lounge. Another member of the faculty came in and overheard our discussion concerning the school's family atmosphere: "I feel that this school is a refuge from the storm; yes, we bump heads at times, but it's OK, because we're like a family."

The CT members characterized the PTA president at Epsilon during the 1989-1990 school year as "totally committed," "caring," "loving," and "the most dedicated parent I've seen in a long time." A CT member remarked:

Our PTA coordinator did things for the teachers as well as for the kids. She alone spent over one thousand dollars out of her own pocket. She would look at our alternative program (a special program to help Epsilon's at-risk population), and say, "I think I'm going to do something special for them." It would not be uncommon for her to provide lunch for all alternative kids or notice the hottest classroom in the building and buy ice cream pops for them all.

CT members stated that Epsilon was already doing many inviting things to encourage student success, but the Invitational philosophy expedited the growth of the total school community. Teachers were more aware of inviting practices, mannerisms, comments, and body-language.

The CT member in charge of the Pass Program (a program renamed from In-School Suspension to encourage school

success with at-risk students) alluded to her methods with at-risk students:

I worked from a therapeutic standpoint...not strictly punitive by any means; yes, there were consequences for getting in Pass, but the basic point I found was that once they got in there and the cooling off occurred, I started to communicate with them and they responded.

This teacher used open-ended questions to help students process their problems. Administrator E maintained that students responded to this teacher by dropping their guarded, distrusting behaviors, and developed a more solution-oriented position. Administrator E remarked that Ms. Jones had such a way about her that kids said, "Just send me to Pass, I need Ms. Jones."

### **Epsilon's Policies**

The 1989-1990 discipline policy underwent major modifications. The CT supported a more "therapeutic" approach and the guidelines for discipline consequences were modified by the CT leader to include an inviting framework for success. This team member worked with students to "get them back on target" and "to develop a plan" to overcome behavioral obstacles and succeed in school. The ISS (in-school suspension program) had previously been the major consequence for disruptive behavior. The ISS was a "holding

tank" for disruptive students with the main emphasis on punitive measures. Students were given assignments to complete with minimal personal contact from the ISS coordinator. Very little processing was done with students concerning their behavioral infractions, and strict rules were emphasized. Students were given minimal bathroom breaks and were expected to "keep quiet" and "work." The CT leader changed the tone of this program and encouraged students' understanding of the problem behavior that caused them to reap these consequences. She changed the program name from ISS to Pass to signal a more positive application of the discipline policy. Not all teachers agreed with this new methodology. This dissention was acknowledged in an Invitational consultant's report:

This tension shows up most clearly in the In School Suspension Program, which is a very therapeutic approach. Some faculty want students disciplined rather than having a program that seeks to find the causes behind the behavior. But the principal is a strong supporter of the ISS program and is working to bring the faculty around. This was about the only real negative we encountered.

Since not all teachers at first agreed with the procedures used by the Pass coordinator, the CT leader/ Pass coordinator and Administrator E were determined to get to the root of the problem. Administrator E contended:



We felt that getting in trouble was a way of saying "Hey, I'm alive, somebody help me. The only thing I feel in the classroom is dumbness, everybody else seems to be comprehending what's going on, I'm lost."

The CT leader supported Administrator E by asserting:

I expect a lot of these kids. I want their behavior to change. When they get in a bind I want to help them how to figure out a solution. For example, I had this seventh grade kid who the principal dealt with a lot. I traced the problem to what was happening in the classroom. I said, "Look kid you're so bright and you can make good grades, what's the problem?" He said he wanted so bad to read, "I read slower than the rest, then the teacher starts talking and I'm not through, I can't think what I'm doing, and I get angry, I try to read but she (the teacher) won't let me read."

Both Administrator E and the CT coordinator felt that the frustration of getting off task or the inability to keep up with the rest of the class caused many students to become disruptive. This remedial approach to discipline created opportunities for students with behavioral problems to seek both emotional support from the Pass teacher and intensive tutoring. The Pass coordinator said:

I'm not slapping the child into the past and saying "Ok kid you've messed up and you rot." Once you do that you've lost them. I get them back on target. I say, "let me see where you get off base and we'll work together to get you back on."

By tutoring some students until as late as 11:00 p.m. this Pass teacher helped students to become more academically and behaviorally successful. Both Administrator E and the Pass coordinator voiced their concerns that some students would act out in order to be referred to Pass. The Pass teacher reported that "Kids put themselves in Pass." Epsilon's administrator said that students would say "Just send me to Pass." Students told the Pass teacher, "I won't ever be back in your room [for discipline], but I would like to be with you."

During the 1990-1991 school year, Administrator F expanded the discipline policy to include a more elaborate network of discipline levels. The previous ISS program was dismantled. The Pass coordinator continued to work with students in a tutorial support capacity, but afternoon detentions became the primary consequence for discipline.

The faculty at Epsilon initiated the following discipline policy:

1. The teacher sent the student to after-school detention for one hour for a classroom rule infraction.
2. If the student failed to stay for afternoon detention, the principal gave the student office detention (double time - 2 hours detention).
3. Students failing to stay for office detention received in-class suspension.

At all three levels, students worked on assignments. During in-class suspension the student was isolated by an L-shaped cubicle made out of plywood. Teachers gave work assignments and lunch to students in this area. Students who failed to do their work while in-class detention were given a zero.

Administrator F had used the new discipline policy at the high school level in her previous position. She suggested that this new policy separated behavioral discipline consequences from tutorial time. Students who were having learning problems were referred to the previous Pass coordinator, but not as a punitive consequence. This way students were less likely to act out in order to get to go to the Pass teacher.

### **Epsilon's Places**

Epsilon's CT worked to create a more inviting atmosphere by encouraging the display of student artwork throughout the school, by bringing in green plants and flowers, and by maintaining a clean physical plant. An IE consultant reported:

Epsilon has been implementing the Middle School Concept for four years now and seems well on its way to becoming a fine middle school. The building is arranged well for this age group and offers excellent facilities in the enrichment areas, music, art, computers, vocational explorations. Improvements in the school grounds

and decorations throughout the school attest to efforts to make it more inviting.

The CT members frequently referred to Epsilon's teachers as "going all out" to make classrooms inviting and comfortable. Many teachers created classroom environments, complete with comfortable reading areas and colorful bulletin boards. An Invitational consultant commended Epsilon's classroom environments:

The general atmosphere of the school is very positive. The faculty and students seem comfortable with each other. The classes we visited were engaged in interesting activities and the teachers reported several innovative approaches to instruction.

The school's sense of place was determined by many variables. The physical plant, the classroom atmosphere, and the positive communications and rewards given to students all contributed to the climate of this school.

#### **Epsilon's Programs**

Teachers used cooperative learning techniques in the classroom to encourage interdependence between students and to reduce competition. Pizza and ice cream parties were a common positive reinforcement device used to reward students both for attendance and for grades.

During the 1990-1991 school year, teachers inaugurated the GOTCHA Program to encourage proper study habits, and inviting behaviors. Teachers gave a blue GOTCHA coupon to students who demonstrated high time-on-task in the classroom. Frequently all students in the class won a GOTCHA coupon. Students then deposited the coupons into a large box located in the cafeteria. Prizes like pink and blue GOTCHA tee shirts were awarded to the winners of a regular drawing.

The PTO contributed to the school's Invitational Quotient by volunteering to assist in the classrooms by reading to students or listening to students read; binding library books; performing clerical tasks; or giving popcorn parties.

Faculty formed an Alternative Program during the 1989-1990 school year as a response to the high risk population at Epsilon. This program involved non-traditional learning experiences and flexible scheduling to create a non-threatening environment tailored for student success. A team of teachers, the guidance counselors, and the school principal selected 15 students to be involved in this experimental program for the 1989-1990 school year. Students selected for this program had one or more of the following problems: grade retentions, poor attendance, lack of motivation, and/or inappropriate behavior.

Students received regular counseling, vocational skills training, basic skills instruction (concentrated instruction in language and math skills), and academic performance contracts. Teachers developed performance contracts for each individual student and designed specific activities as tasks to be completed for a grade of A, B, or C. Performance below these levels would not be accepted. The teacher provided students with activities that stimulated thinking skills and problem solving methods to meet the contract objectives (as opposed to the more traditional methods of textbooks and worksheets). This classroom was self-contained. Evaluation of student performance was based on quality of work, as opposed to rate of progress. All CT members praised this program as a primary method to restructure success for students who had previously experienced school frustrations and failure. The Alternative Program was self-concept based:

Students in this program see themselves as learning failures. We must develop strategies to reverse this perception. Praise and reward for good work is essential, and the teacher will develop appropriate strategies to include these. In addition, the teacher and the vocational staff will guide each student through a major project chosen by the student. At the conclusion of the project, the student will have been involved in decision-making, problem solving, planning, and through persistence will have a final product to show for his efforts.

Many teachers at Epsilon felt that the "tutorial project" (an outgrowth of the Alternative Program) was very successful. All 15 of the Alternative Program students were involved. Once a week, these students visited the elementary school, and tutored a group of at-risk primary-age students. During the six-weeks grading period, alternative students designed a lesson and taught it to the younger students. The teacher graded students on their presentation, promptness in getting prepared, and the creativity of the idea. The project coordinator rated this effort a real success.

The faculty and staff encouraged students to improve their academic skills and study habits. The math lab encouraged skill building in the area of mathematics. A certified math teacher was hired for the lab beginning at 7:30 a.m. and ending at 4:00 p.m.. Students voluntarily came in before school or stayed after school for help. The teacher arranged daily tutoring sessions for students who needed more regular help with math.

