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Junior high to middle school transition: A portrait of one setting's metamorphosis

Schnuit, Lisa Louise Zimmerman, Ed.D.

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1990

JUNIOR HIGH TO MIDDLE SCHOOL TRANSITION:

A PORTRAIT OF ONE SETTING'S

METAMORPHOSIS

by

Lisa Zimmerman Schnuit

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

Greensboro
1990

Approved by

_____
Dissertation Advisor

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Dissertation Advisor _____

Committee Members _____

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Date of Acceptance by Committee

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Date of Final Oral Examination

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SCHNUIT, LISA. Ed.D. Junior High to Middle School
Transition: A Portrait of One Setting's Metamorphosis.
(1990) Directed by Dr. Dale L. Brubaker. 117 pp.

Extensive research has supported advantages of the
unique components of the increasingly popular middle school
concept. As a result, more and more middle schools have
been created to provide a transitional link between
elementary and high schools. This study addresses the
problem surrounding the theory to practice gap facing former
junior high school faculties asked to implement these middle
school concepts in the classroom.

The significance of this study is that it examines the
opposing pressures of change and conservation during the
early stages of metamorphosis (stages described by the
Sarason framework) as the Charles Erwin School setting
transforms from junior high to middle school. The focus of
the study centers on the curriculum workers, mainly the
teachers at the setting.

Using a narrative style validated by Lightfoot and
others, a descriptive analysis is fashioned to represent the
transition of this setting as the aesthetic portrait of a
holistic process. This is alternative to a statistical
analysis of component parts. Conclusions of the study are
as follows: 1) The Sarason framework remains useful in the
1990s to inform educational settings undergoing major
change. 2) The balance between the forces of change and

conservation often dictate the actual degree of change.

3) When faced initially with change, school faculties tend
to form factions with widely divergent views. These views
converge as time passes. 4) The link between activities
undergone during the critical early stages of change and
later success/failure of the setting is dramatic. For
example, a written constitution will help guide a new
setting around potential problems if drafted at the earliest
stage possible. 5) Vicariously experiencing the successes
and failures of one situationally complex educational
setting should guide settings undergoing similar changes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Thousands of junior high school faculties across the United States have found themselves called upon to make the transition to the middle school concept during the past few decades. The trend toward this concept is based on research studies (e.g., Howard, 1970; Eichhorn, 1977; Brooks and Alexander, 1979) that have indicated the superiority of this organizational structure for students in the 10 to 14 year age bracket. In line with the trend and its accompanying research data, the staff at Charles C. Erwin Jr. High School (C.C.E.) located in Rowan County, North Carolina, have begun the transition process to the middle school concept on the verge of the 1990s, almost 30 years since the first middle schools became established.

While similar with regard to the age students they serve, junior highs and middle schools have several striking differences. Junior high schools were created after the first world war to alleviate an administrative problem (Romano, 1973) stemming from over-crowding in the unified schools (those containing grades one through twelve). Middle schools, on the other hand, developed primarily because researchers and practitioners recognized a need to educate middle level students in a special way, rather than

the way of their high school counterparts. While

departmentalized curriculum organizations were considered

the most expedient and logical way to run the junior high

school, in the middle school departments were disassembled

in favor of smaller interdisciplinary teams of teachers to

meet the needs of a common family of students. Junior high

school students normally could anticipate the help of a

guidance counselor based on a 1 to 400 ratio. Advocates of

the middle school felt that while this afforded almost no

consistent contact between student and counselor, a teacher-

based guidance set-up with a ratio of 1 to 15 or 20 would do

a much better job. Hence, the teacher-based guidance or

advisor-advisee program became a stable component of the

middle school. These are just a few of the ways that the

junior high and middle school concepts differ. Intramural

as opposed to interscholastic sports, and exploratory rather

than elective courses are two other differences discussed in

the second chapter.

Statement of the Problem

The process of transition that personnel in a junior

high undergo when they become the staff of a middle school

is the problem of this study based on the experience of

transition at C.C.E. Junior High. While many studies have

highlighted aspects of the middle school program itself,

this study is primarily concerned with that critical time

period when personnel are asked to take theory and put it into practice.

To date, the prevailing method of evoking change or introducing innovation in education has been to "push" theory into practice. One strategy to accomplish this has been to utilize the educational bureaucracy found in most public schools as the vehicle through which to remove out of favor methodological designs or programs and replace them with favored alternatives This method pulls out the old and replaces it with the new.

The challenge of the persons in any setting faced with change is to avoid the convenient "push in, pull out" methods used to install each new bandwagon fad. For junior high schools considering the middle school concept, the opportunity to develop new ways of thinking about change, innovation, conservation, leadership and group decision making is the challenge of the day.

Not surprisingly, negative curricular side-effects accompany a change method which bypasses the curriculum worker at the decision making stage. Social psychologist Seymour Sarason (1971) examines this problem from the standpoint of the creation of many settings. Dale Brubaker (1979) looks at it from the perspective of types of change and human reaction.

Sarason provides a framework upon which to analyze the creation of a new setting. Through his extensive

examination of many new institutional settings he has
developed a description of the stages common to all. In The
Creation of Settings and the Future Societies (1972) he
offers these stages in terms of what often happens as
opposed to what could and should happen as a setting is
created. The stages, which he has called Before the
Beginning, The Leader and the Beginning Context, Formation
of the Core Group, Myth of Unlimited Resources, Resources
and Values, and Symptoms of Decline are described in chapter
two of this study.

The faculty of C.C.E. Jr. High School is presently in
the position to utilize the work of Sarason, Brubaker and
others as it goes through the initial transition period
during which it will create out of the prior school
situation a new setting based on the middle school concept.
As a junior high school the setting is chronologically
mature, but it has the necessary elements to create a new
chronologically immature middle school setting. The
facility itself for example, although designed to house a
junior high departmentalized classroom configuration, is
adaptable to facilitate the interdisciplinary team
organization called for by the middle school concept.
Curriculum area certifications of staff adequately meet the
requirements of middle school teaching with little to no
extra certification work required. These are just a few
examples of the components already in place before the

transition begins. Elements of this setting make it unique
from all other settings, yet very much like any other school
setting in the nation where a similar change might occur.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to use the Sarason
framework to examine the early stages of the transition
process of junior high to middle school as it specifically
affects C.C.E. Jr. High. Of most interest will be the
effect on curriculum workers, primarily the teachers, with
whom rest the charge of putting theory into practice. Other
key groups to be included in the study are administrators,
support staff members, students and their parents.
Ancillary components of the transition also mentioned in the
study will be community members not directly related to the
school and the school facility itself.

The point of this endeavor is to examine the process of
change during the critical first stages of the creation of a
new setting using the structure of the Sarason framework.
For C.C.E. Jr. High this includes the "Before the Beginning"
stage which commenced during the early spring of 1989 when
school personnel were asked to consider the middle school
concept, "The Leader and Beginning Context" stage which
occurred later that spring, "Formation of the Core Group"
which began in the late spring and progressed through the
late summer, "The Myth of Unlimited Resources" which

appeared in the late summer and early fall, and the stage
called "Resources and Values" which seemed to be
recognizable throughout the transition process that C.C.E.
experienced from the early spring to late fall of 1989.

The advantage of focusing this study on the early
stages of the creation of a setting is the critical nature
of this period to the eventual success or decline of the
setting. Throughout Sarason's book the elements referred to
as critical to the success of a new setting are those which
should have been present from the outset.

The purpose of the study then is to investigate the
transition process at C.C.E. Jr. High School (Spring 1989 –
Fall 1989) using the Sarason framework. Examination of this
process will include focus on the important concepts of
change and conservation, and the evolution of theory into
practice.

Definition of Terms

The collection of terms used throughout this study are
defined within this specific context to avoid their
interpretation as so much educational jargon. The danger of
assumption and the use of language as propaganda is known.
Huebner (1964) for example, admonishes the writer not to
underestimate words which can take on a power of their own
to shift the entire meaning of any written work. Blindly
assuming the meaning of words is a trap which can defeat the

intention of the writer and confuse the experience of the reader.

Language is powerful and complex for what it includes as well as for what it excludes. For example, the word curriculum might suggest formal schooling gained from texts, workbooks and curriculum guides. Therefore using such a definition implies that learning that takes place as a result of watching the personal integrity modeled by a teacher would not be considered curriculum.

To say that there is only one right kind of definition is too simple. In response to this problem Israel Scheffler (1960) created a framework to help make sense out of definitions. He proposed three different types of definitions. According to Scheffler, descriptive definitions explain meanings of words by making reference to prior usage as in a tree is a tree. On the other hand, stipulative definitions are designed to facilitate discussion by clarifying for the sake of better communication. An example might begin, "When I say education, I mean schooling...." Prescriptive or programmatic definitions are non-negotiable and morally derived as in the view of leadership described by a specific corporate body. Key terms used in this study will be defined stipulatively in order to clarify and facilitate better communication.

Several terms throughout this discourse pertain to the middle school concept. Middle school itself is defined by Alexander (1981) as containing between three and five grades, two of which are always grades six and seven. Transescents are the students who inhabit middle schools, usually between the ages of 10 and 14. They are taught language arts, science, math and social studies, which are called the core subjects. The interdisciplinary team, as it is usually called, consists of one teacher for each of the core subjects who works in conjunction with the other core subject teachers to meet the needs of a specific group of students. Other subjects taken by transescents under the umbrella of cultural or vocational arts are known as the exploratory subjects.

In broad terms, curriculum is defined in two different ways. The term curriculum, based on the definition by Ralph Tyler (1949, p.1) is "an instructional program as a functioning instrument of education." In this same context is the definition offered by Brubaker (1989, p.107) as "transmission of knowledge ... with learners the recipients of knowledge from external authorities who author textbooks, curriculum guides, workbooks and the like."

This definition of curriculum is balanced by the definition of CURRICULUM. CURRICULUM is also defined by Brubaker (1989, p.107), as "...what each person experiences as settings are cooperatively created." By implication,

this definition encompasses not only the elements of curriculum as defined above, but also those unintended learning experiences presented by events and emotions which also comprise the essence of learning.

The blending of these two notions of curriculum and CURRICULUM will comprise the usage of the term in this study. Curriculum, then, is the set of planned activities and formalized texts, other teaching aids and strategies used by educators to present a body of content material from core or exploratory courses. This idea also includes the hidden curriculum which consists of the learning that is imparted during unplanned events, activities or displays of emotion as people form and reform a setting.

First and second order change are terms defined by Watzlawick (cited in Brubaker, 1979, and Cuban, 1988) and used in this study according to those definitions. First order change describes the technical approach to change. Brubaker (p.5) says that because change can "...produce in one a sense of guilt for displacing and destroying the old..." first order change is seductive. This type of change is imposed on rather than emanating from those involved, allowing blame to be placed outside those asked to implement the change if it is later deemed a failure.

Second order change originates from the implementors. This type of change is more on the order of a revolution and is seen more rarely than first order change because it

derives its origin from the praxis between old and new, thus
carrying responsibilities not found with first order change.

Praxis is the term used to describe the process of
"reflective action" which Brubaker (1976) examined in his
study of creative leadership. Praxis denotes a cycle which
begins with theorizing. It then evolves to action, then to
reflection and modification, and finally to new action.

In this study, praxis will refer to an educational
cycle of action. The cycle begins with educational theory
and continues as that theory is put into practice. As a
result of reflection during and after practice, the theory
may be modified and put into practice anew. An example of
educational praxis is the cycle of action and modification
that occur on a year to year basis. The first year educator
may apply theory in the classroom as a set of practices
which she will modify by the second year of teaching based
on her evaluation of the success the first time around.
Likewise, the teachers involved for the first time in
the middle school concept may define and redefine their
roles continually as theory is first put into action.

A final term crucial to this study is actually the
expression creation of settings. Sarason (1972) has defined
it in a way that is applicable to this study.

> I have labeled this set of problems the creation
> of settings that provisionally may be defined as
> any instance in which two or more people come
> together in a new relationship over a sustained

period of time in order to achieve certain goals.
p.1

Sarason describes many different settings that he has
researched and from which this definition stems. He clearly
points out that the definition has application for a variety
of brand new settings as well as new settings which are
created from old (p.30). This study concentrates on the use
of the definition in an educational setting application from
the latter circumstance, a new setting which arises from the
old.

To summarize, three strands of definitions comprise the
basic assumptions underlying this study. Middle school and
related terminology identify a unique educational concept
based upon theory arising out of a recognized need to
provide a specialized kind of education for transescents.
One of the primary elements of this theory is that
curriculum for students of this age must purposely nurture
as well as educate. Curriculum experiences include
intentional interweaving of the text-based formal core and
exploratory courses with the hidden curriculum transmitted
through modeling, interrelating, and reflecting. First
order change, second order change and praxis are terms which
describe motivators of change and one process of change.
The last term, in particular, refers to the dialectic
between action and reflection. Finally, the creation of a
setting describes the experience that two or more people

have when they interrelate in order to form a new organization.

Significance of the Study

Because first-order change is the prevalent method of effecting change in the educational arena, it becomes important to examine this method critically. The apparent advantage to using this method is expediency. Decisions made at bureaucratic levels are filtered downward to field workers. Time does not become lost through an open decision-making process. Preset methodology, teaching techniques and accompanying materials suggest uniformity leading to predictable outcomes. From the standpoint of the worker, regardless of the individual style of application, ideas resulting from the first order change process become a packaged product complete with absolution for the user if the product should fail.

The same elements listed above as advantages of the first order change process are also the disadvantages of the process. Because educators are bombarded with products of the first order change process they predictably react by taking shelter from the plethora of brightly colored, commercially appealing educational packages. When the classroom door closes with all of the pretty packages inside, the apothegm from Alphonse Karr "The more

things change the more they remain the same" becomes the
prevailing rule.

