SLADE JR., JOHN R., Ed.D. A Theoretical Framework Toward Implementing and Sustaining Middle and Early College High Schools. (2006)
Directed by Dr. Leila Villaverde. 208 pp.

This study addresses the growing interest in middle and early college high schools as a tool of reform to transform the philosophy and structure of the traditional high school. The following questions guided this study: 1) What is the set of core factors that tend to permeate successful middle and early college high school initiatives, and 2) What is the effect of these core factors in implementing and sustaining middle and early college high schools?

Three approaches were used to answer these questions. First, the literature was analyzed to determine if core factors could be defined from existing research and other sources about middle and early colleges. The result was a coherent set of factors along philosophical grounds fashioned into a theoretical framework that was developed and discussed in-depth. Then, selected North Carolina middle and early college high schools were evaluated and briefly profiled with the core factors in mind. This dissertation focuses upon North Carolina because of its high level of middle and early college high school activity in recent years.

This work concludes that evidence from middle and early colleges supports the assertion that the theoretical framework defined herein can positively affect the implementation and sustainability of such high schools. As the middle and early college concepts proliferate as responses to failing high schools, this study increases in significance and invites further study of what enhances success for such schools.

A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK TOWARD IMPLEMENTING AND SUSTAINING

MIDDLE AND EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOLS

By

John R. Slade Jr.

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
2006

Approved by

_____
Committee Chair

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of

The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Committee Chair   _____

Committee Members   _____

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Date of Acceptance by Committee

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Date of Final Oral Examination

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The majority of my professional life has been spent in the practical surroundings of the community college experience. Thus, it was unsettling at first, but eventually refreshing, to be reminded through doctoral study that engaging in theoretical discourse has value all its own and, indeed, liberates one from the confines and comforts of *what is* to *what can be*. For this, I am grateful to the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and the Department of Educational Leadership and Cultural Foundations for allowing me the opportunity to explore fresh ideas, novel concepts, and emerging issues in education that I hope will continue to make my professional endeavors more interesting, viable, and effective. For helping me bring shape and meaning to these life-changing experiences, I gratefully acknowledge the assistance and patience of my dissertation committee, Professors Leila Villaverde (chair), Joanne Chesley, C. P. Gause, and Carl Lashley, all of whom have provided me guidance not only during this effort but also throughout my studies at the University.

I also acknowledge support from the Central Carolina Community College Foundation for providing tuition assistance. I owe as much gratitude to Dr. Matthew S. Garrett, Central Carolina's president, for his understanding, patience, and encouragement.

For certain, the completion of this degree is due in large measure to my wife, Pam, and her patience and selflessness in contributing more than her fair share in looking after our son, JC, and keeping the household operating as I pursued a dream. I dedicate this work to her.

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CHAPTER I

THE CHALLENGE AND THE RESPONSE

The comprehensive high schools of today were not built with the assumption that every kid could or should go to college, and that's fundamentally a problem.
                                                -- *Joel Vargas (Evelyn, 2005, p. A17)*

Background

Joel Vargas has been recognized as a noticeable voice in a new generation of thinkers on higher education issues, and his forceful statement above encapsulates the current mindset regarding the nation's high schools. Vargas, the senior project manager for Jobs for the Future, a Boston-based research group focused on education reform and workforce development, goes on to say that early college high schools assume something much different: that students *will not* fade from view nor fall through the cracks (Evelyn, 2005). Not only does his sentiment under gird the early college high school concept, but it also comfortably attaches to the middle college concept as well as to other initiatives aimed at reforming the nation's high schools.

Indeed, no dearth of criticism exists with regard to the failing of the modern high school, and the mood for reform seems universal. Policymakers, private sector reformers, scholars, and practitioners alike have galvanized around the issue of what is viewed as the general ineffectiveness of the public high school. Alarming statistics of approximately 3,000 students dropping out of high school each day serve as the current focal point (as

cited in Houston, Byers, and Danner, 1992) for mayors of large urban centers such as New York and Los Angeles who have vowed more accountability for school systems perceived as broken. Some states, North Carolina among the most active, have tended to connect high school reform with economic development and have zeroed in on the ever-increasing size of the modern high school as the main culprit in the lack of student achievement and productivity (*New Schools Project [NSP]*). Well-known business leader Bill Gates, the owner of Microsoft, is convinced that blending early introduction to college with drastically smaller school sizes is the key to more effective high schooling, and he has joined his millions with those of other foundations to champion his fix (*Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Home Page*). Scholars such as Kincheloe (1995) stand firm in their assertion that the philosophical, structural, and operational aspects of today's high schools are remarkably similar to those practiced in the early part of the last century. Local educational leaders are in general agreement with politicians, activists, and scholars in a willingness to move beyond their own institutional cultures to create successful learning environments for those high school students they cannot seem to reach. Indeed, even some superintendents – charged with educating everyone within their districts – are boldly vindicating the critics of the nation's public high schools. Alluding to President George Bush's "No Child Left Behind" anthem, Terry Grier, superintendent of Guilford County Schools, which is a hot bed of education reform in North Carolina, asserts that "High schools were never designed to leave no child behind or for 70 percent of kids to take the SAT. The high schools we have today work for 30 to 40 percent of the

kids . . . I want to do more for kids who aren't getting what they need" (as quoted in Silberman, 2005a).

The model that policymakers, practitioners, and activists have adopted is rooted in what is becoming known as the *smallness movement*, or the belief that a core fix to critical ailments of the large, modern high school is an appreciably smaller institution designed to address the affective needs of students along with more rigorous and relevant curriculum and pedagogical approaches. Much attention is being focused at this point in the discussion on middle and early college high schools with evidence to support credible results of a relatively few incubated innovative high school projects since the late 1960s and early 1970s (Steinberg & Allen, 2000).

The first of these innovative approaches has its antecedents in the 1950s when educational activists, specifically the Ford Foundation for the Advancement of Education (FAE), funded scholarships for intellectually capable high school students who were performing poorly to leave high school altogether and enter college early. Though moderately successful, the experiment was short-lived when the foundation could not entice a benefactor to continue underwriting the scholarships (Wechsler, 2001). In the mid-1960s, the first of the early college high schools as we know them today was established at Simon's Rock College in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, a model that combined the last years of secondary school with college courses. This arrangement made it possible for high school students to graduate with a junior college degree instead of the traditional high school diploma. The impetus for this early college high school at Simon's Rock College was to make the senior year more challenging and therefore more

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meaningful and educationally beneficial for its affluent students. By 1974, the first middle college high school had opened in New York City at LaGuardia Community College, which borrowed part of its design from the Simon's Rock early college high school, with the idea that disadvantaged students might benefit from a similar approach (Jacobsen, 2005). Though the Simon's Rock school came first, its middle college derivative claimed the attention of high school reformers. Replications of LaGuardia Community College's middle college high school were slow to come, with 20 of the 30 innovative high schools established by 2000 beginning their operations in the 1990s (Williams, 2000).

By comparison, the early college high school concept remained at a virtual standstill until relatively recently, and even though it can claim an earlier birth, it has been the success of the middle college high schools that has given rise to increasing interest in the early college. Essentially, the interest initially showered upon the middle college high school concept appears to have shifted to the early college. Fueled by strong interest from a combination of well-endowed foundations, with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation leading the charge, nearly $1 billion have been put to this effort since 2001 (Silberman, 2005b). At the present, about 71 early college high schools exist across the nation, with plans to finance more than 170 by 2012 (Early College Initiative; Jacobsen, 2005), 34 either in operation or planned for implementation in North Carolina by 2006 with another 7 middle or early colleges currently unaffiliated with the Gates Foundation (see Appendices C, D, & E). About 12,000 students are currently being served in early college high schools, and the number is expected to increase to as many as 66,000 by

2012 (Early College High School Initiative by the Numbers, 2006). The early college

high schools in operation in Fall 2005 exist in half of the states, and about 63% of them

are public schools with another 35% classified as charter schools. Twenty percent are

conversion schools, and 78% are start-ups. Fifty-four percent are on a post-secondary

campus, 33% are off campus, 9% are within a comprehensive high school, and 4% are on

a Native American Reservation. Of the early college high schools located on post-

secondary campuses, 56% are located at 2-year institutions, 30% on 4-year campuses,

13% on 2- and 4-year campuses, and 1% on 3-year campuses (Early College High School

Initiative by the Numbers, 2006). An even higher majority of middle colleges are located

at 2-year institutions (Early College High School Initiative by the Numbers, 2005).

The simplest explanation for this rather unusual development trend of the early

college and the strong interest the concept has received from funding sources is that it

seems to be thought of as more radical than the middle college and therefore more

challenging to establish and implement. An early college high school is viewed as a more

labor-intensive endeavor because this concept means 9th- through 12th-grade curriculum

design and integration along with concomitant challenges of the various issues presented

with addressing students as young as 13 years old thrown into the mix of a college

campus. The goal for students in an early college high school is that they will earn both

the high school diploma and an associate degree in 4 or 5 years. The details of working

out a curriculum design that weaves seamlessly into a pattern integrated well enough that

curriculum and resources result in both credentials can be overwhelming. A middle

college, on the other hand, enrolls students at the 11th grade and provides them the

opportunity to engage in an academically enriched environment through access to some college courses as high school students. With either approach –middle college or early college – in many cases, state school systems are not relieving innovative high schools of traditional measuring instruments such as end-of-course testing. In some respects, then, something earmarked for its innovativeness will be judged a success or failure by traditional assessment methods.

Both middle college and early college high schools are structural responses to breaks in the educational pipelines. At the outset, these different high schools were set to address primarily Hispanic and African-American students impacted by low-income and other socio-economic factors. The intent of both nontraditional high school concepts is to stem dropout rates and to provide students with more personal attention than they would receive at a traditional high school. Securely attached to the *smallness movement,* "small" now stands as a requisite for effective high school reform. Hence, early college high schools are intended to be no larger than 450 students; middle colleges aim to enroll no more than 125 per grade level (Steinberg & Allen, 2002; Lieberman, 2004). In some cases, as with Middle College of Forsyth County at Forsyth Technical Community College, such high schools are designed to enroll no more than what may be required for official recognition as a state-supported school for funding purposes. In North Carolina, that threshold number is 100, and not all middle or early college high schools aim for maximum size.

This study takes the position that the necessary forces have gathered in sufficient numbers and with noticeable leadership. That is, the political will and the capital

resources to make the concept of middle and early college high schools a primary solution toward better and more effective high schools are now large enough to register on any radar. As the high school reform movement gains momentum in general, the specific responses of middle and early college high schools – perhaps proving among the most interesting and tricky to implement and sustain – are gathering a lion's share of the attention. As these innovative high schools begin to dot the educational landscape, they bring with them attendant issues and challenges that are proving difficult to address but not impossible to overcome. In this vein, this study gathers the scattered pieces that exist about middle and early college implementation and kneads them into a cohesive framework for the elements of successful implementation and sustainability. While some solid data have been collected on the success of middle colleges over the last 30 years, the mostly recent proliferation of the early college high school has not yet allowed for data that can be considered wholly reliable. Both concepts, however, have just begun to generate the kind of scholarship that would be expected from such novel approaches to educating high school students, which makes the purpose of this study all the more timely and relevant.

Context and Emphasis

I was first introduced to the middle college high school concept as a mid-level administrator at Forsyth Technical Community College in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and, like others I have read about in my research on the subject, my introduction was abrupt and therefore initially generated more suspicion than support for

the idea. In many ways, the manner in which *my* college became acquainted with the notion that a public high school would take up residence on the campus would be the antithesis of the textbook fashion of conceiving, designing, and implementing such a high school. The idea was floated in the midst of school board discussions to close the system's alternative high school, which fueled suspicions held by community college faculty that the middle college was in reality a way to shift some of the school system's most severe discipline problems to the community college. Adding to the doubts was too little discussion with those who would be involved in the implementation of the middle college and with faculty who would soon be sharing space and resources with high school faculty and high school students. Skepticism ran so high that all odds for the success of this project seemed low, if for no other reason that the heavy negativism surrounding the project was like so many daggers striking blows at every opportunity.

In the most literal sense, any non-traditional high school could be called successfully implemented if it opens it doors and enrolls students for any amount of time. This study, however, moves beyond implementation to *how* the implementation should be grounded and carried out in a way that leads to the greater possibility that the innovative high school will take root and continually renew itself with predictable positive results. Successful denotes reduced dropout rates, enhanced student completion rates, greater student engagement, curricular innovations geared toward blending academic and vocational interests, greater student satisfaction, positive collaboration between K-12 and higher education institutions including productive resource sharing, significant integration of the high school into the culture and operation of the host

college, and graduates prepared for either the workforce or a 4-year college degree. From the view of this researcher, reducing the dropout rate, for instance, is worthy. If, however, the high school graduate is either unprepared to enter a skilled workforce or must be remediated before enrolling in a 4-year institution, then the innovative high school has been an insufficient intervention for that graduate. If the middle or early college is merely a small high school tucked away on a college campus, then it is perhaps no different from the traditional "alternative" high school and therefore will face many obstacles in achieving what middle and early colleges purport to be about.

This study has attempted to answer the following questions: 1) What is the set of core factors that tend to permeate successful middle and early college high school initiatives, and 2) What is the effect of these core factors in implementing and sustaining middle and early college high schools?

Design and Methodology

What are some of these core factors? They include an emphasis on an affective environment, substantial – not token – integration into the college environment, adaptable curriculum strategies that address student interest as well as need, a reliable funding source resistant to political and leadership changes, and a genuine democratic governance structure that includes the voices of all stakeholders. This study isolates such a set of factors and spotlights the degree to which project viability is enhanced when the factors are employed. After providing appropriate background and history of the middle and early college movement in the United States, an analyses of the literature and of existing

and failed innovative high schools are provided that cull a set of factors common to such high school experiments. The more well known, established, and successful replications are featured along with relatively new schools that have been established in North Carolina.

The second phase shows through mini-case studies and profiles how the presence or the lack thereof of this set of core factors influenced the establishment and development of selected middle and early college high schools in North Carolina within the last 5 years. Projects deemed successful as well as those considered marginal or failures have proven equally useful in showing that a set of core factors can be isolated and therefore capsulated for general application by all such projects. This study has chosen accessible middle or early college high schools, overlaid them with the core factors, and then determined their relative health according to what success outcomes were set – both generally and in terms of the schools' initial intentions as prescribed by their missions. Selected schools have been juxtaposed with projects widely considered as successful and effective and discussed in terms of the core factors.

As examples, consider two North Carolina programs, one into its 5th year and the other that failed to reach implementation. Middle College of Forsyth County at Forsyth Technical Community College in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, began in 2002 and struggled at the start. As a participant-observer in this project, I can now see key elements that were either missing or inadequately considered or applied as this much-heralded project got under way. No doubt a worthwhile effort on the part of the local education agency (LEA) and the community college, and though this middle college has survived 4

years, the degree to which it can be called a success would depend upon which measures are taken. The larger question is whether closer attention to core factors can propel it forward and give it a better chance at sustainability. Another project in which I was a participant representing Central Carolina Community College was introduced in opposite fashion as the Forsyth school, and, in all respects, had considered challenges faced by other projects and was determined from the outset to avoid the mistakes others had made – or so it was thought. Still, yet another project in collaboration with Central Carolina Community College did get underway, and Lee Early College High School owes its successful launch to experiences from earlier projects that serve as both tangible and intangible lessons that could be argued as consideration of core factors.

The following methods of data collection were employed in answering the research questions of what are the core factors and what are their effects:

1. Research and analysis of the literature support the assertion that common design principles can be isolated in successful programs. Representative literature on the topic supports the theory that a set of common principles are in effect and therefore can be isolated and strategically applied in the design, implementation, and sustainability of a high school on a college campus. Various types of sources analyzed include scholarly and journal works, newspaper and other general media accounts, and websites devoted to the support and proliferation of middle and early college high schools.

2. Examination and analyses of existing and defunct middle and early college high schools further support the theory that the absence of key design factors contributes to the failure of such projects.

3. The development of a theoretical framework for implementing a middle or early college based on core factors determined from existing literature and both successful and non-successful projects stands as the theoretical center of this study. The key elements are discussed in detail as to "why" and "how" the core factors should be understood in order to avoid unintended consequences. The aim of this research is to highlight the core factors in connected form and show how they can increase a project's chances for success. As mentioned earlier, success means more than enrolling students year after year. The essence of success with a middle or early college is to establish and build a *reformed* high school that substantively improves the academic success and prospects for those whose chances are in doubt in the traditional high school. The theoretical framework intends to impact not only the likelihood of a truly reformed high school but hopes to create a school that sparks true reform within the system to which it belongs.

4. Mini-case studies of middle or early college high schools flesh out the degree to which the core principles are effective. The mini-case studies of the high schools include some or all of the following: their genesis, establishment, and development; analyses of artifacts (mission statement, websites, promotional literature); analyses of public presentation via media outlets (news accounts, journals); reported outcomes

compared against criteria for success (graduation rates, attendance data, state

reporting data, state performance measure standards, college course success rates).

Audience

The target audiences for this work are public school and community college

practitioners seeking to collaborate successfully on a middle or early college high school

project. The first obvious reason for focusing upon the audiences chosen was mentioned

earlier: The majority of middle and early college high schools have met less resistance

(the operative word is *less,* as challenges do abound) from community colleges. The

other, less obvious, reason is that, historically, public schools and community colleges

have worked closely together to serve various educational needs of its immediate

community. Most community colleges have experience with high school students among

its student population through dual enrollment programs, but a full-fledged high school

within the physical walls of the community college is not an idea that has easily found a

comfortable place, especially in the minds of community college personnel, namely

faculty. As borne out in my research and supported by personal experience, too often

senior administrative officials in both the public school and community college

institutions decide to address a community need without due regard to implementation

and sustainability factors that, if not given serious consideration, can doom such a

partnership from the start.

Summary

In essence, this study takes notice of the growing criticism about the nation's ailing public high schools, resulting debates about the core causes of their general ineffectiveness, and the rapidly growing interest focused on middle and early college high schools as a likely cure. Scholars and critics such as Kincheloe (1995) meet little opposition to claims that the modern high school is not significantly different structurally from what would be found in the 1920s. The middle and early college high school concept, rooted in the notion that smaller is better, has become a fast-moving movement accepted by activists, politicians, and educational leaders alike. Backed by private foundation funds coupled with a gubernatorial agenda and legislative support, the goal to improve North Carolina's high schools through the establishment of innovative high school projects is on a fast track and attracting attention from other states. As a community college practitioner in North Carolina, and knowing that the movement in the State is seeing its greatest activity as collaborations between local school systems and community colleges, this study will highlight and apply its general findings to middle and early colleges within North Carolina.

Accepting the likelihood that the middle and early college high school movement has gained the kind of momentum that serious study of what makes them successful is a worthy topic, the focus of this dissertation isolates those core factors common to successful middle and early college high schools and offers a framework of sorts for practitioners – both public school and community college administrators – as a philosophical guide in establishing such an innovative high school with enhanced

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chances that it will sustain itself beyond a successful implementation. The conclusions

drawn in this study are derived from the following approach: a review of the literature

and other resources about middle and early college high school implementation in order

to isolate core factors; a critical discussion of those factors as elements of a framework

toward implementation and sustainability; and an application of those core factors

through brief analytical studies of existing middle and early college high schools in North

Carolina.

Definition of Terms

Frequently used terms integral to this study of middle college and early college

high school implementation and sustainability are defined below:

Affective Environment: A tenet of middle and early college high school is the provision

　　　that such schools will encase the academic environment with a shell of caring and

　　　a genuine desire and capacity to address the emotional and social needs of

　　　students whose family and socio-economic environments may be challenged in

　　　some way (Wecshler, 2001).

Blended Curriculum: This is a curriculum that develops and teaches content in a manner

　　　that de-emphasizes labels such as "academic" and "vocational" in favor of

　　　deciding upon content that has been determined relevant and useful for the student

　　　(Kincheloe, 1995; Wechsler, 2001).

Creative Curriculum: Such a curriculum strives for student-centeredness and is

　　　continually evaluated for relevance and effectiveness so that what is determined

worthy of teaching is considered worth learning by those who will learn the

content and then use it for successful endeavors during and beyond the high

school experience (Brubaker, 2004; Kincheloe, 2001; Lieberman, 2004;

Wechsler, 2001).

Democratic Governance: This is a leadership-management approach to operating

schools, not just high schools, that calls for genuine involvement in the governing

of the school that includes genuine input from administrators, teachers, students,

parents, and the community (Wechsler, 2001).

Disaffected Student: Such a student is a low-achiever or failure by conventional

measurements in the traditional high school and is either a dropout or a risk for

becoming one. The lack of success may be marked by a combination of factors

including irrelevant curriculum, impersonal interaction due to large high school

environments, and socio-economic challenges (Riley & Rustique-Forrester,

2002).

Early College High School: Such schools are established high schools physically housed

on post-secondary campuses, most often community colleges, with curriculum

designed and approached in a manner that results in the simultaneous awarding of

both a high school diploma and an associate degree in a community college

discipline at the end of 4 or 5 years. Thus, early college high schools enroll

students beginning in what would be their ninth-grade year (Lieberman, 2004).

Innovative High School: This term commonly refers to any established high school with a

design, curriculum, structure, or approach meant as a fundamental change in order

to address the basic high school set up consisting of four grades with compartmentalized disciplines taught by specialists. In this study, several high schools within the same building, deliberately small high school academies, early college high schools, middle college high schools, and themed schools would qualify as examples under this umbrella term (*NSP*).

Middle College High School: As with early college high schools, middle colleges are found on both community college and 4-year campuses, though the vast majority are located on junior college campuses. Unlike early colleges, middle colleges usually enroll only 11th and 12th graders and provide access to college-level courses, with students leaving the high school with varying amounts of college credit depending upon their interests (Wechsler, 2001).

Relationships: Both middle and early college high schools focus their approach to student success for academically capable students who fail to meet with success on three main avenues, one of which is emphasizing genuine, affective two-way relationships between the student and the school (*NSP*).