Epsilon's guidance counselor organized a peer-tutoring program to provide further assistance for students who needed academic help, as well as a friend with whom to talk. Twenty-five students reported to the library before school and called out spelling words, helped with tough homework assignments, and provided general assistance. The guidance counselor reported that the greatest number of students

showed up for help right after report cards were distributed.

The Buddy Program provided support and assistance to students at Epsilon. Teachers compiled a list of students who needed special attention. This list was then passed around so teachers could sign up to be a mentor/buddy for a student with special needs. CT members commented on the Buddy Program:

Many at-risk students' parents have more problems than the kids do. It's tough to help them out all day and then send them back into a bad home environment with no food, some have no clothes, ...parents who are on drugs.

For some reason a kid feels comfortable with a teacher. They talk about their problems or come back for a hug. They get attached. Our faculty go the extra mile with these kids.

During the 1990-1991 school year the guidance counselor organized a Parenting Program to assist parents in dealing with their adolescents. Parent groups met once a week for one month and discussed a different topic. The counselor reinforced the value of keeping topics light:

The first rule of our sessions was not to get heavy, no drugs or family abuse talk. Just keep it light. Each parent would bring up an experience and everyone would come up with possible solutions and some ways that the experience could have been handled differently. We never used the word problem, we always used experiences. We tried to always keep it light.



We were not there to lecture, we were there to share.

Although only 12 parents participated in these one-hour sessions, the counselor felt that the program was a success. Some parents requested follow-up in the spring, and suggested that the course be taught at the local community college.

The CORE Team program met the needs of at-risk students. Administrator F selected teachers to receive CORE Team training from the North Carolina State Department of Public Instruction. CORE Team training involved knowledge concerning dysfunctional family settings, including drug and alcohol abuse and/or verbal or physical violence. CORE Teams were trained in various levels of intervention to assist students from dysfunctional families to better deal with the circumstances. Levels of intervention ranged from classroom interventions performed by the teacher (like being a Buddy) to social-service agency interventions.

The CORE Team changed their name to CARE (Channeling Adolescents Toward Responsible Experiences). In August 1990, the CARE Team sent a letter to all parents explaining their mission. Parents could sign a permission slip attached to this mailing to permit their child's involvement in this program.

### **Processes and the Spirit of the School**

Although the faculty at Epsilon were already initiating many programs for school improvement, IE struck a nerve for transformation. Administrator E noted:

Teachers here go all out in general; however, IE expedited this process. Teachers said, "gosh, I didn't know I was changing the climate of the school," and actually started competing with one another to challenge kids in a positive way.

Administrator E elaborated that even the "prune-faced lemon" teachers started to feel the pressure for change. Students came into the rooms of these "not so positive" teachers and made remarks about the incentives teachers had provided to stimulate and encourage them. Administrator E stated that this subtle pressure for change caused some teachers to re-think their teaching practices:

Many teachers thought, "I'm going to have to do something because kids come in saying Ms so and so did this for us..." I think just to save face they found themselves doing some things they ordinarily would not have done.

One CT member explained how teachers started to change their language patterns from orange to blue:

We tried to talk to students using lots of blue words instead of orange. Long lectures on misbehavior were down-played.

An Invitational consultant made the following comments concerning teacher-student interactions:

Teachers spend a lot of time talking to students.... adults in the school provide an excellent support network for students... the faculty have built a climate of trust among themselves and the students.

The Pass Program teacher emphasized a new process for helping students get unstuck. This CT member worked one-on-one with her students to find out where they got "off base" and assisted them in getting back on task. This extraordinary teacher commented:

They (the students) said, "Ms \_\_\_\_\_ I've got a hang up with this math." But I said don't you dare come to me with a failing grade on your report card this time. You're not allowed to fail. Don't say you don't have anyone to help you. I've got a telephone, you call me.

The Pass teacher also worked to help other teachers understand how students got stuck. She built rapport with these teachers and did not "get in the middle." She focused on clarification of the process of how and why lower-achieving students were getting stuck in the academic areas:

You tell me that a kid is drowning. Most of the time teachers say "If he would just sit down and

keep his mouth shut he could learn." But I contend that all kids want to learn and our mission is to find out how they get lost and get them back on target.

"The Pass teacher was considered a role model worth emulating," One CT member asserted; "We need more teachers like her at this school. She wades through the mire of problems these kids have like no one I know."

Administrator E noted that IE helped to encourage self-examination of how teachers and administrators invite or disinvite student success. After the faculty filled out the "Inviting School Checklist" Administrator E stated:

I went home and cried. Some agreed that I administered the rules fairly and equitably and some didn't. I thought here I am with blinders on, but there it was in black and white...

Introspection was an impetus for growth and change at Epsilon. "Something changed," Administrator E observed. "It was like electricity in the air, a sense of excitement; we were driven to find the answers." After the 1989-1990 school year ended, the CT reviewed the findings of the Inviting School Checklist. Administrator E stated:

The final checklist was unbelievable. I couldn't see that I was doing anything more than what I was already doing, but the checklist results were much better...It was like acquiring a state of mind. A

lot of self-analysis was going on and the result was very powerful.

### **Epsilon's Connection Team**

CT members had a common desire for an improved climate at Epsilon. All five team members commented on a shared sense of purpose:

We had a common thread among us. We all shared a love for kids. We even had a special feeling for kids who couldn't make it and were driven to help these special kids.

Although team members did not meet often on a formal basis, they would touch base in the hallway or meet informally. One CT member commented:

I guess we didn't meet that often because of so many other responsibilities - Senate Bill Two, the five year interim review, etc. - but we still got a lot accomplished. If we had been able to have more formal meetings we could have earmarked more programs for at-risk youth.

The CT shared the videos made by William Purkey as a "kick off" into the processes of inviting school success with the students. One CT member showed the video to her class:

I showed the tape to my kids and they said, "Mrs \_\_\_\_\_, you've been doing stuff like that." It

really validated my own teaching techniques and encouraged me to continue on. Plus I added more inviting methods to my bag of tricks.

Another CT member noted that IE had stirred the climate at Epsilon. Many of the components became contagious.

When the researcher met with the CT members during the 1990-1991 school year, they were still working together to re-create the school environment. The Learning Lab (their newest innovation) was a concept rather than a place. Learning Lab was a mind-set very similar to IE. CT members maintained that they continued to look for more ways to help students be successful in school, and that IE helped to spark and confirm their thirst for this knowledge.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **ACROSS-CASE ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter includes findings that reflect the efforts of five Connection Teams (CTs). These teams used the Five P's of IE to address the needs of at-risk youth. The data collected in this study resulted from surveys of CT members; interviews of all CT leaders and each school principal; observation of and interviews with CT members; unobtrusive data that included CT reports, public displays, IE "expert" reports, and school records. Chapter V is a synthesis and across-case analysis of the similarities of methods, strategies, and procedures used between and among the five schools. Across-case data are discussed in terms of the conceptual framework of IE and how these data relate to school improvement programs.

#### **Research Questions Presented in Chapter V:**

##### **Research Question Three**

Are there similarities in the types of internal methods, policies, strategies and procedures employed between and among the five schools?

#### **Research Question Four**

How do results from these five schools relate to the conceptual framework of Invitational Education and improved school programs?

#### **Organization of Findings for Research Question 3**

School gestalts began to form as common practices, methods, and strategies emerged from the review of these data. Recurrent practices, strategies and behaviors were presented in terms of the Five P's. People and processes were presented together because of the close relationship between these two variables.

#### **People and Processes**

All five schools engaged in the following key IE elements:

1) Focus on school philosophy; 2) Use of the language of "blue and orange" cards; 3) Emphasis on a family atmosphere and a school community; 4) Use of the team concept. (See Table I).



**Table I People and Processes**


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|         | <u>Focus on<br/>Philosophy</u> | <u>Use of<br/>Language<br/>(Blue and<br/>Orange)</u> | <u>Family<br/>Atmosphere</u> | <u>Team Concept</u> | <u>Totals</u> |
|---------|--------------------------------|--|------------------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| Alpha   | X                              | X  | X                            | X                   | 4             |
| Beta    | X                              | X  | X                            | X                   | 4             |
| Gamma   | X                              | X  | X                            | X                   | 4             |
| Delta   | X                              | X  | X                            | X                   | 4             |
| Epsilon | X                              | X  | X                            | X                   | 4             |
| Total   | 5                              | 5  | 5                            | 5                   | 20            |

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**Focus on School Philosophy****Alpha's Philosophy**

Administrator A felt that IE was a vehicle for transporting a renewed school mission. The Leadership Team (comprised of teachers from all grade levels, guidance counselor, and support staff) developed a school mission reflective of the tenets of IE. The major emphasis at Alpha was on building trust and a foundation of inviting teacher practices.

Although this administrator inherited a school with broken windows and broken trust, the slow process of renewal became evident as teachers started to go out to dinner with one another and to participate in the development of their school's philosophy.

**Beta's Philosophy**

The faculty and staff at Beta focused on developing a philosophy that reflected a synthesis of IE and the Middle School Concept. This faculty targeted the use of inviting

practices, but the elements of trust and faculty cohesiveness were developed prior to their introduction to the concepts of IE. Framing IE with the Middle School Concept became a top priority. One CT member expressed a need for reinforcement of the "blue" process:

I wish we could keep it going or take it deeper. We say, "well we've done it now we can go back to what we've always done." It's hard to keep a good thing going, people have a tendency to wear down, slow up and take their foot off the gas pedal.

#### **Gamma's Philosophy**

At Gamma, Administrator C concentrated on increasing trust and cohesiveness among faculty members. This administrator contended that teachers were traditionally isolated from one another and cloistered within their classrooms. IE brought faculty members closer together as they collaborated within one another and the community in channeling their inviting beliefs through the Five P's. As Gamma's faculty and staff applied inviting practices and concepts, they began to integrate these practices and beliefs with the Middle School Concept and with teaching strategies like whole language. Motivational contests and incentive programs emerged as important devices for student engagement.