The question then becomes one of the reality of the
change process in schools today. When a shift as dramatic
as the one exchanging the long-standing junior high school
institution for the newer middle school concept is advocated
nationally, how does that change become realized at the
grassroots level? Does it actually become implemented or
are new middle schools actually junior high schools with a
few topical rearrangements? What factors during the
transition process from junior high to middle school
contribute to or detract from a successful change?

One important area of significance for this study is
that it will not attempt to answer these questions in a
quantifiable fashion. It purposely avoids this type of
analysis based on the conviction that the change process in
a setting is more than the sum of its separate elements.

This study will answer five questions.

1.   To what degree do the stages of
      Sarason's creation of settings corre-
      late with the transition of C.C.E. Jr.
      High to C.C.E. Middle School?

2.   What is the relationship of conserva-
      tion and change to the creation of a
      new setting from an old one?

3.   How does the transition process become

realized at the grass roots level?

4. Do the early stages of the transition
    process result in topical rearrange-
    ments or the initial implementation of
    actual change?

5. Can one setting project implications
    for other settings undergoing or about
    to undergo the same process of change
    from junior high to middle school?

By presenting a narrative account of the theory to
practice transition in a unique setting, the experience of
that setting will communicate not only elements of the
process, but the nature of the process. The researcher
hopes that through the portraiture approach to examining
this process, its intricate and political nature will become
evident to the reader. James Macdonald (1977, p.15)
comments on how inextricably this is tied to the change
process.

> Any person concerned with curriculum must realize
> that he/she is engaged in political activity.
> Curriculum talk and work are, in microcosm, a
> legislative function.

Any junior high school faculty anticipating the change to
middle school must be aware of the political realities
inherent in that change. Using the illuminating framework
by Sarason, the successes and failures of C.C.E. Jr. High as

it makes the transition, and the communication vehicle of portraiture pioneered by Lightfoot, the researcher hopes that this study will not only prove to be a good introspective analysis, but a useful resource to others.

Methodology

Using one educational research methodology, this study of transition could be managed by detailed analyses of selected components. Validation of the individual factors promoting or inhibiting the process could be sought through statistical analysis. A researcher using such a study could quite possibly examine the training process used to acquaint teachers with new teaching techniques; analyze test score and attitudinal changes in students; offer time-line studies to determine efficiency improvements; and categorize improvement in both attendance and drop-out rates. Tylerian proponents (Tyler, 1942; Metfessel & Michael, 1967; Hammond, 1973; Yates, Chandler, & Westwood, 1987: Gage & Needels, 1989) would advocate an examination of objective data to measure the accomplishment of teaching objectives considered to correlate with achievement of middle school goals.

For this particular study the researcher proposes, however, to view the transition process revealingly from another perspective. Using the axiom that the whole is greater than the sum of its individual parts, this researcher will examine the transition process through a

holistic lens. Through a description that will interweave
ideas, activities, resources, values, and attitudes, the
researcher will use a pictorially fluid narrative to
chronolog the creation of a new educational setting to be
called C.C.E. Middle School by the 1990-91 school year.
Descriptions of the transition process in this study will
come from the point of view of the researcher herself as she
examines and analyzes the process during her experience on
the job as curriculum director of the new setting.

The style of research employed will be naturalistic
inquiry with analysis and presentation through portraiture
based on the study of Sara Lawrence Lightfoot (The Good High
School, 1983). To maintain the integrity of a naturalistic
approach to research, data will be triangulated using a
multimethod design including extensive field observation
data, interviews, and unobtrusive measures. Chapter 3
contains discussion of the complete methodology to be
employed together with a critique of the quantitative and
qualitative research models.

Organization of the Rest of the Study

The essays in the review of literature in chapter two
will describe the middle school model, the concepts of
change and conservation, and the Sarason framework with
regard to the creation of a setting. The research model
developed in chapter three will provide the rationale for

the analytical strategies used to examine the process involved in the creation of the new setting of C.C.E. Middle School. Chapter four will include a reconceptualization of theory into practice as the principles of research methodology and the Sarason framework are applied to illuminate the process in this setting. The final chapter will synthesize the experience at C.C.E. Jr. High in order to better understand the complexities inherent in the transition to a new conceptual setting. Implications for further study and research into the creation of new educational settings, and steps to reconcile the gap between theory and practice may help educators in similar circumstances.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

"The Simile of the Cave," from Plato's Republic,
describes the life mission of mankind. His analogy begins
with man chained among the dim shadows within the bowels of
the earth. The only light sifts from an opening in the cave
far above that leads to the sunshine. Once loosed from his
chains, it becomes man's mission to follow that light up and
out of the cave. After gaining the light man must learn the
truth it provides. The final phase of the mission of man is
to once again descend into the shadows in order to share the
truth from above with those yet consigned to the twilight.

The meaning of Plato's simile might be likened to the
passage from Corinthians which speaks of man seeing through
a glass darkly, but then face to face. Humankind strives
during a lifetime to discover truth. When truth is found
there is no release from the quest, because the greater
challenge becomes the communication of that truth with
others.

This chapter seeks to unravel and communicate the truth
about a number of topics pertaining to the transition of an
educational setting through the light of literature related
to this study. The discussion of one junior high changing to
a middle school will describe the mission of one unique

entity, yet will provide truths which may give illumination to other such entities across the United States.

The first essay of this chapter provides a comprehensive description of that special educational setting called the middle school. The history of its origin is discussed in terms of when, why and how. This essay also includes some characteristics of the exemplary middle school.

The middle section of the chapter will deal with the change process itself. The relative importance of innovation, change and conservation, as well as definitions of these important terms will be provided. First and second order change strategies will be examined as they relate to the educational change process. The psychology of human change will be an added dimension.

This chapter will conclude with a discussion of the creation of settings. The framework described by Sarason (1972) will be used to illustrate this process. Goffman's (1959) insightful truths about the presentation of self will add another perspective of illumination to the basic Sarason framework.

The Middle School

History

Alexander (1981, p.12), defines the middle school as being a school having not more than five grades and not less

than three and including grades six and seven. Junior high

schools, by contrast, are defined as schools containing

grades seven, eight and nine. Middle school students,

usually found between the ages of 10 and 14 are referred to

in the middle school literature as transescents. The

subjects taught to transescents as well as other students,

referred to as the core subjects, are language arts, math,

social studies, and science. These subjects are examples of

the term curriculum which is that part of the middle school

defined by Brubaker (1989, p.107) as "Transmission of

knowledge...with learners the recipients of knowledge from

external authorities who author textbooks, curriculum

guides, workbooks and the like." This curriculum

represents a significant, yet not total picture of the goals

behind the middle school endeavor. The greater goal is

encompassed in the term CURRICULUM. Again from Brubaker,

"CURRICULUM may be defined as what each person experiences

as settings are cooperatively created." p.107 Through the

use of interdisciplinary team families, advisor-advisee

time, intramurals and other aspects of the middle school

concept, the overall CURRICULUM becomes the culture of a

setting which is geared to the needs of transescents.

It is not possible to establish a clear picture of the

middle school educational organization without going back to

the introduction of its predecessor, the junior high school.

According to Romano (1973, p.16-18), it was unfortunate that

the junior high school was established in response to a post-World War I baby boom that precipitated the need to alleviate over-crowding. Romano goes on to say that "the original goals of the junior high school were overlooked in the urgency of alleviating administrative problems." Especially lacking among those goals were provisions for a program designed to meet the unique needs of transescents.

During two early periods, prototype middle schools emerged in Illinois and Pennsylvania. As early as the 1940's Skokie Junior High School in Winnetka, Illinois, utilized many of the characteristics of the middle school without calling itself such.

In the late 1950's the Pennsylvania State Department of Instruction gave the Upper St. Clair School District permission to develop a grade 6 through 8 organization. As a result, the Fort Couch Middle School program went into operation beginning with the 1962-1963 school year. These two programs were the little-known forerunners of the middle school movement which took off to a documented start in the middle 1960's.

In a dramatic response to the perceived failings of the junior high school organizational pattern, middle schools began to spring up across the United States beginning in the 1960's. National surveys conducted by Brooks and Alexander, (1979, p.3) show great contrast in the number of middle schools from 1967 when there were 1,101 to 1977 when there

were 4,060. To supplement this objective information on the

growth in middle school numbers are other factors supporting

the popularity of the movement during the same time period.

Among these are the establishment of the National Middle

School Association (NMSA) and its many state associations

(one of which is the North Carolina League of Middle Level

Schools), the extensive efforts to improve middle level

teacher education programs, the emergence of scores of

middle level publications, and the coordination of a variety

of conferences and seminars on educating the middle.

It would be a misrepresentation to say that middle

schools, unlike junior high schools, proliferated solely due

to dissatisfaction with the program available at the time

for 10 to 14 year olds. Again, according to the survey by

Brooks and Alexander (1979, p.15), of all reasons given for

creating middle schools in 1967, the greatest percentage of

respondents (58.2%) identified "To eliminate crowded

conditions in other schools," as the deciding factor. To be

sure, the percentage that same year identifying "To provide

a program specifically designed for children in this age

group," was a close second at 44.6%. Interestingly,

responses to those same reasons were reversed in the 1977

survey. The later survey revealed that 47.7% attributed

middle school formation to overcrowding, while 68.3%

attributed it to the program needs for this age group.

This shift seemed to indicate a growing belief in the

advantages of the middle school program for transescents as a goal worthy of pursuit itself, rather than as a byproduct of some other goal. It also represented a change from emphasis o.n curriculum, to emphasis on CURRICULUM.

Characteristics

In the long run, the questions behind the "why" and "when" of middle school creation take a back seat to the more important question of "how." No matter what its origin, the important consideration is that a school calling itself a middle school should strive to incorporate the characteristics of middle school set forth in the literature.

One of the basic technical kinds of characteristics of the middle school is that it contains a very specific range of grade configurations. As stated above, it always contains grades 6 and 7 with a possibility of up to three other grades. The most common configuration, according to Donald Eichhorn (1977), includes grades 6 through 8. Many middle school experts say this configuration is most desirable because it causes the ninth grade to be identified as part of the high school. A.W. Howard (1970) describes the sentiment:

> It does make a difference which grades are
> included when evidence indicates that grade nine
> is more compatible with grade ten than with grade
> eight...
> (p. 461).

The 6 through 8 grade configuration found in many middle
schools facilitates the creation of programs specifically
designed for that "in-betweenager" who is not yet accruing
credits for high school graduation.

Other characteristics of the middle school have been
described in a variety of sources including publications of
middle school and curriculum organizations as well as by
eminent researchers in the field of middle level education.
A position statement from the NMSA (1977) justifies the
variation in definitions of middle school characteristics:

> We recognized the absence of any universal
> definition of the middle school and of middle
> school goals, and indeed would tend to reject any
> set of standards which prescribed specific goals.
> At the same time we felt that the NMSA should
> stand for certain priority goals, and hoped this
> would influence members to incorporate these goals
> into their own school statements. p.16

The goals supported by the NMSA are:

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

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

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

4.   Every student should acquire a functional body of

      fundamental knowledge.

5.   Every student should have opportunities to explore and

      develop interests in aesthetic, leisure, career, and

      other aspects of life.

These general goals are taken from the "Report of the NMSA

Committee on Future Goals and Directions," presented in the

Middle School Journal (November 1977). They do not mandate

any particular delivery model, but they adamantly champion

what are perceived to be the unique needs of the

transescent.

      As a point of comparison with the middle school goals

offered by NMSA, another set was established by the

Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)

in the mid-1970's. This association (Gatewood and Dilg,

1975) declared that the middle school should have the

following ten characteristics:

1.   A unique program adapted to the needs of the pre- and

      early adolescent learner.

2.   The widest possible range of intellectual, social and

      physical experiences.

3.   Opportunities for exploration and development of

      fundamental skills needed by all while making

      allowances for individual learning patterns. It

      should maintain an atmosphere of basic respect for

      individual differences.

4. A climate that enables students to develop abilities,
    find facts, weigh evidence, draw conclusions,
    determine values, and that keeps their minds open
    to the new facts.

5. Staff members who recognize and understand the
    student's needs, interests, backgrounds,
    motivations, goals, as well as stresses, strains,
    frustrations, and fears.

6. A smooth educational transition between the elementary
    school and the high school while allowing for the
    physical and emotional changes taking place due to
    transescence.

7. An environment where the child, not the program, is
    most important and where the opportunity to
    succeed is ensured for all students.

8. Guidance in the development of mental processes and
    attitudes needed for constructive citizenship and the
    development of lifelong competencies and appreciations
    needed for effective use of leisure.

9. Competent instructional personnel who will strive to
    understand the students whom they serve and develop
    professional competencies which are both unique and
    applicable to the transescent student.

10. Facilities and time which allow students and teachers
    an opportunity to achieve the goals of the
    program to their fullest capabilities.

Examination of the ASCD and NMSA goals shows that the two
are close approximations of one another. Both sets of goals
stress the themes of personal relationships between teacher
and student, plenty of opportunity for students to
experience success, many different kinds of experiences for
students with the accent on lifelong learning, and a
generally positive climate of education.

Characteristics that are put into practice vary from
middle school to middle school depending on facility
constraints, personnel limitations or other factors. In his
Developing Middle Schools: A Guidebook (1972) J. Bondi
says,

> There is no blueprint for a successful middle
> school. Each school must consider the
> characteristics of its students and develop an
> instructional program that will take into
> consideration the unique needs of those students
> it serves. p. 18

While as Bondi says, there is no set profile, a few
characteristics can be seen in most current middle schools
which include interdisciplinary teaming, advisor-advisee
programs, exploratory classes and intramural sports.

Interdisciplinary teaming is the cornerstone of the
middle school organizational structure. Alexander and
George, (1981, p.113) call it the distinguishing feature.

> In the presence of stable interdisciplinary team
> organization, other components of the program
> function much more smoothly. In its absence they
> operate with considerably more difficulty, if they
> exist at all.

This distinctive form of faculty organization provides a

compromise between the self-contained classroom of

elementary school and the departmental structure of the high

school.