Relevance: Another in the triangle of areas in the middle and early college approach, *relevance* is primarily a curricular issue. It has been argued that a critical issue in lack of high school success for some students is linked to lack of a curriculum and instructional techniques that resonate with what students find pertinent to the world they live in and skills they need to negotiate a modern job market (*NSP*).

Rigor: The third of the three-element emphasis considered key in middle and early college high schools is the notion of a rigorous curriculum supported by a mixture

of challenging high school and college-level courses with high expectations of students (*NSP*).

Shared Governance: Similar to *democratic governance,* this term reflects the intended relationship between the local education agency to which the middle or early college high school belongs as an educational unit and host college where it physically resides. The concept engenders the integration of the middle or early college high school into the college campus rather than becoming a small high school with borrowed space on a college campus (Cunningham & Wagonlander, 2000; Wecshler, 2001).

Smallness Movement: This rapidly developing concept associated with the high school reform movement promotes *smallness* in general as one of the key elements in transforming modern high schools into more successful institutions. Specifically, high schools of no larger than 400 or 500 are recommended with each grade level proportionately populated (Steinberg & Allen, 2002).

Structural Change: This type of change addresses such aspects of the middle and early college high schools as location, size, and governance approach (Lieberman, 2004).

Successful Implementation: A successfully implemented middle or early college is one that has faithfully addressed the needs of marginalized students through careful consideration of philosophical and practical use of those key elements deemed necessary to establish a middle or early college high school poised to grow deep

roots as a flourishing high school that generates student success however defined by the local education agency and hosting college (Wechsler, 2001).

Sustainability: For the purposes of this study, *sustainability* is defined as a middle or early college high school having reached a place whereby it is recognized as a viable educational unit carrying out a successful mission to serve those students who are not otherwise meeting success in the traditional high school setting. A middle or early college high school at the point of sustainability has undergone its "significant event" toward solidification, has become a preferred option for students, has garnered a recurring, reliable source of funding in the manner of other district high schools, has the respect of both its parent and host institutions as well as the community at large, and is worthy of replication (Cunningham & Wagonlander, 2000).

Teacher-Counselor: Closely tied with the under girding affective approach championed by middle and early college high schools, the instructional component, especially, must embrace a holistic student approach that involves teachers who are willing to address both curriculum and emotional needs of their students (Wechsler, 2001).

Chapter Synopses

Chapter II is a review of the literature with respect to what has been documented regarding key factors in establishing and sustaining middle and early college high schools. In essence, the literature in all its various forms has been combed to determine

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recurring themes, points, data, and such that can then be argued as those key factors under girding establishment and sustainability. Relatively little traditional scholarship exists at this juncture about middle and early colleges as the innovative high school concepts addressed in this dissertation have just begun to garner widespread interest. However, with interest mounting from the private, public, and political sectors, it is likely that the proliferation of middle and early college high schools will pull the attention of academe as more critical debate gathers about the impact and effectiveness of these schools. Therefore, less traditional resources are treated in this review of the literature in that general articles, journalistic accounts, and web resources devoted to this subject have contributed to the growing interest. In some cases, such as specific websites primarily promoting and serving as a resource for middle or early colleges, some direct information could be collected from the perspective of a particular point of view. It is just as useful to study newspaper, magazine, and journal articles profiling specific innovative high school projects to discern common elements that have lent to their effectiveness.

Chapter III presents the theoretical framework on which this study asserts the middle and early college concept should be constructed. This chapter defines those crucial factors that this researcher believes are the most important in setting the stage for a middle or early college high school that will play out in a way that will be deemed successful and sustainable. This chapter provides in-depth discussion of the definition of the target population; curriculum philosophy; organization and governance philosophy with a focus on leadership and instruction; financial considerations; and some special considerations, namely legal and ethical issues.

Chapter IV moves from theory to practice by providing mini-profiles of selected North Carolina projects as measured against the one such project generally considered the best established and most effective in the nation. The selection of the high schools profiled will include both those considered highly successful and those considered marginal or even failures. Conclusions may be drawn in this section about which projects are model ones and which ones are considered merely good, with the idea that the model school can be recommended as ripe for replication. The mini-case studies will be both analytical and critical in nature, as the intent is to determine the strengths and weaknesses with an aim of suggesting changes – structural, philosophical, and otherwise – and improvements that could make a defining difference in the likelihood of long-term success and sustainability. The hotbed of high school reform activity taking place in North Carolina makes this state a good laboratory for the mini-case studies.

The concluding section, Chapter V, discusses the status of the middle and early college high school movement, with emphasis on early colleges because of the spotlight currently shining upon them mostly due to funding sources that favors this model. The conclusion also supports the case in favor of middle and early college high schools and why it is important to recognize a set of core factors in theory and practice. Some observations and reflections are given to summarize what have been effective practices and to bring attention to some unsuspecting areas of note that provide lessons for these innovative high schools as well as support why they should become options for those students not served well by traditional high schools.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Overview

Literature on the subject of the middle and early college movement is not as plentiful as it will likely become; therefore, implementation factors and techniques are even more scattered, thus indicating a field of study ripe for exploration. What is available with respect to implementation strategies generally must be culled from within sources and from best practices deducted from reported challenges to implementation efforts. The following literature review analyzes and evaluates available materials on middle and early college high schools from three main categories: book-length studies; articles, both scholarly presentations and journalistic accounts; and noted websites in support of the movement. The organization of this review also intends to make it more useful for those who may desire to use these resources in designing middle and early college high schools.

Book-length Studies

Edited volumes about collaborations between high schools and higher education are available, such as *The Learning Connection: New Partnerships Between Schools and Colleges* edited by Maeroff, Callan, and Usdan (2001) and *How Community Colleges Can Create Productive Collaborative Collaborations with Local Schools* edited by

Palmer (2000). This review of the literature addresses the most related literature within those edited volumes in a later section on articles. In terms of a published book-length work that focuses directly on this subject, Wechsler (2001) provides an insightful history and study of the 30-year concept of middle colleges through an analysis of the history of Fiorello H. LaGuardia Community College Middle College High School in Long Island City, Queens, New York. Wechsler's book, titled *Access to Success in the Urban High School: The Middle College Movement,* not only focuses on LaGuardia but also discusses antecedents to the LaGuardia middle college high school, successful and unsuccessful replications, and a critical analysis of the maturing concept.

With respect to planning and implementation strategies, sub-sections of Chapter 2 – "An Elite School for At-Risk Students: The Components" and "Who'll Run the School" – are especially useful in Wechsler (2001). The former section analyzes the LaGuardia school's original concept and design in light of the student needs it had determined should be addressed. Understanding the framework from the perspective of a school for at-risk students that positioned itself from the beginning as an elite school helps the designer to think beyond the traditional "alternative" school approach. Likewise, separating and discussing concepts such as recruitment, the physical plant, curriculum, and affective support orients those contemplating a middle or early college high school toward the notion of defined core factors that should be considered. The latter section basically outlines the murky waters in which the LaGuardia project found itself as tension built around under whose jurisdiction the middle college would operate: the public schools or the university system. While this concern is probably not as great

today because the concept is now more clearly defined as a *high school* within the LEA designed for selected students to benefit from a blended setting, how well such projects become integrated into a college campus remains related to issues of governance and who is ultimately in charge. Chapter 3, "Living at the Border: Design and Implementation," is the richest in terms of points about implementation, and much can be gleaned from the fourth chapter on replications that evaluates the success of the middle college movement through profiles of several replications of the LaGuardia project. The straightforward account of the design and implementation of the New York middle college details the challenges encountered in the initial phases of implementation and how they were overcome. For example, useful discussion is devoted to such topics as its location on a college campus not guaranteeing integration into the campus culture, which was an intended goal. Another challenge was the concern from traditional high schools that the middle college would skim its better students who would be drawn by the lure of earning college credits early. Such topics alert today's educators and planners of such high schools to challenges and pitfalls and how to navigate or negotiate through them.

Another benefit of Wechsler (2001) is the historical perspective his book provides. The middle and early college movement actually has an antecedent in what can be described as a more literal form of "early college," which, as has been noted, is an idea rooted in the 1950s in which high school students were encouraged to leave high school early to enroll in college. When Lieberman first promoted the concept, it obviously was considered novel, with the Carnegie Foundation providing $95,000 to plan the experimental high school within a college campus. Ten years later in 1983, the Ford

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Foundation expanded on a theme it had championed since the 1950s, which focused on improving high school-college relations as a means of positively influencing the college entrance rate. Between 1951 and 1954, for instance, The Ford Foundation for the Advancement of Education (FAE), Ford's major vehicle aimed at educational reform during that time, provided scholarships to intellectually capable students from weak high schools if the recipients began college early. Curiously, the idea met with opposition from high school principals, who feared that rampant success of such a program would take away their best students and social leaders, a notion that would return 30 years later with the first replications of middle college high schools. Despite opposition, FAE moved ahead with the project. The experiment ended when the idea could not court an organization to take over funding the scholarships; however, the results were mainly positive, with early college recipients doing slightly less well than a controlled older group but better than their freshman classes. The conclusion of the early college scholarships did not end FAE's commitment to improving high school-college relations, and most of its $4.9 million to make an impact was shuttled to Advanced Placement.

"An Elite School for At-Risk Students: The Components" in Chapter 2 serves as an anatomy of the middle college concept. While it fairly points out that LaGuardia Community College's own infancy (established in 1969) and lack of entrenched traditions aided in the relative ease of establishing the middle college high school there, the description of the components and what has made it successful are indispensable to the study of implementation (Wechsler, 2001). This distinction is crucial in that it implies that the willingness with which the host college embraces innovative and creative

approaches can be linked to the established traditions of the college. This is not to say that an institution with a decades-old culture and tradition cannot nurture a successful middle college high school on its campus; however, it does serve as a strong recommendation that the host institution must be as carefully prepared and educated about the concept and involved in the planning and implementation as public school personnel.

This section of Chapter 2 supports the basic design principles discussed in what I refer to as the "blueprint literature" that emphasizes design and best practices. This key section of Wechsler (2001) points to targeted recruitment, a college location, appropriately creative curriculum, cooperative education, teacher-counselors, and shared governance as the key components. With the exception of cooperative education in which students are required to engage in a work activity as part of their curriculum, middle college high schools in general adhere to the design principles listed. The targeted students for middle college are generally academically able but are low-achievers due to a variety of issues that have caused students to disengage in the regular high school setting. The college campus as the physical location is mostly symbolic but important, nonetheless, as the philosophy is to put the students in a less restrictive environment and one that will intentionally blur the lines between high school and college as a means of seamless transition from one to the other. As well, the college campus is intended to nurture creative approaches for teachers and set the stage for collaboration between high school and college faculty, who are accustomed to more freedom in designing and carrying out curriculum. Middle college teachers are expected to add dimensions to their

traditional role and are chosen for their willingness and ability to serve as teacher-counselors, as an underlying tenet of the middle college high school concept rests upon the affective. The alternative nature of middle college high schools makes for a fluid environment, and the traditional administrative and leadership roles are altered as well. Middle college design prefers a shared governance approach, not just between teachers and administrators and the school system and the college, but also between the school personnel and the students.

The section headed "Who'll Run the School" is an interesting discussion of deliberations between Janet Lieberman, the chief designer of LaGuardia Community College Middle College High School, and others who debated which governing institution – the city's Board of Education or the university system – would oversee the newly designed high school (Wechsler, 2001). This discussion is pertinent because concerns by both sides forced compromise, and it became clear that innovation and creativity were not readily compatible with the standard rules, regulations and parameters of either system. As middle college high schools are established at an increased pace, the concept remains in the eyes of local education boards and state authorities as bold, with measured but significant reluctance of officials to relax guidelines and erase boundaries that would enhance implementation and sustainability (*NSP*). Who is ultimately in charge and the balance maintained among autonomous school governance and central office and/or post-secondary institution control will either support or weaken the key design element of structural innovation.

In terms of implementation, the centerpiece of Wechsler (2001) is Chapter 3, "Living at the Border: Design and Implementation." This chapter points to some important planning concepts and suggests that they not be compromised in order to enhance implementation efforts. Among the topics treated are the crucial factors of affective support for students, curricular innovation, and faculty governance, which is a sub-component of shared governance discussed as part of Chapter III in this study. Lieberman and her team contemplated with great care and skill the relationship between the design and the implementation and reasoned that "[a] poor design might be fatal, but questionable implementation could be corrected as students, faculty, and staff created or learned and refined their roles" (pp. 54 – 55). Put another way, and as support for this study, the framework for the school is all-important. Operational snags can be remedied relatively quickly; a flawed theoretical understanding or approach could potentially weaken under the stresses of those operational processes of implementation. The key point here is that some of the principles that LaGuardia decided upon became the corner posts upon which the core factors are built. Moreover, to under gird its middle college high school concept, LaGuardia steadfastly adhered to principles such as strong emphasis on the affective domain despite challenges and criticisms. A factor such as the decision to be located on a college campus, which served as an important symbolic representation of focusing the students toward success not just in high school but also beyond it, was never compromised. Another example of careful design was the inclusion of college faculty in creating the design and cementing their role in curricular innovations and implementation. This recognition stems from an earlier realization that nothing would be

gained for students suffering from an incompatible high school environment if it were to be traded for an atmosphere of unwelcomeness and hostility on a college campus. Not unexpectedly, some members of the LaGuardia faculty did not receive the concept well. As pointed out by Raymond Bowen, associate dean of the faculty in charge of creating academic programs during the LaGuardia middle college implementation, "We're trying to become a college and you're trying to turn us back into a high school" (as quoted in Wechsler, 2001, p. 31) was the sentiment expressed by some college faculty. Such an expression by college faculty begs for special attention to creating and building commitment from a core constituency of the college community, and it should be noted that one of the key factors in failed replications is the lack of support of the college community, especially from faculty members (Wechsler, 2001). In general, design is a function of implementation. LaGuardia's daunting task was that it had no precedents; therefore, it knew it would become the model that would guide potential replications – indicating the huge assumption that its efforts would result in success.

Chapter 3 underscores as well the commitment from the leadership – public schools, colleges, governing boards, etc. – to see the project as something that must establish itself over a length of time and to view most challenges as "normative problems" (Wechsler, 2001, p. 57). Wechsler borrows sociologist Burton R. Clark's term "organizational saga" to describe "how enthusiasm and energy [sustain] an embryonic innovation until a 'great event'" (p. 55) causes some substantive review or change that ensures long-term success. In LaGuardia's case, this notable event was the total reassessment of the school in its third year. As elementary as it may seem, this point in

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the literature reminds those who embark on the complex project of creating a middle

college high school that visible success will not come over night or even in 2 or 3 years.

Instead, success is more likely to be measured in small and perhaps lagging increments

that must be magnified and capitalized upon until a "great event" presents itself to launch

the project beyond its foundation tier to a second-level phase.

"Replications," Chapter 4 of Wechsler (2001), begins with a then decade-old

LaGuardia Community College Middle College High School that had withstood a

challenged beginning complete with critics as formidable as the governor of New York to

become a stable, visible model "ripe for export" (p. 94). Favorable notice from New York

State Legislature funded five local replications, four of which came to fruition, and

funding from the Ford Foundation encouraged the LaGuardia school's founder, Janet

Lieberman, to set her sights on the national stage. Seven carefully selected sites opened

following the Lieberman model, with the idea that the model must be adopted in total to

avoid the pitfalls experienced by LaGuardia. Five of the seven remained viable a dozen

years later, and in all about 20 additional sites opened during the 1980s and 1990s

(Wechsler, 2001). In the last few years, the concept has gained even greater favor,

spawning variations of a more general nature such as the gathering momentum toward

the generic notion of smaller high schools and "early colleges," a blending of high school

and 2-year colleges resulting in graduates with both high school and associate degrees

after 5 years (*Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Home Page; NSP*).

As Wechsler (2001) suggests, the relative successes of the replication efforts

produce wisdom to guide the planning and implementation of a middle college high

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school. "Examining the state- and Ford-sponsored replications allows us to explore the relationships between 'adopt' and 'adapt,' and how local educators navigated difficult political currents" (p. 94). In summary, Chapter 4 provides the core of implementing the LaGuardia model, providing discussion of the following factors that surfaced as recurring themes: effective planning and leadership, resistance from community college faculty and students (it was also proven that the concept worked least well at 4-year colleges), and administrative relations with host colleges. Additionally, new middle college high schools had to decide whether to "adopt" the entire LaGuardia model, or select components "adaptable" to local conditions. Finally, it had to be considered which path a newly established middle college high school would illuminate as it inevitably took its place as a high school so different that it could avoid neither attention nor suspicion. "Would a lighthouse have ships to guide, that is, promote 'systemic' change in a school district, or would it promote 'threatening' reforms?" (p. 105). For instance, in 1985, the New York State Legislature, impressed with the 10-year success of LaGuardia, funded five replications, one intended for each of the five boroughs. Four were eventually realized, though not all in the locations originally announced. On the other hand, at least one of the replications, International High School, also located at LaGuardia, was accused of "creaming," or siphoning off students the traditional high schools wanted to keep. To combat this charge, admissions criteria were changed to restrict entrance to referred 10th-graders who had scored below a certain percentile on the language assessment battery and who had resided in the United States for less than 4 years.

Successful implementation should either capitalize on positive attention or devise a means to minimize unintended negative response.

In addition to replications in the vicinity of LaGuardia, Chapter 4 goes into a more detailed profile of five successful national replications and of two failed attempts. Much can be gleaned from the seven profiles about what techniques and concepts might be embraced as well as those to avoid. In addition to LaGuardia and the four other New York City middle college high schools, any of the nine successful implementations could be considered hallmark programs and might be studied and visited as part of the planning process for implementing a middle college high school.

Articles

Many useful articles support the assertion that meticulous planning, insightful vision, and a strong and substantive commitment to a collaborative approach between the school system and the community college serve as the foundation for successful implementation of middle college high schools. Cunningham and Wagonlander (2000) summarize this discussion in "Establishing and Sustaining a Middle College High School" in which they outline the basics of what supports success with such initiatives. One of the authors, Cecelia Cunningham, who served as principal of the first middle college high school in the nation and considered a national leader in the movement, emphasizes "that the program cannot be replicated via blueprint – it must be tailored to each site" (Anderson, 2001). With this caveat in mind, Cunningham and Wagonlander

provide a list of concepts that serve as guidelines for successful implementation. They are as follows:

- Collaboratively develop a concept

- Select the liaison and project coordinator

- Prepare a planning budget and secure funding

- Lay foundations for school-based management and internal governance

- Profile and recruit faculty

- Design an instructional program

- Design a holistic, integrated pupil personnel system

- Plan on-going, systematic outreach to parents

- Seek long-term collaborative funding

- Locate and acquire suitable space

- Find ways to mix and match personnel

- Profile, locate, and recruit the right students

- Develop and define an understandable admissions process

- Build a communications network of key constituents

The credibility of the outline provided by Cunningham and Wagonlander is strengthened by the fact that the co-authors have led middle college high schools as principals. From my observations, the items above could serve as a checklist for successful implementation. When overlaid on existing middle college high schools, it can become an assessment instrument that could guide a school in determining its strengths and weaknesses. This suggests my general agreement with the guiding principles as presented

and finds that they are helpful in responding to questions about suitable implementation strategies and how they can be applied to enhance the likelihood of success. However, the list above is more along the lines of a set of strategies that will prove immensely important for most projects but maybe only marginally so for others. Therefore, as will be discussed in Chapter III, such a list as the one above can be sorted and the results merged with other strategies into identifiable core principles that take on "must" status for successful projects.

Sincere collaboration between the public school system and the host college becomes the base as well as over-arching factor in the list of guidelines. As well, it can be argued that some of the principles are integrated and therefore do not constitute a conventional step-by-step method. More specifically, the Cunningham and Wagonlander (2000) article summarizes from the practitioners' point of view (as both are experienced principals of middle college high schools, as has been noted) that *collaboration* from the outset is key to embarking upon a middle college high school. Their experiences emphasize preliminary involvement from the host college, the board of education, and external authorities and consultants. A solid concept paper outlines the proposed school's mission, design, and curricular and learning concepts with the document reviewed by important stakeholders from both institutions. I would suggest other important stakeholders in the preliminary stages – parents and community – that would foster greater parental support once the program is officially implemented and could serve as the genesis for a strong parent support group.

The remainder of the article describes supporting crucial elements in successful implementation. Selecting the *liaison and project director* literally as well as symbolically represents the collaboration between the two systems. The key college liaison must be someone respected by the college's administration and faculty, and the project director must have access to and the trust of school officials and decision makers (Cunningham & Wagonlander, 2000). Both personnel mentioned above play an important role in *planning a budget and securing funding* to provide for space renovations and needs, supplies, support services, and the like, calling on consultants from both institutions to participate in the planning process. The manner in which the college liaison and the project director/principal work together should begin to lay the foundation for a *school-based management and shared governance* approach. Success will depend largely upon a sense of ownership by all participants, and this sense of shared commitment and ownership should come before the school's opening, not as a result of it.

The needs of the specific school proposed will determine the *profiling and recruiting criteria for selecting faculty and staff,* and will be greatly influenced by the school's mission, curricular, and learning frameworks. *Instructional design,* as general as it represents itself, is a prime arena for the school to distinguish itself in terms of intended outcomes and effectiveness. As the authors suggest, the alternative nature of middle college high schools beg for innovative approaches to curricular design and related activities that will provide avenues for success unavailable to the targeted group (Cunningham & Wagonlander, 2000). Another important guiding principle is the "ethic of care" (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2001), which Cunningham and Wagonlander (2000)

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basically describe in their *holistic, integrated pupil personnel system*. At Mott Middle

College High School on the campus of Mott Community College in Michigan, every

teacher "is hired and trained to be an adviser to students first and a teacher of content

second" (Cunningham & Wagonlander, 2000, p. 46).