**Delta's Philosophy**

The CT at Delta introduced the concepts of IE to the faculty through the Purkey videos. The faculty began to identify the elements of inviting versus disinviting practices. The CT channeled these practices into programs like a social for parents, peer tutoring, and practices like collaborative learning. The faculty announced their Invitational philosophy to the community by presenting it in the local newspaper.

**Epsilon's Philosophy**

The CT at Epsilon introduced the faculty to the concepts of IE and decided to wage an assault on disinviting practices. The faculty created an inviting climate through increased community interaction, incentive programs, and restructuring the discipline policy. During the 1990-1991 school year the faculty blended the components of the "Learning Lab" concept with IE. CT members stressed that they constantly searched for new ways to channel the Invitational philosophy.

**Use of Language (Blue and Orange Cards)**

All five schools adopted the language of "blue" and "orange" to describe inviting versus disinviting practices.

**Alpha's Language**

One CT member at Alpha remarked:

Our language and the messages we were sending to one another and to the students were very orange. We talked about this on many occasions during faculty meetings and gave examples. Some people were pretty hard on each other, but I think the honesty paid off.

Since building trust was an important issue at Alpha, faculty and staff concentrated on becoming more intentionally inviting. Faculty members at all schools gave frank feedback to one another when "orange" words were chosen or disinviting practices were used.

#### **Beta's Language**

Beta's faculty and staff taught the language of IE to the students. Administrator B commented that students and teachers reminded one another to redirect their energy from negative to positive.

Administrator C stated that the use of blue cards and orange cards helped the faculty at Gamma to "get a handle on subtle behaviors that might invite or disinvite learning." Teachers began to "look before they leaped" in their use of language. Administrator C contended that a majority of the faculty at Gamma increased their use of blue cards to students as well as to one another. There were, however, "a few closet oranges."

#### **Delta's Language**

Delta's faculty changed their signs and symbols to reflect a "blue" attitude. One CT member shared:

Our whole atmosphere changed, even our little notices on the door changed from negative to positive. Before we scraped them off they said, "All visitors must report to the office." Now they say, "We're concerned about our children. Please report to the office so we know who our visitors are."

### **Epsilon's Language**

At Epsilon teachers focused on inviting practices, mannerisms, comments, and body language. One teacher at Epsilon stated, "I never knew that standing with my arms crossed could send a disinviting message (orange card)." Both Administrator E and Administrator F commented on the versatility of the orange and blue metaphor in assessing their school's IQ (Invitational Quotient).

### **Summary**

The language of orange cards and blue cards was a useful metaphor for describing behaviors, attitudes, discipline and teaching techniques. Faculty and staff members at all five schools used the language to reflect on their inviting versus disinviting styles, as well as the styles of other faculty members. One CT member stated that she had explained the concepts of IE (complete with the blue and orange symbols) to her husband, and that they would signal whenever a orange card was given. This teacher stated that her ability to communicate with both her

children (at school) and her husband (at home) increased as a result of her awareness of this metaphor.

The blue and orange cards became a way for teachers, students and administrators to reflect on their interactions with one another. This "reflection in action" helped these individuals to reframe their attitudes and behaviors. These symbols became a language for educators to talk about who they were and what they were doing to meet the needs of all students.

#### **Family Atmosphere: The School as a Community**

The faculty at all five participating schools mentioned that after the implementation of IE, a family-type atmosphere pervaded their schools.

##### **Alpha's Atmosphere**

At Alpha, faculty began to share their notions of inviting and disinviting practices in faculty meetings. As more blue relationships emerged, faculty bonds tightened. Faculty and staff began to trust one another more and interact in more positive ways.

##### **Beta's Atmosphere**

One CT member at Beta noted, "We have bonded with each other and the result is a better environment for the kids." Although the faculty at Beta had "always been like a family," IE provided a vehicle to extend this bonding through the Five P's.

### **Gamma's Atmosphere**

Administrator A sought to increase faculty bonds and create a more nurturing environment. This administrator noted that teachers are traditionally isolated from one another and that IE had "made it okay to share, interact, and connect with one another."

### **Delta's Atmosphere**

Delta's staff focused on strengthening family ties. One CT member stated,

The neatest thing that Invitational Education has done here is to foster our family setting. Every month we recognize everybody's birthday regardless of what job they have; cafeteria worker, teacher assistant or bus driver. Three teachers bring refreshment sing happy birthday and the voices are incredible. Most of us sing in a choir. The birthday people get to pick a gift from a goodie bag. Everyone is celebrated at some point during the year.

### **Epsilon's Atmosphere**

At Epsilon students and staff cultivated a family type atmosphere. An Invitational consultant reported:

Teachers spend a lot of time talking to students... adults in the school provide an excellent support network for students... the faculty have built a climate of trust among themselves and the students.

CT members reported that bonding with the staff at Epsilon and the community increased. PTA members, community speakers, and outreach programs infiltrated the school.

**Table II**  
**Team Structure**

---

| School  | Connection<br>C-Teams | Interdisc-<br>iplinary<br>Teams | Home Base<br>Team | Assistance<br>Team | Totals |
|---------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------|
| Alpha   | X                     | X                               | X                 | X                  | 4      |
| Beta    | X                     | X                               | X                 | X                  | 4      |
| Gamma   | X                     | X                               | X                 | X                  | 4      |
| Delta   | X                     | X                               | ---               | ---                | 2      |
| Epsilon | ---                   | X                               | X                 | X                  | 3      |
| TOTAL   | 4                     | 5                               | 4                 | 4                  | 17     |

X = YES            --- = NO

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### Increased Teamwork

Each school in this study reflected a variety of teams. (See Table II). All five schools had active CTs that were in charge of introducing the principles of IE and setting up a system for the implementation of the Five P's. Four out of five schools had interdisciplinary teams comprised of language arts, math, science, and social studies teachers. These teachers were provided with a common planning time to develop interdisciplinary units and talk about ways of meeting the needs of students under their charge. Four out of five schools offered the Home-Base Team. This team



involved the assignment of 20 to 25 students to a middle grade teacher for the first period of the day. This teacher provided a support network for all students including at-risk youth. Four out of five schools provided A Teams. These teams primarily performed systematic interventions for at-risk youth. The CTs of each of these three schools consistently emphasized the importance of this team in targeting the needs of at-risk students and performing successful interventions for these students. A thorough overview of the A Team follows:

#### **Assistance Teams**

"A" teams were comprised of the school guidance counselor, two (or in some cases three) teachers, one administrator, and the school social worker. These teams met once a week for approximately 55 minutes to collectively brainstorm solutions to the problems facing at-risk students. For example, at Beta the A Team referred many students for group counseling and/or plugged them into a nurturing class designed for at-risk students. At Epsilon many of the at-risk students were placed in the Alternative Education Program (a program that provided intensive one-on-one tutoring, competency-based learning, and self-concept development.) Alpha's A Team connected their at-risk students with HOTS (Higher Order Thinking Skills designed for at-risk students). Willpower (a self-concept building program sponsored by a local radio station) or I've Got

Better Things to Do (a self-concept building program sponsored by local firefighters) were two other intervention possibilities. Other common interventions included: referrals of parents of at-risk students to parenting programs, and family counseling. Classroom interventions performed by the classroom teacher (such as behavior contracts), peer tutoring or counseling, and Social Service referrals were frequently used. A Team training was provided by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction Drug and Alcohol Prevention Unit. All four CTs made favorable comments concerning the effectiveness of the A Teams. At-risk students were provided with multiple interventions to help them become more successful in school. A Teams provided a focused systematic approach to the intervention process.

### **Policies**

All schools reflected discipline policies that were blended with the Invitational model. Table III shows some of the procedures used to establish the disciplinary policies and reported results.

**Table III**  
**Common Discipline Policies**

| School  | Clear<br>Consequences | ID Teams<br>created<br>standards | Incrsd<br>Positive<br>Reinforce-<br>ment | Increased<br>Positive<br>Communi-<br>cation | Decreased<br>Power<br>Struggles | Reduced<br>Misbehav-<br>ior | Totals |
|---------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|--|---|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------|
| Alpha   | X                     | X                                | X  | X   | X                               | X                           | 6      |
| Beta    | X                     | X                                | X  | X   | X                               | X                           | 6      |
| Gamma   | ---                   | X                                | X  | X   | X                               | ---                         | 4      |
| Delta   | X                     | ---                              | X  | X   | X                               | X                           | 5      |
| Epsilon | X                     | X                                | X  | X   | X                               | ---                         | 5      |
| TOTAL   | 4                     | 4                                | 5  | 5   | 5                               | 3                           | 26     |
| (YES)   |                       |                                  |  |   |                                 |                             |        |

X = YES      --- = NO

### Clear Consequences

Each of the five schools in this project had established a discipline policy that was clearly articulated and provided clear consequences for inappropriate behavior.

### Creation of Standards

Principals in four out of five schools encouraged the interdisciplinary teams to create their own standards for discipline. The fifth school's principal also encouraged individual teachers to set up a system for standards and expectations. Since teachers in these schools worked collaboratively on behavioral expectations, they experienced a sense of ownership in the creation of the discipline

process. Four out of five CT members at Beta stated that discipline was more consistent and inviting because of their cooperative discipline plan.