Like many characteristics of the middle school, there

are several different ways to provide the interdisciplinary

team organization. Some schools operate with two teacher

teams. These teachers would share the same 50-75 students.

Often with this type of structure, one teacher would be

responsible for two of the core subjects such as language

arts and social studies, while the other would handle the

math and science. Three teacher teams are also found in

middle schools. With this configuration, each teacher is

responsible for teaching one of the core subjects

exclusively, while all three teachers share the teaching of

the fourth core subject. Four teacher teams are often

associated with the upper middle school grades, 7 and 8. In

this type organization each teacher is responsible for one

of the four core subjects. Interdisciplinary teams can

range, in fact, to six teachers who share the same 150-175

students. This team would provide one teacher for each of

the core subjects, a teacher for an extra period of reading
instruction, and a physical education teacher.

No matter what the size of the interdisciplinary team,
there are some essential ingredients that must be present
for the team to be truly representative of the middle school
concept. In one of the first books ever devoted solely to
the topic of teaming Shaplin (1964, p. 15) defined team
teaching.

> ...a type of instructional organization, involving
> teaching personnel and the students assigned to
> them, in which two or more teachers are given
> responsibility, working together, for all or a
> significant part of the instruction of the same
> group of students.

This was one of the original definitions of team teaching.
A more current definition of the middle school concept of
interdisciplinary team organization (Alexander & George,
1981), uses this original as a foundation from which to
build.

> ...a way of organizing the faculty so that a group
> of teachers share: (1) the responsibility for
> planning, teaching, and evaluating curriculum and
> instruction in more than one academic area; (2)
> the same group of students; (3) the same schedule;
> and (4) the same area of the building. p.115

Interdisciplinary teams of middle schools today either
incorporate all four of these factors or are in the process
of working toward their incorporation.

If these factors are not present it is often due to
structural or scheduling constraints. Middle school
literature highly recommends that the classrooms of teachers
on the same team should be clustered in a common location
within the school building. Sometimes this factor is not
present within a middle school because of the facility
itself. Many current middle schools are housed in buildings
which used to be, and were originally intended to be, junior
high or high schools. This most often means that the
buildings were constructed so that classrooms would be
arranged departmentally. Departmental configuration has
often caused a seemingly illogical distribution of
classrooms; for example, three classrooms together on one
end of the hall, two at the other end, four in the center.
Special problems created by the inheritance of such
buildings provide the opportunity for great creativity on
the part of the building principal. Often this leads to
middle schools with teams of various sizes, and sometimes it
leads to teams which are located in classrooms which are a
little less clustered that the literature would recommend.

Ideally all teachers on the team should have at least
one common planning period per day, referred to in the
definition above as the same schedule. During this planning
time teachers are able to share responsibility for planning
and evaluating the curriculum. In addition, the needs of
shared students are addressed and plans are often made

toward modification of the teaching/learning environment if the need for such accommodation is evident. This valuable team time may not be possible in some schools due to scheduling difficulties. Dramatic differences in student numbers per grade can sometimes cause such difficulties. In such cases, it may become necessary to overlap the duties of various teachers by having them serve on two or more teams during the school day. Often the result of this particular problem is the absence of the overlap teacher in one team or the other's planning periods. Schools with this problem commonly find ways to compensate, such as the team designation of one or more afternoons or mornings per week as short team meeting times which enable the overlap teacher to touch base with each team.

Beyond the technical considerations necessary for successful interdisciplinary teaming are the interpersonal considerations also necessary for success. An article in Middle School Journal by Nancy Doda (1977) attempts to answer the question "What really makes a team work?" by describing four central ingredients:

> (1) total team spirit, fostered by regular spirit-building activities like projects, field trips, honor rolls and special gatherings; (2) constant and effective team communication and conferences between and among teachers, students, parents and administrators; (3) a team approach to discipline; and (4) when possible, a measure of totally teamed instruction. p. 8-9

Most teams which exhibit these characteristics can not help

but move forward. Most teams which exhibit these have given

extra time and effort in the process.

In addition to interdisciplinary teaming, the advisor-

advisee component is a key to the successful middle school.

A very descriptive definition of this component is provided

by William Alexander (1981).

> The fundamental purpose of the advisor-advisee
> program, regardless of its design in any
> particular school, is to promote involvement
> between a teacher and the students involved in the
> advisory group. Every student needs to have a
> relationship with at least one adult in the school
> which is characterized by warmth, concern,
> openness and understanding. Such a program
> focuses on what has been called the "fourth R,"
> relationships: interpersonal relationships which
> produce growth for both people involved. p. 90

As students reach the middle level ages, they begin to be

able to analyze their emotions in a semisophisticated

fashion. Having an adult "friend" who is not a peer

provides the student with a built-in forum to explore

feelings and emotions. An ultimate goal of the advisor-

advisee group is that the students should feel part of a

group experience that is familiar, safe, and supportive.

In addition to the emotional support, a significant

source of co-curricular kinds of learning experiences can

also be found occurring within the advisor-advisee group.

As the group functions to make decisions on special events,

daily agendas, and student council representatives among

other things, the members concurrently are experiencing
lessons on democratic decision making, problem solving and
cooperation.

By contrast with the guidance program in the junior
high school, the advisor-advisee program (or teacher based
guidance as it is also called), provides the opportunity for
far more consistency in the adult-student relationship. The
typical guidance counselor in the junior high school is
responsible for the advising of approximately 400 students.
The teacher advisor is responsible for approximately 20.
Through no fault of their own, the guidance counselor in the
junior high setting is completely overwhelmed. In the
middle school concept, that same guidance counselor is
empowered to help more students by acting as consultant and
coordinator to the advisor-advisee program. Teachers can
refer special cases to the guidance counselor, or simply get
advise from that person.

In a society characterized by Vance Packard (1974,
cited in Alexander, 1981) as "a nation of strangers,"
students need a sense of community now more than ever. The
smallness of the advisory group provides the family
atmosphere absent for so long from junior high schools.

The exploratory curriculum is another essential
component of the middle school. This component is
considered the legacy of the junior high where a variety of
elective courses are offered. Most common among these

courses are art, music, home economics, industrial arts, and typing.

Because the transescent is at the stage in life where many interests and abilities are discovered for the first time, exploratory courses are designed to provide the setting and equipment necessary for this opportunity. Courses taken as part of the exploratory curriculum are usually characterized as short in duration, and introductory in nature. Alexander and George (1981) express their conviction about the need for such course offerings at the middle level.

> An adequate curriculum for the middle school must offer many opportunities for individual choice and many opportunities to meet individual needs, each opportunity providing so far as possible for sequential experiences that ensure continuous progress. These many and varied opportunities must be as wide in their range as schooling can provide. p.56

The intent of these opportunities is that students may discover particular interests or talents which they will wish to pursue through more intensive courses available in later years of education.

The last characteristic of the middle school to be addressed in this chapter is perhaps also the most controversial - intramural as opposed to interscholastic sports. These two concepts of sport vary widely. Intramural sports are sport competitions held within the

middle school organized in a variety of ways, i.e. team vs team, grade vs grade, and so on. With intramural sports, all students participate. Close supervision is provided as with any physical activity, but with intramural sports the supervision, interest and support is often shared by physical education teachers and academic team teachers.

Inter-scholastic sports, on the other hand, are competitive contact athletics. Athletic events feature competition between schools, are the exclusive domain of physical education staff or coaches, and are open for participation only to those students considered good enough for the team. Middle level schools featuring interscholastic sports are still modeling themselves after the high school level rather than concentrating on being a unique institution focused on the needs of transescents.

Parent and community pressure often increase the difficulty of middle level schools making the break from interscholastic sports. Romano and Timmers (1978) are emphatic with the issue of resisting this pressure.

> Middle school people who really are concerned for
> what is best for their students increasingly are
> looking for a quiet burial for interscholastic
> athletic programs with their overcompetitiveness
> and overorganization of these youngsters. They
> are trying in their middle schools to offer a
> program of intramural sports and strong physical
> education programs for both boys and girls, with
> teachers who understand and are dedicated to the
> best interests of these transescents. p.16

All students at the middle level need to have experience
with sports. The experience must be in line with the
developmental status of this age group in order to avoid the
possible physical damage of inappropriate activities. At
the same time, it must provide the potential to yield
feelings of satisfaction for students who might never make a
varsity sports team.

Although these characteristics of interdisciplinary
teaming, advisor-advisee programs, exploratory curriculum
and intramural sports are the hallmarks of the middle level,
they still represent what ought to be rather than what
universally is. Many schools calling themselves middle
schools have not yet been able to put all of these
components into full operation. Among several impediments
discussed previously are problems with facilities,
scheduling and parent pressure.

The view provided in the literature of inter-
disciplinary teaming, advisor-advisee programs, the
exploratory curriculum, and intramural sport illuminates the
concept called middle school. If these concepts from the
literature can be likened to the light of truth above the
cave described by Plato, then the challenge of the middle
school advocate is to communicate the truth to those in the
shadows resistant to change.

Change and Conservation

The terms innovation and change are juxtaposed by Seymour Sarason (1971):

> Innovation involves new regularities that co-exist with the old; change involves some altering of existing regularities. p. 109

Sarason goes on to explain that regularities can be behavioral or programmatic. Behavioral regularities in the educational setting might be the number of questions normally asked by a teacher to students within a day, or the number of questions students would be expected to ask in a day. Programmatic regularities would be the expectation that during every school day from a child's first school year to her last, she would be expected in some way to work with numbers.

If these then are examples of regularities, they can be extended to describe innovation as opposed to change. Since innovation involves new regularities that co-exist with old, a good example might be the introduction of calculators as a math tool used in addition to traditional pencil and paper calculation. With regard to change, where existing regularities are actually altered, a good example would be the computerized attendance record keeping that has completely replaced the old register method in many school systems.

Another set of important terms are first order change
and second order change discussed in "Two Views of
Educational Change Strategies" by Dale Brubaker (1979).
First order change is used to describe the technical
approach to change. An example would be the principal and
teacher who go to a regional conference to learn about the
new performance based instruction. After training with the
experts on the concept, the two return to become school-
based experts who teach the concept to all faculty members.
Brubaker explains that this technical approach is seductive
to some because, "to change things is to create something
new which can produce in one a sense of guilt for displacing
or destroying the old..." (p. 5.) However, to soothe this
guilt, the possibility always remains that the new technique
itself can be blamed if conflict arises. In addition, first
order change strategies shield teachers from the need to
initiate their own praxis between the old and the new.

Second order change is more in line with the concept of
total revolution with its grass roots origin. It is this
type of change strategy which takes place only as
educational practitioners develop their own praxis between
old and new. Brubaker sums this up.

>   In fact, an implosion is considered desirable:
>   the strategist is expected to create the
>   conditions in which the person can set aside
>   present ways of viewing
>   things and involve himself/herself in
>   reconceptualizing

goals and processes and their relationship to each other.   p.7

Such change emanates from within and is often wholesale.

Brubaker gives an analogy to illustrate first and second

order change. He describes an old building already deemed

unsatisfactory as is. The first order change strategist

would advocate minor to extensive remodeling. The second

order change strategist would recommend complete demolition

and the erection of a new structure.

   Of reforms experienced in education over the years,

most can be described as first order as opposed to second

order and innovation rather than change. This phenomenon is

not surprising since by the definition given, change would

require teachers to give up traditional regularities by

replacing them with new ones. Sarason (1971), describes

educator resistance to change:

      ... the elitist traditions of the university in
      blatant and subtle ways inculcate attitudes and
      conceptions in educators that render them
      vulnerable to disillusionment and resistant to
      change. p. 46

Resistance to change has often factored decisively into the

innovation - implementation gap. Examining the history of

education reforms, Ralph Tyler (1987) says:

      Clearly, teachers are the most significant factor
      in implementing a school reform. Unless the
      teachers have participated in identifying the
      problems or inadequacies of the school and in

        developing workable and promising solutions, they
        may not believe that a given problem exists or
        that a proposed solution will be an improvement
        over current practices. Furthermore, if a
        proposed reform requires new ways of working with
        students and parents, teachers must be given
        opportunities to learn the new procedures. p. 280

Lack of teacher involvement as the impetus for change, or

even in the planning stages of an imposed change, has often

sealed the fate of the change effort (Eubanks & Parish,

1987, p.614). While in-service training may be held to "re-

educate" teachers in the desired area, results of that

training ultimately rest at the classroom door.

    Sarason asserts that most pressure for educational

reform emanates from outside the elementary or secondary

educational circles. This first order change is often, in

fact, a product of the university system which traditionally

views the educational practitioner as inferior in status and

accomplishment. Sarason says that this view is not a matter

of personality or morality, but rather an extension of the

dynamics of the setting which have the intended effect of

socializing members to regard themselves and others in

specified ways. He sites as the antecedent of this

perception the fact that educational practitioners had long

been educated in "normal schools" and have only lately come

under the umbrella of the university system (p.46). While

the university system has been the source of many

educational innovations, other pressure sources external to

the public schools have exerted their influence. Many

historical examples exist of the imposition of first order

change on American public schools from non-university

sources. Diane Ravitch (1974, p.97) tells about the "Great

School Wars" beginning in the middle of the last century

between the Catholic Church and the public schools of New

York City. These resulted in certain accommodations of

educational practice to satisfy the religious interest

group. A more recent example is the advent of Sputnik in

1954 which became the catalyst for innovations in science,

modern languages and mathematics. The intensity of the

years in education to follow that event were coined by John

Goodlad (1975, p.45) as "the school decade" to describe

Sputnik's effect on education. Robert Slavin (1989, p. 758)

says

> ...if education is ever to make serious
> generational progress, educators must somehow stop
> the pendulum by focusing their efforts to improve
> education on programs that are effective, rather
> than on those that are merely new and sound good.

He comments further that they only way to stem this tide is

to demand quality program evaluation results before buying.