A plan for *systematic outreach to parents* is expected and encourages both

"paper" and "people" systems. Parents as principal stakeholders in the education of their

children should be involved both as supporters and as partners in the school's design and

ongoing operation. Parental involvement in the earliest stages of conceptualization

promotes deep parental understanding of the school's mission and need to be different

from the traditional high school. Such guiding principles as *seeking long-term*

collaborative funding and *locating and acquiring suitable space* are examples of

elements integrated within other steps. Points about establishing an *easily navigable*

admissions process and *building a communications network of key constituents* I would

consider the most overlooked parts of the process. An admission process perceived as

cumbersome and complicated will likely discourage those students with the most to gain

from an alternative high school approach. Maintaining positive relationships with core

constituents is insurance for possible future resistance and challenges to program

continuance, enhancement, and expansion (Cunningham & Wagonlander, 2000).

Lieberman (1998) provides a more succinct but nonetheless insightful blueprint

on what makes middle colleges work in "Creating Structural Change: Best Practices."

Lieberman's perspective is particularly important to the study of middle college high

school implementation as the original idea evolved from her groundbreaking work in

1973 when she was a professor of psychology at LaGuardia Community College (Cunningham & Wagonlander, 2000). Lieberman's background and experiences prior to 1973 are worth noting in order to appreciate her value to the literature on the subject of middle college high school implementation in particular and to the existence of middle and early colleges in general.

Wechsler (2001) writes about Lieberman's early career, marked by an interest in challenged students and her work as a clinical diagnostician and school psychologist in the New York City public schools. After earning the doctorate, she taught at Hunter College before joining LaGuardia Community College in 1971. Shortly after arriving at LaGuardia, the acting chancellor of the City University of New York (CUNY) asked her to design a program to increase LaGuardia's enrollments. The persistent high school dropout rate and the detrimental effects on CUNY's enrollments sparked his request. What she designed in 1972 and 1973 became LaGuardia Community College Middle College High School, a school designed to create an environment that would provide disengaged high school students a fresh start. Lieberman realized from her teaching at Hunter College, where faculty taught in their homes and elsewhere to prepare education students for their licensure exams, that "other spaces" could be turned into stimulating experiences. Her goal in creating the middle college high school was to offer a flexible and multi-disciplinary "relevant" educational program to students who had, for a variety of reasons, turned off education. While collaborations between public schools and higher educational institutions were nothing new, the concept of a high school located on a college campus was revolutionary, and Lieberman is the leader who pioneered this

design. Therefore, no discussion of middle colleges is complete without recognizing her contributions to the movement.

Lieberman (1998) extracts from her experiences with designing and developing the middle college high school at LaGuardia Community College and prefaces her discussion with a reminder that community colleges were founded to serve as a bridge from secondary schools to institutions of higher learning. Written a quarter century after the birth of the middle college high school concept, Lieberman is able to distill the process of successful establishment and implementation. She reminds those contemplating a middle college model what she and her colleagues validated before embarking on their creative approach to dropout prevention and promoting access to higher education: Students who drop out is not a function of academic inability but rather a function of school structural anomalies such as anonymity, bureaucratic tendency, and irrelevant curriculum and instructional modes. Her focus was on substantive collaboration, not mere partnering, between two systems that were drastically different required "strong leadership at the top and voluntarism in the rank and file . . ." (pp. 13-14). She reports that the LaGuardia project had both elements. Important to note as well is her emphasis on a holistic approach, and after pinpointing the problems of the at-risk student in the traditional high school, she set out to develop an institution that would embody the following:

- Raise expectations

- Enrich the setting

- Reduce fear and anonymity

- Replace failure with success

- Provide a sense of the future

As Lieberman (1998) puts it, "The trick is to embody these abstractions in a practice teaching and learning institution that runs on tax levy money" (pp. 15-16). The point here is that real commitment means a regular and reliable revenue stream; success cannot be dependent upon grant funds that may or may not be available in a few years.

Important to the study of implementation strategies are profiles and case studies of successfully implemented programs. Seminal literature in this category must include articles on LaGuardia Community College Middle College High School since it was the first and is arguably the most successful of the middle college high schools to date. Cullen (1991) is a relatively brief but useful article that serves as an update of sorts on the maturity of the LaGuardia project. At the time of this article's publication, LaGuardia Community College Middle College High School was just a few years shy of its 20th anniversary and had surpassed most expectations its critics had of it. The key elements of successful middle college implementation are referenced in Cullen's "Membership and Engagement at Middle College High School," including such emphases on the definitive factors such as location. Cullen points out that "a community college campus provides a concrete spatial connection to the next stage of learning. Students participate fully in the life of the college, which thereby becomes a realistic goal as well as a motivation for completing high school" (p. 84). She makes references to stable sources of funding – that is, a plan must be in place to replace start-up grant funds with recurring permanent funds in the same manner expected by other high schools within the district. Otherwise,

stability in terms of personnel and services cannot be reasonably ensured, which threatens the eventual long-term success of the project. The article also addresses such critical factors as choosing teachers who are capable of becoming teacher-counselors and putting together the kind of academic team willing to embrace innovative curriculum design. Houston, Byers, and Danner (1992) are an example of a similarly designed report on a middle college high school replication established 15 years after the LaGuardia project. This article details the success of Seattle Middle College High School at Seattle Central Community College, and common factors in design indicate the influence of best practices established by LaGuardia.

In addition to peer-reviewed literature such as the articles discussed above are journalistic accounts that also prove beneficial in exposing successful as well as unsuccessful planning and implementation strategies. A typical example and perhaps among the most accessible in terms of providing a readable overview of the challenges to implementation is Anderson's 2001 article "Middle College High School in Memphis" in which he writes of the genesis and then rocky but eventually successful establishment of the middle college program at Shelby State Community College in 1986. Anderson details many of the problems the school encountered from the college community, especially faculty members, as well as challenges from school officials when funding cuts threatened to close the program. The article legitimizes the principles outlined by Cunningham and Wagonlander (2000) and is a litany of instances of planning flaws that may have been avoided maybe for lack of a well-defined theoretical framework. Inattention to shared governance and insufficient participation on part of the college

faculty proved an almost fatal mistake. As Anderson (2001) points out, "The story of Middle College High in Memphis is one of conflict and collaboration. It is also about perseverance" (p. 43). The latter, coupled with committed and skillful leadership on the part of both the principal and the community college president, salvaged the program and turned it into a successful model with useful lessons for future middle college high school initiatives. Multiple journalistic accounts such as Kelleher (1996) in which she profiles the Olive-Harvey Middle College in Chicago have been written. While second-hand accounts of student and teacher testimonials from newsletters, newspapers, and magazines cannot replace the emotional effect of hearing such narratives in person, articles that attempt to capture the human side of what middle and early colleges have come to mean to students can especially serve to persuade those who are uncertain of whether such a daunting undertaking is worth the effort. Kelleher's article reports students who were dropped from traditional high schools for poor attendance but who chart attendance rates of 97% after enrolling in the middle college. The college environment at Olive-Harvey has had positive effect on a variety of issues, and some perhaps that were not specifically planned, such as students who are now willing to leave their gang culture at the door in order to have the opportunity to attend middle college. The school attributes the college environment with focusing both students and teachers on learning rather than discipline, which seems to have made the difference.

The newspaper and magazine accounts are mostly feature-style stories written for more general audiences but are useful in that they include the words and thoughts of planners, practitioners, students, and other elements of the school community, including

parents. Whether this new style of high school changes students and what they can achieve is what matters; therefore, it is important to hear from those who, in effect, are the experimental group in this elaborate research project called high school reform. Borsuk and Vest (2002), Feemster (2003), Nathan and Myatt (1998), and Schleicher (2003) are other examples of profiles of middle and early college successes.

Websites

Many websites add to the discussion of middle and early college high school thought, design, and implementation, most established as information arms of advocacy projects or as sites for established middle and early college high schools. All sites I have viewed provide some worthwhile information that can be used to inform an implementation initiative, either offering information directly or tangentially related. Websites of selected middle and early college high schools around the country tend to include supporting as well as background information about the middle and early college high school movement useful in providing the context needed in the early stages of sharing the concept with others.

The *Middle College National Consortium Home Page* (www.laguardia.edu/mcnc) website is the site of the organization by the same name and provides the best materials for addressing implementation guidelines for middle colleges. Formed in 1993 with financial support from the Pew Charitable Trusts and the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, the Consortium is a professional development organization for secondary and post-secondary public-sector educators that provides ongoing technical assistance

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and support to both new and established middle college high schools (*Middle College National Consortium Home Page*). LaGuardia Community College houses and maintains the site. Cecelia Cunningham is executive director of Middle College National Consortium and the former principal of the LaGuardia middle college high school. Full access to the site requires an account, and the request is screened before the account is activated. Access to basic information, short articles, and announcements is available without having a user account. Regarding information designed to assist with middle college high school implementation, the site is immensely beneficial and straightforward, though navigating the site can be somewhat cumbersome.

Early College High School Initiative Home Page (www.earlycolleges.org) is one of the more useful of the general websites. It is important to note that the literature now distinguishes between the "middle college" and "early college" concepts. "Early college" is a derivative of the middle college concept in that it combines high school and community college in a structure that graduates its students with both a high school diploma and an associate degree simultaneously. *Early College High School Initiative* offers explanatory information about the movement, including such topics as rationales, implications for educators and policymakers, and attributes of such programs. In terms of research resources about implementation efforts, "Early College Library" provides a list of downloadable articles about various aspects of middle and early colleges as well as related writings on high school reform and secondary/higher education connections. For instance, Lieberman (2004) authors an article on the prerequisites for a successful early college; as has been noted, Lieberman is perhaps the most notable and noticed voice on

the subject. Another important feature of this website as an implementation resource are the links to sources of funding organizations and others supportive of middle and early college initiatives. A variety of organizations either with redesigned high school initiatives under way or in the planning stages are listed as well as foundations interested in funding such initiatives.

Perhaps the most active foundation in promoting high school redesign at the present is the *Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation* (www.gatesfoundation.org), with an accompanying website with a focus on redesigning high schools. The site contains two particularly pertinent sections to middle and early college implementation, "Education" and "Grants." The former provides useful articles on research that supports high school redesign philosophy and summaries of successful models. In 2002, the foundation joined with the Carnegie Corporation, Ford Foundation, and W. K. Kellogg Foundation to fund 70 high school redesign projects aimed at creating smaller high schools to increase high school attendance and graduation rates for disadvantaged youth. The focus of this effort is the creation of early colleges (*Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Home Page).*

As the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation expands its collaborations around the country, its influence is spawning initiatives not just in particular public or higher education systems but in some cases movements that have coalesced into statewide projects. The foundation has made such an impact in North Carolina, which has resulted in The New Schools Project (*NSP*), which is the result of an initiative sponsored by the North Carolina Education Cabinet and the Public School Forum of North Carolina with much publicized support from the State's governor. *The New Schools Project Home Page*

(www.newschoolsproject.org) in some respects is a distillation of the national middle and early college movement, with a decided emphasis on early colleges. The site promotes innovative high school concepts in North Carolina along with listing resources and providing descriptions and updates of current projects funding through NSP. To date, NSP has funded projects to plan, implement, or enhance an existing middle or early college high school. Projects that receive planning funds must re-apply and be approved for implementation funds if the planning project meets with NSP approval. The specific Governor's initiative under the auspices of NSP that funds early college high schools is called Learn and Earn. Existing middle colleges are eligible for enhancement funds, with an emphasis on converting middle college high schools to early colleges. Each funded project is assigned a "coach," and anyone associated with a funded project may register and access a designated portal for coaches and associated members. This particular feature of the site is immensely beneficial to those planning and implementing either middle or early college high schools.

Two points should be emphasized with respect to NSP and its involvement in high school reform in North Carolina. First, NSP is focused not only on the creation of additional high schools, which middle and early college high schools are, but also on high school reform in a more general sense. Toward this end, NSP projects also include restructuring of existing high schools into smaller entities within the same building, for instance, or converting an existing high school into a theme-based school. This study, however, focuses only on the aspects of NSP that deal with early college high schools. With respect to stand-alone projects, as opposed to those that are several schools

organized under one roof, NSP seems to have settled upon a preference for the early

college high school model as opposed to the middle college when an LEA and post-

secondary institution have sought collaborative funds. All of NSP's Learn and Projects to

date have awarded implementation grants to K-12/higher education collaborations that

support either the creation of an early college high school or the conversion of a middle

college to an early college (*NSP*, Current Sites). As a specific example of NSP

collaborative project funds being based upon this condition, the 2004 planning grant

awarded to Chatham County Schools in partnership with Central Carolina Community

College initially supported a middle college high school design. When the

implementation proposal was being prepared a year later, NSP had hardened its position

about which model would likely receive its support, and the project slant was switched

from a middle to early college design (Chatham County New Schools Project Planning

Grant, 2004; Chatham County Early College Grant, 2005).[1]

While sites such as those of funding foundations provide convenient pathways to

basic information and data and access to funding options, websites of individual middle

and early colleges are also beneficial to a planning or implementation team. *Greensboro*

College Middle College Home Page (www.gsomiddlecollege.org) provides a useful

overview of the concept as well as basic implementation basics such as governance,

operational logistics, and staff selection. It also shares a curriculum matrix, which

benefits those at the program planning stages. Most such sites highlight the particular

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[1] The Chatham County Schools Early College High School received a $1.5 million implementation grant from the New Schools Project and was slated to open Fall 2005. By decision of Chatham County Schools, the project has been postponed until further notice and was not operational as of the completion of this study.

middle college high school; however, much can be learned from what is shared about operational procedures, admission criteria for students, programmatic information, and the like. The different high school websites also provide convenient points to notice differing emphases and operational parameters. Testing information provided by one may indicate a greater link to the home school district and required adherence to state-mandated standards, while another may appear more innovative because it has been able to negotiate a less restrictive environment as an innovative high school.

Summary

Even 30 years after the successful inception of the first middle college high school in the nation, the concept is viewed as unique. As has been noted, the literature and resources on the subject can be categorized into the broad headings described within this review, and the literature, even the most recent, still describes the middle and early college high school concepts as bold and innovative. The interest of wealthy foundations in early colleges has slowed the momentum of the middle college concept; still, both concepts are generating more research about the size of high schools and fueling recommendations that small high schools are preferable to larger ones for what could be considered obvious reasons. In my view, the most interesting of the reasons for proliferation of either type innovative high school is the focus on the targeted population of disaffected students. General discussion of the term "disaffected" seems to stereotypically point to minority students who have carded less than stellar academic performance. However, an analysis of the literature tends to define "disaffected" more

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broadly as students with the ability to perform up to academic standards but fail to do so because of a variety of reasons, most notably school environment and societal issues that negate a sense of belonging and capability. More importantly, as Wechsler (2001) points out, the desire for a middle college high school finds its roots in designs for effective schools for other socio-economic groups. In this regard, it can be concluded that what is good for those in the upper socio-economic groups is beneficial for the socio-economically challenged as well.

What, then, are common themes drawn from the literature and supported by established and defunct middle and early college high schools that can be isolated as core principles that support successful implementation and sustainability? It is arguable that the very notion of innovation contradicts the production of a kit-style approach to implementing and sustaining such a high school, and such is not the intent here. The goal is to extrapolate those elements crucial to producing and sustaining the life of a truly innovative and eventually successful project that achieves significant results for students whose likelihood for success – as evidenced by those before them – are much in doubt. The following chapter discusses in depth those common elements of middle and early college high schools that have attained the distinction of unqualified successes. Likewise, one or more of these elements either are absent from or unsuccessfully introduced in less successful projects.

CHAPTER III

A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Overview

Scores of specific successful strategies that have been used to launch an innovative high school can be collected and documented. However, particular projects have employed various and different strategies. The contention here is not so much on strategies at the granular level but on more broad, over-arching concepts and principles that must find a comfortable place in the conceptual design phase of a middle or early college if it is to survive over time and become a fruitful place for those students and their families who have chosen it as the alternative that will make the difference between educational success and failure. Of course, emanating from these broad principles are individual strategies that fit particular projects, their locales, and parameters based on sources of funds, and so on. An operational strategy differs from a core concept in that appropriate strategies spring from the concepts. What is paramount is that any specific strategy unaligned with core concepts may contribute to challenges to success. Likewise, it is the position of this study that insufficient understanding of core concepts and lack of commitment to them are likely to jeopardize a middle or early college high school from the start.

Based upon a review of the literature and an examination of existing, defunct, and proposed middle and early college projects that never materialized, concepts most closely

associated with what went right or wrong with these projects can be categorized as the following: understanding the target population and the mission of the school, a belief in a creative and even radical approach to curriculum content as well as delivery, a commitment to structural changes, a firm understanding of the legal and ethical considerations, and, to some degree, an understanding of the political realities and the fortitude to navigate and withstand them.

Understanding the Target Population: An Emphasis on the Affective

> *"There were too many students in the high school I went to before. The teachers only had time for the motivated ones. It's a lot harder here. These teachers, they see all of your strong points, all your weak points, everything." — Freddie (Learning in a new key 2003)*

The students intended to benefit from the establishment of middle and early college high schools are generally considered "disaffected" in some way. Therefore, middle and early college high schools on college campuses are blended in a way to address not only academic needs of students but their affective needs as well. More specifically, the purpose of middle and early college high schools is to address and to dim the resentfulness disaffected students have developed toward their traditional high school in particular and toward education in general. This negativity often leads to disengagement from the school culture and even to low academic performance or behavior resulting in involuntary removal from the regular school setting. It should be noted, however, that the targeted students possess the capacity to negotiate the high school curriculum and are selected for middle or early college programs because they have also exhibited the potential to perform adequately in college classes. For reasons

other than academic ones, these students become low achievers in the traditional school setting and often become dropouts. Some enter GED and adult high school programs or, in too many cases, fail to earn a high school credential. Ironically, an appropriate introduction to the profile of such students may be through the impersonal aspect of numbers. As is obvious, statistics and other hard data come in a variety of ways from a variety of sources and can produce varying degrees of alarm, depending upon one's perspective on and level of passion for the social justice function of education.

For the purposes of this study, the most logical context would probably define its starting point as the number of students who begin their ninth-grade year and how many of them earn the high school diploma 4 years later. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2003), of the nearly 13.92 million students enrolled in grades 9 through 12 in 1998, 29.2% of them, or nearly 3.9 million, were ninth graders. Four years later, in 2001, those 3.9 million students had shrunk by almost 1 million students, to about 2.9 million students entering the 12th grade. Viewed another way, tracking the number of students lost from one grade level to the next in either 1998, 1999, or 2000 shows that about 1 million students did not enter the next level. This does not mean that all of these students dropped out, as, no doubt, some were retained, others put into alternative settings, others incarcerated perhaps, and still a small percentage deceased.

The U.S. Census Bureau, the same source on which National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) bases its data, reports U.S. high school graduation at an all-time high, with 85% of those 25 years old and older having completed a high school diploma in 2003 (Longley, 2004). Some researchers such as Greene and Winters (2005)

dispute the data analyses from NCES and the U.S. Census Bureau and argue that statistics presented by government agencies are often the most unreliable. The Greene and Winters study reports only those students who earn regular high school diplomas, whereas the government statistics include students who receive GEDs. Greene and Winters point to data that show dropouts and GED recipients share similar limited opportunities in society, which dampens the often-touted assertion that the GED and the traditional high school diploma are viewed as equals. According to Greene and Winters, basic computations of the number of ninth graders entering public education in 1998, for instance, and the number of regular diplomas awarded 4 years later show a graduation rate of about 68%. Therefore, depending upon how the numbers are crunched and what parameters are used, the most recent high school graduation rate reported ranges between 68% and 85% (Greene & Winters, 2005; Longley, 2004).

Still, other sources report more disturbing numbers. Put yet another way, as a snapshot of every 100 students who enter the ninth grade and their level of education they have attained 10 years later, Callan and Finney (2003) provide summary statistical data that beg for concern. Of every 100 students who enroll in ninth grade nationwide, 67 graduate from high school. Thirty-eight of those 67 will enter a post-secondary program, and only 26 of those are still enrolled after their sophomore year. Six years after entering college, 18 of those original 100 ninth graders have graduated with either an associate or bachelor's degree. This means that in a 10-year span, from ninth grade to 6 years of college enrollment, only 18% of those original 100 students have attained a benchmark higher educational credential.

The numbers may cause a blur, but what remains clear is that students who do not move through the "system" as intended are those who become defined by the single adjective that changes over time – "at-risk," "underserved," "disengaged" and the current catch term, "disaffected." Ironically, no matter those successes our public education system can claim, it is more defined by its failures, one of which is its inability to find ways to serve those students at the margins. Those students targeted by middle and early college high school initiatives fall into the category of the marginalized, and as some nontraditional approaches to high school have addressed time and again, students often do not achieve as we wish for reasons totally unrelated to lack of intellectual ability. Students whose life struggles are further complicated by a school experience marked by a sense of uncaring, not belonging, low expectations, and irrelevancy are likely to turn off their education. Optimists would claim that these students have always had the potential to achieve; the real challenge has been finding a way to serve them better.

As an established, definable entity blending high school and college, first came the early college. In 1966, a former headmistress of a private girls' school in Concord, Massachusetts, acted on her belief that the high school years provided too few academic challenges. Elizabeth Blodgett Hall's visionary concept became realized at Simon's Rock College in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, a residential college where affluent high school students received a liberal arts education and earned an associate degree. Simon's Rock College began offering the bachelor's degree in 1974, and about this time educators in New York City decided that low-income minority students not realizing their academic potential might benefit from the Simon's Rock approach (Jacobsen, 2005). New York's

concept was the Middle College High School at LaGuardia Community College, which owes it genesis to the expectations of a fledgling community college, the newest in the City University of New York system, to offer innovative solutions to urban education problems. Like early college, middle college also found its physical presence on a college campus and both are based upon similar principles, the main distinction being the credential the student earns. Both nontraditional high schools aim to provide students with a different, more supportive environment with access to higher education that hopefully encourages them to continue on to earn a higher education credential.