#### **Increased Positive Reinforcement (Blue Cards)**

Faculty at all five schools initiated more praise and "blue cards" to create a positive climate in the classroom. High expectations and clear consequences went hand in hand to reduce discipline problems. The librarian at Gamma asserted, "I buy blue "Post-It" notes, and whenever I catch a student being well behaved, I give him/her a blue card." This teacher noted that since students at Gamma felt good about their school and wanted to please their teachers, discipline problems were low.

#### **Increased Positive Communication**

All five CT members at Beta reported increased positive communication between faculty members and students after initiating IE. One CT member at Alpha commented that "power struggles" between teachers and students declined as teachers focused on inviting mannerisms, body language and comments.

#### **Reduction in Misbehavior**

Alpha's administrator noted that by the end of the first semester of the 1989-1990 school year, discipline problems were reduced to a bare minimum. Administrator A contended, "We backed up our high expectations with clear consequences and improved behavior with praise and

encouragement." Administrator B noted that discipline problems were reduced by 50% in the 1989-1990 school year. Delta's CT also referred to a reduction in discipline problems due to increased rapport and blue cards: "Kids here are thinking more about doing things that are going to make teachers happy rather than unhappy."

#### **A Unique Disciplinary Approach**

Epsilon's discipline policy went through some major changes during the first Invitational year. In an effort to make discipline more therapeutic, the CT leader provided one-on-one tutoring to students assigned to In-School Suspension. She changed the name from ISS (In-School Suspension) to Pass, to reflect a more positive title. Both Administrator E and the CT leader desired to help students who cried out for help, yet some faculty members felt that the consequences for misbehavior were not tough enough. The following school year, Epsilon's new administrator (Administrator F), modified the policy to meet the needs of troubled youth and to provide structured consequences for inappropriate behavior. This principal instituted an "after school detention" for discipline consequences and provided extensive tutoring for students who needed academic help. The faculty at Epsilon emphasized positive reinforcement, yet desired clear consequences for inappropriate behavior. The students who put themselves in the Pass Program (formerly ISS) because of personal and/or academic needs

were still given individual assistance, but in a structured program designed to meet their needs. These students were either placed in the Alternative Program for at-risk students, or provided with individual tutoring by the previous Pass coordinator (who was noted for her ability to help these students become successful in school).

### **Corporal Punishment**

The educators at Beta and Delta used corporal punishment. In Beta, however, it appeared to drop by the wayside. One CT member at Beta noted, in November, 1990, "I don't notice any more corporal punishment...it seemed to fade away." In Delta, this form of punishment was a part of the culture of the school and appeared to be commonly accepted and respected.

### **Places**

The school buildings and surrounding grounds were improved in all five schools. Community groups and students adopted areas for beautification, and witnessed their area transform into a creation of beauty. Improvements are presented in Table IV.

#### **Alpha's Places**

Alpha had suffered serious disrepair in previous years. Sidewalks were cracked and windows broken. The visual symbol of repair and enhancement during the 1989-1990 Invitational year was a metaphor for the life and health that the faculty was beginning to experience.

**Table IV**  
**Common Places**

---

| School  | Community<br>Enhancement<br>of property | Student Art-<br>work<br>Displayed | Landscaping | Rooms<br>redecorated | Totals |
|---------|---|-----------------------------------|-------------|----------------------|--------|
| Alpha   | X                                       | X                                 | X           | X                    | 4      |
| Beta    | X                                       | X                                 | X           | X                    | 4      |
| Gamma   | X                                       | X                                 | X           | X                    | 4      |
| Delta   | X                                       | X                                 | X           | X                    | 4      |
| Epsilon | X                                       | X                                 | X           | X                    | 4      |
| TOTAL   | 5                                       | 5                                 | 5           | 5                    | 20     |

X = YES      --- = NO

---

#### **Beta's Places**

Beta began to reflect the Invitational efforts of faculty and staff. Bulletin boards, team logos, student art-work and inviting niches abounded. Administrator B made sure the window trim on the new wing was painted blue to commemorate Beta's allegiance to their new philosophy.

#### **Gamma's Places**

At Gamma, a local church adopted an area and furnished flowers and planters. The resource class at Gamma maintained this area. Administrator C received 100 azaleas from a "Keep North Carolina Beautiful" grant and the students planted the azaleas throughout the campus.

#### **Delta's Places**

The PTA at Delta adopted the faculty lounge. Bus drivers decorated their buses with inviting slogans and

signs. Hall monitors made sure students walked on the "right side" and kept the hallway clear of trash.

#### **Epsilon's Places**

The PTA at Epsilon decided to beautify the school with plants and flowers. Teachers concentrated on making their classrooms as inviting as possible by providing reading niches, carpeted areas, and colorful bulletin boards.

At all five schools, collective efforts to create a school of beauty and aesthetic value was a concrete way of showing pride and demonstrating interdependence. The physical appearances of all five schools attested to the visual results of IE.

#### **Programs**

Many of the five participating schools developed similar programs to meet the needs of at-risk youth. Table V reflects these programs.

#### **Community Speakers and Programs**

The CTs of all five schools encouraged participation of the community in their at-risk project. At Alpha, the community radio station and area fire fighters initiated programs for at-risk youth. At Beta and Epsilon members of the community were invited into the school to talk about the importance of staying in school. DARE (Drug and Alcohol Resistance Education) officers participated in a drug information and prevention program at Gamma and Delta.



**Table V**  
**Common Programs**

---

| School  | Speakers | Incentives<br>and rewards | Middle<br>School | Peer<br>Helpers | Totals |
|---------|----------|---------------------------|------------------|-----------------|--------|
| Alpha   | X        | X                         | X                | ---             | 3      |
| Beta    | X        | X                         | X                | ---             | 3      |
| Gamma   | X        | X                         | ---              | X               | 3      |
| Delta   | X        | X                         | X                | X               | 4      |
| Epsilon | X        | X                         | X                | X               | 4      |
| TOTAL   | 5        | 5                         | 4                | 3               | 17     |

X = YES      --- = NO

---

### **Incentives and Rewards**

Rewarding students for their success in school was another program effort in which faculty from all five schools participated.

#### **Alpha:**

- A) "Blue Cards"
- B) Positive notes home
- C) Awards Day
- D) Incentive lunches for students with improved behavior and/or grades.

#### **Beta:**

- A) "Blue Cards"
- B) Individual classroom incentives
- C) Positive notes home
- D) School Dance
- E) Student of the month Honor Roll.

**Gamma:**

- A) "Blue Cards"
- B) Pizza parties for end-of-course testing
- C) Positive notes home
- D) Celebration parties for CAT (California Achievement Test)
- E) Good behavior candies and prizes
- F) Student of the Month
- G) Attendance rewards
- H) Fun day
- I) Newspaper article on achieving students.

**Delta:**

- A) "Blue Cards"
- B) Beta Club
- C) "Blue Cards" sent home by principal
- D) Socials for parents of students with improved grades or on honor roll
- E) School store discounts for improved grade points
- F) Student of the Month.

**Epsilon:**

- A) "Blue Cards"
- B) Popcorn parties after CAT
- C) GOTCHA Program for students caught being good
- D) Student of the Month Certificate
- E) Pizza parties for good attendance

- F) Free passes to concession stand
- G) Luncheons for at-risk students who made either academic or behavioral improvements
- H) Ice cream parties.

### **Middle School Concept**

Four out of the five schools adopted the Middle School Concept. Each of the four schools provided a Home-Base period for all students. This period was used to promote communication and to develop a team identity. Administrator A declared that the Middle School Concept was a major contribution to the enhanced inviting climate at Alpha. Administrator C mirrored this sentiment: "To me, if you do the Middle School Concept, you can't help but be inviting." Both administrators felt that IE augmented the Middle School Concept's successful implementation. CT members at Beta also felt that the self-concept emphasis of both the Middle School Concept and IE created a double dose of validation to all students at Beta. One CT member at Epsilon noted, "IE gave us a way to talk about self-concept that we all could understand and use effectively."

### **Special Classes for At-Risk Students**

Three of the five schools - Alpha, Beta, and Epsilon - formulated classes to focus on the needs of at-risk students. Alpha's HOTS (Higher Order Thinking Skills) was designed to offer a hands on curriculum especially designed

for potential dropouts. At Beta special one-on-one tutoring, communication skills training, computer literacy, and basic skills training were emphasized in a nurturing class designed for students at risk of dropping out of school. Educators at Epsilon also identified students with low achievement and/or high absenteeism and provided them with a class where contracts were made available for grades. This Alternative Program was based on competence mastery. Students were provided with vocational training, information on effective study skills, and self-concept enhancing activities. The basic focus of these special classes at all three schools was to create a platform for student success. The CTs from Alpha, Beta and Epsilon highly endorsed these classes that were tailor made for their population of at-risk students.

#### **Peer Helper Programs**

Gamma, Delta in Epsilon provided peer helper programs for students who needed tutoring, counseling concerning a personal problem, or just someone with whom to talk.

Gamma's program was primarily tutorial. Students with a "C" or above average could volunteer to tutor another student. Schoolwide academic study time was provided two or three times a week. During this time students who desired tutoring could go the library to receive assistance.

Staff at Delta and Epsilon provided peer helpers for tutoring and non-crisis counseling. Delta's program included seventh and eighth grade students trained in helping and communications skills. These student/tutors were assigned to assist third and fourth grade students, and functioned as positive role models for them.

Epsilon's guidance counselor trained 25 students to be peer helpers for students needing tutoring or counseling services. These peer helpers were available in the library before school to call out spelling words and provide academic assistance.

The peer support programs provided yet another means of assisting students with personal or academic concerns. Interdependence, bonding, and mutual support characterized these facilitative programs.