Second-order change, unlike first-order, is rare

because it faces too many obstacles. Even if the grass-

roots educators desire to direct a substantial change, the

system is against them. Looking at school reform over the

decades, Larry Cuban (1988), says,

> For those who seek fundamental, second-order
> changes that will sweep away current structures
> and start anew, as was done in the mid- 19th
> century, basic social and political changes would
> need to occur outside of schools." p. 344

This does not mean that second-order change cannot occur. It means that such reforms are tough to adopt and hard to implement. According to Cuban, one example of an implemented second-order change in education was the development of separate technical and industrial schools.

> The "vocationalizing" of schooling -that is, the
> broadening of the mission of public schools to
> include the goal of preparing students for the
> workplace -- was a second-order change in American
> schooling. p. 571

A key ingredient to the success of this reform was the support that it received from outside the arena of education. Corporate leaders played central roles in this turn-of-the-century innovation.

Innovation and change are two methods used to keep schooling from remaining the same year after year, yet an opposing pressure seeks to resist change. Ultra-conservation pressure has come about as a backlash to the doomed attempts at innovation in the 50s and 60s. Frustration with the imposition of new math, open schools, social promotion and other changes that were viewed as failures has resulted in the "back to basics" and minimum competencies movements of the early 70s. Jean Grambs (1981)

describes the entrance of this counter-movement in
education.

> And it was the vociferous criticism by the public
> which shamed the schools into a closer look at
> student performance, resulting in the "back to
> basics" movement. p.654

When the failure of innovations became glaringly obvious to
the public, the cry went out to reintroduce stability into
the public school system. The back-to-basics movement
demanded the elimination of innovation for the sake of
innovation, and advocated instead, a re-examination of
individual student progress. The result of this movement
was that minimum competency and end of course testing were
introduced in public education.

The back-to-basics movement, while being one example of
the larger concept of conservation, should not be confused
with conservation itself. The larger concept is associated
not only with resistance to change, but with healthy
decisions to keep that which is beneficial and currently
successful. C.H. Edson (1978) says,

> In other words curriculum needs a socially
> conserving component as well as an individually
> liberating component. p. 68

From the conservationists' standpoint, the school should be
the setting which provides stability and comfort to those
faced with a life of uncertainty. Many educators fall into

this category which is why, again, there exists the innovation - implementation gap. Many teachers, behind closed classroom doors validate Alphonse Karr's famous axiom (quoted by Cowen, 1976, p.245): "The more things change, the more they remain the same."

The Sarason Framework

Seymour Sarason (1972, p. x) became dissatisfied with existing studies of settings because "...too many people spent too much time trying to understand chronologically mature settings and were overlooking how they came into existence." As a result of this dissatisfaction, Sarason and a group of fellow academicians from the Yale Psycho-Educational Clinic (which Sarason founded) spent 8 years studying the creation of settings. The culmination of the work was the book entitled The Creation of Settings and the Future Societies (1972).

Inside Sarason's book is a framework of stages experienced during a setting's creation. These stages illuminate the elements of setting creation that are not often considered by those participating in the establishment of the new setting. Stages within the Sarason framework include:

1.   Before the beginning

2.   The leader and the beginning context

3.   Formation of the core group

4.   The myth of unlimited resources

5.   Resources and values

6.   Symptoms of decline

Sarason explains the pitfalls associated with each stage.

> This book is about a set of related problems
> which, despite their frequency and importance, has
> remained relatively unrecognized and undiscussed
> to a surprising, if not amazing, degree. p.1

For those setting about the task of establishing a

completely new setting or for those restructuring a new

setting from an old, the Sarason book should be required

reading. What this author has to offer was summed up by

Emory L. Cowen (1976) in his introduction of Sarason at the

1975 Division 27 Awards for Distinguished Contributions to

Community Psychology and Community Mental Health.

> A related, finely honed skill is Seymour's ability
> to formulate and apply cogent, enriching concepts
> - for example, his notions of system regularities,
> the universe of alternatives, and networks and
> collectivities. Such creative conceptualizations
> have powerful orienting value. p.245

As this introduction from Cowen implies, Sarason not only

talks of specific settings such as mental health

institutions and schools, his concepts are much broader.

They are really about community action, community

involvement, prevention, adaptation, history, and

alternatives. Within these broad concepts his paradigms

describe the creation of new settings.

Sarason sets forth the proposition that anyone who wants to create a successful setting must have an appreciation and respect for the history of the new setting. This stage he has called "Before the Beginning."

He uses the Constitutional Convention of 1787 to illustrate this stage. He describes the participants who were so closely linked with history in relation to the events and periods in which the forces of freedom and tyranny conflicted. He points out that these creators of a new setting used the lessons of history so that the dilemmas, mistakes, and solutions could be used productively.

His description of present day setting creators is much less favorable. He puts the situation this way,

> My observation is that, in fact, there is always a more or less dim awareness that there is a relevant history of past endeavors but this is largely ignored or, more correctly, it has no conceptual significance. p. 35

He explains why he has observed this in terms of those he sees in the role of setting creator.

> I mention this only in regard to the argument that those who create settings are usually "action people" in whom the historical stance is weak or nonexistent. p.37

With regard to the theory-practice dichotomy, these people

would be far more interested in the practice of the activity

itself than in the theory behind that practice. Hence

theory, or history as it were, would seem to provide no.

benefit to the creation of the new setting. A quote from

Sarason illustrates this phenomenon using the experience of

the Cuban revolution.

> The heart can make up for a lot of inadequacies
> but an empty head is not one of them. Creating a
> setting is as much an affair of the head as it is
> the heart, the lesson which Castro so eloquently
> discussed in relating the failures of the cuban
> revolution. p. 67

Sarason emphasizes that the Before-the-beginning stage

consists of four important elements or axioms. First, the

creator of the new setting should take into consideration

the fact that the new setting always arises in some relation

to existing settings. Second, that the characteristics of

the new setting and the concerns of the current setting will

ensure some conflict and competition. Third, that within

the new setting is the heritage of traditional conceptions

that contain negative and positive forces. And finally,

confronting its history is not a matter of esthetics but

necessity.

The second stage Sarason discusses is the Leader and

the Beginning Context. He specifically deals with how the

leader is chosen, his time perspective and the consequences of how he defines the beginning point.

A leader is chosen for a new setting in one of two ways, each of which reflect certain assumptions. The often-stated preference is to "promote from within" or "choose from the ranks." The assumption here is that such a move is better for morale. Sarason says of those who make such decisions:

> Although they are also aware that choosing one
> from the ranks will not produce indifference among
> those not chosen, this awareness is usually
> transient and does not give rise to actions which
> directly deal with the opinions and feeling of
> those not chosen. p. 52

In spite of an attempt to keep from lowering morale, a decision to hire from within often has that very effect.

While importing a leader is traditionally viewed as the less desirable of the two options, Sarason says it is actually no better and no worse than promoting from within. In the matter of morale, he says, those adversely affected are those who now find themselves in competition with the outsider for the next level of promotion. He illustrates this point using the university setting.

> But how does one understand the fact that there is
> usually no sensitivity to the fact that those who
> are already at the associate professor level are
> not indifferent to a newcomer who is now in
> competition with them for the highest level of
> appointment? p. 52

From the Sarason perspective, choosing the leader of the new

setting is a no win situation. He summarizes this well.

> The point of all this is that when leaders choose
> leaders, they create a morale problem regardless
> of whether they choose from within or without, and
> to choose as if this were not true is an example·
> of the gulf that can exist between knowledge and
> action.
> p. 52

Choosing a new leader creates a morale problem. Sarason

says that this is a problemmatic situation that must be

accepted and dealt with by helping those adversely affected

confront reality.

Along with the potential pitfalls associated with the

choosing of the new leader are the problems related to the

time perspective of that leader. The usual time perspective

of this "action person" quickly places those in the new

setting on a rigid timetable. The effect of this rigidity

has immediate repercussions.

> ...the existence of a fairly definite timetable can and
> usually does have an enormous influence on the
> beginning context. For one thing, the feeling of
> pressure begins to build... p. 62.

The nature of the new leader is to view the infant setting

in terms of predictable stages that it will undergo. While

stages probably will occur as the setting matures, these are

often not the stages that the new leader would have

expected. Thus the timetable and the component parts of the

timetable are more often upset than realized. This
ultimately causes frustration for the new leader and other
significant participants in the new setting.

The third aspect of the stage describing the leader and
the beginning context is the set of consequences which
accompany the time orientation of the new setting. Because
the beginning context is often thought of in terms of stages
of growth, the hegemonic notion that these stages should
unfold in a predetermined way becomes translated into the
notion that they must unfold in a certain way.

> Still another consequence of thinking in terms of
> stages of growth is that it frequently lulls us
> into accepting the idea of inevitability of
> process or outcome, an unfolding in which the
> shape of the future is already determined. p. 69

Sarason's warning about this assumption is an admonition
about the dangers of hegemonic truth in general.

> It is precisely when we feel that something does
> not require explanation that we are very likely
> confusing what is with what has to be. p. 69

The timetable and predetermined stages in the growth of a
new setting turn out to have serious negative consequences
when approached with rigidity. A projected timetable and
general idea of stages plus built-in flexibility for
evolution is the less common but potentially more successful
stance.

Sarason focuses on the core group as the topic of his
discussion of the next stage. The leader, Sarason says,
thinks in terms of a core group as usually being a handful
of people who will be closest to him interpersonally and
statuswise (p. 73). In spite of this auspicious feeling
about the role of the core group, the leader can again
expect several pitfalls waiting to sabotage this important
element of the new setting.

The first potential problem is a breakdown in
communication.

> ...the most frequent complaint one hears in any
> setting: "There is a communication problem." The
> failure to communicate has diverse interacting
> sources, but in my experience the most important
> is the failure of two people to anticipate and
> discuss how predictable issues affecting them both
> will be handled. p. 75

As a result of this failure, issues are usually resolved in
a heated manner when smoldering conflict is present.

To overcome this pitfall, it is necessary for
understandings to be constructed before problems that could
have been anticipated occur. Borrowing again from the
Convention of 1787, Sarason calls this process, forging a
constitution.

> Anticipating problems and forging a "constitution"
> by which the leader and the core group will be
> governed are intellectually and interpersonally
> difficult and demanding processes. One result of
> the processes may be that some individuals will
> choose not to join the setting, a consequence as

revealing of ideological as of personality
differences. p. 76

As the core group is formed and the constitution forged,

these differences of which Sarason speaks are important to

fathom out and handle.

One last pitfall that Sarason discusses in relation to

the formation of the core group is the particular

significance of order.

> The core group is usually not chosen at one time
> but rather serially. The order in which they are
> chosen is not a trifling matter either to the
> leader or the core group because the order usually
> reflects, or may be perceived as reflecting, a
> scale of importance. p. 78

A leader sensitive to this perceptual phenomenon may be able

to avoid the potential for jealousy and conflict that can be

created among those in the important core group.

The Myth of Unlimited Resources is the next stage that

Sarason describes. In his discussion of this stage he makes

four succinct and important observations.

> My aims ...were to suggest (a) that for the most
> important problems of society for the solution of
> which new settings are being created at an ever-
> accelerating rate, there is a serious limitation
> of human resources; (b) that the seriousness of
> the limitation is in part a function of how the
> problem is defined; (c) that confronting the
> limitation of resources involves one in the
> problem of priorities and distribution, that is
> the values by which they will be established; and
> (d) that in the context of creating a new setting
> the limitation of resources tends not only to be

denied but to be replaced by the myth of unlimited
or adequate resources. p. 109

In capsule form, Sarason is saying that new settings are
often set up for failure from the start because unbounded
enthusiasm and optimism often obscure reality. Manpower and
fiscal shortages are waiting to sabotage those action people
creating the setting who believe the old adage "Where
there's a will there's a way." Only through the
anticipation of these shortages and the establishment of
priority distribution of human and material resources can a
way be found to save the new setting from the myth of
unlimited resources.

Sarason focuses in the next stage on "Resources and
Values." Particularly in the area of human resources, he
points out the problem of misplaced emphasis on
professionalism. He reminds us of the traditional stance
that only professional people can be trusted to perform
certain duties. As a consequence, too few qualifying people
can usually be found to successfully staff the new setting.
If they can be found, they often become frustrated with the
loads that they carry. To explain a viable alternative, he
cites the newer trend toward greater use of
paraprofessionals and heightened interchangeability of roles
within a setting.

To add to the problem of the assumptions that
professional people must carry the greatest load, are the

assumptions that these people agree on the same values and goals. Even if there were agreement, which Sarason says only happens rarely, there is the additional pitfall of the assumption that sufficient resources are available to insure that each of these people will be able to realize their values and goals.

> What I have just summarized has less to do with the fact and problem of growth (and even size) than it does with the lack of a set of conceptions which would mirror the realities and complexities of the creation of a setting, and not, as is presently the case, the wish-fulfilling propensities of the human mind. p. 142

Resources in the new setting then, are either insufficient or misused due to false assumptions. Values are misjudged to be consistent, and often improperly handled when emerging as variant.

With all the pitfalls described in previous stages, it seems inevitable that the final stage described by Sarason is called Symptoms of Decline. In this stage he recaps the important stumbling blocks for new settings that he has described in previous stages.

He points the finger definitively at the danger of assumptions.

> ...an initial assumption which was too quickly accepted, rarely examined, and effectively blocked a realistic view of the future and how to think about it in the present. That assumption was that in fact the leader and the core group were in complete agreement about values, goals, and

resources; power and conflict were never issues in
the beginning. p. 147

Again he returns to the Convention of 1787 to illustrate the

long lasting effect that a constitution has which is mapped

out among people who are anticipators and problem solvers.

Without that constitutional beginning, the setting is bound

for decline.