At the time the LaGuardia middle college high school was conceived, as few as 40% of New York City's students finished high school, with only 25% of those enrolling in a post-secondary institution. Janet Lieberman, who pioneered the middle college concept, understood the result of such attrition rates, which obviously lowered the admission rate to higher education institutions. She became the designer of the response when officials of the university system, which also encompassed the community colleges, ordered LaGuardia to fashion a plan that would encourage adolescents to stay in high school and consider college. Lieberman's (1998) research of the problem that led her to the middle college design revealed the following:

> The highest proportion of dropouts in urban schools occurs in 9th and 10th grades. Dropping out is less an inability of students to negotiate the curriculum and more a function of the structural anomalies of anonymity, bureaucracy, and irrelevancy. Developmental psychology suggested that fifteen-year-olds shared more in common with eighteen-year-olds than with twelve-year-olds, thus supporting a structure that would provide a seamless high school to college transition. Private educational settings had already established the feasibility of combining high school and the initial years of college. (pp. 13-14)

In every middle or early college high school that I have visited, read about, or worked with, it can be said that the school missions are written for those students who have turned off or tuned out their education and who have exhibited the potential to master the curriculum content but have not. Such students have developed attendant characteristics such as disruptive tendencies and chronic absenteeism, perhaps precipitated by their disengagement from an educational process that apparently has not served them well. The Middle College High School at Greensboro College in association with the Guilford County Schools in Greensboro, North Carolina, includes the following language in its mission statement: ". . . to re-engage and graduate high school juniors and seniors who have become disengaged from the traditional high school or are unsuccessful or dissatisfied in a traditional high school setting" (*Greensboro Middle College Home Page*). Also sponsored by the Guilford County School System, Middle College at Bennett College, a 4-year, all-women's college, focuses on providing "an academic and nurturing environment . . . where aspiring high school female students who have experienced social and academic challenges can succeed" (*Middle College at Bennett Home Page*). The program hosted by Forsyth Technical Community College in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, devotes its existence to offering a student-centered experience "focused on individual choices – academic and vocational – leading to a high school diploma and a successful future" (*Middle College of Forsyth County Home Page*). Though distinct differences can be discerned in the profile of the specific target groups of the three middle college high schools above, the core language of each mission statement acknowledges a disconnect with the target group and the traditional high school setting.

Even the choice of conjunctions – "and" rather than "or" – when referencing "academic" and "vocational" in the Forsyth statement is telling. This choice of words connotes that this middle college high school views the two types of curricula as equals rather than one preferred above the other. It is fitting that such a distinction, or rather the lack of one, between curricula would be viewed in this manner, as historically many community colleges owe their existence to local secondary school systems devising a way to extend vocational education beyond high school.

Regarding a focused response to whether the generic (if there is such a thing) middle or early college high school student is primarily the "disaffected" student, the answer would be yes. Cullen (1991) defines the middle college high school as one that blends the high school and the college to create "a collaborative structure that promotes school membership and academic engagement" (p. 83). Inherent in this basic definition is the concept of belonging, and connecting implies relevancy. A theme that runs throughout research-based key components of successful school reform is re-acculturation that focuses on rigor and relevance connected to students' interest, learning styles, abilities, and needs (International Center). Taken in context with one of the obvious goals of this innovative approach to high schooling – to increase the graduation and college-going rate – both middle and early college high schools continue to score major successes. By 1998, the 31 middle colleges across the country recorded a student retention rate of 85%, with 75% of their seniors graduating and 78% of those enrolling in college. With the average graduation rate of 25% for most inner city high schools, and even less than that number of traditional community college students transferring to 4-

year institutions, it becomes hard to argue with the success of the middle and early college concepts (Lieberman, 1998). Hoff (2003) reports that of the 4,500 students enrolled in 1999-2000 in the 31 middle colleges associated with the Middle College High School National Consortium, 41% took college classes with a 97% pass rate. All of these colleges were established to serve at-risk and disaffected students.

What do these innovative high schools understand about some students that their traditional high schools do not? They understand that belonging, positive relationships, and authentic relevancy matter for some students as much as a superior curriculum and the most well credentialed teachers. At the core of the concepts is a careful and deliberate consideration of how best to serve the student – and this approach in itself is affective. Toward further definition of the target student group, the original designer of this innovative approach to high school, Janet Lieberman, implemented the "house" concept, modeled after successful plans at such colleges as Harvard and Yale. The "house" went far beyond the traditional homeroom and was meant to create small "families" that would engender cooperative learning and a kind of group dynamics that would counteract the propensity for lost identity and therefore disaffection found in the large high schools. Additionally, Lieberman counted on the "house" to "insulate students from detrimental elements in the community, although this rationale was not mentioned in most documents" (Wechsler, 2001, p. 41). Apparently, she recognized the risk in making the family and social structure of the mostly minority students in the new high school as the centerpiece for her rationale and feared that her motives would be misunderstood as stereotyping minority families as dysfunctional (Wechsler, 2001). It is easily understood

the tightrope she walked, as a program intending to impact high dropout rates would more than likely involve more Hispanics and African-American students. Recent widely cited studies, for instance, show that graduation rates for blacks and Hispanics are just above 50% (Klein, 2005). However, much existed to support her basis for considering, however veiled, that life's circumstances had in many instances severely curtailed the ability of working-class and minority parents to be involved in their children's education. Lieberman, therefore, put much stock in the community college and took advantage of its structure of being open from early morning to late evening as a means of developing an alternative "home" (Wechsler, 2001). As an observation, and not meant to be cynical, is that if the "house" concept were beneficial for the highest socio-economic groups, then why would the same approach not benefit those most in need of a structure that would facilitate and nurture an intimate educational experience?

Even stronger evidence that the high school reform movement should consider affective development as a crucial element in addressing student needs is the redefined concept of the teacher's role. From the beginning, Lieberman and the designers blended the concept of the teacher and counselor – in effect, creating a teacher-counselor – as a key component in achieving the desired results from at-risk youth. This concept met with much resistance from teachers who felt uncomfortable in negotiating counseling responsibilities that they felt required formal expertise to union officials who feared the loss of counselor positions if the concept took hold (Wechsler, 2001). However, the most well-established and successful middle and early college high schools have made some aspect of the teacher-counselor a core principle of its operation. Cunningham and

Wagonlander (2000) encapsulate this principle by recognizing that sustaining a middle college high school (and I would add that this also applies to the early college as well) requires an integrated pupil personnel system and sum it up in this way: "An educated adult can provide much informal guidance, while formal counseling must be left to trained professionals. Most important, systems must ensure that students are always in close contact with adults who keep track of their successes and failures" (p. 46).

Beyond merely tracking successes and failures is guiding students toward capitalizing on the former and learning from the latter. Social, mental, emotional, and cognitive development that takes place during the high school years is but a section of the spectrum of development that continues throughout life. In some respects, disaffection can be linked to numerous and lingering failures – whatever the reason – that go unchallenged and therefore lead to lack of persistence. Completing high school is an act of persistence. Continuing to college is a choice that leads to another act of persistence of earning the post-secondary credential. In most cases, neither is achieved without challenges. Chesley (1998, 2005) says that "[t]wo essential characteristics mark the behaviors and mindsets of people who are considered resilient. These are having a sense of personal power and control over life's events and the capacity to make meaning through a role model." Faculty and staff who embody this affective component of the theoretical framework are more likely to take into consideration the students' need for authentic involvement in charting their success, and such faculty and staff will therefore more naturally accept their place as role models, both in terms of who they are as well as how they go about their work and interaction with one another as a professional team.

Such is the role and power of every adult associated with the middle and early college and is a crucial sub-component of the affective approach in the theoretical framework.

Though it can certainly be argued that the most public face of at-risk students may be that of the minority and the working-class, it must be noted that disaffection travels all along the social spectrum. While the typical middle or early college student is likely to have failed multiple foundation classes and been truant, the comprehensive profile of the student is likely to vary from community to community. A school such as LaGuardia drawing from mostly inner city high schools is likely to be mainly minority and from working-class families (Cunningham & Wagonlander, 2000). Forsyth Middle College in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, on the other hand, serves students from all of the system's 10 high schools, and the school generally reflects the demographics of the county's population. Students from private schools also seek admission into middle college high school at Forsyth Tech, as I observed during my tenure as the arts and sciences dean there when the middle college was established. However the target group is defined, it is crucial that students are properly selected, according to Cunningham and Wagonlander (2000), to prevent an undesirable obvious distinction between the students in the blended school and the students at the host college. A student profile of socio-economic and academic histories paralleling those of the host college nurtures the likelihood of such desirable associated services as mentoring possibilities.

In North Carolina, the New Schools Project aimed at reforming high schools through grant support for schools that partner with higher education institutions clearly requires funded schools to serve a student population that mirrors the district's

demographics (*NSP*). The literature produced by the New Schools Project and Learn and Earn seems to deliberately stay away from language that would suggest that the State's high school system is failing a particular segment of society. Indeed, the suggestion seems to be that the statistics showing that 40 of every 100 North Carolina students who enter ninth grade will not graduate is a systemic problem, and not one that can be coded according to sociological terminology. One thing is clear, however, and it is that no research is required to assert with assurance that all parents – no matter the socio-economic status or ethnicity – would prefer a high school graduate to a dropout. Put another way, no group holds a monopoly on suffering disaffection and its consequences; therefore, middle and early college high schools are most often designed to serve any student who can benefit from what they have to offer. George Johnson, principal of the Forsyth Middle College at Forsyth Technical Community College, warns that it is not easily seen who his middle college high school is really serving, and his school's profile includes every sort of student that can be found in the system. He points also to some positive unforeseen consequences the students from the more economically advantaged groups bring to his school such as gateways to outside resources that working-class families cannot provide as readily. The fact that students from very wealthy families are accessing middle and early colleges shows that no demographic is immune from turning off their education.

It becomes clear that attempts to reform the high school into a more effective institution is a response to the 3,000 students per day on average who become high school dropouts, as Henry reports (as cited in Houston, Byers, & Danner, 1992). This alarming

number does not appear to have changed appreciably, as recent reports would indicate (National Center; Greene & Winters, 2005). Therefore, much of the focus of this discussion has been determining a general profile of the student served by the rising wave of high school reform devoting much of its attention to creating small environments with more emphasis on affective development. To draw the profile is not sufficient, as a school team must be assembled with the knowledge, skill, and will to address the needs of the targeted population. The classically trained principal or the teacher with the greatest knowledge set will not automatically fill the needs of a high school really designed with the needs of its students in mind. What happens in the case of either the re-acculturation or the formation of a high school to meet the needs of disaffected students can find appropriate parallels in scenes from the 1980s' film *Lean on Me* (Avildsen, 1989), though what happens in real life will not play out so dramatically.

Principal Joe Clark as portrayed by Morgan Freeman in the film is not as tyrannical as he is intolerant of those factors that prevent his high school from breeding success throughout its body of students. He understands the American institution of education as an ideal to strive toward and realizes that he must create an environment that produces belonging and relevance for its students. Those students he determines beyond his capacity to reach he eradicates from the school, thus the famous scene in the auditorium during an assembly in which he literally stages the expulsion of the most incorrigible students. Likewise, he refuses to tolerate incompetent or uncaring teachers and staff, offering no allegiance to longevity, race, or popularity and therefore replaces those who either are unproductive or do not care to be productive with personnel of his

choosing. Even in defiance of the fire code, he padlocks the doors each day to prevent the

thugs from returning and stands down all challengers with the help of his trademark

baseball bat. These acts and others, I contend, are acts of daring and risk-taking that are

ultimately acts of caring, as they are all intended to create an atmosphere that is safe,

secure, and conducive to building rigor, relevance, and self-esteem. Perhaps no one

among the school staff is more affectively inclined than the rough-hewn Clark, evidenced

in another scene when one of the male students earlier discharged as one of the

incorrigibles waits for him outside the school and begs for another chance. What does

Clark do? He realizes the sincerity in the young man, especially taken with the fact that

the student has been afraid to share his expulsion with his mother, a sign that he is not

beyond the point of salvation. This leads to another famous scene on the roof of the

school in which Clark challenges the boy either to be serious about his request or jump

from the roof, metaphorically stating the student's likely bad end unless he is serious

about turning his life around. In that scene as well as the one that leads to it, it becomes

apparent that Principal Clark sees an earlier version of himself in that student, which

means he realizes that seemingly lost causes can sometimes be found. Indeed, Clark is

dealing with a school full of disaffected students, and the holistic approach he uses to

address the problems obviously must include affective elements.

Whether the affective needs of students are enough to justify the growth of the

integrated presence of high school students into college life is being challenged. The dean

of the School of Education at the Indiana University at Bloomington, Gerardo M.

Gonzalez, points to the rapid growth of early college high schools and contends that too

little research exists to justify the trend and questions whether the blending of high school and college warrants the traditional college experience early college high school students will not get (Jacobsen, 2005). Timothy Nealon, the first principal of Dayton Early College Academy on the campus of the University of Dayton in Ohio, disagrees and adopts another view: "I don't think we have the luxury of trying to play it out the old traditional way. The classic model of remediation just doesn't work. I believe in my heart if the child makes the personal commitment to learn and they are pushed in the process, we can expect more from them" (as quoted in Jacobsen, 2005, p. A38). The executive director of the National Dropout Prevention Center, Jay Smink, agrees with Nealon and says traditional high schools, for whatever reasons, do not adjust readily to the variety of students who attend them (Silberman, 2005b).

Along with academic rigor and content relevance, it appears that the affective emphasis practiced in middle and early college high schools makes a difference to the students. Comments of middle college high school students in Guilford County, North Carolina, are typical of feedback from students in the approximately 100 middle and early college high schools currently in existence across the country. A 17-year-old says she felt lost and out of place. Another student interprets the calls he receives at home or to his mother as feeling wanted as a member of the school community (Silberman, 2005a). Schools like the University of Dayton's Early College Academy reports a 97% daily attendance rate compared to 86% of Dayton's public high schools (Jacobsen, 2005). Cotton (1996) indicates that the research shows that Dayton's experience is not isolated and that the high school reform principle that replaces large schools with small ones

shows improved attendance rates at the small schools. A more engaged student – brought about by caring relationships that students can count on as the norm – tends to translate into improved graduation and college-going rates as well.

An attempt to typify the middle and early college student courts the interesting question of whether the disaffection in high schools is purely an American phenomenon, and the answer is clearly no. Indeed, as Riley and Rustique-Forrester (2002) suggest, the concern about the disaffected student is a universal one. Their book, *Working with Disaffected Students*, is a study mainly of the plight of at-risk youth in the British educational system. However, the topics they write about and the points they make could very well be about any struggling high school in America. Connections that teachers and pupils must make, the educational achievement gaps between the majority population and ethnic communities, and the thoughts of too many students who feel no relevance between the curriculum and preparation for work after high school are just a few of the many instances researched and discussed that prove that the disaffected student knows no geographical boundaries. School systems in the United States and elsewhere are challenged by those students who, for some reasons we understand and for some we do not, have turned off their education. With respect to schooling at the high school level, the middle and early colleges – with emphasis on small learning environments, rigor, relevance, and attention to affective development – have proven successful and worth replicating. It provides one answer to the question of "Why do students lose interest in school and what can we do about it?"

A Commitment to Creative Curriculum: Relevancy Rules

> *"In my old school I did little pieces of everything, but it didn't really stick to my brain. Pieces aren't enough." — Maya (Learning in a new key, 2003)*

> *"A curriculum of academic and vocational integration would require autonomy for individual schools and teachers to develop their own programs free from bureaucratic regulations. . . . A district's role in the critical integrated curriculum envisioned here would be consultative and facilitative . . . ." (Kincheloe, 1995, p. 273).*

Generally speaking, creative curriculum theory does not run alongside the

Tylerian approach of a centrally planned curriculum (though I would contend that the

Tylerian method might be applied more simply and blindly than Professor Tyler

intended). Henderson and Hawthorne (2000) reference the state-controlled (and now

federal with the advent of No Child Left Behind) system of approved goals and

objectives accompanied by learning activities for all schools as a one-size-fits all scheme

that does not yield the desired results. A creative curriculum seeks to put the student at

the center of the learning and therefore begins with a set of questions, tantamount to

"action research," no less concerned with outcomes and student performance but toward

goals of student engagement in learning and the application of what is learned. Moreover,

a creative curriculum, as well as creative pedagogy, respects front-line involvement – that

of the student, the teacher, the parent, the community – in determining what is worth

learning and engaging ways to learn it.

I would suggest that a firm ground rule for a creative curriculum approach for a

middle or early college high school, both structures firmly grounded and dependent upon

a collaborative philosophy in order to exist, would be strict adherence to democratic

school governance. A truly innovative curriculum will involve those who will benefit the most from it – the students. North Carolina's New Schools Project has adopted the Middle College National Consortium's guiding principles as markers for the path it is paving. Those principles ask that everyone's voice be heard and respected, including that of administrators, teachers, parents, students, and other constituency interested in the well-being of the school and its results (*NSP*).

The starring role the curriculum plays in whether middle and early colleges take hold cannot be over-emphasized. It could be argued that curriculum design becomes the hallmark of innovation for the different and more positive experience a middle or early college is supposed to mean for those for whom it is established. To press further, the curriculum design of the high school is likely to speak volumes about the seriousness of the collaborators, especially public school leaders, in determining the lengths they will go in assuring a truly innovative school designed to meet the needs of its students rather than the prevailing system. Indeed, if curriculum and its associated parts are the heart of the school, can a middle or early college high school be any healthier for the disconnected student if it merely transplants into the body an already unhealthy organ?

This means, too, that conceiving of a middle or early college with pre-determined notions of what the curriculum must be may doom the initiative from the start. Creative curriculum development begins with a system of complex questions, and I agree with Joseph (2000) and the assertion that "The strength of commonplace heuristic is its facility for generating questions for understanding curriculum" (p. 8). The questions cited from Beyer and Apple (as cited in Joseph, 2000) provide a framework for understanding a

particular curriculum, its aims, and, in my view, how close it really comes to being what

its creators intended. The areas the questions address are the following: epistemological,

political, economic, ideological, economic, technical, aesthetic, ethical, and historical

(Beyer & Apple, as cited in Joseph, 2000). Giroux (1980) asks similar questions in his

discourse on dialectics, as does Slattery (1995) when he asserts that curriculum plays a

role in "creating a democratic educational vision" (p. 194) that is essential in critical

theory. These various questions serve as a means of scrutinizing the curriculum critically,

as should be the case. *Epistemologically* speaking, what should count as knowledge?

What is worth knowing? Who should teach it (high school teachers, college teachers,

both)? How should it be taught? What materials will be used? What are appropriate ways

to assess student learning? Not only should these sorts of questions be asked and

investigated when designing a curriculum, it is only ethical to do so.

Shapiro and Stefkovich (2001) describe the ethic of critique as resisting the ethic

of those in power. ". . . [T]hese scholars challenge the status quo by seeking an ethic that

will deal with inconsistencies, formulate the hard questions, and debate and challenge the

issues" (p. 13). While Shapiro and Stefkovich may have focused their discussion on the

decision-making process and practices of educators, what they phrase as the "ethic of

care" extends to the manner in which educators make decisions about curriculum, how it

is developed, and what it contains. Scholars such as Kincheloe (1995) have reminded

their audiences that the *modern* high school, including the manner in which it deals with

curriculum design, is not so different from what John D. Philbrick, a proponent of what

Tyack (1974) calls "the one best system," would promote in school structure and

curriculum, which would be continued strivings to shape the system into a one-size-fits-all institution. Wrote Philbrick in 1885, school "is for the imposition of tasks; if the pupil likes it, well; if not, the obligation is the same" (as quoted in Tyack, 1974, p. 40). The obligation may be the same, but the results are not.

Accepting the premise that a creative curriculum approach is a major component to successful middle and early college implementation and sustainability, what is the core element of that design? To designate content, or even to prefer one pedagogical strategy to another, is not the point. To do so would be antithetical to a creative curriculum approach. The point is, however, that the heart of learning – which is the curriculum – extends well beyond content. To such an end, curriculum is multi-faceted and multi-layered, and what is to be learned is inextricably tied to whether the learners find the curriculum worthwhile along with the manner in which it is presented. Planning research that informed the nation's first middle college high school clearly showed that the dropout rate was far less a function of students' inability to master the academic content and much more a function of "school structural anomalies: anonymity, bureaucracy, and *irrelevancy* [italics added]" (Lieberman, 1998, p. 14).

What has worked from the start with middle and early colleges is a curriculum approach that strives for relevancy. Clearly, innovative, creative curriculum planning, which leads to the issue of what type of curriculum provides the greatest chance for success, is a key implementation strategy. The only constant in developing a curriculum is to design it with the students in mind. Gause (2003) sums up this philosophy in stating that any approach to a successful academic program must create the capacity to deliver an

instructional program where students are the primary focus. "Teachers, bus drivers, cafeteria staff, building administrators, and hall monitors should have as their foci student development. This concern consists of emotional, mental, cognitive, and social paradigms" (Gause, 2003). A small high school with the theoretical base described herein has better potential of achieving what Gause suggests.

Standardization and efficiency cannot continue their prominent positions in curriculum development if the educational experience is to become relevant. More importantly, the curriculum should not favor any one "traditional goal," often part of the hidden agenda of most curricula, over any other "traditional goal." Most high schools exist to provide students either college preparation or work skills. In doing so, as Kincheloe (1995) points out, the majority of "students leave school without the academic or vocational skills necessary for successful employment" (p. 251). His greater point is that students need both – and perhaps they always have. Societal forces, however, may have decided otherwise. Therefore, what we have come to know as nontraditional schools, such as middle and early college high schools, rigorously combat compartmentalized curriculum models with interdisciplinary approaches and a conscious blending of academic and vocational skills as a means of making what they teach relevant.

The curriculum designers at LaGuardia Community College's middle college high school were careful to provide relevancy through the curriculum and may have been ahead of their time with the inclusion of cooperative work experiences, for instance.

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However, the program would not become a "narrow" vocational school. Nor did the planners find college preparation incompatible with job placement (Wechsler, 2001).

Curricular design considerations should take advantage of the nontraditional high school's experimental status. Of middle college high schools, Cunningham and Wagonlander (2000) write that a program's reputation as new provides an expectation that it "can achieve designs beyond the means of older schools" (p. 45). Middle College High School at LaGuardia Community College can claim its curriculum design as one of its most replicated features. Consequently, most middle college high schools require completion of an internship program, modeled after LaGuardia's core cooperative education component, thereby linking education to work opportunities (Cunningham & Wagonlander, 2000; Wechsler, 2001). Mott Middle College High School in Flint, Michigan, has the distinction of every one of its courses having been created either by a group of administrators and teachers or as the result of national projects focusing on curricular innovation. The high school resists a one-size-fits-all placement model. Instead, placement is based on skill level, mastery of knowledge, and credit distribution needs. Instruction is facilitative, which respects what students already know. Courses are interdisciplinary in nature, and college credit courses are fused into the curriculum as part of the sequencing (Cunningham & Wagonlander, 2000).