#### Research Question Four

**How do results from these five schools relate to the conceptual framework of Invitational Education and improved school programs?**

The Greek prefix syn, (together with) as in synthesis, synergy, syntropy, becomes increasingly meaningful. When things come together something new happens. In relationship there is novelty, creativity, richer complexity. Whether we are talking about chemical reactions or human societies, molecules or international treaties, there are qualities that cannot be predicted by looking at the components. (Marilyn Fergurson, The Aquarian Conspiracy, 1980, p. 156)

The faculties of all five schools in this project created their own networks of inviting policies and practices. IE was easily accepted and assimilated into school philosophies that reflected the needs and aspirations of each school's culture. George (1984) asserted that effectiveness or productivity centers on the same concepts, whether in business or in schools: a commitment to an organizational philosophy.

Within all five schools a vision of possibilities emerged. The conceptual framework of IE blended with the team concept of the middle school approach, and provided avenues (through the Five P's) to realize Effective School concepts. Proponents of the Effective School model emphasize a safe, orderly environment that encourages a sense of mission, high expectations, and a high rate of

successful experiences in school. The fundamental tenets of IE reinforce these values and provide means of channeling them through the Five P's (people, policies, places, programs, and processes). Clearly, IE is a useful complement to the standards of Effective Schools and the Middle School Concept.

Fullan, Bennett and Bennett (1990) stated that shared purpose and norms of collegiality were two critical cogs in the wheel of total school improvement. Each school in this project reflected staff members who were dedicated to building successful school experiences through school and community participation and collaboration. Schools developed missions and a sense of direction. Through collaboration teachers were given a sense of ownership. Administrator A indicated this renewed sense of direction:

Invitational learning brought our faculty together and created dialogue, important planning and consensus building at a critical time in the history of our school. We developed our school mission together, and we reminded each other to stick to it.

Personnel in all five schools designed their own roadmaps to direct the Invitational philosophy. The staff at Alpha focused on inviting and disinviting behaviors and practices. The formation of a therapeutic community at Beta evolved as a primary goal. At Gamma, Administrator C used

IE to foster a greater commitment of faculty and staff to the Middle School Concept. Delta's CT noted that an "automatic process" of high expectations and teamwork unfolded as faculty developed their Invitational philosophy. The cohesiveness of Epsilon's faculty and community increased as more parents volunteered to work with the school, and the at-risk students at Epsilon adopted the at-risk students at a neighboring elementary school.

The versatility of IE made it possible for CTs to individualize this theory of practice to meet the needs of each school's environment. Goodlad (1984) proposed that for school improvements to be successful, reform efforts must encompass the school as a system of interacting parts. Each part affects the other to develop greater productivity. As educators develop their own reform strategies, a sense of ownership occurs and schools become self-renewing. This renewal generates a dynamic homeostasis that is constantly evolving and life supporting. A CT member at Gamma commented on this process:

Invitational Education is something we automatically do now. Everything we created to promote growth and success at this school has its roots in this philosophy. It is a way of living and interacting with one another.



## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY, FINDINGS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary

This study reflected the efforts of five Connection Teams (CTs) from four middle schools and one K-12 school. These teams were composed of the school principal, guidance counselor, and one teacher from each of the middle grades (6,7,8). After attending a workshop on Invitational Education (IE) in October 1989, CTs at each school initiated the Invitational model through the use of the Five P's, (people, policies, places, programs, and processes).

The researcher visited each of the five schools, reviewed a variety of data and performed a qualitative analysis to determine how the faculty and staff at each of school initiated IE to meet the needs of at-risk youth. The following are findings from this effort:

#### Findings

**Research Question #1 - Have the people, places, policies, programs, and processes of these five schools changed through their participation in these efforts? If so, (A) How has the "spirit" of camaraderie changed within each school? (B) What particular programs, events, activities, etc. at each school have contributed to this change?**

**People and Processes**

1. The faculty and staff at all five schools developed IE as a school philosophy in varying degrees.
2. The IE theory of practice provided direction and focus to the reform and self-assessment efforts at each school in this study. All five CTs attested to the value of IE as a vehicle for transformation within their schools.
3. The spirit of camaraderie increased as faculties networked to build inviting practices, policies, programs, and processes.
4. The language of IE (orange cards and blue cards) was used to categorize inviting versus disinviting practices at all five schools.
5. Staff members at all five schools reported an increased family-type atmosphere and referred to the blending of school and community.
6. All schools reflected increased faculty teamwork, some schools more than others.

**Policies**

7. Staff at all five schools re-framed their discipline policies to increase expectations, provide clear consequences, and furnish positive reinforcement for appropriate behavior. Teachers collaborated with one another to establish these policies. This collaboration increased teachers' ownership in the development of school discipline.

**Places**

8. School buildings, grounds, and classrooms in all five schools were enhanced through repair, remodeling, and decoration. Community organizations adopted areas to repair and decorate.

**Programs**

9. The faculty and staff at all five schools invited community speakers, and representatives of agencies and programs into their schools to influence students to stay in school.

10. The faculty and staff at all schools increased their use of incentives, rewards and recognition for all students.

11. The Invitational model was complementary to the Middle School Concept, that four out of five schools had previously adopted by:

(a) Providing self-concept based principles that were integral to the Middle School Concept.

(b) Equipping educators with a language of transformation (blue and orange cards) to label their self-concept building behaviors and practices.

(c) Fostering a total school approach to meet the needs of at-risk youth as well as all students within the school setting.

(d) Encouraging teamwork and collaboration between and among students, teachers and community.

12. The staff at three out of five schools initiated special classes to meet the needs of at-risk youth.

13. The staff at four out of five schools created A Teams to perform interventions for at-risk students.

14. The staff at three of five schools initiated a peer helper program to tutor at-risk youth and provide non-crisis counseling.

**Research Question #2 - How has each Connection Team initiated IE?**

15. Each CT formulated a plan of action to create a uniquely inviting environment. The CTs' efforts reflected the culture of each school; however, all teams taught the language of "blue" and "orange" and funneled their efforts through the Five P's.

**Research Question #3 - Are there similarities in the types of internal methods, policies, strategies and procedures employed between and among the five schools?**

16. All five CTs initiated similar programs and policies and enlivened their places. The processes of teamwork, collaboration and positive interactions were consistently reported processes in all five schools. All schools focused on IE as a school philosophy and used the language of "blue" and "orange." Similar programs included: Assistance Teams, Peer Helper Programs, nurturing classes specifically designed for at-risk students, and increased community involvement.

**Research Question #4 - How do results from these five schools relate to the conceptual framework of IE and improved school programs?**

17. All five CTs cited examples of how inviting mannerisms, behaviors and teaching styles were integrated into the

curriculum. For example, collaborative learning, whole language, and interactive teaching were cited as examples of inviting teacher practices. CTs targeted practices that they felt encouraged success and promoted their use to other teachers.

18. CTs in all five schools reported that IE had a positive effect on students , staff and community. This theory of practice was conducive to the success of all students, and not isolated to those classified at-risk.

19. Faculty at all five schools created unique programs, policies, and processes. For example, the faculty at Epsilon created the Alternative Program for at-risk students. Teachers at Gamma endorsed a homework policy to encourage a comprehensive focus on students' completion of homework. At Alpha, the process of community involvement stimulated many new approaches to help students experience school success.

20. All five principals supported the principles of IE and modeled inviting behaviors to the staff. (e.g. Alpha's administrator put up a brag board of teacher accomplishments beside the check-in counter). Beta's administrator painted the window trim on the school blue; Delta's administrator sent blue cards to students and staff. Gamma's administrator interviewed all new students. Epsilon's administrators encouraged teachers to send blue cards to students.

21. All CTs created and/or supported special programs to assist at-risk students in succeeding in school (e.g. Beta's Nurturing Class, Epsilon's Alternative Education, Alpha's HOTS Program).

22. IE fit in well with other programs like the Middle School Concept and Effective Schools strategies.

## **A Framework for the Developmental Stages of Invitational Education**

All five schools in this project adopted the tenets of IE and used the Five P's as a vessel to transport this philosophy. Because these schools were at different stages of development in fostering their Invitational theory of practice, the following structure was used to explain the process of development (See Table VI).

**Table VI Developmental Stages of IE**

| <u>Leveling</u> | <u>Foundation Stage</u>  | <u>Framing Stage</u>                    | <u>Fortification</u>  | <u>Remodeling</u>  |
|-----------------|--|---|---|--|
| Building Trust  | Exposure to the principles of IE.<br>Practice of these principles. | Regular use of principles and language. | Systematic strengthening of IE through regular reinforcement and re-exposure of principles. | Research and development of new principles that complement the IE model. |

### **Leveling**

The faculty and staff at all five schools noted that they initially developed trust and faculty cohesiveness as necessary components to create their school philosophy. This coming to terms with reality and discussion of the issue of trust assisted each faculty member in leveling the ground for a stable foundation to support the components of IE.

**Foundation**

The foundation stage reflected the initiation and exposure of the faculty to the principles of IE. The viewing of the video tapes of Dr. Purkey and the discussion of inviting versus disinviting practices were consistent efforts used by all five schools. The foundation stage also included the understanding and practice of the "blue card and orange card" metaphor. All participating schools adopted this process as well.

**Framing**

This stage included the regular and automatic use of the principles and practices of IE and the incorporation of other pre-existing programs that enhanced this philosophy. For example, many CT members mentioned that IE reinforced the principles of the Middle School Concept and teaching strategies such as Whole Language and collaborative learning.

**Fortification**

The fortification of IE included regular validation and reinforcement of the principles involved in this philosophy. Delta's faculty fortified their philosophy by presenting it in the town newspaper. None of the faculties in the schools that participated in this project, however, developed a systematic means of re-exposing or renewing the tenets of



IE. Thus, many schools were struggling to "keep the blue alive." One CT member at Beta remarked, "If we only knew how to make the blue feeling last and keep it going, the maintenance part (and I think that's where we're struggling); how to make it last."