> The important fact is that [without a
> constitution] the setting is created as if it will
> function the way planned and there is no
> discussion of, or vehicles developed for, how to
> think about, become sensitive to, and be prepared
> for the necessity to change. p. 152

He finishes the discussion of this stage by admonishing

those who would create a new setting to keep in mind the

following:

> There are two issues; to create a setting which
> allows people to experience growth,
> differentiation, and diversity; and to
> consistently maintain this value over time. p.
> 156

The creation of a new setting is often accompanied by

fanfare and the soaring hopes that the perceived problems

leading to its existence will finally be solved. This is

precisely why Sarason's words should be used to temper

optimism with reality, thereby increasing the likelihood

that the new setting will actually achieve the success

already taken for granted.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The dynamic of attitudinal change in people is both
intriguing and elusive. How can change be captured in time
for study? What exactly constitutes change? How can it be
detected in its subtlest forms? How is it manifested in
different people? When does it contribute to or detract
from a larger purpose? These questions and more are a part
of the life of a school faculty which is making the change
from a junior high school to a middle school.

In order to explain how this study will be
accomplished, a few words about the research methodology and
the model upon which it stands are in order. An important
objective of this methodology discussion is to provide a
rationale for the use of a qualitative research model (the
applications of ethnographic techniques and portraiture) as
the framework by which the change process will be portrayed.

Reality, commonly thought of as apart from human
experience, is actually created, reaffirmed or replaced
through the interactions of those who make up a social
setting (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Portraying the current
or changing reality of a setting requires description as
vivid as words can paint. The qualitative research
framework champions the use of such descriptions to

communicate reality. Five traits of qualitative methodology
(Bogdan and Biklen, 1982) include:

> ...the natural setting as the source of data.

> ...the research technique of description.

> ...the emphasis on process rather than outcome.

> ...the use of grounded theory for data analysis.

> ...the essential concern for "meaning".

This methodological approach is tailored to the conveyance
of understanding about life through the strength of
storytelling.

Valerie Suransky (1983) describes her rationale for
using qualitative methodology in her study of preschoolers
in this way:

> If the reality of everyday life is to be
> understood, account must first be taken of the
> experiential world its actors inhabit... One must
> ground interpretations in the thick descriptions
> of daily rituals and patterns of existence...
> (p.138)

The reality of life for the preschoolers in Suransky's study
was developed by the members of the day care setting. In
like manner, the reality of the schooling experience is
unique to each subset of stakeholders in the school and is
created by their interaction. The experience of change is
unique to those undergoing it. What constitutes a painful
or pleasant change experience can only be defined by those
who share the experience. The communication of that

experience is best served qualitatively, or as the word implies, with quality of context.

While the qualitative research model embraces the use of thick descriptions, it often rejects the two-dimensional products of nomothetic science. A qualitative methodological framework assumes that the human element, which is reflected in the complexities of everyday reality and the different perspectives of those engaged in education, is missing from most parochial, objectivist, mechanistic conceptions and methods of research (Worthen and Sanders, 1987; Gage, 1989). Stanley and Campbell (1963) note that defections from experimentation to essay writing have frequently occurred in persons well trained in the experimental tradition. The rate and degree of progress which result from experiment have been grandiosely overoptimistic and nonexperimental wisdom has been unjustifiably depreciated (Stanley and Campbell, 1963).

Application of only a quantitative methodology for this study of the change process would not be appropriate. Conducting surveys, such as attitude surveys, which would be reduced to numeric values through statistical analysis would be time-consuming to construct and difficult to validate. Sending out surveys and doing structured interviews could yield information on transition activities, as in what will be done and when. However these quantitative "in-basket" activities would not reveal the nature of the change

process. Human conduct, being in the realm of action and
end ... is most directly discussible in dramatistic terms
(Burke, 1954). Therefore, the positivist approach to
research would be inadequate to capture the drama of human
lives as the change process unfolds. Harris, et al. (1963)
sum up the objective vs subjective dilemma this way:

> A choice must be made between objective measures
> of change that are meaningless within the province
> of differential psychology and meaningful measures
> that carry the stigma of subjectivity. Though it
> is a dilemma, there can be little question as to
> which is the preferable choice. p. 20

The qualitative model of research houses many
methodological perspectives. The study of change at C.C.E.
Jr. High employed the perspective of naturalistic inquiry.
Also used were elements of an anthropological description of
culture, known as ethnography. Ethnography is not merely an
objective description of people and their behavior from the
observer's viewpoint. It is a systematic attempt to
discover the knowledge a group of people have learned and
are using to organize their behavior (Spradley, 1972, p.9).

Although ethnography remains a viable research method
for the school setting, caution in its use is warranted to
maintain the integrity of the model. Polonsky (1986),
offers criteria for quality ethnographic research which
include:

1.   Extensive Field Observations.

It is necessary to spend a great deal of time in

the field under a wide range of circumstances.

2.   Hypotheses and Questions to Explore

Should be Developed in the Field.

It is generally agreed that hypotheses developed

before entering the field tempt the researcher to

expose himself or herself to the data

nonrandomly... [this element is used in part only

since the Sarason framework was used to pre-

develop some hypotheses about the stages of the

setting].

3.   Data Gathering Should Not Be Limited to

Observation.

Ethnography is typically considered to be a

multimethod research design.

4.   Ethnographers Should Work Toward Achieving Social

Intimacy with Subjects.

Researchers must take part in the social

constructions of reality that guide the subjects'

lives.

5.   Ethnographers Should Try to Leave the Culture

Intact.

The ethnographer does not attempt to change the

behavior of the community under investigation.

6.   Selection of Appropriate Research Roles.

        The researcher must assume a role that allows him

        or her to become a part of the group under

        investigation.

Field research methods of ethnography allow the

researcher to better record the dynamics of the setting in

order to better understand the group processes in which

realities are being constructed, reaffirmed or replaced.

While individuals and groups develop reasonable responses to

the demands of their lives which may not be understood by

outsiders, they become understandable once you [the field

researcher] get close to the situation or become part of it

(Goffman, 1961; Schutz, 1967).   The term "going native" is

used to describe this technique.   To go native in a foreign

culture, the field researcher would become part of that

culture in order to describe the native's perception of

reality.

Whether using qualitative or quantitative research

methodology, the selection of the sample to be studied is

critical to the study.   In common with many ethnographies,

the C.C.E. Jr. High school site was selected largely

because the investigator was already be a co-actor at C.C.E.

and therefore in place to conduct participant observation.

As the school curriculum specialist/assistant principal

at C.C.E. Jr. High for the past three years, this

investigator has the opportunity to take part in the

dynamics of the group process. She has become a familiar enough member of the school team to facilitate a role as a true participant observer in this study.

Because this is not a quantifiable study, the selection of C.C.E. as a site does not imply that it is universally representative of all sites undergoing the transition from junior high to middle school. It is not even representative of all rural junior high schools in North Carolina undergoing such change.

This lack of a randomly chosen universe for study generates questions about the limitations to the outcomes of this research. One question speaks to the lack of applicability of general findings from this site to any other site. Another questions the social reality of the change process among the teachers at C.C.E. Jr. High in terms of ability to inform teachers at other unique settings.

In answer to these questions it must be acknowledged that while C.C.E. Jr. High will not be scientifically chosen because it is representative of all rural junior high schools in North Carolina, it does share some important common elements with them. Some characteristics of the teachers undergoing this transition are common to most teachers in the state. All have received similar training (mandated by the state), all have had similar educational backgrounds, all are in a similar general socioeconomic

category, all work in schools that have a mandated state

minimum of 5.5 hours of instructional time per day, all

experience bouts of frustration, powerlessness and isolation

in their jobs, and for most these feelings are intensified

when undergoing any kind of change (i.e. switching to a new

classroom, teaching a new grade or subject, changing schools

or administrators, etc.).

One other commonality that C.C.E. Jr. High shares with

other schools, despite demographic differences, is that it

is undergoing a transition being shared by thousands of

other schools from coast to coast in the United States. The

decade between 1968 to 1978 saw the actual number of middle

schools grow four-fold in the United States (Center for

Health Statistics, 1981). As C.C.E. Jr. High joins in this

endeavor it shares a kinship with other schools that

surpasses boundaries of space and time.

External validity of this type of study, which does not

attempt to utilize a universally random sample, rests with

the perception of the reader. Given the experiences of the

reader, background information of the setting under study

and the process under investigation it will either

"resonate" as truth or it will not. Intersubjective

validity or being "shocked by recognition" is the kind of

external validity sought by this type of research

methodology (Shapiro, 1988, Lecture, January 23). This type

of validity relies on the need to experience and reflect

upon one's own feelings in order to successfully identify with another's perspective (Lightfoot, 1983, p. 370). The reader will be the judge.

Internal validity will be controlled through triangulation via the use of multiple data collection methods and sources, and through the construct validity of the Sarson model. Teachers from all grade levels and subject areas will be represented. Using naturalistic research design, the reality of a school undergoing transition will be examined in its natural setting. Ethnographic interviews (Spradley, 1979), participant observation (Spradley, 1980; Cicourel et al., 1974), and unobtrusive measures will contribute to a description of the unfolding change process. Open-ended questions, both written and conversational, will center around the process of change from the junior high service delivery model to the middle school concept. Perceptions of teachers, counselors, administrators, and students will be represented in the study with the major emphasis being on teachers and how they are affected and in turn affect the process of change. As data are accumulated and drafts written, they will be regularly returned to those whose words or actions have been interpreted. Using the portraiture style of analysis (Lightfoot, 1983, p.373), validation and correction of any factual errors will be invited.

The structure of the naturalistic data accumulation process will be augmented by the middle school organization itself. Because C.C.E. Jr. High will run as a school-within-a-school (with a middle school style seventh and eighth grade and a traditional high school style ninth grade in the same building) during the 1989-90 school year, characteristics of the middle school concept will be in place to facilitate data collection.

The investigator will access teams of teachers with common planning periods during the school day. The researcher will attend meetings with each of the four teams (two seventh grade and two eighth) at least once a week to listen to their emerging ideas, frustrations and general state of being. This will occur regularly for the first semester of the school year. In addition, meetings will often be taped to extract representative excerpts for inclusion in a portraiture of the change process.

Non-team meeting days will be used by the researcher to interview teachers during their planning periods. During the course of the semester a comprehensive interview will be held with each of the 24 teachers involved. Those not directly involved, including a representative of guidance, a ninth grade teacher, an administrator, a custodian and a secretary will also be interviewed.

Classroom observations will be yet another source of information. Visits to each of the 24 team members'

classrooms will take place at the rate of one to two per week for one or more class periods each. The investigator will also follow the schedule of one student in each team for an entire day to experience the team process much as the student does.

As a final facet, the researcher will gather unobtrusive data. The investigator will be listening to the informal conversations of teachers in the cafeteria or faculty lounge as they relate to middle school concept. She will also collect some of the notes sent to middle school teachers by parents when they pertain to the change process. Copies of letters sent home to students by teams, idea papers circulated by team members, and other middle school hard copy will be collected and integrated into the study.

Derived from the overall model of qualitative research and some aspects of the anthropological process of ethnography, the data from the study of change at this one junior high school will be reported and analyzed using the technique of "portraiture" pioneered by Sarah Lawrence Lightfoot (1983). Portraiture will be used to paint with words one reality of the change process from this insider's perspective. In a sense the outcome will be a tapestry of interrelated stories to capture the nature of a transition that the persons in this school and many more like it are making from theory to practice. Responses to the

portraitures of "good" high schools illustrate the essence
of this type of data presentation:

> Everyone expressed surprise at the vividly
> personal character of the pieces. "I didn't
> expect so many adjectives," said a Milton
> teacher. "You know, usually research does a good
> job of masking reality. There is some comfort in
> that. Your work takes the mask off and that's
> very hard," claimed a Brookline teacher.
> (Lightfoot, 1983, p. 373)

The researcher will protect the anonymity of the
participants in the study by taking several steps to insure
confidentiality. For example, individuals will be noted
through general identifiers: "a seventh grade teacher," "a
guidance counselor," "an eighth grade student." Pseudonyms
will be employed in extended descriptions of single
individuals.

The time span of the change process at this school will
encompass more than a year, yet the time span of focus for
this study will be the critical beginning phases of the
transition. The study will begin with reception of the
formal notice in the spring of 1989 of the impending
transition to middle school status for the 1990-91 school
year. It will continue to progress through the first half
of the 1989-90 school year as final preparations are made
and the change is implemented in the seventh and eighth
grades.

Summary

Critics of this approach discount it as "soft."
Because it relies on human observation and individual
perspective, they have labeled the outcomes of this type of
study as "loose or unsubstantiated." In response, advocates
say that it can readily be used by sensitive individuals to
provide rich and powerful information that subsumes any
quantitative approach. The techniques of observation,
interviewing, ethnographic description and of portraiture
can provide holistic, complex, contextual descriptions of
reality. Somewhere within this approach the truth lies in
the integration of various perspectives rather than with one
"objective" truth. It is this investigator's hope that
North Carolina junior high schools (and indeed any junior
highs) which become middle schools will actually be able to
use this dissertation to survey contextually anchored facts
on which to base, and then assess, tentative
generalizations.

CHAPTER IV

THE TRANSFORMATION OF A SETTING

C.C.E. JUNIOR HIGH TO C.C.E. MIDDLE SCHOOL

In transforming the lump of clay into a piece of art, the potter uses his mind and hands to direct the interactions of clay, water and his wheel. His personal creation takes shape. It carries his individuality. It is an extension of the potter. Of all pots made, the one that he finishes is the only one of its kind. Or is it? Other pots are made in virtually the same way out of the same basic materials. The functions of the finished pots do not vary widely. In fact, they are alike in many ways. And yet there is still that undeniable something that separates one from another. That something comes from the hand of the creator.

In much the same way, the transformation of an educational setting is like the creation of the pot. While the raw materials are much the same as those in any educational setting, the way they interact shapes the unique finished product. The analogy is appropriate, but must be extended. Transforming one education setting into another is more like the effort of a group of potters attempting to produce one community pot. Each potter wants the wheel to turn at a different speed. Each naturally has his own

perception of the raw materials and vision of the finished

product. Yet a finished product emerges. It is unique. It

is an extension of the efforts of the group.