A particular curricular trend that runs throughout most middle and early college high schools is Kincheloe's concept of academic and vocational integration. The Los Angeles Trade-Technical College service area has since 1993 worked to forge successful partnerships with high schools. The emphasis has been on academic and vocational

partnerships, the heart of which is the curriculum itself (Chen, et. al, 2000). North Carolina's New Schools Project has as its goal to create small, effective high schools with an emphasis on early colleges. The project's marketing moniker is "Learn and Earn Schools" and encourages creative curriculum designs that blend academic and vocational skills structured in a 9 to 13 model culminating in the community college associate degree upon completion. An examination of the NSP web site suggests a goal based upon boosting and sustaining the economic health of the State and obviously believes that a well-prepared workforce is one of the major keys. Consider the following goals listed on its site:

- **Advocate** for high school innovation that will strengthen local economies and future prospects for graduates;

- **Facilitate**, with key partners, a consensus-building approach to defining the next generation of North Carolina high schools to ensure that all students graduate prepared for work and college; and

- **Invest**, along with private and governmental sources, in the planning and implementation of small high schools that actively engage students in real-world, applied learning.

As well intended as this statewide initiative may be, it is still a prescriptive method that could tempt a myopic government to align too readily with a trend-setting business sector. After all, manufacturing a pharmaceutical product is still manufacturing. The discussion centers upon not whether the manufacturing industry is defunct but rather what is being manufactured and the increased level of education

and critical thinking skills required to work in today's high technology manufacturing settings. The language being used by the New Schools Project is, no doubt, what the business community wants to hear. One wonders, though, what detours might be constructed if the liberating nature of higher education should cause too many workers being trained for the "new economy" to think more deeply and therefore connect higher education to more upward mobility. A better-educated worker could be a destabilizing element in the workforce of the modern manufacturing company, in that such a dynamic might invite into the curriculum strategies to conform students rather than truly educate them.

Unintended consequences or not, statistics that show 40 of every North Carolina 100 ninth graders failing to earn a high school education in 4 years and only 19 of that same 100 earning an associate or bachelor's degree within 6 years of high school graduation scream for attention in some fashion. Refreshingly, the North Carolina project does not place all the blame on the students and their parents and whatever circumstances that may have befallen them. To the contrary, the underlying theme seems to be providing creative solutions that may work for those 40 students who are not reaching graduation. North Carolina's dropout rate and the number of students who earn post-secondary degrees align with national data, which are 18 of every 100 ninth graders achieving a college degree 10 years later (Callan & Finney, 2003).

In the vein of the LaGuardia designers, the Learn and Earn concept favors neither academic nor vocational education, but sees value in both. A curriculum that treats them as mutually supportive and integrated prepares the student to choose a path – rather than

having a path chosen for the student. The NSP says the following about the innovative high schools it intends to spawn over the next few years: "Each school will enjoy greater flexibility in its use of time and resources and create unique approaches to develop an integrated approach to learning that is relevant to the local economy and academically rigorous" (*NSP*). This notion assumes an understanding that students who have perceived of curriculum content or pedagogy as irrelevant arrived at this perception through exposure to curriculum and pedagogical practices that rang false. Indeed, as Kincheloe (1995) eloquently states it, "A critical pedagogy that integrates academic and vocational education rejects not only the isolated focus of traditional schooling but refuses to ignore the understandings already present in a student's head" (p. 256).

Historically, the high school as an institution has tended to sort students to their "suited" paths in life. As the village school gave way under the rising influence of what Tyack (1974) labeled as the "administrative progressives," education reform beginning in the late 19th century bent toward centralization and an efficiency that quested to match educational outcomes with business, economic, and societal needs (not unlike what we see today). A leading critic of education at the time, Charles Eliot, president of Harvard University, stressed a stratification of civilized society, which he explained as four layers. At the top was a thin upper layer of intellectuals and thinkers; followed by a second tier of skilled workers, whose growth would be tied to technology advances; then a third level of the commercial class who worked in buying, selling and distribution of goods; and finally the lower stratum, the "thick fundamental layer" of people in domestic work, agriculture, and so on. Eliot pointed out that the educational system should be on the

lookout for the "talented child" in the lower layers and that the nature of democracy would foster movement from a lower level to a higher one. In the main, though, schooling should be organized "to give each layer its own appropriate form of schooling." (p. 129). Eliot's thinking may have been considered progressive during his time, but that makes it no less questionable.

In my estimation, vestiges of Eliot's peculiar layering scheme remains with us today, and the unsurprising result of such thought is commonly known as "tracking," with courses of like label – general, vocational, college prep, and their derivatives – cemented into a corresponding curriculum paradigm that wears the label of those courses from which it is comprised. In more recent times, school systems have downplayed the term *tracking* because of the stigma it has developed. Villaverde (2003) warns of the use of language in the proliferation of tracking, and, indeed, creative terminology such as *career pathways* has taken hold, as is the case in today's North Carolina high schools. In reality, *pathways*, too, constitute a system of tracking – but distinguished by the fact that it can be claimed that students and their parents decide which track to choose – which is true. What happens when a student is attracted to different types of courses? In a traditional high school in which tracks and pathways are paved and designated as one way, students can move in one direction only, and changing paths when it is determined the direction is wrong is very difficult to do.

As would be expected, the courses labeled college preparatory have taken on elitist attributes, usually called "academic," in order to distinguish them from such courses as automotive mechanics, in a manner that implies that vocational courses do not

require academic know-how. In many of today's high schools, to be sure that the distinction between the so-called academic and vocational is clear, the *really* academic courses, sometimes called "honors courses," earn more quality points than other courses. This means that student achievements in automotive classes, for instance, may be officially viewed as less important than those achievements in the college preparatory courses.

The practice of tracking, which Villaverde (2003) asserts remains "a consistent practice throughout this nation's high schools" (p. 80), and its consequences beg for the consideration of academic and vocational curricula that would more than co-exist but blend in a transparent manner. The community college as the host site for the majority of middle and early colleges may very well offer the best chances to realize a truly revolutionary effect on high school curriculum design, especially in terms of de-stigmatizing vocational education and bringing academic skills to their proper place alongside employability skills, not ahead of them. The obvious reason is the community college's historical place as a community institution and its shape-shifting ability to morph into what a community needs at a particular time. With most community colleges owing their upbringing to local boards of education that sought ways to provide post-secondary vocational training to its communities, a precedent exists for the two systems to collaborate. Moreover, the fact that academic programs and vocational programs already exist together at community colleges, and *academic* courses are sequenced along with *technical* and *vocational* courses, the community college may be the best incubator for the maturation of a blended academic and vocational curriculum.

While most of this discussion has been a theoretical plea for the consideration of creative curriculum planning as a necessary implementation strategy for the nontraditional high school, it also intends to say that what qualifies as creative and innovative depends upon the systems and communities involved. The large, urban environment may call for a different kind of curriculum than that needed for a city or county of one high school with 2,500 students. A large school may decide to reorganize into several smaller high schools under the same roof with a different curriculum designed to meet the needs of the school's mission and target population. A system of three relatively small high schools may determine a need for a middle or early college high school that may offer an alternative to potential achievers from all three schools in collaboration with the local community college or university. A founding supposition of middle and early college high schools researched for this study seemed to conclude the need to inform their design, whatever it turns out to be, with affective and counseling components that can make the difference in educational success or failure. This is pertinent to curriculum in that these components sometimes come in the form of orientation, success, and study skills courses or curriculum design that includes development of interpersonal skills and life skills.

With scholars in agreement that little significant change has occurred in the structure and aims of our nation's high schools since the 1920s, even the most obvious curriculum innovation such as academic and vocational integration may qualify as creative genius. Kincheloe (1995) asserts that

[t]he processes of standardization and efficiency found in most existing schools will never allow for the production of thoughtful students and smart workers. . . . The workplace does not demarcate compartments called math, English, social studies, or science – indeed, neither is knowledge separated from application. (p. 256)

Adoption of such an approach calls for team-oriented educators willing to participate in a shared academic program with a faculty that is "flexible, open-minded, highly skilled, and innovative" (Lieberman, 2004, p. 4). The manner in which too many of today's schools separate knowledge and application contributes greatly to students failing to find relevancy in education and therefore causing them to tune it out. Creative curriculum design builds according to the characteristics and contours of the landscape. The hope should be that what is hailed as innovative today becomes a normal, sound way of educating students tomorrow.

Structural Changes: More Than a "Little High School on a College Campus"

To say that attention to coordination, collaboration, partnerships, and integration cannot be over-emphasized as considerations toward successful middle and early college implementation is not hyperbole. Responding to the question of what strategies might be employed to produce a more collaborative and structurally efficient school begins with a general discussion of the over-arching structural consideration of distancing the reformed high school from the *high school*.

By virtue of the variety of factors that contribute to the disengagement of some students in traditional high school settings, the concept of middle and early colleges

requires a location physically as well as symbolically different from what the students

leave behind. In most cases, the chosen site has been either a senior or community

college campus, with the majority established at community colleges. Moving the

concept to senior institutions in the early stages of replications proved difficult and as late

as 1997 remained small (Wechsler, 2001). As Wechsler points out, "At four-year

colleges, faculty often were accused of resisting campus-based, short-cycle programs and

off-campus extension centers" (p. 104). Furthermore, noted authorities such as Janet

Lieberman concluded early on that "the normative distance between high schools and

four-year colleges, with the latter's focus on the academic disciplines . . . reduced the

chances for successful replication" (p. 152). It should be expected, then, that faculty at

senior institutions would not embrace enthusiastically the notion of a high school within

their walls.

As the concept continues to mature, however, and many successful replications

across the country can be documented, more 4-year colleges and universities are giving

the concept of such collaborations with their local systems some consideration or in some

cases a second chance. Of the 46 early college high schools established in the United

States as of September 2004, 28% were housed at 4-year colleges and universities, with

59% at 2-year colleges (Early College High School Initiative by the Numbers, 2005).

During the same time period in North Carolina had provided funding to 15 middle or

early colleges either to accelerate their projects or to implement them. Three of the 15

projects are on three different University of North Carolina campuses – North

Carolina Central University in Durham, Fayetteville State University in Fayetteville,

and the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. The remaining 12 of the higher education partners are community colleges (Curliss, 2005). Middle college high schools not associated with the New Schools Project were previously established at Greensboro College, Bennett College, and North Carolina A&T State University, all in Greensboro and operated under the auspices of the Guilford County Schools. The remaining one established outside of the New Schools Project is Forsyth Tech Middle College High School in Winston-Salem. The primary interest of this research project is with K-12/community college collaboration; therefore, this discussion of structural implementation will focus primarily on efforts at community colleges, where the most success with these partnerships has been documented.

As discussed in the section on the population middle and early colleges establish themselves to serve, often the failure of students has more to do with the physical and affective environment than it does with lack of academic ability. In fact, as Lieberman (2004) discusses, early college is derived from the middle college high school concept of 30 years ago. Both structures serve the needs of under-represented youth and generally assume that lack of student success can be attributed in part to a disconnect from the traditional modes of schooling. She cites community college scholars Cohen and Brawer (1987), who argue that community colleges exist to link the functions of the lower schools with those of higher education. Furthermore, the community college system itself is an offspring of the public school system, and, for good or ill, the child has not strayed too far from home. Several community colleges began as extensions of local high schools to offer more advanced levels of vocational education in grades 13 and 14 and therefore

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operated under the auspices of the local school board. Not until the 1960s did states begin to build separate governing structures for community colleges. Currently, 29 states operate their community colleges through post-secondary governing boards that oversee its 4-year institutions as well. Sixteen states, including North Carolina, have created independent state boards to govern community colleges, and six states maintain the original governing structure (Boswell, 2000). Such collaborations between the two institutions can trace a history back to the late 1800s (Villaverde, 2003), and over the years partnerships such as tech prep education, dual enrollment programs, and adult high schools have been judged worthy and successful (Orr & Bragg, 2001).

Orr and Bragg (2001) therefore conclude that historic, political, and public perspectives position the K-12 and community college systems for system integration. The two systems are the largest and most broadly serving public education systems in the United States; they are both primarily publicly funded; both usually serve the same legislatively-mandated geographic areas and constituencies and therefore respond to local and state priorities; both have similar public education missions and are designed to be accessible. The same publics pressure both institutions for the same purposes: to provide effective pathways either to work or to a 4-year education. From a social and political perspective, community colleges and their leaders are taking the stage alongside other chief education officers in their locales – the superintendents and the college presidents – to become part of the equation that attempts to solve societal issues. With all that the community college and the K-12 system can claim in common and even celebrate, it would seem natural that their systems might integrate where feasible, which, for the

politicians, means better and wiser leveraging of resources. Students who graduate with an associate degree after a 9th- through 13th-grade experience and who are either prepared to enter the work force or a 4-year institution with junior standing is a sound investment. The coalescing of factions on the K-12/community college partnership initiative is easily understood. Goodwill and best intentions, however, may never take the place of sound planning, which is why attainment of structural efficiency in the establishment of middle and early colleges is a key component on which to focus.

Various lesser strategies to strong collaboration and structural efficiency can be cited such as formal agreements between the community college and the local school district about sharing space and office equipment (see Appendix F). The overall effectiveness that results from a public school system partnering with a community college to establish a middle or early college high school is largely affected by the following: location and size, organization and shared governance, and realignment of policies to support establishment and sustainability.

Location and Size

An overwhelming consensus exists that the most important structural consideration of the middle or early college high school deals with physicality, especially location and size. The issue of location spawns directly from the reasons giving rise to high school reform, which is the disaffection of noticeable numbers of students, as has been noted. For capable students otherwise underperforming in traditional high school settings, one solution is to change the setting. Pioneers such as Lieberman (2004) believe

in what the Middle College National Consortium terms the "power of the site"; that is, locating on a college campus is integral to students being physically as well as symbolically supported by the idea that they are capable of academic success. "The location on a college campus provides motivation and mitigates the usual teenage behavior. Being on a college campus encourages high school students to develop a 'future orientation'" (p. 1). Important as well is the significance the word "college" takes on in recognition of what middle and early colleges are meant to be – and what they are not meant to be. The presence of high school students on the college campus reduces the fears of college faculty regarding teaching younger students and encourages more collaboration between high school and college faculty as well as the articulation of content, courses, and programs between the two institutions. At least some of the freedom enjoyed by college students will be visited upon the high school students, with the absence of bells and hall monitors enhancing the place of trust and responsibility in successful learning environments (Lieberman, 2004). Those middle and early college high schools that have met with the most success have been careful to avoid becoming mere small high schools on college campuses. They have done so with structural integration of the high school into the college campus by sharing physical resources such as the library and learning centers and by finding logical ways to share human resources, including teachers and support personnel such as counselors (Cunningham & Wagonlander, 2000). Middle College High School at LaGuardia Community College in New York has inspired many other school districts to adopt its "power of the site"

philosophy, which is also championed by the early college movement as well

(Lieberman, 2004).

Inseparable from location as an important structural factor is size. As school

districts become fewer through consolidation efforts, the results are larger secondary

schools, and in many cases, larger schools at every level. Writes Cotton (1996): "Today,

high school enrollments of 2,000 and 3,000 are commonplace, and New York City has

many schools with enrollments approaching 5,000." As more and more of these super-

sized schools fail in meeting educational goals for their students, the consideration of size

seems to infuse several areas of school reform (Raywid, 1999). Lieberman (2004)

indicates that the structural innovations that support the success of the middle college

high schools are vital to early colleges as well. Prime among them is a student body size

no larger than about 100 students per grade level, with a total of 400 to 450 students

defining a "small school." In general, those favoring small schools are buttressed by the

following sentiment:

> This 'small is better' movement has been fueled by well-publicized research
> indicating that small high schools generally have higher achievement levels,
> higher graduation rates, and lower dropout rates, and that they are safer than
> larger high schools. Most encouraging to urban leaders has been the finding that
> small schools make the most difference for low-income and minority youth.
> (Steinberg & Allen, 2002, p. 9)

Size necessarily serves as a structural catalyst to creating an environment that

engenders connectivity of students to the school. Cunningham and Wagonlander (2000)

along with most others who have experienced success with middle and early college high

schools champion the integrated pupil personnel system that requires more than a

heightened interest in providing counseling. From the start, LaGuardia founder

Lieberman envisioned the educator's role as that of teacher-counselor, a professional

intended to have not only knowledge of a discipline but one skilled in and willing to

serve as a "consultant, friend, facilitator of learning, director of learning strategies, and

hopefully, arouser of latent enthusiasm" (as quoted in Wechsler, 2001, p. 42). With both

research and common sense supporting the affective needs of students, a deed not easily

achieved in high schools of 2,000 and 3,000 students, schools of much smaller numbers

can more easily connect with its students. As Lieberman (2004) points out, middle and

early college high schools, small by definition, encourage as well as enable intensive

guidance and regular peer and group counseling. Weak commitment to either locating in

a supportive environment or ensuring a school size drastically smaller than what the LEA

may be accustomed to results in a weak foundation on which to build.

Considerable challenges – which sometimes become criticisms – to both location

and size are concerns about cost and allocation of resources. The fiscally minded usually

argue that consolidation of schools and districts at least means a cut in administrative and

other associated costs such as librarians and cafeteria staff. Every small high school

created to reside on a college campus means administrative, instructional, and support

staff for that school. The fact that the majority of such initiatives are at least initially

grant-funded gives reason to question the commitment of those controlling the funds.

Cunningham and Wagonlander (2000) state as one of the keys to sustaining a successful

program a plan for long-term funding as part of the planning process. As with any school

in the district, the long-term base funding should come from the state and district itself

with the understanding that certain expenses can either be shared or absorbed by the college. In some respects, North Carolina may be one of the more progressive states, as legislation passed in 2003 not only encourages and sets guidelines for innovative high school programs but specifically allows the use of various funds and other mechanisms once available only to one or the other entity to be used in collaborative projects (North Carolina General Statutes, 115C-238.53.[e]).

Organization and Governance

Azinger (2000) suggests the following: "At a time when school dollars are spread thin among a wide range of programs designed to meet the growing demands of higher test scores and a well-prepared workforce, cooperation with community colleges would appear to offer school administrators a valuable resource" (p. 17). However, the successful implementation and sustainability of a collaborative high school on a college campus demands much more than cooperation between the two entities, and only the phrase "shared governance" sufficiently describes the philosophical as well as practical operation of a middle or early college high school. Perhaps the most delicate aspect of such a cooperative initiative, shared governance is meant to be a democratized approach to decision-making and running the school that fosters the input of all stakeholders involved in the academic enterprise. These various stakeholders include administration, faculty, and staff of the high school; administration and faculty of the host site; students; parents; and the community at large. Lieberman (1998) believes the common thread to successful shared governance is trust. While much talked about, trust is not often an

integrated principle in collaborative efforts, "yet it is the sine qua non for success. Unfortunately there is little trust between levels of education; instead there has more typically been mutual blame" (pp. 16-17). Real commitment, leadership, and clear intent from the uppermost levels of both institutions – the LEA and the college – are all required to clear the way for the rank-and-file from both entities to plan together. Says Lieberman (1998): "When there is initially strong leadership from the top administrative level, faculty, given time and decision-making power, can run collaborative programs" (p. 17).

A philosophical environment of participatory governance is best supported by an operational one. Again, small size and the creation of learning communities that include the clustering of faculty and administrators in close proximity feed interaction. Teachers and administrators, including those from the college, serve together on screening committees that select the students and hire faculty and staff. Some schools empower student governance groups or include them on appropriate committees and consider their input into matters of curriculum, discipline, community regulation, and student affairs. In addition to students having their say, this approach reinforces their governance skills and enhances a fuller understanding of civic responsibility and social science (Wechsler, 2001).

Another more specific structural consideration within this arena is the willingness of the college to integrate the chief administrator of the high school into the college's leadership. Assuming that the college community has been properly prepared and is generally accepting of a high school within its midst, the degree to which the high school

runs smoothly depends upon the chief administrator's ability to execute daily operations with the least number of obstacles to navigate. When one thinks of what makes other administrators of the college organization successful, knowledge, leadership, and technical skills must be supported by empowerment through college standing and access to those with decision-making authority. A middle or early college high school is a functional unit – or should be – of the college operation, and for the high school's chief administrator to have standing on the college campus, he or she must be given that standing in the normal way the college community recognizes such authority. What the LEA would know as the principal the community college audience would better respond to as department chair or associate dean. In the spirit of true collaboration and innovation, the person chosen to lead the high school on the college campus is owed a joint appointment with permanent and meaningful participation in the same reporting circle as other college administrators of an equivalent level. A recognized *college* position will facilitate the conducting of normal business such as requesting maintenance service or reserving parking spaces for parents' night if the college realizes that the middle college administrator has the same standing as other college officials. Less time dealing with devising ways to carry out mundane tasks leaves more time for complicated issues that require skill and leadership.

Policy Considerations

The most deftly executed organizational strategies and the most skilled and inspired leadership can be fatally thwarted by policies, rules, and parameters – in the

form of codified state rules and laws or practices that local officials are reluctant to let go – that are incompatible with innovative, creative approaches to the mission of effective middle and early college high schools. In fact, innovation, for the most part, does not mesh with existing policies. Therefore, from the outset, the existing policy structures should be thoroughly analyzed to determine what unsuspected procedural matter or bit of administrative code might be venomous enough to incapacitate the fledgling creative high school undertaking.