### **Remodeling**

Epsilon reflected this stage of development as the faculty and staff strove to identify new principles and strategies to complement IE. The "Learning Lab" at Epsilon was identified as a new concept that focused on self-concept building principles. This concept of the school as a community-based laboratory for learning fit in with the principles of IE.

### **Discussion of the Developmental Stages of IE**

Table VII describes the developmental stages of each schools' involvement in Invitational Education.

All five schools reflected a thorough participation in the first three stages of Invitational development. (These 3 stages are Leveling, Foundation, and Framing.) Faculties learned the principles of IE and established a sound basis of trust and cohesiveness. The practices of these principles appeared to have encouraged a "mind set" of inviting practices and behaviors. As time passed, however, all but one school discontinued the CT. Very little re-

exposure to the principles of IE occurred at any of the five schools.

**Table VII Developmental Stages of Invitational Education**

| <u>Leveling</u>   | Alpha | Beta | Gamma | Delta | Epsilon | Total |
|---|-------|------|-------|-------|---------|-------|
| Building Trust  | X     | X    | X     | X     | X       | 5     |
| Principal Expectations Clear  | X     | X    | X     | X     | X       | 5     |
| Increased Communication   | X     | X    | X     | X     | X       | 5     |
| Increased Faculty Cohesiveness  | X     | X    | X     | X     | X       | 5     |
| <u>FOUNDATION</u>   |       |      |       |       |         |       |
| The CT introduced the Purkey Videos   | X     | X    | X     | X     | X       | 5     |
| Faculty discussion of inviting vs disinventing practices  | X     | X    | X     | X     | X       | 5     |
| Faculty practiced language of blue and orange cards   | X     | X    | X     | X     | X       | 5     |
| An assembly was held to introduce IE to the student body  | ---   | X    | ---   | ---   | ---     | 1     |
| Discussion of how to make the school more inviting  | X     | X    | X     | X     | X       | 5     |
| <u>FRAMING</u>  |       |      |       |       |         |       |
| The language of blue and orange became widely used and understood   | X     | X    | X     | X     | X       | 5     |
| Faculty integrated IE with other programs like HOTS, community outreach programs and/or incentive programs. | X     | X    | X     | X     | X       | 5     |
| Discipline policies restructured  | X     | X    | X     | X     | X       | 5     |
| <u>FORTIFICATION</u>  |       |      |       |       |         |       |
| On-going Connection Team  | ---   | ---  | ---   | ---   | X       | 1     |
| Inviting School checklist was used to assess the effect of IE   | X     | X    | X     | X     | X       | 5     |
| <u>REMODELING</u>   |       |      |       |       |         |       |
| Research on new and innovative approaches to enhance the invitational model                                 | ---   | ---  | ---   | ---   | X       | 1     |
| Totals  | 12    | 13   | 12    | 12    | 14      | 63    |

X = YES --- = NO

Four principle missing factors became evident in assessing the development of each school's Invitational program:

First, only at Beta did the faculty and staff introduce the Invitational model to the students. Although the staff at all five schools used the language of "blue" and "orange," students were not systematically introduced to this language. It would seem that a more comprehensive use of the language would have expedited the development of IE at each school.

Second, Epsilon continued to have CT meetings while at all other schools CTs discontinued their meetings. The possibility of continuity of the practice of IE decreased when the CTs disbanded.

Third, none of the faculties at the five schools in this study continued to re-expose themselves to the tenets of IE. By having an ongoing CT this re-emphasis could have been part of a long range goals planning session.

Fourth, only one CT, at Epsilon, placed an emphasis on research and development of other resources, programs, etc., to complement the Invitational model. In this school the CT continued to meet and explore new avenues of developing successful school experiences based on IE.

### Discussion

Everything the teacher does, as well as the manner in which he does it, incites the child to respond in some way or another and each response tends to set the child's attitude in some way or another. (Dewey, 1933, p.59)

#### Schools as a Message System

Novak (1989) referred to schools as "message systems" that send out messages of proficiency or deficiency, competence or incompetence, etc. These systems either "call forth or shun the development of human potential" (p. 232). The faculty, staff and community at each school in this study formulated their own methods, strategies, and policies to create a message system based on IE. Since each school was led by a CT composed of one administrator and four peers, ownership in the development of each school's plan was shared. Each school's gestalt was unique.

The language of blue cards and of orange cards was easily assimilated into each school's culture, yet no effort was put into re-exposing the staff to these variables. This language did, however, encourage teachers to reflect on their practices and frame them in terms of inviting versus disinviting body language, mannerisms, and teaching strategies.

Each CT reported an emphasis on cooperative learning, whole language, and "hands on" approaches to learning. This emphasis reinforced Damico et al.'s (1989) findings

concerning "engaging" teacher practices versus "disengaging" practices. Damico underscored the importance of student engagement in the lesson through active participation and interaction with other students and the teacher.

The process of engagement in learning was expanded through the Five P's to reinforce Finn's (1989) Participation/ Identification Model that emphasized the provision of an adequate instructional and/or emotional environment (p. 123). In this model, bonding with school and the resultant commitment to schooling was a key strategy in the prevention of school dropouts. CTs formulated many ways to create an environment conducive to the success of at-risk students. Peer helper programs, community projects for at-risk students, and special nurturing classes helped to reduce alienation and to engage at-risk students in the learning process.

#### **Family Atmosphere - Open System**

A family atmosphere was repeatedly mentioned as a major component that emerged through the continuous interactions and interdependence of school and community. This gestalt of inviting people, policies, places, programs and processes reinforced Goodlad's (1987) notion of a self-renewing school where every component interacts with the others to enhance and re-create the setting. The concept of the school as a "dissipative structure," or open system (as described by

Prigogine, 1980), was developed as each CT devised a means to increase the Invitational Quotient (IQ) of the school environment. Apathy and alienation were reduced and connection and engagement in learning was enhanced. This open system of interconnectedness was constantly evolving and developing ways to replenish the system.

### **A Moral Imperative**

Beane (1991) asserted that enhancing self-concept was a moral imperative for schools," especially in a time when other social institutions and agencies seem unwilling or unable to provide support and encouragement in the process of growing up" (p.25). Through the development of IE at each of the five schools in this project, teachers felt personally invited and took responsibility for actualizing this model because they could identify with its basic components, experience them, and share these components with others. The moral imperative of self-concept enhancement became a desideratum instead of another duty handed down from above. Teachers, administrators, and community members willingly developed their own fulfillment of the moral imperative. Teamwork and collaboration verified Glasser's (1990) principles of "lead-management" as practices like coercion and intimidation dropped off, while cooperation and participation increased in each of the five participating schools.

### **School Reform**

Goodlad (1987) stated that school innovations must fit with teachers' tacit or explicit views and must be incorporated into teachers' ways of viewing their worlds. Deal (1990) referred to the "symbolic webbing" or traditions and practices that symbolize the history and culture of the school. Deal felt that effective reform occurred when cultural beliefs and patterns of people within the school were incorporated with reform efforts.

According to Tye (1987), the deep structure of schooling has the strongest hold on the way things are done in schools. This "deep structure" is determined by the values and assumptions that are widely shared by school societies. Each CT in this study attested to the positive change brought about by IE. The tenets of IE that encourage the growth of human potential, the importance of cooperative dialogue and the value of a family school setting fit in easily with the values and assumptions held by school staffs. The belief system of IE took a firm hold in all five participating schools. All CTs adopted the Invitational theory of practice as a school philosophy. The revised discipline policies, and the ongoing Invitational programs and strategies to assist students to realize their full potential were a testimony to deep structural change. A re-spirited setting became evident as Assistance Teams continued to perform interventions for at-risk youth;

children in Home-Base Teams continued to share their lives and their feelings and community members popped popcorn for students finishing a test. Administrator E referred to this by stating:

Something changed as a result of IE, it was like electricity in the air, a sense of excitement, we were driven to find the answers.

Discipline policies were re-created at Epsilon. CT members agreed that discipline became more humane. Corporal punishment ceased at Beta. Although the signs and slogans with inviting phrases eventually were taken down, the permanent structural changes remained. Teachers continued to use cooperative and collaborative techniques both in the classroom and in faculty meetings.

IE provided a vehicle for the Middle School Concept and Effective Schools components to infiltrate each school. Through teamwork, high expectations, and a focus on self-concept development, school climates were improved and supportive communities evolved.

The German word "Zeitgeist" refers to "the spirit of the setting" (Sarason, 1984 p.25). The faculty and staff at all five schools cited the Zeitgeist of their school settings through recurrent references to "a renewed school mission," "a family atmosphere," or "greater school spirit."

The Zeitgeist at each school was a reflection of the



culture of the school. It appeared that the deep structure espoused by Tye (1987) was affected by IE. The results of the five CTs' efforts had many commonalities, yet unique plans evolved out of the needs of each school culture. IE provided a flexible model for total school improvement. This model fit in with the way teachers and staff wanted to view their school culture. Fortification, however, was a missing element and a highly critical stage to systematically continue to shift the deep structure.

CTs adopted the tenets of IE and structured many ongoing programs and strategies to invite school success. Systematic re-exposure and reinforcement of the principles of IE, however, would have insured continued growth and evolution of the inviting process. An analogy to the fortification process can be drawn using a theological example. Christians, when attending the church of their choice, are exposed to many principles in which they believe. The repeated exposure to the values held important by a Christian confirm and reinforce ongoing Christian behaviors. At only one school, Epsilon, did the CT continue to meet. Ongoing CT meetings could have provided the Invitational fortification and re-exposure necessary to perpetuate the active translation of Invitational theory into practice. Thus, it would seem that deep structural change must be perpetuated through some form of fortification.