A group of educators like a group of artisans is made

up of individuals who pride themselves on their unique

talents. The creation of a product from such a group is as

dependent upon the group dynamic as it is upon interaction

with raw materials. Keeping the analogy of the artwork in

mind, let us review the application of the Sarason framework

to the creation of a setting. Bear in mind that the product

of the potters is the pot, while the product of the

educators is a transformed educational setting.

Sarason (1972, p. 277) creates parameters which

describe the creation of settings. He asserts that:

> ...a new setting has a pre-history and that many
> different individuals and groups have had a role
> in its birth.
> ...much of its past is in the living present and
> must be dealt with.
> ...resources are always limited and usually
> overestimated because of a sense of mission and
> boundless enthusiasm.
> ...conflict with the setting (and between
> settings) is a fact of social life exacerbated by
> the conflicts between ideas.
> ...verbal agreement about values is no substitute
> for forging a constitution that anticipates and
> helps deal with differences in values, ideas and
> changes.

Using these parameters, consideration of artistic aspects,

and the Sarason framework for the stages of the creation of

a setting, the initial phase of the transformation of one junior high to one middle school will be examined.

Once again it is important to note that the researcher recognizes the special challenge she faced in researching a setting to which she gave curriculum leadership. The researcher as curriculum specialist not only reported the transition process at C.C.E. Jr. High, but was herself a part of that process. From this factor stems the conviction that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, and that the reporting of the intracacies of that whole (even from one point of view) can supply information not available to the outside observer.

Before the Beginning

The pre-history of the former C.C.E. Jr. High setting was known yet largely unevaluated before or during the transition process. Founded in 1967 as a junior high school, it was established to alleviate the overcrowding at smaller union schools which housed students in grades kindergarten through eight. The school took the seventh and eighth grades from the union schools and also took the ninth grades from the crowded high schools. C.C.E. Jr. High was the pride of the community at that time as it is now. Its wide expanses of window, single story profile, total climate control and central courtyard made it the most modern of all the junior highs in the county.

Staff members (with only a few exceptions) had all been part of the former junior high setting and would comprise the new middle school setting as well. Strengths of C.C.E. have traditionally been the competent certified staff, supportive community and modern facility. Weaknesses brought on by overcrowding, high student-teacher ratios and teacher isolation were also elements of the setting's pre-history. These elements were at the surface. Under the surface were issues apparent to many and admitted only by some. Issues of teacher morale, individual autonomy, attitude toward change, and satisfaction with school leadership were elements of the pre-history largely unexplored, yet critical to the success of the early stages of the transition process. It was assumed that the foremost value shared by all teachers in the setting was the primary importance of the student.

For the staff at C.C.E. Junior High, the realization that the school would become a middle school came early in the 1989 year. Just after the selection of a new school superintendent for the system, it was made known that all of the junior highs would become middle schools.

In late January of that year both assistant principals (of curriculum and administration) from C.C.E. went to a middle school institute given by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Each accumulated a plethora of information on middle schools. By the middle of

the next week these assistant principals met with C.C.E.'s

staff members and gave each a copy of written materials from

the institute. Staff members commented at these meetings

that they did not yet know enough about the middle school

concept to ask many questions about what had been discussed.

By early February the curriculum specialists of each of

the junior highs were meeting with central office personnel

about the approaches that would be used to make the

transition. Staff development was the leading topic of

discussion. As yet, other school-based staff were largely

uninvolved.

In mid-February the athletic director, physical

education department chair, principal and curriculum

specialist from C.C.E. went to visit a demonstration middle

school in the eastern part of the state. This experience

was intended to demonstrate the way physical education is

handled at a North Carolina Middle School of Excellence. In

reality, the experience did a better job of showing this

visiting team some things that it would probably like to

avoid. The impact of sheer numbers of students on the

quality of supervision was the major problem observed. Yet,

the experience was worth the time. It was the first time

staff members outside of administration were given the

opportunity to deal with the issue of middle school theory

vs middle school practice.

Another specialized team from C.C.E. made a visit to a middle school in the northern part of the state at the end of February. This time the media specialist, computer coordinator and curriculum specialist visited a middle school with the the primary purpose of viewing a middle school media and computer center. After focusing on these particular areas and getting some information about automating the library, the group had a discussion with the principal of the school. During this discussion many topics, including this group's recent transition from junior high to middle school, scheduling, group dynamics, intramurals and discipline at the middle level surfaced. The net result was that a new group of non-administrative staff at C.C.E. had been given the opportunity to get a first hand look at the dynamics of middle school theory in practice. Again the experience was valuable, but the majority of staff members had as yet not had this type of opportunity.

In late March, curriculum specialists and principals again met with central office personnel. Discussion centered around the course offerings that would be made available to middle school students for the next school year. At the suggestion of the new superintendent, course offerings would be consistent at each of the middle level schools in the system. This would allow a survey-type of registration which would point out the course related

interests of these students and their parents. The courses

listed would include several that were not currently offered

at one or more of the school sites.

One month later, in-service training for central office

staff and school site administrators was held. A professor

from UNCG came and spoke to the group about the physical,

mental, social and emotional characteristics of middle level

students. Two weeks later, in the middle of May, this same

professor came to C.C.E. Junior High and gave the same talk

for staff members. Later that evening he repeated the same

presentation for local parents and interested community

members.

These events mark the formal attempt to move the system

toward middle schools in the "Before the Beginning" stage.

During this same time period other informal events were

occuring as the staff at C.C.E. attempted to acclimate

themselves to the middle school idea.

The faculty lounge was the center of discussion during

planning periods. Teachers seemed to be asking questions

relating to the translation of theory into practice.

Teachers seemed to agree that it would be nice if course

offerings could include French, Spanish, Latin, Theater

Arts, Dance, Jr. ROTC, and other courses which were not

currently being taught but had been included on the

registration forms. They wondered, however, "Where will we

find room to house all these new classes?" and "Who will we

find to teach all of these?" The theory was fine, but the
practice called for space in already overcrowded schools and
the nearly impossible acquisition of teachers for low-
incidence courses. Eyes were rolled and heads were shaken.
The researcher as curriculum specialist was asked to
speculate daily on these and the most fundamental of
questions, "Will we really be a 6-8 school next year?"
"What will happen to the ninth graders and their teachers?"
"How in the world will the high school accommodate grades 9-
12?" Questions during this stage had not evolved to "How do
we?" There was still much unanswered as to "Will we?"

The Leader and the Beginning Context

Formation of the Core Group

Choice of leader and unfolding of the beginning context
for the emerging C.C.E. Middle School occurred both before
and after the "Before the Beginning" stage. Selection of
the formal leader, or principal, had been done several years
before when the school was a junior high. This leader and
the existing administrative team assumed the same role it
had maintained for the past 3 years before the transition.
Selection of informal leaders was done in late May of 1989.

The informal leaders of the new middle school concept
were chosen from among existing faculty members to serve as
team leaders. Teachers completed surveys in early May
indicating other faculty members they would work well with

in a team setting. From those surveys teams were formed.

The existing administrative team then decided on a team

leader for each based on perceived leadership ability. The

decision was not scientific, however it did represent a

consensus of the three administrators. By virtue of their

leadership ability and perceived enthusiasm for the middle

school concept, these team leaders also became the core

group that was called upon most often to assist the formal

leadership team during the earliest stages of the

transition.

One of the first events of the beginning context was

the occasion when team members were "introduced" to one

another during separate thirty minute meetings on the first

workday in June. At each meeting an administrator, usually

the researcher as curriculum specialist, identified the new

team leader. Since the individual selected had no prior

knowledge of this, it was as much a surprise to him or her

as it was to other members of the team. Theoretically the

new team leader had the opportunity at the time to decline

the honor, but none did. Realistically the immediate

setting would not have lent itself well to such a move. But

even in private settings later, no team leader expressed any

reservation about serving.

Sarason mentions the fact that the beginning context of

any new setting is perceived to unfold in certain stages.

At C.C.E. the stages were kept very broad. These stages, although never formally named, could be called:

1.   Awareness

2.   Organization .

3.   Early Application of Teaming and Exploratory

4.   Phase in of Other Elements (i.e. teacher-based guidance, intramurals, interdisciplinary units)

The "awareness" stage took place in a formal sense during the winter through early fall of 1989. Elements already discussed that comprised this stage included the in-service training, professional reading on the middle school concept, and visiting of existing middle schools.

A distinguishing feature of this stage was that it tended to generate more questions than answers. It also evoked a variety of responses from faculty members. While many of the new concepts were intriguing to some, it was clear that those same concepts were threatening to others.

Early in the spring of 1989 teachers began to react to the prospect of teaming which was projected to phase in at the beginning of the 1989-90 school year. Teaming was to be the flagship element of the transition process. All information coming from the school system's central office, C.C.E.'s principal and the researcher as curriculum specialist stressed the importance of going to a teaming format as soon as possible to begin the transition process to middle school.

Mr. H. Terrence, an eighth grade teacher, reacted by getting his hands on everything he could find about the middle school process and by making plans to attend a special summer workshop on strategies for middle school. Several others close to Terrence began to share his enthusiasm and started devoting faculty lounge conversation time to speculative discussions about team planning, team names and other elements of the teaming process. Although questions without answers still plagued the faculty at this point, Terrence and a handful of others maintained a level of hopeful anticipation throughout the spring months of 1989. Terrence did attend the workshop in the summer and shared information about it with all teams during the first workdays of the new school year.

The great majority of the curriculum workers at C.C.E. adopted a wait and see attitude. For some it was a time of judgement reserved. For others the wait and see time was tinged with skepticism. Many, like Ms. H. Sanders from the seventh grade, expressed interest in some of the collegial aspects of teaming but had grave doubts about the modifications that logistical considerations might produce. Sander's sentiments matched a large group at C.C.E. who could not discount the possibility that this new middle school concept might turn out to be just another educational fad.

Another small group seemed to have difficulty making up their minds during the "awareness" stage. Another eighth grade teacher, Ms. C. Bertram, was typical of a group whose reactions to all of the middle school information shifted on an intermittent basis. There would be times when the curriculum specialist would see Bertram discussing middle school concepts in a positive manner. At other times Bertram would be communicating apprehensions and even disparagements about those same concepts.

The smallest group consisted of staff members who were openly hostile toward the idea. One vowed that he would transfer to a high school where he would not have to "deal with this mess." Another displayed hostility toward the idea of forming teacher teams. His rationale was interesting. He disagreed with the involvement of teachers in the decision making process (about which teams would be comprised of which teachers) on the grounds that teachers should not be forced to reveal their preferences of co-workers. At the same time he did not agree that a confidential teacher-preference survey could be used by an administrator to form teams on the basis that there was no such thing as confidentiality. He further did not feel that an administrator should simply decide on the make-up of teams without teacher input. When asked by the researcher how he would propose team selection be done, he didn't know. He only knew it wouldn't work no matter how it was done. He

knew that he did not want to keep his feelings a secret. At the end of the spring he knew that he also wanted a transfer.

Late in the spring C.C.E. began the "organization" stage. During this stage, teams, team leaders and team classroom locations were established. As discussed earlier, teams were chosen by the researcher as curriculum specialist from confidential input supplied by teachers. The school's principal confirmed these decisions and determined jointly with the researcher who the team leaders would be.

The researcher also determined locations for team classrooms within the physical plant so that the "team" idea would be promoted through proximity. Team locations were chosen with traffic patterns in mind so that individual grade levels would be exclusively trafficked by students of that level. Using a facility originally built in 1967 to be a departmentally organized junior high school did not allow that to be accomplished with complete success - but to a high degree of success.

As mentioned earlier, these organizational decisions were shared with teachers immediately after school ended for the 1988-89 year. Although the prospect of having to move to another physical location within the building was greeted with groans from many, the overwhelming majority of teachers responded very positively to these early aspects of their new situation.

The researcher will never forget how the members of one team hugged each other when "introduced" as a new team. When another team came in for their introductory meeting they all shook hands and welcomed one another to the team. By the time each of the two seventh grade and two eighth grade teams had all had a chance to "meet" one another and get a look at the school map to see where their classrooms would be located, the researcher was very optimistic.

Of course everything during that stage was not upbeat. One of the teachers mentioned before as being hostile came into his meeting and told all present that he would quit before the next school year because he was not projected to be in a room with windows. The other described as hostile did not even show up at this initial team meeting.

Another aspect of the "organization" stage occurred behind the scenes from the perspective of teachers. During the summer of 1989 the researcher as curriculum specialist worked on a master schedule that attempted to provide exploratory time, team time (to include physical education), and team members with a double planning period. In line with middle school literature, one of the planning periods would consist of daily team meetings to discuss curriculum and other team concerns, and/or to hold meetings with parents when necessary. The other planning period would be used by individual teachers to plan, work with grading, call parents and attend to other such personal matters.

In addition to fashioning the master schedule, the researcher also worked with data provided by sixth and seventh grade teachers on rising seventh and eighth grade students to determine initial placement on teams. The composition of students on teams had to be carefully balanced to provide each team with a roughly equivalent population. Factors that had to be considered included: 1) general ability levels/academic performance; 2) exceptionalities (such as students with learning disabilities, emotional or behavior disorders, etc.); 3) minority percentages; and 4) individual personality factors (when known).

Since middle school literature advocates the participation of team members in the scheduling of students within the team, this possibility was explored. Before the 1989 summer began, a discussion was held with team leaders, principal and curriculum specialist on the scheduling of students. The curriculum specialist shared accounts from the middle school literature of teams being given a list of students to assign to classes within the team. Team leaders expressed a hesitancy to take on this responsibility at this initial stage because of their heavy involvement in other necessary gearing-up activities. These activities would include physically moving to new classrooms, establishing team rules and objectives, and generally working on team identities for the first time. A group consensus decision

assigned this responsibility to the administration for this first year of teaming.