In essence, as Boswell (2000) points out, policies governing public schools and higher educational institutions tend to pose barriers rather than complement collaborations. The differing methods for which states choose to fund LEAs and higher education institutions have been and remain an issue. Along with whether a post-secondary institution was legally entitled to operate a high school, the first challenge to the establishment of a middle college centered on who would provide the funding and how much (Wechsler, 2001). While most of the policy challenges tend to be state and local, a national debate is ensuing. According to Callan and Finney (2003), a national discussion about policy change that would support collaborations such as middle and early colleges is just getting under way. However, they suggest that the discussion that has begun is a most important one and may be of the magnitude of the national conversation that followed World War II that resulted in post-secondary educational access for the masses (Callan & Finney, 2003).

At a base level, middle and early colleges are intended as vehicles for seamless transition from K-12 to education and training beyond secondary school, which has

become a socio-economic necessity in today's technological world. Policies that govern

the public school system for the most part remain disconnected with those that set the

operational parameters for junior and senior colleges, which begs the question of how

seamless can the educational process become if the policies regarding each level remain

in conflict? Examples abound, but for the sake of discussion, consider the consequence of

general policies that result from the separate boards in each state and local communities

in charge of the three levels of education. Policymaking bodies that govern K-12 schools

and colleges and universities are generally different groups, and in most states separate

state boards govern community colleges and the senior institutions. Callan and Finney

(2003) have observed that most such boards tend to look inward as they make policies

determined to gain the most for the constituents they serve. This does not mean that

thinking and practices to support collaborative efforts are not taking place; however, the

fact remains that such efforts are mostly voluntary and subject to changing leaders and

foundation interest. Of the 4,581 students enrolled in middle college high schools in

1999-2000, "41 percent enrolled in more than 3,984 college classes, with a 97 percent

pass rate, higher than that of the regular college freshman cohort" (Lieberman, 2004, p.

2), a success by any measure. As successful as these non-traditional high schools have

been, the establishment of these schools has been more dependent upon private interest

and foundation support than on public policy to facilitate their proliferation. While the

combined efforts of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation, the

Ford Foundation, and the W. K. Kellogg Foundation hope to influence the future

establishment of as many as 170 early college high schools by 2008, public policy

infrastructure in most locales does not exist in a consistent fashion to support high school

reform initiatives (Hoffman, 2003; Larose, 2005).

Less globally, and to bring this discussion to a local level, traditional policies such

as those governing content articulation from one level to the next and restrictions on

which college courses middle and early college high school students may take are in need

of review. It was only about 10 years ago that it literally took an act of the legislature for

North Carolina's public universities to recognize as a system the college transfer function

of the community colleges. Chapter 116C-3, "Strategic design for a continuum of

education programs," propelled into motion a comprehensive articulation agreement

between North Carolina's two systems of post-secondary education and lays the

groundwork for a coordination of "the complement of programs delivered by the State to

learners at all levels." Related legislation passed in 2003, Chapter 116-4, the "First in

America Innovative Education Initiatives Act," encourages and endorses high school

reform initiatives by putting into law rules that facilitate the establishment of cooperative

innovative high school programs that build bridges from secondary to post-secondary

education (North Carolina General Statutes). Public conversation about the issue seem to

indicate that the community college system is more interested in the blended high

school/college programs on their campuses than is the university system (Curliss &

Bonner, 2005; Lancaster, 2005).

Despite the worthiness of the middle and early college concepts and the favor

they are gaining from both the public and private sector, it is clear that the nearly 40-

year-old concept of a public high school integrated into the fabric of a college

environment has germinated but much in need of the sustenance that can be provided by collaborative leadership on several levels. Middle and early college high schools are showing much promise toward meeting the needs of the rising number of youth underserved by the traditional high school design and approach. However, innovative and precedent setting strategies designed to address the needs of disaffected students are not necessarily compatible with current rules, regulations, parameters, and guidelines. The will to proliferate the success of the relatively few middle and early college high schools in existence is more likely to happen if the necessary structural changes are given a priority place in the work of implementing and sustaining these high school reform initiatives.

Legal and Ethical Considerations: Beyond What is Legal to What is Right

In the various instances in which I have worked with teams assembled to plan a middle or early college, or as I have dealt with implementation issues, a constant question as well as reminder continues to be legal issues involving high school students on college campuses. (The same questions and concerns linger about high school students on community college campuses in dual enrollment programs. Conversely, the question is raised about the liability of community college instructors who teach college courses on the high school campus.) Middle and early college high schools, most of which are physically located on a community college campus, generate the following areas of concern for both the public school systems under which auspices the nontraditional high schools operate and for the community colleges that host them:

- What are the legal obligations to accept all students, or can the nontraditional high school prescribe a set of criteria to "select" students?

- What is the obligation to students with disabilities?

- Are college faculty obligated to participate in IEPs?

- Does the college move into an *"in loco parentis"*[2] status by virtue of the presence of the high school on its campus?

- Is the college obligated to increase safety standards beyond those found acceptable for its traditional population; are its obligations to "duty" and "standard of care" increased for high school students on its campus?[3]

- Which system's rules, policies, and procedures prevail when conflicts arise? Who handles due process for the students?

- How should FERPA rules be interpreted for students who are legally minors but participating in a program intending to blur the lines between high school and college?

Simple responses are not readily available to most of these questions. What is clear, however, is that both systems must recognize the concerns and the potentially serious situations that could result from differing standards and interpretations regarding the legal and ethical obligations owed to high school students on college campuses.

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[2] *In loco parentis,* or "in the place of the parent," is an accepted principle in the law that recognizes that the parental discipline and control over children is relinquished to school officials when students are placed in the care of the school (Alexander & Alexander, 2002).

[3] Related to *in loco parentis* are the principles of "duty" and the "standard of care" that require school officials "to abide by a standard of reasonable conduct in the face of apparent risks" (Alexander & Alexander, 2002).

As high school students stationed on college campuses continue to increase because of the proliferation of middle and early college high schools, legal questions of several sorts have increased as well. These issues can be broadly grouped into tangible issues such as which governing board – school board or community college trustee board – has the controlling interest and have led to discussions about which entity provides funding and whose sets of policies take precedent in addressing disciplinary situations. While hotly debated in some locales, the more tangible issues tend to be local and are therefore more easily resolved. A year and several opinions from state and legal officials were necessary before it was finally determined that the Board of Higher Education could open and operate Middle College High School at LaGuardia Community College in New York in 1974 (Wechsler, 2001).

The growing support for middle and early college high schools by such well-known and well-financed activists such as Bill Gates and the tendency to use "crisis" language about the failure of modern schools to develop a 21st century workforce continue to attract the attention of lawmakers expressing concern about dropout rates. What appears to be a coalition of innovative thinkers, the business-minded, and politicians has led to the revision of legislation and codification of state rules that authorize the establishment of innovative high school undertakings and, in effect, diminish the complexity of some legal questions related to funding and allowable contributions of participating entities. The North Carolina General Assembly added to section 115C, the chapter of the General Statues pertaining to the operation of the State's K-12 schools, a provision authorizing boards of community colleges and local boards of

education to jointly establish cooperative innovative high school programs. In particular, the legislation states that the innovative programs shall target high school students at risk of dropping out and those students who would benefit from accelerated academic instruction (North Carolina General Statutes, 115C-238.50, [a]). Operational aspects such as the use of funds and property are clearly addressed in this legislation and encourage participation between the LEA and the community college that was often tentative before this legislation. The most intriguing point in this code is 115C-238.53.c, which essentially makes the operation of middle and early colleges established using this provision "exempt from laws and rules applicable to a local board of education, a local school administrative unit, a community college, or a local board of trustees of a community college." This exemption allows for the consideration of waivers of existing operating guidelines that are not available to traditional dual enrollment programs on the college campus; nor does it extend to middle and early college high schools established outside of the legislation.

Less specific issues associated with middle and early college programs tend toward topics of a more global nature. One of the more worrisome topics, especially for community colleges, is the high school's necessary interpretation and practice of the concept of the "duty of care" and to what extent does the college owe the same to minors enrolled in college courses. The proliferation of middle and early college high schools intensifies concerns because such programs by design are meant to be housed full-time on the college campus. Lugg (2000) establishes the concept of *in loco parentis* as the distinguishing point in the degree to which the high school and the community college

owes its students the duty of care. Traditionally, *in loco parentis* has been used to protect

public school teachers from legal jeopardy regarding disciplinary measures for students.

In more recent times, the concept has been expanded to nondisciplinary issues, such as

the expectation of parents that their children are supervised throughout the school day.

Such specific expectations may include supervised access to the Internet and restricted

movement about the campus. In the traditional high school setting, the concept of "duty"

is reasonably clear and means that any agent of the school is obligated to abide by a

standard of reasonable conduct when facing apparent risks (Alexander & Alexander,

2002). Along with the duty owed is the commensurate obligation to act in accordance

with a standard of care. This concept recognizes that the standard of care changes with

the situation. For instance, shop teachers are expected to meet a greater standard of care

than history teachers do because the general environment of a shop class poses a greater

likelihood that a student may be injured in the course of participating in required

activities (Alexander & Alexander, 2002).

In instances such as the example of the shop classes, both the duty of care and the

standard of care are close for the high school and the community college, for the intent is

to prevent bodily injury to students in participating in activities normal for that classroom

setting. However, in the basic realm, community colleges are accepted as educational

institutions, not custodial ones, and therefore *in loco parentis* does not apply for the

traditional community college student. In essence, the duty of care owed the community

college student is one individual instructing another, and matters of what a student does

between classes, for instance, are not automatic concerns for the community college or its

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instructors (Lugg, 2000). Legal rulings exist to support the notion that the school system incurs increased liability when it has an agreement with the community college that its students will enroll in classes during the regular school day. Likewise, community college instructors who, as part of their assignment, teach college classes on high school campuses are bound by the same *in loco parentis* expectations of regular high school faculty (Lugg, 2000). However, the interpretation of the duty of care becomes rather muddled when a high school is established on a college campus, especially ironic in light of the fact that one of the guiding principles of the middle and early college is to surround the disengaged high school student with a college environment and more mature experience intended to boost his or her engagement in education. It is unlikely that the differing aspects of *in loco parentis* will be settled other than through situations that arise; and the severity of those situations, especially should court cases result, will continue to produce precedents that will determine how colleges and LEAs treat this issue.

Other more basic issues that could become legal concerns are being addressed statewide through the legislative process, as discussed earlier, and locally through memorandum of agreements designed to solidify the responsibilities of each partner to the project and signed by the board chairs and chief executive officers of the LEA and the community college. These agreements address such expected concerns as assurance of dedicated space for the high school by the college, which governing board has prevailing jurisdiction, and a pledge to comply with all federal, state, and local laws that apply to public high schools. Some agreements include assurances by the college that access to the college's library will be limited and controlled, and unmonitored access to the Internet

will be prohibited. These issues are no doubt cautions on behalf of both institutions in light of regulations requiring the filtering of Internet sites for minors using public facilities. Such agreements may speak interpretively or directly to the point about whose rules the middle or early college high school student will follow. Insofar as the innovative high school is a public school, the degree to which the issue of rules becomes an issue will be determined primarily by the diplomatic and administrative talents of the principal. School administrators of LaGuardia Community College's middle college high school obviously had those skills and were able to build relationships that contributed greatly to the successful implementation and sustainability of the school (Wechsler, 2001). In practice, whose rules prevail will depend upon the design of the school and the particular situation. Schools with more traditional curriculum and high school course offerings distinctly different from the college courses will more likely operate like a high school on a college campus and will therefore tend to insulate itself from the operational culture of the college. On the other hand, a truly innovative program that blends the two cultures to the point that the high school students substantively feel their college surroundings is more apt to take on the culture of the college.

From my experience as a faculty member, mid-level building and academic administrator, and chief academic officer in community colleges, it is not difficult to argue that the issue of students with disabilities needs much more attention than it is given. Hawke (2004) points out that more than half a million disabled students are enrolled in higher education nationwide with 71% of those attending community colleges. This discussion is important to the concept of middle and early college high

schools because as advocates for these small, innovative high schools on college campuses have convinced more and more educational communities to blur boundary lines between secondary and post-secondary education, the higher educational institution has resisted erasing the line when it comes to accommodating the needs of disabled students. One of the more peculiar dialogues a community college administrator will have is with the parents of students asking for accommodations they are accustomed to under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), only to have the community college respond by referencing the less restrictive legislation that bounds it, which is the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). The two pieces of legislation in no way guarantee the same thing. The defining difference between the two is that IDEA provides a "zero reject" stance in that it is not required that a student will benefit from the education provided, places the duty on the school to recognize students with disabilities, and then requires the school to provide individualized education plans if necessary (Alexander & Alexander, 2002). ADA, on the other hand, requires the student to self-disclose learning disabilities and requires the college to provide reasonable accommodations but not to the extent that the accommodation would fundamentally change the nature of the program or activity or create an undue hardship on the institution (Hawke, 2004). The high school administration, staff, and instructors of the middle or early college will no doubt at least understand their obligation to such students and the general requirements of IDEA, whereas community college instructors will not only know little of this regulation but also already feel ill-equipped to respond to most student disability issues under the less stringent requirements of ADA.

Obviously, students with cognitive disabilities do not belong to this discussion, as middle and early colleges are designed for those students capable of negotiating a college curriculum along with their high school program. However, broad considerations would at least anticipate the likelihood of a physically impaired student of high intellectual ability seeking access to an early college, for instance, and it would seem that the high school perspective would offer accommodations to that student. As a general matter, so would colleges – under ADA regulations. The unresolved issue is the degree to which those accommodations would be made and the complex situations that arise from a student in need of accommodations who may be taking a high school course one hour and a college course the next. More problematic is the high school student enrolled in a college-level course that satisfies both a high school and college requirement. Which special accommodations statutes will take precedent when the high school and the college deliberately blend courses for the sake of a more effective curriculum design?

What are the greatest concerns colleges have about students with disabilities with regard to middle and early college high school partnerships? How are colleges likely to respond to these concerns? Put simply, colleges are most worried about legal considerations that could cause the college money and, for community colleges especially, their well-deserved reputation as open-door institutions. As a high school, it would appear, at least for now, that as one examines local memorandum of agreements that access owed to any public school student does not disappear when a student is accepted into a middle or early college. However, this does not mean that IDEA rights supersede the ADA regulations that guide post-secondary institutions. In the case of

Cross Creek Middle College on the campus of Fayetteville State University in North

Carolina, the agreement explicitly states that the middle college will adhere to regulations

governing the education of students with disabilities (Cross Creek Middle, #3). The

nuances of policies that cross both the high school and the college invite uncertainty.

However, it is a surety that a student accepted into an early or middle college high school

is owed accommodations within the parameters of the law as they relate to high school

classes. Where the law is less clear – and will no doubt be tested and therefore case law

developed – is whether accommodations determined under IDEA extend to college

courses students will take. For now, the general understanding and practice seem to be

that they do not. Whereas some agreements are heavily weighted toward providing

guarantees that the middle or early college will provide to its high school students all that

is legally required by law, some agreements seem to assume as much and focus on the

less obvious. The memorandum of agreement proposed for the early college high schools

in which Central Carolina Community College has worked to establish addresses mostly

operational and structural matters such as use of facilities, participation in the selection of

students, and the integration of the early college into the fabric of the college (see

Appendix F). For colleges with long traditions of successful collaboration with its LEAs,

which is the case for Central Carolina Community College, matters such as special

accommodations and understanding the legal obligations as well as the limits of each

entity have long been understood and settled.

    Though the positive effects both the higher education institution and the public

schools intend to achieve in their collaborative efforts are genuine, even the most surface

evaluation of their motives reveal benefits for both that go beyond pure altruism. The local high schools continuously accused of entrenchment and failure to keep pace with a changing world are desperate for ways to either protect or enhance the performance measures recorded by their individual schools. It is certainly to the advantage of the high schools to find alternative educational settings for students they are ineffective in educating. The higher education institution stands to gain in terms of growth and additional funding, as not only will middle and early college students take college courses while in the high school, thus adding to the college's funding base, but it is also hoped that the arrangement will seamlessly transition more high school students into continued studies at the host college. In most cases, the LEA, through its state and locally appropriated funds, provides the bulk of the funding for the middle college in terms of salaries for teachers, administrators, and support staff, with the college providing the capital resources and access to college courses. Though it may be true that each institution may experience different legal obligations to its students pertaining to the level of education it provides, it is also true that both are ethically obligated to provide for the needs of those they purport to serve.

If a college welcomes the establishment of a middle or early college on its campus and therefore generates funds from those students as part of its funding formula, then it should be willing to accept concomitant duties such as dealing with minors that will, for example, necessarily require more interaction of the college with parents, and not seek refuge behind FERPA laws because "college instructors prefer not to deal with parents." The intellectually capable middle college student who suffers a physical challenge best

addressed by an IEP should not be denied the same consideration when enrolled in a

college course because the college is bound by the less restrictive ADA regulations. I

would suggest that sincere and deep partnerships between the colleges and school

systems would provide the colleges an avenue to understand how they might in general

better serve students with disabilities. From my experiences working in both 2- and 4-

year institutions (and I would be less than honest not to admit past complicity in one or

two such happenings), post-secondary institutions seem less willing to work with students

with disabilities and take license to feel less guilty by rationalizing that access to junior

and senior college educational opportunity is not a guaranteed right whereas a K-12

public education is afforded to all. College instructors tend to teach their disciplines

either as they think they should be taught or as they were taught and often will resist

initiatives counter to what they believe is appropriate or educationally sound. Likewise,

college teachers sometimes adopt a mindset that their institutions are for those with the

strongest minds or with the traditional faculties and capabilities associated with a certain

profession. The stigma associated with community college students sorted into remedial

courses taught in a manner that offers little relevance to the reason why they enrolled in

college in the first place is bad enough for the student without special needs. Couple that

experience with a student who might suffer from attention deficit disorder or who may

need a sign language interpreter and little wonder surrounds the statistics that only 8% of

community college students report disabilities, and only half of those request an

accommodation of any sort (Hawke, 2004). If an early college high school student with a

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special need is provided a justifiable accommodation in a high school course but not in a college course, then that student's options have been compromised.

If college faculty were more often put into situations that required more consideration of challenged students, post-secondary institutions would devote more resources and required training of its faculty to these issues. Perhaps, too, required attention to these matters would encourage more creative thinking and teaching on the parts of college faculty members, which just might do more than provide more access and greater equity for the student with disabilities but may offer an enhanced teaching and learning environment for all students because teachers would be more conscious of instructional strategies and techniques. As Burello, Lashley, and Beatty (2001) challenge with respect to public school students with special needs, "Education should be special for any student. As we learn how to personalize education for all students, that just may come true." This challenge should be met at the post-secondary level as well.

One is left to ponder if ADA for post-secondary institutions offers not only a legal but also an ethical shield for what would be an otherwise ethical challenge. Put another way, how does a student's disability in high school suddenly resolve itself when the student enters the doors of higher education? For the college not to address an accommodation because it is offered protections in the form of less stringent requirements does not, in my mind, remove the ethical responsibility to do more than what is legally required.

Realities being what they are, how does the 2- or 4-year campus prepare for the legal and ethical issues that inevitably present themselves as middle and early college

partnerships proliferate at a steady pace? College ADA compliance officers will need to have a better understanding of IDEA regulations and work in tandem with public school officials to address needs when such students are enrolled in both high school and college courses – which is meant to happen. Agreements between the cooperating entities should stipulate which party is responsible for funding accommodations. While it may seem obvious that the LEA will assume responsibility since it is operating an officially recognized high school on the college campus, joint funding of accommodations should be considered where appropriate since the college is benefiting in terms of budget generation when high school students are enrolled in its classes. A strong and well thought out memorandum of agreement should also speak to such issues arising from *in loco parentis* and "standard of care" practices of the high school and to what degree the high school will adhere to the rules and regulations of the college. Recommended as well are consent and hold harmless agreements that parents and guardians would be required to sign so that it is clear from the beginning that the environment of the college campus is intended to embrace the middle or early college high school student from the perspective that the college setting and atmosphere are being used as tools in focusing the high school attitude more toward learning and achievement. Parents who object to mature subject matter covered in a college course or who have suspicions about library holdings should know prior to enrollment that their child would be in a college setting where academic freedom and free speech are paramount.

Any successful implementation of an innovative high school on a college campus must take into consideration the legal and ethical aspects that inevitably arise with new

and creative initiatives to address old problems. As is happening in North Carolina, the legal aspects become easier to negotiate when the political will coincides with the educational community's desire to employ the middle or early college high school model as a tool for high school reform. As Shapiro and Stefkovich (2001) would support, ethical considerations should envelop the decisions, legal or otherwise, that educational leaders make. Sustainability beyond successful implementation of the middle or early college high school depends upon decisions that are the right thing to do ahead of being the legal thing to do.

Summary

The assertion of this researcher is that four broad categories are tiled to serve as the foundation for successful implementation and sustainability of the bold middle and early college high school concept that has gained the most momentum in influencing the direction of high school reform. Those core principles are the following:

1. Genuine, consistent, and careful consideration of non- and underachievers and what they can achieve with the right support systems in place rather than focusing upon what these students have not yet proven academically;

2. A firm and consistent focus on reengineering of the curriculum that favors creativity not only in terms of merely blending vocational and academic content but an emphasis on a curriculum that is rigorous as well as relevant to the lives that students are living and for which they express an interest in preparing.

3. A greater focus on students' affective needs and a reengineered curriculum must be connected to specific structural changes that support the first two principles in addition to providing for authentic autonomous school governance that includes all stakeholders, including teachers, parents, students, and the community.

4. Lastly, certain legal and ethical considerations, that, admittedly, cover an expansive territory, must inform any and everything connected to a concept intended to be very different from current practice and understandings. In particular, the intended blurring of the lines between secondary and post-secondary educational settings and philosophies must be carefully negotiated, as the wrong legal or ethical snag could instantaneously derail the best and most effective of these schools.

The theoretical framework developed in this study appears radical in view of practices that prevail in the operation of the traditional high school. A structural realignment of the design and nature of high schools to serve disaffected students will require not only creative thinking but also bold action. The administrative staff and the instructional staff of a middle or early college high school are likely to have more say in any matter that benefits the students, as intended, but more say for some stakeholders means less control by the central office and the school board. Students are expected to have an authentic voice in the governing of the school as well as the community faculty and staff who have adopted a high school into their family. If a structural alignment takes hold that truly represents the needs of an entity that will more or less govern itself, then the usual balance of power between school, central office, and community will realign accordingly.