**Recommendations for Future Invitational Education Projects**

1. CTs are integral to the continued development of the school philosophy; therefore, they should become a permanent part of the school culture.
2. The permanent CT should be expanded to include parents, students and community members.
3. Regular meetings should be established by CTs.
4. CTs need a more thorough foundation in the knowledge of IE so that implementation can be expedited and continued over time.
5. Invitational consultants need to visit each school at the beginning of the project as a follow-up to the CT's introduction (staff development) in IE.
6. On-going contact and frequent follow up needs to occur between CTs and Invitational consultants.
7. CTs should be encouraged to use a planning guide.
8. Each CT should have a written plan of action with deadlines.
9. Introduction to the components of IE should include the entire school: students, cafeteria workers, bus drivers, parents, etc.
10. A thorough audit trail should be done before and after the introduction of IE.
11. Each school would benefit from a self-study on the Five P's.

12. A tighter integration of the principles of IE and other key concepts like the Middle School Concept should be pursued through staff development.

13. Systematic re-exposure of faculties to the principles of IE would help to fortify IE and keep faculties moving in the Invitational direction.

#### **Recommendations for New Studies**

1. Early intervention is important in increasing students' engagement in the learning process. A study similar to the present one should be initiated on the elementary school level. Students' self-concepts, attendance rates, test scores, discipline referrals, etc., could be measured before and after their exposure to this model.

2. The Developmental Stages of IE (Table VI p. 186) are devices for discussing the degrees of implementation of IE. The hypothesis can be made that the schools that implemented IE in all five stages had higher attendance, SAT and CAT scores, and fewer discipline problems. This hypothesis should be tested.

#### **Concluding Statement**

Team members in all schools within this project opened the windows of school renewal. The faculty and staff members of each participating school became instrumental in creating their school's gestalt. Prigogine (1980) contended

that the behavior of a small group of people can completely change the behavior of the group as a whole. Open systems are continually recreating their own environments and are described by Prigogine as a type of "flowing wholeness." In each school within this study, the people became a part of a total school process. The result was a transformation of the whole.

At Alpha, Administrator A used IE to rebuild the school setting with teamwork, trust, and inviting teacher practices. The process of self-concept development was already an important focus at Beta; however, IE provided a common language (blue and orange cards) and a structure (Five P's) to funnel this focus. The faculty and staff at both Gamma and Delta developed a transforming environment replete with increased interdependence and camaraderie. At Epsilon, programs like ISS (In-School Suspension) were modified to provide a more therapeutic environment. This was done so at-risk students could get on target academically and achieve in school. Each CT molded IE to facilitate and enhance their school's environmental needs. The process was one that reflected people working together to create a dynamic environment. Goodlad (1984) indicated that effective school reform comes when individuals within the system seek to deal with their own problems and set their own reform goals. At this point, schools become self-renewing. IE provided a flexible container that was filled

with the individualized reform efforts reflective of each school's culture.

The collaboration between faculty, administrators and community increased in all five schools. A tighter network of interdependence was evident. Purkey (1991) maintained that "Education is a cooperative, collaborative activity where process is as important as product" (p. 2). Because each school's faculty became a part of the inviting process, ownership was shared. Rules and procedures were initiated by CTs, administration and faculty members worked together using a participatory approach. The top-down bureaucratic method of leadership was "played down" by all five principals. Leadership was shared. Teachers were not "under the gun" to accept the Invitational philosophy, they were exposed to its components, then formulated their own preferred practices.

IE became a vehicle for school restructuring. First, it provided a system of beliefs concerning the nature of humanity: Students and teachers are able, valuable, and responsible and have relatively unlimited potential. Second, IE provided a viable philosophy and a theory of practice. School philosophies typically address the social, academic, and psychological development of the student. Too many times, however, students, teachers, and staff are rarely aware of their educational philosophy, and how it can breathe relevance into instructional programs. An

educational philosophy is expected to be the foundation upon which all programs are based. Few, however, find their way out of the dusty, abandoned pages of accreditation reports into the pulse of the school. Philosophies are ways to invite the realization of one's full potential to create a fully integrated human being, but many fall short. School philosophies fall short because school personnel either do not know their philosophy, believe in it, or know how to apply it.

At Alpha, faculty and staff lacked a sense of mission. The result was a vandalized building and a dysfunctional school spirit. Administrator A introduced IE to generate renewal and provide a philosophy which faculty could experience and create from within themselves. Administrator A contended, "We need a common goal and a mission. It's going to take being a team member. You cannot go around tearing down people or we're never going to get there." Unfortunately, schools void of a living philosophy reflect an erosion of trust and a lack of direction. Administrator A stated that IE provided a means for restructuring the climate at Alpha and a language for transformation.

The deep structure of each school was shifted through the Invitational model. IE appeared to have impacted on the basic assumptions and philosophies that school faculties regarded as important to the schooling process. Although all five schools exhibited deep structural change, very

little was done to perpetuate the translation of theory into practice. The programs that were developed from each schools' involvement with IE were ongoing. CTs took the theories of IE to their faculties and initiated the use of its tenets. The theory of IE, when stimulated and organized by CTs, blossomed into many ongoing strategies, programs and processes. For effective, continued reform, schools need a driving force. In this study, CTs played this role. To maintain the transference of IE from theory into practice, some efforts of control must be made. Whether this control is generated from a team of teachers, or an administrator, the brain of the operation powers the programs and processes that create reform. Fortification of this seat of control (through the continuance of CTs or other such agents) promotes the critical re-exposure to the theories of IE that germinate into practices. The evolution of deep structural change can thus be insured.

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**The International Alliance for Invitational Education  
c/o School of Education  
University of North Carolina at Greensboro, NC 27412**



April 27, 1990

Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation  
Project Team Members

Dear Connections Project Team Members,

This letter is to introduce Ms. Debbie Chance who is conducting research on our Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation Project as part of her doctoral dissertation at UNCG.

We urge you to take a few minutes and complete Ms. Chance's survey, which is enclosed. The information you provide will be combined with other data to determine the success of our Z. Smith Reynolds demonstration/research project. Many thanks for your help in completing this important survey. A self-addressed, stamped envelope is also enclosed so that you can return the survey promptly.

Immediate business aside, we are delighted to report that our conference evaluations were uniformly positive. Professionals from many states and Canada were unanimous in their approval and appreciation for your fine work at our March 30, 1990 Conference.

Again, please complete and return the survey in the enclosed envelope as quickly as possible.

Very best wishes,

*Paula Helen Stanley*  
Paula Helen Stanley  
Associate Director  
Z. Smith Reynolds  
Connection Project

*William W. Purkey*  
William Watson Purkey  
Director  
Z. Smith Reynolds  
Connections Project

cc: Ms. Debbie Chance  
East Davidson High School  
501 Lake Road, Thomasville, N.C.  
27360

"Home Of The  
Golden Eagles"



Member, Southern  
Assn. Of Secondary  
Schools & Colleges.

EAST DAVIDSON HIGH SCHOOL  
501 LAKE ROAD  
THOMASVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA 27360

April 30th, 1990

Dear Fellow Team Members:

I was really impressed with your successes with Invitational Education shared at the March conference - so impressed that I've decided to write my dissertation on many aspects of the "Connecting with the Disconnected Student" project. I would certainly appreciate your input on the questions that follow. Of course, you may choose not to become involved with this dissertation project, but if you do, all data collected will be confidential - no names will appear in my study.

My study will focus on the policies and practices which each individual team (including my own East Davidson team) has devised to meet the needs of at risk students. I also want to assess the team approach and gain some knowledge of how the school climate has changed since Invitational Education has been initiated in each school. Please be as thorough as possible in answering these questions. Hopefully, what I learn from the results of the analysis of this data will provide a springboard for other school's successes in inviting at risk students.

Many, many thanks for your cooperation!!

Sincerely,

EAST DAVIDSON HIGH SCHOOL

*Debbie Chance*

Debbie Chance  
Assistant Principal

/bgw

ENCLOSURE (S)



SCHOOL NAME \_\_\_\_\_

1. What practices and procedures did you and your team do to develop the needs of students at risk in your school?
2. What barriers and/or obstacles did you and your team confront in the process of inviting school success with at risk students?
3. How often did your team meet?
4. a) Please reflect upon your experiences during team meetings and describe the strengths.  
  
b) Please reflect upon your experiences during team meetings and describe the weaknesses of the team approach.

5. Please describe how your team has worked as a cooperative unit.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. How could your team have worked better?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. a) Who was your team leader?  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
b) What are some of the characteristics of your team leader?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. a) How successful was your program?  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
b) What contributed to the success you had?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. What weaknesses did you observe during the process of inviting school success with at risk students?

10. In what ways if any has the "spirit" of your school changed during the past year?
11. How has your school changed since you initiated the invitational approach?
12. How have the 5 p's changed in your school since you initiated the invitational approach?
- a) places
  - b) policies
  - c) programs
  - d) processes
  - e) people

Many thanks for your participation!

Sincerely,

*Debbie Chance*

Debbie Chance

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Dr. David Strahan  
School of Education  
UNC-Greensboro  
Greensboro, NC 27412

October 23, 1989

Dear Eddie, Sandi, Judy, John, and David,

This form is to wish you the very best of success in your visit to your two schools. It is also a way to keep each other informed of your successes.

Would you please duplicate the following form, complete the form for each of your two trips, and independently mail copies of the form to your four colleagues for each of your two trips. Of course, send a copy to us as well. Many thanks.