By the start of the 1989-90 school year, the master schedule was ready, students were assigned to teams and students were assigned to classes within teams. Because of an overwhelming influx of seventh graders, the idea of the double planning period had to be abandoned. When 90 more students than projected ended up on the rolls, something had to give. The decision was made by the administration to ask team members to use two planning periods per week to meet as a team and use three planning periods per week to handle individual needs. Although this strategy was certainly not ideal, most team members accepted it with grace. One team member hostile to the teaming idea from the earliest stages, voiced his discontent with this planning strategy loudly and long into the 1989 year. The other hostile individual was not concerned because he did transfer to a high school in another system over the summer.

Final organizational matters were handled with teams and team leaders during the August workdays. The researcher had meetings with each team and shared some policy issues that would need to be consistent across teams. The researcher regarded these team meetings as the official communication of a verbal constitution. Within this constitution guidelines were given for team field trips, interdisciplinary units (a unit of study taught by all team

teachers within their own curriculum area(s) using a common theme), group rewards, planning sessions, and student management plans. Guidelines were that teams should:

1.   ...schedule no more than one field trip per quarter.

2.   ...use field trips as outgrowths of the curriculum and as culminating activities of interdisciplinary units.

3.   ...consider all trips open to all students on the team.

4.   ...try to present one interdisciplinary unit per quarter.

5.   ...use group rewards of coke and chip breaks, special assemblies or guest speakers with authorization from an administrator.

6.   ...plan together as a team at least twice per week.

7.   ...submit team planning period minutes to the curriculum specialist once per week.

8.   ...determine student management plans to include rules, and positive and negative consequences that would be used uniformly by every member of the team.

9.   ...submit a copy of this plan to the curriculum specialist.

10.   ...begin the year with a positive contact with

the parent of each student.

At the time that these last organizational matters were discussed, team members responded positively. Team behavior management plans were quickly posted in classrooms. Copies were sent to the office for filing. Team planning session notes began to come in to the administration on a regular basis. Long range plans for the first field trip were already being made. Teachers were making a concerted effort to call parents of students and were logging these calls.

Although the "organization" stage was largely confined to the late spring through early fall of the 1989 year, it would re-emerge from time to time as issues of an organizational nature surfaced. One of those issues, dealing with consistency within C.C.E. as an organization, would emerge late in the 1989 year as an irritant between teams and administration.

From the first student day of the 1989-90 school year until the end of this study at the start of the 1990 year, the strongest focus was on "early application of the teaming concept and exploratory." Interwoven through this period also were elements of "awareness" and "organization."

Reactions from teachers and administrators as middle school theory began to take the form of practice were more similar at this stage than they had been during the

"awareness" stage. Around the school the general feeling was one of enthusiasm. Teams chose names and decorated their areas with theme material. The seventh grade teams named themselves the Los Amigos and the STARS (Students That Are Responsible Scholars). Eighth grades named themselves the Golden Eagles and the SWAT (Students With Awesome Talents) Team. Twice weekly during their one common planning period teachers met as a team and discussed strategies to help individual students, weekly curriculum objectives, how to spend team money (each was allocated a budget of $500.00), article needs for team newsletters, and upcoming special team activities. Many teams held conferences with parents at these times so that the whole team could reflect on the child's progress. A letter sent to the SWAT team in August by the parent of a child on the team summarized the initial application of the teaming process:

> Dear SWAT team teachers,
>
> > I am very delighted with this team
> >
> > spirit
>
> approach to educating my son. Thank you for such
> an upbeat positive start this year. Please call
> if I can help in any way.
>
> > > > S.P.

Even the one teacher whose initial reactions had been classed as hostile began to thaw to the idea. He began to

come to terms with his windowless room and his other team members.

These early weeks of the teaming process might, as in a marriage, have been classified as the "honeymoon stage." Teachers were generally upbeat because they had a support base of colleagues that they had never had before. During team meetings frustrations and successes were all shared. Late in October at one SWAT team meeting a teacher brought in a huge iced pumpkin cookie to share with her team members as a way of showing her appreciation for their support.

Values and the Myth of Unlimited Resources

All during this time the researcher attended team meetings on a regular basis. She noted that a growing amount of team planning time was being devoted to discussions of student behavior problems. Although team members were still consistently representing their feelings as positive toward teaming, the researcher was developing a question as to the stability of the feeling.

An in-service workshop mentioned earlier, given by Terrence on the middle school concept, was well received by all in middle August. By the end of October when an outside specialist came in during a workday to do in-service on teaming, the response was much less enthusiastic. Although the presenter was well-prepared and entertaining, team members felt that they were hearing about things that they

already knew. The researcher found this interesting since

one of the presenter's topics included the small percentage

of team planning time that should be spent on discussing

behavior problems as opposed to discussing curriculum and

objective type topics. Neither the presenter nor the

researcher seemed to have an effect on this problem.

Other indicators existed during the late fall months to

lead the researcher to believe that all was not going

smoothly with the early implementation of the teaming phase

of this transition of C.C.E. to a middle school. Because

C.C.E. is located in a system which has merged with a career

pilot system in N.C. (a system which receives extra money to

implement a merit pay plan), the school faculty members

would start receiving extra observations to enable them to

be eligible for the same merit pay. As a part of this

process, faculty members would be observed by administrators

as usual but also by system-wide outside observers during

the 1989-90 school year. This was all explained to team

members and exploratory teachers. Some team members,

particularly Terrence, had a very hard time accepting the

fact that the outside observer might very well ask about the

objectives from the Teacher's Handbook (a curriculum guide

put out by the state) being taught in the lesson observed.

In the team meeting when this was discussed, Terrence stated

emphatically that this was a "gross misuse of those

objectives." The fact that the state had mandated that

these objectives be known and used by each teacher four years ago became an issue when accountability was mentioned.

Two weeks later when the merged school system was asked to take a formal vote on the career pilot program, Terrence again spoke adamantly before the faculty against the idea. When questioned by fellow faculty members about the reason for his strong opposition, Terrence stated that teachers should have been receiving extra money all along instead of waiting until now to do it. Many were perplexed by Terrence's stand on this.

It is important to note that the negative reaction of one or another faculty member to a new policy or idea is not uncommon. It normally would have no impact on a study of this type unless it were shared by a large group. The significance of mentioning the reactions of this particular faculty member goes back to the reader's original introduction of him as an influential individual.

From the very first stages of the transition process, Terrence had been included as a member of the core group by virtue of his enthusiasm for the middle school concept and his influence as an informal leader. It could be counted on in this faculty that Terrence's general outlook (rather than necessarily his stand on individual issues) would be adopted by a sizeable group. The two incidents reported above were not team-related except for the fact that they began a cycle of negativity that rippled into team life.

Disgruntled or at least confused already with these system policy issues, some teams started reporting that they were finding it harder to muster enthusiasm. Reports filtering back to the researcher as curriculum specialist indicated that some team meetings held when she was not present were turning into "gripe sessions." Although the in-service workshop held in October addressed how to plan and implement an interdisciplinary unit of study and gave several written units as samples, team members expressed a lack of understanding of the concept. By the end of the study, no team as yet had tried implementing one.

As mentioned earlier, an "organization" issue which occurred at the end of the 1989 year caused the greatest irritation between teams and administration to that date. Unfortunately this issue arose just after discussions had been held on the outside observer-evaluators and the vote for the career pilot project.

Just before Christmas 1989, a member of the SWAT team developed an idea to take students from the team on a field trip to a nuclear power plant based on their behavior during that quarter. The idea was shared with the Golden Eagles team. They also decided that their "good" students would go. This was not shared, however, with anyone in the administration. Weeks went by and the team member did the background work necessary to get a date set with the power

plant to have these students come for the field trip.

Students were notified that this would occur based on their

behavior. Teachers on both teams were enthusiastic. No one

told an administrator. "Bad" students were to be given to a

few teachers who would stay behind and "babysit." The day

for these students would consist of worksheet activities

left behind by their regular teachers.

One day when the researcher was asking various team

members about significant team events to occur in January

for placement on a school calendar, a team member gave the

date of this trip. When queried further, the team member

described the trip in detail. After discussing the

situation with both other administrators it became clear

that a trip might well have occurred about which no

administrator knew.

A meeting of team leaders was held the following

afternoon. At that meeting the original guidelines for

field trips were again discussed. Field trip proposal forms

were handed to team leaders for use with future field trips

so that the potential for unauthorized trips would be

substantially reduced. Legal implications were explained to

team leaders at that meeting also. Team leaders were not

pleased. The feeling they expressed at the meeting was that

empowerment had been withdrawn from the teams. Their

understanding had been that teams were to make decisions

about trips, not the administration. Their further

conviction was that the desired trip proposed by the SWAT team was unquestionably being taken for the ultimate benefit of the students on two teams.

Epilogue: The End of the Beginning

Looking back at the early transition stages at C.C.E. brings the researcher back to the analogy of the potters creating their community pot. Like the potters, the teachers and other staff members in the transitional setting were artisans who either worked toward an initial vision of the finished product, or worked toward the vision that developed once the product began to evolve. The problems that emerged toward the end of the initial stages could be traced to the fact that it was <u>assumed</u> that the vision was essentially the same for all artisans.

At the end of the 1989 year, team leaders were meeting with administrators once a month. The projection was for this interval to shorten. Myths about resources such as unlimited teacher autonomy, bottomless financial support, and boundless teacher zeal were new topics of discussion. Objectives and values for this middle school transition were being recorded on paper in a constitutional form. Out of frustration and withdrawal a flicker of new hope was emerging.

As a learning experience and an opportunity for reflection on the theory to practice issue, these early

stages of transition to a new setting were a success for the staff at C.C.E. Jr. High. They left the group intact in their eagerness to reflect on the errors that had been made in order to try again in their drive toward the accomplishment of middle school goals. Although the frustrations of the 1989 year were intense at different times, the accomplishments continually motivated the curriculum workers to readjust and push ahead.

For the researcher, experiencing the early stages of transition brought personal satisfaction because it left her with a deeper understanding of the practical application of theory to practice. The Sarason framework proved to be a helpful and accurate guide to the unfolding stages. Finally, the opposing forces of change and conservation became much more obvious and significant as they were displayed in the actions and verbalized convictions of the staff at C.C.E. Jr. High.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

The problem which this study addressed was an examination of the critical early stages of transition that the personnel at C.C.E. Junior High underwent as they moved toward becoming the personnel at C.C.E. Middle School. The working hypothesis of the study was that this transition process, perhaps like the process in other educational settings undergoing a similar change, offered interesting insight into the dynamics of theory to practice and the opposing forces of conservation and change. A methodology was adopted that featured qualitative data gathering techniques such as participant observation, unstructured interviews, and the gathering of unobtrusive data. Portraiture was the narrative form chosen to report the data. In this way the element of art informed the written study as it also influenced the events upon which the study was based. Critical theory, based on the work of Seymour Sarason and Dale Brubaker, provided a framework by which were viewed the creation of the new setting at C.C.E. and its experience with the forces of change and conservation.

The significance of the study rested on its attempt to provide information about the critical elements associated

with the early stages of transition in an educational

setting. The main focus was on faculty members, mainly

teachers, with whom rested the greatest responsibility for

translating theory into practice at the grass roots level.

The study was also significant in that it portrayed the

dilemmas faced by teachers dealing with the opposing

pressures of conservation and change.

It recognized the variety in responses to these pressures

among staff members as the transition evolved. The study

also advanced the idea that this transition process was

greater than the sum of its parts. Separate events and

individuals of the setting contributed to a whole that took

on a power of its own.

The definitions in Chapter I formed the basic value

assumptions woven throughout the rest of the study. The

concepts of middle school, change and innovation, praxis,

and the stages of setting creation defined by Sarason, were

elements which formed the core upon which rested

understanding of the application of theory to practice as

the C.C.E. setting underwent the early stages of transition.

The concept of hidden curriculum was a factor as it became

significant in the crucial praxis between conservation and

change that took place at every classroom door.

The literature review discussed scholarly works devoted

to the three integral elements of this study: 1) the

history of the middle school movement; 2) the concepts of

first- and second-order change strategies and the forces of
change and conservation described by Dale Brubaker; and, 3)
the initial stages of the creation of a setting according to
the work of Seymour Sarason.   In the section on the history
of the middle school movement, important differences between
the junior high and middle school concepts were explored.
One of the major distinctions stated was the underlying
philosophy about the educational service delivery model most
appropriate for the 10-14 year old age group. This
difference in philosophy was the catalyst that created each
of the separate educational organizations.

The section on change highlighted the complimentary
concepts of change and innovation and first- and second-
order change. The opposing forces of change and
conservation were also discussed. Diane Ravitch's history
of the schooling decade (1957-1967) and her account of the
later back-to-basics movement illustrated the force of
conservation. Open classrooms and new math were identified
as attempts at change in education.

The final section on Sarason's stages of the creation
of a setting served to present the framework upon which the
present study was constructed. As his extensive work
suggested the presence of identifiable stages through which
any new setting progresses, so this study was viewed.
Critical elements in each of the stages of setting creation
were described by Sarason. During the before-the-beginning

stage the critical activity was the active consideration of the setting's prehistory. The next two stages involved the choice of leader and the formation of the core group. Considerations critical here were the manner in which these were chosen and the development of a written constitution. Resources and values were elements of the next stage. Sarason said that these must be perceived realistically for the success of the setting.

Chapter III used a qualitative research model of data collection and the critical models of Sarason and Brubaker in a effort to explore the situational complexity involved in the creation of a new setting from an older one. The four critical early stages in Sarason's creation of settings were revealed in this setting through many of the techniques of ethnography and participant observation. Brubaker's analysis of the opposing pressures of conservation and change were validated as the researcher listened to teachers as they held discussions in team meetings, in the faculty lounge, in the cafeteria, and in the halls. The use of portraiture to report the data was discussed as an appropriate method by which to attempt to convey each new situation, complex human interrelationship, and outcome. The limitation of words and paper to ever completely accomplish this task was acknowledged.

In chapter four the Sarason model served as a guide by which the transition of C.C.E. Junior High to C.C.E. Middle

School was viewed. A look at each of the Sarason stages provided illumination by comparison with the transition process at C.C.E.