Historically, as Wecshler (2001) writes in his book, power-sharing arrangements with these projects have often produced much drama followed by a failed project.

As a final word regarding identifying core principles, perhaps it should be briefly noted that, for good or ill, public education has and probably always will be cloaked in political cloth. After all, many local boards of education are elected officials, and those that are appointed are selected by political appointees or elected officials. Even though the heat under the early college high school initiative is mainly due to private funds, the fire has been stoked mostly by state politicians in search of ways to bring effective reform to ailing public high schools. As this study has shown, North Carolina is the case in point. The point to be made is that political motivations are essential, whether they should be or not. Many instances exist to support the assertion that extremely well conceived middle and early college high schools were aborted before getting to the launching pad. Such projects can also be documented that were as poor in design as others were brilliant but the mediocre projects received the full faith and backing of all involved and now stand as established innovative high schools. The common element to both seemingly inexplicable situations is politics.

Long-standing structures that withstand the test of time do so in part because of the deliberate thought and construction given to the skeletal portion to which the other materials are affixed. A theoretical framework offers the same function for the middle and early college high school – if the goal is a functioning, effective high school for students whose needs are not being met in traditional institutions.

CHAPTER IV

THE ESSENTIALS AT WORK

Overview

The essence of this chapter is to illuminate the degree to which identifiable core principles and their application affect the implementation and sustainability of middle and early college high schools. While the number of middle and early college high schools along with total numbers of students served seem like an insignificant number when compared with the total number of high schools in the United States, a trend toward proliferation is definitely presenting itself, hastened by the support of interested and wealthy benefactors and foundations.

As data indicate, North Carolina has staked a claim to become the most prolific progenitor of early college high schools in the nation, with a goal of one redesigned high school or early college in every county by 2008 (Gov. Easley); in particular, the New Schools Project plans for at least 75 early college high schools as part of the mix (Silberman, 2005b). In addition to North Carolina, five other states – California, Georgia, Ohio, Texas, and Utah – have developed statewide initiatives, with California and Texas with 15 projects each (Early College Initiative by the Numbers, 2006). This means that, if the reform effort in North Carolina were sustained, over half of the projected early college high schools in the entire nation would exist in North Carolina. These 75 schools would be in addition to already existing or newly created middle colleges. As the

historical data portend, the most likely as well as most fertile ground in North Carolina

for such collaborations remains the community colleges. Since the New Schools Project

began in 2004, 32 middle or early college initiatives either have started or are being

developed on community college campuses, and another seven are under consideration

(Conference Proceedings, 2006 NCACCIA System Conference, 2006).

Indeed, as the North Carolina initiative is showing, a deep understanding of the

core principles and settled minds on their likely impact are having an effect on whether

an early college can proceed past the funding stage. As will be shown in the

representative school profiles that follow, the most successful of these schools, those that

show signs of promise and those that either face serious challenges or have failed to

materialize can link the degree to which they have been successful to core principles.

Obvious to some and surprising to others, the lures of abundant funding and political

support have not been sufficient to pull through some of these projects. As of February

2006, at least four early college high schools poised for implementation were postponed

due to a variety of reasons, ranging from a change in direction by the LEA to space

limitations at the proposed host campus. Chatham County Schools Early College High

School, one of these abandoned projects, is profiled in this chapter.

Profiles of a sampling of these North Carolina efforts through the lenses of core

principles offer insight into reasons for success or failure. While the Middle College High

School at New York's LaGuardia Community College is far from North Carolina, the

LaGuardia school is clearly the gold standard by which all other high school projects

under the umbrella are measured and therefore serves as a brief introduction to the study

of the relatively recent North Carolina projects.

Middle College High School at LaGuardia Community College

Even though much has already been said about the pioneering presence of Middle

College High School at LaGuardia Community College in the discussion of successful

high school reforms, it becomes difficult to profile other such projects in terms of their

relative success or failure without a brief review of what LaGuardia adds to the context.

Its longevity – exceeding 30 years – makes it the obvious choice for noticing those

experiences that under gird success and sustainability.

LaGuardia's model was designed to serve 11th and 12th graders, not 9th through

12th, though the LaGuardia leaders have ventured into the early college model as of late.

The 3-year planning process that birthed the Middle College High School at LaGuardia

Community College in 1974 did not have as its original intent to restructure high schools.

Nevertheless, a natural restructuring happened, as the middle college high school took on

some aspects of the manner in which its college host was organized. First, LaGuardia's

newness meant that it was not as affected by traditions and culture, and the experimental

nature of the school encouraged creative thinking that produced optimistic approaches to

solving problems (Wechsler, 2001). Lieberman observed early that community college

presidents seemed to be more forceful and direct leaders than their counterparts at 4-year

institutions and therefore surmised that the middle college would likely receive strong

support from the top of the organizational chart if it were on a community college

campus (Wechsler, 2001).

Lieberman's design set out to target underachievers with the potential to succeed

academically. In particular, the target population was defined in this way: those students

with "poor attendance, cutting, high rate of scholastic failure, sometimes combined with

talent or interest in one area, or dissatisfaction with some aspect of the current or

anticipated program" (Wechsler, 2001, p. 35). The criterion of "dissatisfaction" raised the

eyebrows of board of education members, who also objected to the notion of the middle

college high school staff making admissions decisions. Setting off another alarm bell was

the spotlight on students "who appear academically successful but feel that the flexibility

and individualization of an alternative educational setting will free their potential" (as

quoted in Wechsler, 2001, p. 35). This component of targeting a population that needed

some attention gave rise to the accusation that the middle college high school would

"cream" top students from traditional high schools, an attitude that seems pervasive in

almost any program that gives students access to college while still in high school. The

"compromise" regarding whom the middle college high school would serve morphed into

the following definition of the target population: "disaffected high risk students who have

already been identified as potential dropouts" (Wechsler, 2001, p. 36). To a great degree,

this definition has influenced the target population of middle and early colleges across the

nation, as local school districts and state governments look for means to stem the tide of

students who do not earn the traditional high school diploma.

Wechsler (2001) writes that LaGuardia's plan deliberately set about integrating the middle college into the fabric of its host community college and wanted students in the midst of the college community as a constant reminder that they were both high school and college students. In a way, the school was naturally engaging in structural and organizational reform through borrowing structural features from its host. Curriculum innovation was another matter, and the middle college was more deliberate about this. The decision was to design the curriculum from scratch – with the teachers leading the way. Rather than an "imposed curriculum," curriculum planning was on a continuing pattern and based on specific needs of the incoming class. A derivative of this approach was the development of teacher professionalism. The curriculum planning process emphasized multidisciplinary core courses and downplayed compartmentalization common to traditional high schools by combining traditional high school subjects. Relevancy of subject matter was paramount, which did not mean necessarily *different* core curricula, for example, but an approach that formed some connection to a student's existence. In the middle college humanities curriculum, it was suggested that Macbeth might "be taught in terms of political power and recent assassination" (as quoted in Wechsler, 2001, p. 37).

Another, more practical aspect of relevance would also highlight the LaGuardia middle college: cooperative education. LaGuardia president Joseph Shenker noted the value of clinical placements for nursing students when he was president at a previous community college and included cooperative education in the planning for LaGuardia (Wechsler, 2001). The middle college borrowed this concept, and included in its design

"pre-job experiences" for students that combined field trips, internships, and apprenticeships. The school also presented core subjects such as mathematics within the context of career and life settings. Not only did this approach make the academic work relevant, it also generated strong community and business support. Moreover, the designers of the middle college "did not see preparing students for the rigors of college work as incompatible with job placement" (Wechsler, 2001, p. 39).

The last major part of the LaGuardia design was a careful and attentive affective support system that the school would achieve through a "house" system. This was not unlike a boarding school or an elite college with small educational units of students in "houses" headed by a teacher, professor, or other staff member designed to engender a sense of social and intellectual belonging. As Wechsler (2001) notes, 1960s educational reformers may have been unknowingly suggesting a 19th century model of education where students and teachers resided together when they began calling for smaller, more manageable educational units. What the 1960s reformers advocated was meant to move beyond the "home room" well established by that time. What Lieberman had in mind was modeled after the "house" previously mentioned that could be found at such institutions as Harvard and Yale, and from her own experience as a teacher and head of house at an independent school on Manhattan's east side. She envisioned 15 students with a faculty member together as a "house" that would nurture a sense of belonging. She also wanted the "house" system to at least mitigate for students those detrimental social factors about their daily existence over which they had little control. The houses were meant to become a "home away from home" and would be headed by the "teacher-counselor heads for

nurturing the cognitive *and* affective development of at-risk students" (Wechsler, 2001, p. 42). As Cullen (1991) points out, rather than settle for attendance, a founding assumption of the LaGuardia middle college was school membership – an essential element to achieve a sense of belonging that had to be fostered in both students and adults. The focus on adults intended to create authentic models that the students would emulate and the social bonding that implies a connection with a concept and a place are tied to a belief in the norms and legitimacy of the school. The LaGuardia school wanted to create a culture of positive relationships between its students and adult stakeholders that would promote a sense that the school was jointly owned. This joint ownership would encourage both groups to endeavor to meet the expectations of each other. High expectations were intended as more than one-dimensional ideals but were built into the structure and governance of the school. For instance, the school uses A, B, C, and D grades. Failing grades are dispensed with, and students receive an incomplete if they can pass with some additional work. No credit, or a grade of NC, is recorded if the course can be completed later or in summer school.

As far back as 15 years ago, Middle College High School at LaGuardia was not divided by grade levels (Cullen, 1991), a philosophy that is not pervasive in most middle and early colleges examined for this study. One exception is the Middle College of Forsyth County, where students work at their own pace, often accelerated, and advance according to how long it takes to complete the requirements to earn a unit of credit. For the most part, though, as an examination of curriculum models show, most schools indicate what will be taken by grade year. As Middle College High School at LaGuardia

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developed, an academically challenging environment developed along with it. Though

1st-year students were caringly introduced into the family of LaGuardia, they were also

introduced to intensive academic experiences, often in courses and activities that

combined academic content and ended in a student-produced activity such as a mock

demonstration, a public presentation, or performance (Cullen, 1991).

Ensuring relevancy of curriculum is achieved in several ways but most notably in

the beginning through cooperative education projects that are more than part-time jobs.

Wechsler (2001) describes the LaGuardia cooperative education model as a form of

career exposure and exploration. The school planned "pre-job experiences" with an

emphasis on field trips for younger students and internships for students with the

equivalent of 2 years of high school remaining. The school deliberately avoided

introducing its students to specific skills that were likely to become outdated but instead

planned a transition from learning information to learning how to learn. By combining

this with what Wechsler calls "liberalizing cooperative education" (p. 39), the designers

of Middle College High School at LaGuardia considered preparing students for the rigors

of college-level work compatible with job placement. In the classroom, the school has

also coupled rigor with relevancy. Themed English and social studies units have become

staples of the curriculum and are often interdisciplinary and team-taught. In 1989, the

school offered a course called "Motion," a collaborative, team-taught course in which

students completed a series of physical tasks that deliberately moved at a slow pace so

that students could acquire deep learning of the various physical and mathematical

concepts planned in the course. At one point, the school adopted an interactive

mathematics program that encouraged group problem solving and team teaching. It also

lent itself to the use of student portfolios, a technique LaGuardia found very effective in

the development of basic skills such as writing and verbal communications, as portfolios

became a key assessment mechanism for the LaGuardia high school (Wechsler, 2001).

In effect, distilled from the LaGuardia experiment that has long been considered a

proven product for distribution are the buzzwords of *rigor, relevance, and relationships*

often associated with the middle and early college movement, and, for that matter, the

high school reform movement in general. Data indicate that the product is worthy of

replication, and Middle College High School at LaGuardia was and has been successful

by a variety of measures. As Cullen (1991) reported, "An unusually high percentage of

students who complete Middle College go on to college or work" (p. 83). In 1985, 83%

of LaGuardia's middle college high school students graduated compared to 50% for

students citywide in New York. In 1989, 75% of the students continued their college

education upon graduation from the middle college high school, where many had already

earned some college credit (Cullen, 1991). Data analyzed for the years between 1990 and

2000 in New York show that 97% of middle college students stayed in school compared

with a city-wide rate of 70%, 87% graduated, and 90% continued into college

(Lieberman, 2004). Though obvious, Lieberman makes the simple assertion that when a

seamless structure is implemented that supports high school completion and provides a

natural bridge to college, the result is an increased number of students going to college.

LaGuardia's years of data support this, and the many replications of LaGuardia's middle

college high school report similar improvements in college attendance among its

graduates. The average high school graduation rate of many urban high schools is about 25%, whereas the middle college graduation rate is three times that. The rate of transfer from 2- to 4-year institutions for middle college high school students is 64% compared to 23% for the rest of the community college population.

Middle College at GTCC (Jamestown Campus)

High school reform through middle and early college high school initiatives in Guilford County may become to North Carolina what the LaGuardia project became to New York and eventually the nation regarding its status as a beacon for other communities and schools systems in the State. As of 2006, Guilford County Schools, the State's third largest system, operates eight middle and early college high schools. This focus upon the middle college and early college is an innovation that Superintendent Terry Grier introduced when he took charge of the Guilford County Schools in 2000. Not surprisingly, his penchant for creative solutions has not been without controversy, including charges by some that his philosophy fosters elitism creating special college gateways for gifted students. This is why, for instance, that the early college at Guilford Technical Community College (GTCC) was called the "early/middle" college, according to Jane Pendry, the community college's liaison to the three such schools connected with GTCC. The attention Guilford County has drawn to the use of middle and early college high schools as a means of addressing students who find it difficult to connect in the traditional school setting precedes the Governor's Learn and Earn initiative discussed in Chapters I and II, and may, in fact, have been the inspiration for it. For this reason,

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Guilford County School System deserves distinction as ground zero for its experimentation with middle and early high schools as a tool of reform in North Carolina.

In terms of sheer fortitude to forge ahead with this experimental concept and the courage to accept the risks involved with establishing eight innovative high school projects in a 6-year period, Guilford County has been far more successful than other systems, some of which have abandoned projects even after receiving planning and implementation grants of at least $1.5 million from the Governor's Learn and Earn Program. Herein may rest one of the guiding principles of successful implementation and sustainability, which is the alignment of local stakeholders and resources to see the idea through with or without outside assistance. The most successful of the eight projects, and partly because it is the oldest, but primarily because it adopted and adheres to a set of core principles that have served it well, is GTCC Middle College High School at the Jamestown campus. When viewed within the theoretical principles, this middle college high school is a full-fledged success.

The Middle College at GTCC has undergone at least three important phases since its inception in 2001. The high school began as the first of GTCC's middle colleges and enrolled 95 10th, 11th, and 12th graders as a collaboration solely between the Guilford County Schools and Guilford Technical Community College. The enrollment history shows that the first ninth graders entered in 2004, with the total number of students that year at 127, just one below its peak enrollment up to that time (GTCC Middle College, 2006). At least by definition, the middle college had planted the seeds to become an early college in that it enrolled all four traditional high school grade levels. Depending upon

careful guidance, course selection, and individual student performance, it became possible at that time for an entering ninth grader to earn both a high school diploma and an associate degree in 5 years. In January 2005, the middle college became an official early/middle college when it was selected as one of five reform high schools by the Learn and Earn initiative. The GTCC-based high school bulleted the following in its literature as its specific goals as an early college high school:

- To create an academically rigorous early college high school serving grades 9-12

- To serve a diverse student body

- To ensure that students graduate with both a high school diploma and associates degree or 2 years of college credit within 4 or 5 years

- To incorporate career exploration into the curriculum to ensure that students experience relevance in their academic program (Guilford County Schools, *GTCC Middle College* brochure).

Deciding as well to maintain its middle college roots, the school still allows other eligible students to enroll as 10th, 11th, or 12th graders with the opportunity to take some college courses but not with the guaranteed opportunity to earn the associate degree during their time as a middle college student (Guilford County Schools, *GTCC Middle College* brochure). According to Principal Tony Watlington, in 2006, the Early/Middle College at GTCC reverted to its original name of GTCC Middle College, though it is now a bona fide early college high school that maintains its original middle college elements. The reason largely has to do with perceptions among Guilford County parents that early colleges somehow take on elitist characteristics and are therefore accessible only to

academically gifted students. Principal Watlington, who began his tenure at GTCC

Middle College in 2004 after several years as principal of a traditional high school, says

that his current school is sensitive to public perception about whom it serves. The school

demographics negate any charges of elitism about GTCC Middle College, as it mirrors

the demographics of the school system (Guilford County Schools, 2006), which is a

stipulation of the Learn and Grant. The school's sensitivity to charges of elitism is also

evident in its selection process. According to Principal Watlington, the more than 400

students and their families seeking admission for the 135 slots available at GTCC Middle

College are intentionally labeled a "pool," not a "waiting list." A "waiting" list implies

that an available slot goes to the person next on the list, but GTCC Middle College does

not operate this way. The selection process strives for demographics representative of the

district, and the school looks like any other in terms of race, free-and-reduced lunch

students, and so on (Guilford County Schools, 2006).

Unlike some schools that seem to blame poor results on the wide diversity of the

populations they are required to serve, GTCC Middle College High School celebrates the

diversity of its student population and is committed to all of its students. Teachers

liberated from traditional chores such as lunch and bus duty have time to connect with

students. These structural changes account for some positive results. Statistics from this

middle college support this observation, and, according to traditional data normally used

to describe the success of a North Carolina high school, the high school based on

GTCC's Jamestown Campus has been highly successful. The 64 students who earned

high school diplomas in the Class of 2005, for instance, all either continued their studies

at GTCC or moved on to 4-year schools and were collectively awarded $400,000 in scholarships. In its 1st year of operation, 33 of 95 students dropped out; in its 5th year, only 1 of 127 students dropped out, and the school is on target for no dropouts in its 6th year. The small size allows the school to address more effectively other problems that plague much larger schools such as daily attendance rates. In its 1st year of operation the daily attendance averaged 87.61% and reached 90.85% by the 5th year. The school set a goal of 95% during its 6th year, and as of December 2005 was on target to achieve it (GTCC Middle College, 2006; Guilford County Schools, *GTCC Middle College*). In terms of composite end-of-course results[4], a state-required measure that indicates the percentage of students at or above grade level in subjects[5] tested, the school's performance was 62.7% for 2004-05, earning it distinction as a "School of Progress" (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2005a, 2005b). Such statistics along with extremely high graduation rates and several statewide recognitions as a model high school may have given the school its signature event that will propel it forward and give it sustainability status beyond the agenda of the next superintendent or the strategic direction of the next president of GTCC.

Favorable statistics are just one of several measures that substantiate GTCC Middle College High School as an unqualified success. In addition to the high school's

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[4] Preliminary results for 2005-06 indicate that GTCC Middle College High School may have increased its composite scores over the previous year. At the point this dissertation was finalized, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction had released a list of high schools with composite scores *less* than 70% (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2006). GTCC Middle College was not on the list and presumably had results of 70% or better. As of September 2006, the final report had not been presented at either the Department of Public Instruction or the Guilford County Schools website.

[5] For 2004-05, the eight subjects calculated as part of the composite score were Algebra I, Algebra II, biology, chemistry, English I, geometry, physical science, and physics. Though SAT scores and participation rates are reported, they are not included in the composite score to determine ABCs status (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2005b).

performance results, the school has established and adhered to other structural changes that have supported its success as an innovative and effective high school. Not only is the student population intentionally small, but also the high school classes maintain a student-teacher ratio of 15 to 1. As is the intent, the small classroom size allows teachers to know their students in multiple ways, suggests Tonya Bowdie, a mathematics teacher who taught at a traditional high school for 6 years before joining the faculty at GTCC Middle College. Jeff Barham, a social studies teacher who has taught his entire career at the middle college, views the school as a place where students are expected to excel rather than merely survive. He and Bowdie are also part of a *team* of adults who have joined with a community of students to create a school that is making a difference because it is truly different.

Not only is the high school housed on the campus, it is integrated to a substantial degree within the setting and culture of the community college. The principal, two counselors (one of whom works mostly with career counseling), and the administrative assistant all have private office space adjacent to one another. Another sizable room has been partitioned into cubicles for the faculty with a small conference table in the center, basic work machines, and other conveniences located in the space. All of the 10 teachers voice appreciation for this arrangement as opposed to the traditional teacher-assigned classroom. The cubicle arrangement provides individual workspace but also encourages teachers to interact with and plan with one another, which is the intent, according to the principal. If he notices something either positive or concerning about a student, he and his colleagues can take note of that student during the common planning time worked into

the schedule. The teachers emphasize that the small classes that allow them to get to know their students allow them to notice potential challenges to success before they get too serious. Their physical arrangement in a common location then permits them to confirm and discuss their concerns with each other and then make sure that whatever may be happening with a student can be addressed before it threatens the student's success.

The arrangement also allows the teachers to learn from one another and supports the principle of inclusive and autonomous governance. Even though, as with all Guilford County high schools, basic performance measures must be met and therefore become worrying points, according to the principal. However, the teachers are included in how to meet those measures, and the teachers and principal work together to determine how their time is better used in ensuring that every student achieves success however it is defined. For instance, the faculty members make much of the fact that they do not deal with such distractions as bus and lunch duty. This has been achieved partly because of the principal's decision to handle those duties himself, which is a doable task for him since his school enrolls only 135 students. Each day, Principal Watlington has lunch with the students in the GTCC cafeteria, whether students bring their lunch, take advantage of the catered meal provided by the Guilford County Schools, or purchase whatever they wish from the college cafeteria. This gives the principal "quality time" with the students. Touring the school with the principal makes it evident that he knows every student and has mentally recorded particular notes about many of them that he files away in his mind to remind him what special attention a student may need in order to find success at the middle college.