1. Consultant's name \_\_\_\_\_ Date of report 12/18/89
2. Name of School Visited \_\_\_\_\_ Date of visit \_\_\_\_\_
3. Partner consultant's name \_\_\_\_\_

see  
attached

4. Briefly describe the school you visited Brick building on top of a hill. The school is too small for the number of students, but there is an addition in the process of being built. The school has only 7th and 8th graders. They would like to add the 6th, but local politics is getting in the way. The grades are basically on separate floors -- the classrooms surround an open commons area. The rooms have part of their wall out of glass and look out on commons area. All rooms have nice windows and view.
5. How prepared was your school for your visit? \_\_\_\_\_

Very. The principal was outside as children arrived. He greeted us and took us inside and introduced us as we encountered people. It was low key, but arrangements had been made for all the members of the team to come and talk with us. This was valuable in giving us a sense of what had been going on since the Oct. meeting (attached

6. Had the school personnel seen the videotape of WWP? If so, How helpful was it?

Part 1

---

see  
attached

7. How were you received by the school personnel? Faculty seemed genuinely pleased to see us. We had the run of the school and went in and out of classrooms. When and I wanted students to talk with we were told to just help ourselves. The principal introduced us to the janitoress. The principal gave us a tour of
  8. How would you describe the general atmosphere of the school? (morale? relationships? climate?) It seems good, but its difficult to know whether the "best face" was put on for us. In any case, the school was a more positive environment than I had expected given the responses of the team at the October meeting.
-

Report to colleagues, page 2

9. Was there an after-school meeting? If so, please describe: Yes. This meeting is described on the attached sheet.

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10. Please describe what contacts you had with students, parents, other teachers, and staff:

~~We talked to all members of the team and any other teachers we encountered in the lounge or other places around the school. We had a meeting with the principal in his office. We had two meetings with small groups of students. The first group seemed to students having more difficulty with the school. The 2nd group discussion was to enable us to get some balance.~~

11. How successful (or unsuccessful) do you feel you were in meeting the goals of our project?

~~The school seems to be doing well. As I said, they were further along than I had expected. I think the feedback and I gave them at the after school meeting was helpful. They took it that way. They are excited about putting together a display for the March meeting and were eager to come in the night before and meet with us and the members of the other schools.~~

---

12. Did you encounter any surprises during your visit? If so, Please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

~~All the faculty were dressed in blue and the homerooms had each been working on coming up with blue cards. Each group had a different saying and students and teachers were wearing them pinned to their clothes.~~

13. What things worked well during your visit? Having a chance to talk with each of the members of the team; also the principal. The meetings with the small groups of students were also very helpful in gaining insight into the school.

---

14. What things could have worked better? A detailed summary of the report we made to the faculty is attached.

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15. What advice (Dutch Uncle) advice could you offer your fellow consultants? \_\_\_\_\_

~~Be sure to meet with your team members. Visit classrooms and TALK to students in small private groups.~~

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16. What suggestions do you have for our March 30, 1990 Conference, when we report out on our successes and failures? (How exactly can we best involve our 25 participants? How should the program be arranged, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

~~and I asked the schools to develop a display of some sort that described them and their project. We also asked them to come in the night before. The visual display should help sell the project. Helping the schools focus on what aspect of the school environment they are working on might also help since they can't do everything at once, there has been some selection going on.~~

Please place any additional comments on back. Many thanks.

WWP & PHS

## MIDDLE SCHOOL VISIT/

1.            was a pleasant surprise. I'm not sure what I had been expecting, but            has a lovely physical setting on top of a hill (mountain by Florida standards). The physical plant of the school is red brick, modern, and with lots of glass. Every room has a super view.            and I were greeted with the Purkey wave and lots of friendly smiles and happy greetings. There was coffee and muffins in the lounge and lots of movement. The reception area in the school is very open and there were lots of student art work there as elsewhere in the school.
2. All of the faculty were dressed in blue. Students had been talking about blue cards in their classes and had made blue tags with different sayings e.g., A Cool Middle School and A Place Where Everyone Knows Your Name.
3. The I Team were prepared for our visit and we spent a good bit of time talking to all of them. We got a good bit of information on what they had been doing before the project began and since. The school has a history of being very supportive of teachers developing ideas they want to try, and letting them do so. They see this project as just a continuation of the kind of emphasis they have been placing on education and relationships for some time. Faculty report that they are very close both professionally and personally.
4. The school only has 7th and 8th graders. They would like to have 6th graders moved into the school when the new additions are completed, but don't see this happening for some time. There are political reasons.
5. While the physical plant is lovely it is obviously too small. There are two big additions well along toward completion -- one additional wing of classrooms and the other a large cafeteria. Right now cafeteria food is brought up from the high school and is served at the end of one of two rooms in which students can eat. This causes several problems. One is that the food isn't very good. It isn't just that it isn't hot, it's cold. The other is that these two rooms are used for other things and yet the carpeted floors are difficult to keep clean, especially after nearly 300 middle school students have eaten in them. Lack of space also means students sent to in school suspension are sent down to the high school, which is just down the hill a little way (in fact the two schools are currently sharing a parking lot until the construction is completed). The students we talked to said all they did in ISS was write (copy) paragraphs. They saw the one advantage as being able to eat in the high school cafeteria.
6. Each of the two grades are located on a different floor. The classrooms open off a large open area where students can socialize between classes. The rooms themselves all have part of their interior walls of glass that look out on the commons. These areas are bright and have lots of student work in them. All of the rooms had XMas trees that the students were decorating -- the PTO auctions them off as a money making project.

7. Students perceive some tension among the more affluent students (skaters) and the rednecks. The lower ability students wanted to talk about this much more than did the more successful students we talked to. Some of the teachers feel this is a reflection of divisions at the high school and isn't "real" at the middle school (Note the middle school students ride the bus with the high school students.) Nevertheless, students believe it is real. The curriculum at the school is heterogeneous except for math.

8. The school has an impressive set of ways to identify students who are already in trouble or who might be heading that way. The variety of support services they offer are impressive, especially given the size of the school.

9. Faculty are divided into grade level teams. The teams meet once a week after school. Faculty have individual planning periods every day.

10. The faculty had seen the tapes, but said that they felt "new" in terms of dealing with the concepts of IE, but were excited about doing so. They have decided to focus their efforts this year on a renewed and revised A/A program. This commitment means that they are totally revising the class schedule beginning December 11. The faculty have been attending workshops of middle school concept and to build group cohesion. The group that came to Greensboro has met a few times since they have returned. We didn't see, however, how they were using the planning guide they were given.

11. While we didn't get a chance to talk to any parents, they report that over 70% of their parents showed up for parent conference day. On the other hand, they also said their PTO isn't as active as they would want.

12. At the end of the school day there was a faculty meeting in the media center. They had made a tape of all the songs they could think of with the word "blue" in them and had them playing as we all entered. The table of food had a blue table cloth, blue punch, blue dip, pretzels dipped in a blue candy coating, blueberry cheese cakes, blue grapes, etc. This made a real visual impact, especially with all the faculty dressed in blue. After everyone arrived they changed the music to something more upbeat and the coach led the faculty in about 15 minutes worth of exercise -- they say they always begin faculty meetings this way. and I did out type presentation of what we had seen based around the 5 P's. We started off talking about IE as the XMas tree on which you hang other ornaments (doing this in the Christmas tree on which you hang other ornaments (doing this in the Christmas tree capitol really made an impact)). Below is a brief summary of our report.

People -

\*The faculty is close and supportive of each other and the students.

\*There is some concern about students sending each other orange cards - the perception of there being two groups of students, the skaters and the rednecks. Also some perception that the 8th graders pick on those in the 7th.

Programs -

\*Lots of exciting programs at the school: Advisee, the Outcast Crew, Peer Helpers, Guidance classroom activities, exploratories/activities, Chapter 1, ISS

\*the PTO isn't as active as the schools wants, or probably needs, it to be.

Policies -

\*Only math is homogeneously grouped

\*there is some concern over policies around changing classes

\*the separation of 7th and 8th graders by floors means that there is little opportunity for them to interact with each other

\*students have some concern over the discipline policy. They talk about corporeal punishment even though school records indicate this is very rare - but this perception needs to be dealt with

\*faculty complain about the use of bells to change classes and would like to see these removed.

Processes -

\*There is lots of evidence of positive reinforcement for appropriate group behavior

\*team meetings even though these have to be held after school

\*The middle school retreat

\*cooperative learning

\*some teaming mixing 7th and 8th grade classes

\*supportive of faculty ideas and suggestions

Places -

\*common areas/ openness

\*the school is light

\*student work displayed everywhere

\*care has been taken in decorating the school building

\*faculty and students are proud of their school



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Students might be involved in a self study of their school, perhaps as part of an A/A activity. The 5 P's could be used to organize this activity.
2. Staff development in learning styles and how this affects curriculum and instruction will be needed.
3. They need a more flexible schedule with academic blocks of time and team planning time.
4. Some of the policies need to be studied to determine if they are the ones the school really wants. For instance, students complain that the 3 minutes between classes isn't enough to include bathroom breaks; why do some students perceive that there are high levels of corporeal punishment at the school; there is a need for a more therapeutic ISS; more opportunities for 7th and 8th graders to interact.
5. 8th graders need to stop teasing 7th graders to the extent that they now are.
6. The school needs more hands on materials and activities for instruction.

\*\*\*\*\*

I should say that both at                      and                      and I made a big point of all the things we had liked about the school and all the positive things we had seen going on. I realize that in writing down the above recommendations it comes across sounding like we were criticizing them -- it didn't sound like this when we delivered the message. This is an internal document. In fact, we were both very inviting. But we did want to give each of the schools accurate feedback.