The before-the-beginning stage provided interesting contrast between Sarason's assertion of the criticality of the pre-history of a setting and C.C.E.'s assumption that this element needed no formal attention. The selection of the leader and the beginning context stage provided the time line as viewed by the leader and alluded to the important, yet highly predictable, omission of a written constitution. The core group was formed as the Sarason stage described with support for the perceived change being a leading consideration in the membership of the emerging group. The notion of formal and informal leaders also occured in this stage emphasizing the significant influence of informal leaders on other staff members. Resources and values as a stage was illustrated to occur throughout the study, but factored in most heavily during the latter months of the study. Without a written constitution and operating under the myth that values were essentially the same among the faculty members at C.C.E., this last stage saw the development of the strongest conflicts the group experienced during the transition.

This study has offered an analysis of the human element during the transition of a setting in a way which has provided an alternative to conventional statistical

research. It has done this by studying the holistic process of creating a new setting.

Regardless of the methodological framework, a statement of conclusion is necessary to place the study in perspective according to the reflections of the researcher. The following statements reflect the praxis between the undergirding theories and the perceived implementations of those theories within the study. They are in answer to the questions in Chapter I.

To what degree do the stages of Sarason's creation of settings correlate with the transition of C.C.E. Jr. High to C.C.E. Middle School?

1.   The postulated stages of Seymour Sarason's creation of settings do correlate favorably with an educational setting as it makes the transition from one conceptual educational organization to another. The case study at C.C.E. Junior High demonstrates the highly applicable assertions of the critical nature of the elements within each stage. Procedural omissions at various stages led to later problems which correlated highly with those described by Sarason. In particular, the critical need for a written constitution to formalize the value structure consistent within the setting was one example of a step C.C.E. left out and later regretted.

What is the relationship of conservation and change to the creation of a new setting from an old one?

2.   Conservation and change are two factors that exerted a great impact upon the creation of a new C.C.E. from an old one. Humans tend to line up along these philosophical ideas as at two ends of a continuum. To effectively create a new setting, even from an old one, it is necessary to strike a balance between the two. Once again from C.H. Edson (1978, p.68), "...curriculum needs a socially conserving component as well as an individually liberating component." As with separate events during the transition of C.C.E., this often takes the form of a compromise.

How does the transition process become realized at the grass roots level?

3.   The transition process was adopted in stages at the grass roots level during this study. Identifiable groups emerged at C.C.E. during transition. Initially these groups spanned the possibilities from those who enthusiastically embraced the proposed changes to those who were openly hostile toward them. When actual implementation began of the "new" middle school concepts, the span of groups narrowed. Both extremes moved toward the middle. The enthusiasts began to recognize that the new concepts were not a panacea to solve all of the problems they privately perceived as part of the pre-history of the setting. Those openly hostile began to experience benefits

from the new concepts that they had not considered or
anticipated.

Do the early stages of the transition process result in
topical rearrangements or the initial implementation of
actual change?

4.   The link between the early stages of the
transition process and the actual implementation of theory
to practice   was very strong given the acceptance of the
whole process by the grass roots level (meaning the
teachers) at C.C.E. Some things were done well at the early
stages and some things were done rather poorly. Sufficient
in-service training, group visitations of middle schools
(largely accomplished the month after this study was
completed), presentation of middle school theory, and
general discussion existed to create in the majority of the
faculty a healthy curiosity and mild enthusiasm about the
new concepts. This general feeling among faculty in the
earliest stages helped moderate reactions to such
necessities as physically moving to a new room, becoming
part of a new team of teachers, and putting in some extra
hours planning for a new year in a group consensus format.
Based upon knowledge of the faculty, demands of this sort
any previous year would have yielded a reaction of much
greater trauma. In addition to a moderating of negative
reaction, events of early stages created enthusiasm among
faculty about the possibility of greater teacher autonomy in

decision making as described in the middle school literature. As a result, the group planning and decision-making portion of the theory was implemented as quickly as the opportunity arrived.

The extent to which implementation was realized by C.C.E. as a topical rearrangement or an actual change had more to do with some of the mistakes that were made during the early stages of the transition process. Although the Sarason work stressed the need for a written constitution to counter the negative effects of the "myth of shared values and unlimited resources," a constitution was not drafted by the group. As a result, some new features of a C.C.E. in transition made it look like a middle school, yet operate somewhere off that mark. A case in point was the situation where the increased opportunity for teacher decision making overwhelmed a verbal contract with the curriculum specialist to make field trips available to all students within the team. True implementation of the middle school theory that transescents should be exposed to as many different experiences as possible would have dictated that all students take part in each and every off-campus exposure. In reality students on teams began being systematically excluded from trips if their prior behavior caused a projection of poor behavior on the trip - a procedure used before transition to middle school. This discrepancy emphasized the point that assumptions about the shared

values among professional staff could not be justifiably
made. Specific provisions for this in a written
constitution rather than a verbal contract might well have
helped temper the practice of decision making with the
theory of middle school objectives.

Events in the early stages of transition did influence
results that were both topical rearrangement and actual
change in the C.C.E. setting. Improved administrative
decisions during this critical period would very likely have
set the stage for a greater degree of actual change. Had a
written constitution been drafted, for example, a greater
amount of actual change would have been instituted in the
field trip policy.

Can one setting project implications for other settings
undergoing or about to undergo the same process of change
from junior high to middle school?

5. This researcher hopes that the failures and
successes experienced during the transition of C.C.E. Junior
High to C.C.E. Middle School do offer implications for other
schools undergoing the same process. After reading this
study, it is hoped that the value of a written constitution
would not be underestimated. Sarason's advice in this
regard is well taken. Without the written constitution an
educational setting undergoing this change process will
likely be ensnared by the myth of shared values and
unlimited resources. In like fashion, formal exploration

and acknowledgement of the setting's pre-history is another facet to be included in the early stages of transition. Without this facet, the tendency exists for false assumptions to be made about the ability of old problems to be solved by the change process itself. On the other hand, the success C.C.E. had with the degree to which faculty members embraced and implemented change when it actually got to the application stage may have implications for the degree to which another setting would desire to provide in-service workshops, visitations etc. during the planning and awareness stage. Early faculty involvement may help other settings to overcome hurdles as theory is applied in practice.

Conclusions

Based on the answers to the questions from the significance of the study, five basic conclusions have been generated.

The stages of setting creation devised by Seymour Sarason are as applicable today as when they were drafted in 1972. It may be that in this information age, other stages might also be identified that would fit within and compliment this framework. However, the basic structure of Sarason is still insightful enough on its own to act as a helpful guide for any setting being created.

Conservation and change are two factors that exerted significant counter-pressures during the C.C.E. transition.

The wise stance is to acknowledge the value of each at the outset. Room can be made for both, perhaps in the written constitution, so that staff members are aware that change is not sought for the sake of change alone. The compromise of these factors, not behind closed classroom doors but in the open, will act as an individually liberating component.

Change adoption at the grass roots level is accomplished in stages. Early stages of transition are characterized by groups whose acceptance levels cover the entire continuum from one extreme to the other. Later stages are identifiable as groups at the extremes tend to pull toward the middle.

Unless extremely accurate projections of the problems that will surface in the future can be made, it is inevitable that some topical rearrangements will be made before actual change can be guaranteed. Early topical rearrangements, in themselves, are not a problem for the new setting unless they take the place of needed change. Anticipation of their occurence can be positive in that their presence identifies areas in need of greater attention if actual change is to take place.

The experience of the faculty at one setting can inform the faculty at another which is undergoing a similar experience. Reading about situational complexities that are an outgrowth of this type of transition can help the reader to experience some of the events vicariously. Just as any

effective narrative can communicate to the sensitive reader
through implication and extention, so too can a narrative-
style study offer something to the reader whose relationship
is already established through involvement in a kindred
process.

Recommendations for Further Study

While the methodology chosen for this study included
elements of participant observation and interpretive
analysis of personal experience, it is recommended that
further inquiry include triangulation by an outside observer
in addition to research by the curriculum specialist or
leader. The situational complexity of responsibility for
facilitation of theory to practice as well as inquiry into
the nature of that process in the setting demands energy
which would more effectively be directed toward one major
task or the other. Further, interpretation of events by a
participant as well as an outside observer could likely add
more information on the political nature of the theory to
practice process.

In addition to methodological considerations for
further study, programmatic aspects offer interesting
avenues for greater exploration. During this study it
became apparent that the transition process itself produced
the conditions from which related issues emerged.

Sarason, Brubaker, and this study have shown that the
transition process itself, and not the new program to be

implemented, is the primary issue of concern. The nature of
this process over time, the logistical considerations, and
the relationship of the element of conservation are all
areas in need of further exploration. Research in these
areas might

1.   Expand upon an existing study which has used the
Sarason framework by presenting follow-up data on a setting
whose early stages of creation were reported within the past
year. Following the setting through middle and later stages
according to Sarason might present interesting evidence
about changing faculty relationships and later impact of
early decisions within the setting.

2.   Compare methods used to resolve logistical
considerations necessary to the transition process. Surveys
of many schools undergoing the change from junior high to
middle school might yield useful information about the
manner in which schools handle such logistics as adaptation
of old buildings to the middle school concept, determination
of the composition of teacher teams, selection of team
leaders, distribution of students onto teams, and
formulation of the schedule for the school day.
Confidential information on teacher and administrator
satisfaction with the handling of these logistical
considerations at each school could be used to correlate an
effectiveness rating with each method.

3.   Inquire further into the relationship of the conservation element to the involvement of teachers during the transition process. Combine the use of surveys and personal observations to determine the degree of personal involvement by various teachers during the earliest stages of awareness and planning, and later evidence of practice during implementation.

Another programmatic recommendation that might lead to future study relates to the assumption of shared values. Within the supposedly "value-free" arena of public education resides the truth that value bases underlie the formal curriculum, the hidden curriculum, and the personal agenda of educators. All decisions made in educational settings are in someone's best interest. Sometimes these are in students' best interests. Sometimes they are for the benefit of teachers. Sometimes they are for the expediency needs of administrators. Sometimes they serve the best interest of current society. B. J. Meadows in "The Rewards and Risks of Shared Leadership" (1990, p.547) dealt with _qui bono_ during her leadership of Oak Grove Elementary, "We clarified the fact that at Oak Grove we welcomed different points of view as long as we made decisions that benefited our students."

Research studies based on values might

1.   Follow a set of students through a school day. Chart activities in which they engage at the direction of

educators or as a result of pre-set school arrangement.
Determine _qui_ _bono_ (in whose interest?) for each action in
several small group problem solving meetings. Utilize these
groups to generate ideas on activity alternatives that would
be more consistently in the best interest of the student.

2.   Compare a group entering a junior high to middle
school transition process,which has produced a document of
shared values in the form of a written constitution with one
that has not. Follow both groups through the first stages
of the creation of the new setting and chart the problems
faced by each. Determine the usefulness of the constitution
in light of the types of problems which arise and the way in
which they are solved.

A final programmatic issue raised by this study is the
issue of first- and second-order change in the educational
arena. First-order change, the technical kind of change
that is imposed upon rather than emanating from teachers, is
the type of change most often seen in education. Second-
order change is the rarer type of change because it is
caused by a ground-swell of interest originating from
teachers themselves.

Dale Brubaker illustrated a first- and second-order
change in a sketch about a novice teacher. At the
suggestion of a mentor teacher, the novice teacher
introduced a change of agenda in her classroom. The change
was designed to move the novice teacher's students toward a

greater degree of free and open discussion during class. Although the novice teacher manipulated classroom procedures to facilitate the change, she did not feel comfortable personally with the new objective. Later in the year the novice teacher attended a workshop on this type of teaching method during which she experienced free and open discussion. She recognized benefits for herself as a result. Convinced of the objective personally, she returned to her classroom and instituted new ideas of her own to expand opportunities for this among her students. In this scenario a first-order change acted as the catalyst to produce a second-order change.

Additional research on the topics of first- and second-order change in education might focus on a variety of aspects of the two. These studies might

1. Review historically significant changes that have taken place in education and evaluate whether they represent first- or second-order changes. Correlate the degree to which the change is still being implemented with its origin as a first- or second-order type of change. Consider also the perceived effectiveness of the change by impacted groups.

2. Investigate the antecedent conditions that must be present for second-order change to be enacted. Use historical data on second-order changes to determine a rationale for the rarity of such occurences. Compare the

longevity of such changes when they do occur with the longevity of first-order changes. Develop strategies that might induce second-order change without the use of first-order change as a catalyst.

3.   Explore the relationship of first-order change implementation and the qui bono question. Identify several first-order changes that have taken place in education. Determine the answer to the question of whose interest was served by each. Compile data on the degree to which each change was implemented at the classroom level. Correlate qui bono with actual implementation. Project long-range strategies to more successfully utilize first-order change in the 21st century.

Reflection

Literary and artistic metaphors used to introduce different aspects of this study are also appropriate vehicles to convey it to conclusion. Both the Simile of the Cave and the illustration of the potters can be used to bring the study full circle.

Plato suggested that the responsibility of each person freed from the cave was to bring some of the light back to those who remained inside. It became that person's charge to attempt to convince those below that the shadows on the walls were but shadows and not reality. Despite the

prisoners' incredulity, the freed man's obligation was to communicate the truth about a world above.

There are yet those faculties which have not yet made the transition from junior high to middle school, but will. The light this researcher attempts to pass on to these unknown colleagues is the story of successes and failures experienced by the administration and faculty of C.C.E. Benefitting from the C.C.E. story may help some new setting to make sense of a few of the shadows looming ahead.

One critical attribute of a setting of artisans, like potters or educators, is the uniqueness of each creative talent. If this study revealed anything about individuals involved in the process of transition, it revealed the necessity to operate within the framework that any setting is no more than a collection of individuals. For a new setting to be successful, this fact must be extolled and harnessed. Only after this question is addressed can the group of potters hope to create the community pot, or the group of educators create the successful educational setting for students.

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