It is evident, too, that the community college and the high school on its campus have achieved deep respect as well as understanding for one another. There are no signs of tension between the high school and the college, and Pendry, the liaison, asserts that the college wants the school on campus. The liaison's role is to manage the needs and resolve the concerns of both entities, and Pendry offers two points as key in the positive relationship that exists between the college and the high school: the clear understanding and relationship between the community college president and school superintendent and the relationship she has with the high school's principal. For instance, GTCC has no available space to dedicate to high school classes during the mornings, so all high school courses are taught in the afternoons. This also allows students in the upper grades to integrate into regular college courses during the morning and evening hours. According to the liaison, the two CEOs respect the needs of one another and embrace the concept of middle and early colleges. "If we can accommodate something the school system or high school wants, we do. If we cannot, then they understand," says Pendry. Like many middle and early colleges, GTCC views the high school and the college's role in its operation as a service to the community. As well, GTCC gains from the arrangement and points out that traditionally 17% of its new students each fall come directly from high school. Over half of the middle college graduates – 56% – have continued their studies at GTCC, according to Mary West, an academic administrator at GTCC.

As has been documented with most such initiatives as the one at GTCC, one of the greatest hurdles to clear is the community college's acceptance of a high school in its midst. Overcoming this challenge has been made somewhat easier by the historical

relationship between community colleges and high schools. First, both public schools and community colleges have generally served the same communities; second, community colleges are used to having high school students on their campuses through dual enrollment arrangements; and third, the community college obviously occupies the middle position in the education continuum and contains elements of both the high school role (GED, adult high schools, and remediation departments) as well as collegiate functions such as college transfer programs (Orr & Bragg, 2001).

While this historical relationship explains a deep understanding between high schools and community colleges regarding collaborative efforts, it should be emphasized that the relationship cannot be forced. Time and effort must be given to preparing the host institution for the long-term commitment of a high school within its midst. Otherwise, the high school runs the risk of students already in need of an affective approach being immersed in a potentially more toxic environment from whence they came if the students encounter a campus culture that does not welcome them. Therefore, the host institution must not only accept the high school, it must show willingness to let go of inexplicable or outmoded traditions and practices if doing so creates greater compatibility with the middle or early college high school. However, this is not a simple or easy achievement for some colleges, and Wechsler (2001) cites middle colleges that failed because the host institution did not find a way to broaden its mission to embrace a high school on its campus.

While GTCC Middle College and its host did not encounter challenges in the beginning that could be considered severe, both the high school and the college admit

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that some faculty and staff at GTCC will never embrace the notion of a high school on the campus. The critical mass of acceptance, however, has been achieved, a point on which both the high school and the college agree. Initial concerns about much-needed college space being taken over the by high school have long been dissipated by the decision to offer the high school classroom space in the afternoon when space is traditionally plentiful on the campus. The classrooms used by the high school in the afternoons are regular classrooms for the college during the mornings and evenings. Neither have predictions of a constant supply of high school students changing the college environment materialized. This can be attributed again to careful planning, substantive collaboration, and real understanding by both sides regarding the innovative nature of the initiative. The concept of academic rigor, for one, has been taken most seriously, and all stakeholders are serious when they say that the college classes the students choose to take will involve a sincere college experience. Therefore, no special course sections are set up, and the documentation clearly states that middle college students enrolled in college classes will be treated as college students. It is prominently written in the high school promotional literature and in written agreements that students and parents or guardians must sign that GTCC Middle College High School is a school of choice; therefore, choosing the school means accepting its terms. Those terms include such stipulations that college instructors do not conference with parents, for example, and that any concerns students may have with their college instructors must be resolved in the usual ways of the college. Whether or not college instructors know which of their

students are also enrolled in the middle college is up to the students themselves to share only if they wish, as neither the high school nor the college discloses this information.

Perhaps the most obvious testament to the success of GTCC Middle College High School is the fact that the Guilford County Schools and Guilford Technical Community College have replicated the project two additional times. A middle college high school also operates on the High Point Campus with a themed connection to the college's entertainment technology program, and another operates on its downtown campus, which, by Fall 2006, will have moved to new surroundings at GTCC's modern East Campus, which houses primarily vocational and technical programs.

Principal Watlington accepts the core principles and believes that the school's founding principal, who is now retired, did as well. He emphasizes that the school never loses touch that it exists to serve a marginal population that is not being served well. This emphasis is not meant to translate into a stereotype, and he takes conscious aim at eradicating notions that his school is either for those who have tested as gifted or for those unwanted by traditional high schools because they are discipline challenges. The Jamestown Campus high school is for any student who can benefit from what it has to offer – but it is a school of choice. Students who have been unable to find a positive connection with a traditional high school are the general type the school seeks to serve. Ways in which students are usually delineated, whether intentionally or unintentionally, are of no consideration at the high school at GTCC.

What distinguishes the GTCC Jamestown project from other North Carolina Projects and puts it on a level that compares it favorably with the likes of the historic

LaGuardia project? Simply put, it has found success in adhering to the core principles. The affective environment is important and is taken seriously, as evidenced by such situations as students who are effectively homeless receiving necessary support from the school staff to achieve success. This is achieved through the teacher-counselor role that the teachers embrace as members of the staff. The smallness of the school – not just in overall student population but also in faculty-student and adult-student ratios – supports the importance of establishing meaningful relationships. The structure of the school resembles nothing like the traditional high schools in the Guilford County Schools. The teachers are intentionally housed together in order to promote interconnectivity regarding students and academic content. The atmosphere and manner in which staff meetings are conducted emphasize the strong degree to which shared governance is valued at this school. Interaction between the school staff, including the college liaison, is cordial and facile. The size of the school allows for an intimacy that is hard to replicate in the traditional high school. While the principal readily accepts the fact that his high school is a guest on the community college campus, he assesses the arrangement as not merely satisfactory and accommodating but one of genuine acceptance and integration. At the local level and insofar as can be done without violating state rules and regulations, policies have been aligned to facilitate the innovative intent and structure of the high school. For instance, while State requirements for such achievement measures as end-of-course examinations have not been set aside, the manner in which the content is packaged and delivered is not required to come in the traditional way. High schools such as the Jamestown project that are associated with the New Schools Project requested and

received certain waivers that allow even more flexibility. Perhaps the most significant event in the existence of GTCC Middle and early College is that its graduates are not only achieving at and above usually referenced State measures of success but their success, along with similar high schools in Guilford County, has been given credit for helping to dramatically improve the dropout rate in the county.

Edgecombe Early College High School

What the GTCC innovative high school is, is what the early college high school project in Edgecombe County, North Carolina, aspires to become. On the campus of Edgecombe Community College's Tarboro campus, Edgecombe Early College High School (EECHS) can be characterized as a fledgling program with much potential. From all indications – faculty and staff attitudes and outlook, perspectives from students, general support from both the college and public school communities, and public embrace – the potential for this school becoming a highly effective alternative for the community's most disaffected students is highly probable. Like several other early college high schools in North Carolina that began as middle colleges, Edgecombe Early College High School received a grant from Governor Mike Easley's Learn and Earn Program aimed at re-inventing high schools. The former middle college opened its doors in 2003 with just 11 students. Starting its 3rd year, and while converting to an early college, EECHS enrolls 70 students in all four grades with a goal of 100 students by the beginning of Fall 2006 (*NSP*, "Current Sites"). According to the planning summary provided at the New Schools Project website, the school will consider itself fully

implemented when it reaches 125 students. As of August 2006, EECHS reported an

enrollment of 109 students.

According to Marcia Edge, the school's second principal, running a school like

EECHS is more than an ambitious undertaking. She believes an early college is truly a

place that changes the lives of students and staff. While she marvels at the transformation

she has witnessed at EECHS, in some instances, transformation does not happen fast

enough for her. During a tour of the school, her facial expressions readily underscore her

displeasure upon leaving one classroom where the desks are in rows, as this reminds her

too much of the traditional high schools where these students did not find success. Edge

explains that the regimentation students endure in a traditional high school is something

they should be liberated from in an early college high school. She hopes the early college

concept, which places much value on ongoing professional development, will help wean

the teachers from models with which they have grown comfortable.

What core principles are at work to support Edge's positive outlook? An analysis

of the program shows that the school's strongest embracement of core principles is its

commitment to the disaffected status of its students, to the integration into the culture of

the community college in order to affect a different and more positive environment for

the students, and to autonomous and collaborative governance.

EECHS describes itself in its literature as "a small and personalized high school"

with a focus on "academic rigor, life relevance and personal relationships" (Edgecombe

County Schools, EECHS brochure). Kathy Webb, the community college liaison and

former faculty member at the college, emphasizes the commonly adopted "house"

concept as a structured commitment to the affective needs of the students, as does Edge.

At EECHS, the seven full-time teachers, principal, and counselor each head a house

consisting of a group of students. The usual comparison made to explain "house" is that it

is an intense form of homeroom, in which students are provided the opportunity to form a

sustained, supportive relationship with a high school professional. In recent years, the

term has been popularized by the success of the *Harry Potter* novel and film series in

which a fantastical school for adolescent witches and wizards is divided into four distinct

houses based upon the emotional needs and personalities of the students. Each house is

headed by a headmaster or headmistress who is also a teacher at the school. At EECHS,

each house meets at least weekly and includes exposure and discussions on topics

ranging from effective study habits to strategies for interacting with college faculty. The

idea is that the head of each house will become acquainted with all aspects of the student

in order to devise targeted support that will enhance student achievement. A visit to the

high school corroborates an atmosphere buttressed by a physical and operational

approach that supports affective needs of the students enrolled that the students

themselves say they could not get in the high schools from which they transferred. The

physical set up that purposefully chose a set of winding, connected offices promotes

openness and is located in a building where the students are openly welcome. At

lunchtime, students may choose where to eat – either in the college cafeteria or camped

out in a back foyer with other students curled up in chairs sharing a pizza.

An important method in determining whether an early college not only

understands the principles of success and sustainability but also embraces them is to

study its mission and operational plans. Goals and measures that the school sets for itself must be viewed within the context of how its leaders and staff intend to support the core principles. For instance, EECHS strives for class sizes of 12 or fewer and a minimum of six full-time high school teachers (it has seven) for the 100 students planned for Fall 2006 (Proposed Plan for EECHS). The school does offer small class sizes in high school offerings, in some cases as few as six or seven. The high school students are intermingled with the traditional college students in college courses, and class sizes for the college courses are what they normally are at Edgecombe with the notion that the early college students are taking on the garments of the college environment.

The students at EECHS are not only from the county's three high schools but from various small private schools as well. This brings to light the realization that the focus on large school size has perhaps become too focused upon as an isolated factor contributing to high school dropouts. Perhaps the spotlight should be widened to illuminate other aspects more equally. As an integral factor in an effective curriculum for early college high schools, whether students find relevance in what they are learning to their own interests is considered too little in the discussion of high school students and disaffection. Applicants to early and middle college high schools, especially on community colleges, seek admission for a variety of reasons. An applicant to the Forsyth Tech Middle College, for instance, from a local private high school sought entry based almost solely on his wish to access vocational courses that would be available to him at Forsyth Tech. His academic ability, socio-economic status, or any other possible factor for his having tuned out of his current high school and into the middle college was not in

question. His main reason for seeking admission was the connection he would have to vocational courses such as automotive technology. The early college at Edgecombe Community College values that connection. In addition to the college liaison who coordinates those overlapping logistics and issues between the community college and the early college high school, the school has plans for an additional staff person who will coordinate job shadowing and internship opportunities for students through the Edgecombe Workforce Development and Training Program (*NSP*).

Unlike the GTCC project, which can be said to have crossed critical thresholds that prove that it is an innovative high school, the EECH has not experienced what can be considered its significant event. It has, however, reached a crossroads that may well determine whether or how quickly it will be judged a success. In its very brief life, it has known three principals. The first two who have gone on to join the New Schools Project central staff to promote, encourage, and provide assistance for early college high schools throughout the state. The school's second principal expressed some anxiety over the likelihood of poor end-of-course exam results for the 2005-06 year. Her concerns proved warranted, and the end-of-course results showing only 50.9% of students at or above grade level were disappointing (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2006). Jane Currin, the New Schools Project coach assigned to the school to help the converted middle college develop into an early college, participated in the meeting during which EECHS learned of the results, and she described the initial reaction from the teaching staff as disbelief.

Once the shock wore off, EECHS's instructional team began to strategize about how to rectify the low performance of its students. Beginning Fall 2006, each student will

have a Personal Education Plan (PEP), a focused plan of study fully tailored to the student's strengths and weaknesses. More so than before, greater consideration is being given to blended curriculum with a desire to include the college instructors more in the academic program at the early college. Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) has been chosen as a tool to provide additional academic support for the students. AVID is a program aimed at preparing disadvantaged, underachieving students for college eligibility and success and focuses on writing, college and careers, and strategies for success. Academic activities are supported by motivational ones such as field trips, speakers, and media center experiences. Note-taking, test-taking, and other skills are also developed to enhance success in school. Currin stressed to EECHS at the outset of its conversion from a middle college to an early college high school that it would likely face greater scrutiny because it would now be a bona fide high school as defined by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Along with the conversion came the $1.5 million Learn and Earn grant, which raised its visibility and expectation levels. The lackluster performance on the end-of-course exams seemed to have shocked EECHS into believing more in the theoretical framework, according to Currin.

Despite challenges, it must be reiterated that the Edgecombe project did come into being. Within the community it has become not an alternative school but a school of choice, like the Guilford school, and this distinction makes a difference in the way it is perceived by students, the community, and its host institution. It utilizes a Critical Friends Group, who are volunteers who believe in EECHS and have a vested interest and desire

in seeing it become successful. Some projects, with arguably stronger designs than EECHS, were aborted before implementation for reasons ranging from inadequate space at the community college to logistical concerns that were considered too taxing for auxiliary functions such as transportation and food service. EECHS, however, is striving and has a good chance of achieving authentic success as it works toward getting the core principles properly aligned and working in concert.

As with most middle and early college high schools in North Carolina, EECHS's home on the campus of Edgecombe Community College has been a major advantage. As discussed throughout this study, it is not an anomaly that most middle and early college high schools either proposed or in operation are located on community college campuses. A firm tenet of such high schools is that they should at least be associated with a higher education institution to help achieve the structural realignment desired. As LaGuardia proved, much can be borrowed from the structure and operation of the host institution if, for no other reason, that it is different from what is normal to a high school. While it is true across the nation that most such projects are associated with community colleges for a variety of reasons, in North Carolina, and especially with those projects funded through the New Schools Project, it is expected that the community colleges would host more activity than the 4-year institutions for the simple reason that North Carolina's community colleges are designed to be within a reasonable commuting distance of all of its citizens. Therefore, 58 community colleges, some with campuses in more than one county,

have not been surprised that the LEAs would turn to them as partners for middle and early college high schools.

As one community college administrator at Edgecombe said, the college benefits as much as the students do and will benefit even more because the early college is a natural pipeline of students for the college. More important is the realization that in a county of 56,000 people with three traditional high schools, nearly 20% of the population is below the poverty level (*American Census Bureau*). For whatever reason, as evident in reflections of Shawna Andrews, the principal who took over from Edge, the traditional high school is not working for everybody, and she relishes the chance to try out new approaches and ideas via the early college that she could not employ at a traditional high school where she was an assistant principal. With Edgecombe County suffering from the loss of manufacturing jobs as are so many other areas of the State, the various players in the early college initiative in Edgecombe have at least one common goal they see as a must: Keep students in school and prepare them for today's world.

The EECHS brochure prominently displays the educational opportunities available to students, including the possibility of graduating in 5 years with a high school diploma as well as a degree in a range of disciplines from accounting to university transfer. The brochure offers testimony from students that range from appreciation for the personal attention they receive to the relatively tension-free environment. The personal attention and supportive relationships promised are evident when observing the school in operation. Despite the disappointing results of

end-of-course exams, some flashes of success are evident. According to Currin, 19 of 21 students who took college courses during the 2006 summer term earned either A's or B's. One of its students finished both the high school diploma and associate degree in 4 years, just before the conversion to an early college, and has become an inspiration for others. From what can be generally observed, the students seem to take seriously the invitation from EECHS to "Be Yourself . . . And Leave Completely Changed" (Edgecombe County Public Schools).

Anatomy of a Mission Aborted: Chatham County Early College

This firsthand account of the genesis, design, and planned implementation of Chatham Early College High School prefaces this narrative with the belief in the sincerity of all involved and their desire to see this project to fruition. It should be noted that the inclusion of this section does not aim to sort out and place blame regarding the failure of this project to be realized. Rather, the purpose of this narrative is to illustrate from a different perspective the critical nature of the theoretical framework and to support the assertion that weaknesses in affirmation of the framework will, sooner or later, become obvious. Chatham Early College High School was fortunate that the crack in the framework was exposed prior to implementation. The postponement of the project will hopefully enhance the chances of sustainability should the project resume at a later date.

The Chatham County New Schools Project (2004) planning grant application indicates the decision of the Chatham County Schools to establish a middle college

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high school.[6] The LEA's partnering post-secondary institution was Central Carolina

Community College, headquartered in Sanford, North Carolina, with full-service

campuses in Chatham, Harnett, and Lee counties. As early as 2003, when high

school reform had become a political plank for Governor Mike Easley, Chatham was

actually one of two school systems within Central Carolina Community College's

service area to strategize to reduce their dropout rates by experimenting with the

middle college high school concept. Lee County Schools was the other. As pointed

out earlier, the New Schools Project was designed to foster creative thinking and

approaches to address what the governor's policy concluded as an antiquated high

school system that "fail the vast majority of students in our public schools" (*NSP).*

The governor has effectively used the dropout statistics in particular to dramatize the

seriousness of the problem, and it has become nearly impossible for some school

systems to defend against the criticism. The doomsday statistics of 40 every 100 North

Carolina ninth graders failing to graduate in 4 years set the stage for the projects

designed in Lee and Chatham counties. With an economy rapidly shifting from

agrarian- and manufacturing-based jobs to one with a workforce more in need of

workers with technological skills requiring post-secondary education, the governor's

goal included high school reform as a tool of economic development (*NSP*). Chatham

and Lee counties had fixated on a growing dropout rate in their districts and were

lured by the possibility of a small high school financially supported in part for 5

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[6] With the evolution of the New Schools Project's emphasis on early colleges, the plans were later altered
to begin with a middle college that would phase into an early college high school. However, the final plans
would carry the title "Chatham County Early College."

years by external funds. Both LEAs believed that an appropriate affective environment with rigorous and relevant curriculum would persuade recent or potential dropouts to persist through graduation and have a head start on a college credential.

In 2004, Central Carolina Community was listed as a partner in proposals submitted by Chatham and Lee county school systems to the New School Projects. Lee County touted its dropout rate of being the 7th highest in the State as a primary reason for wanting to establish a middle college high school; Chatham County enjoined the same rationale (Lee County New Schools Project, 2004; Chatham County New Schools Project, 2004). Curiously, though, Chatham County ranks 86th of 116 school systems in the state, and is in far better shape than Lee County regarding students who drop out (*Curriculum and School Reform Services Home Page*).

Though the planning grants were nearly identical, guidelines regarding two grant awards in the same economic impact zone allowed only one system to receive funding, and the nod was given to Chatham County Schools. In 2004, the school system and its community college partner used the $45,000 planning grant to explore the possibilities of a middle college high school. From every outward indication, it appeared that both institutions were firmly committed to the project, and both had been careful to study the concept that included joint visits and discussions with various other projects. Every critical aspect of implementation – both philosophical and logistical – was discussed at length and agreed upon by both systems prior to submission of the $1.5 million implementation proposal. Points included in the

Chatham County New Schools Project (2004) planning proposal indicated an

awareness of the theoretical framework for middle and early colleges defined in this

study; below is the goal of the project:

> To curtail the flow of unprepared students into the Chatham County workforce, our schools in collaboration with Central Carolina Community College (CCCC) seek to develop a middle college high school located on the community college campus to implement a different kind of high school training and development model. This middle college high school will employ staff and a curriculum delivery design that is intended to encourage high-ability upper grades high school students who have been identified as at-risk of dropping out not only to complete high school but to graduate with an associate or bachelors degree from college.

Additionally, the proposed high school carefully defined its target population in

determining what it viewed as those disaffected students it would serve:

> We envision a student recruitment process for this program based on counseling:
> - with students identified by their school counselor as having the potential to perform college level work but are currently underperforming in their high school classes
> - students who had above average grades in middle school but have failed to live up to expectations in high school
> - students who are one or more semesters behind because of poor attendance
> - students who have the ability for high quality work but have already dropped out of school
> - high ability students who are school-aged mothers and need an alternative schedule for child care purposes
> - high ability students who may be having difficulty taking college courses because of parental immigration issues. (Chatham County New Schools Project, 2004)

An emphasis on empathetic teachers who would nurture a caring environment was also

central to the proposal:

> We envision the focal point of the teacher selection process to concentrate on selecting teachers with empathy for and commitment to their students' success. Research shows that having caring teachers is the most important factor in creating positive community attitudes about school. . . . (Chatham County New Schools Project, 2004)

As well, the innovative high school proposed was intended to serve as a catalyst to positively affect the schooling of high school students in general within the LEA, not just at the new high school, with relevant instructional delivery and content a hallmark of this new concept:

> We also envision the CCMCHS setting as the ideal location to create an instructional delivery model that sets the example for teaching and learning in all of our high schools. Using Problem-Based Learning (PBL) to create realistic and authentic workplace simulations and projects that are related to student interests, we believe that we can connect students to 'real world' problems as a context for learning critical thinking and problem solving skills, and acquiring knowledge of the essential concepts of the courses required for high school graduation in Chatham County. Making sure that students see the connection between work and learning is essential for the attainment of our vision of 100% completion at the associate degree level. (Chatham County New Schools Project, 2004)

Finally, structural innovations were inherent in the proposal and responsive to a high school intended to serve disaffected students as they had been defined:

> Our vision for CCMCHS also includes a school structure that promotes democratic, team-oriented management practices and decentralized decision-making, with participation by students, parents and faculty. Teachers working in teams with students and their parents will create and control a much greater understanding of school and individual needs, while fostering a climate of higher expectations for students and staff. (Chatham County New Schools Project, 2004)

The only serious point of contention in the process arose when the original desire of the soon-to-be-retired superintendent to establish a middle college was forcibly

replaced with an early college high school, which became a condition of the grant based on guidelines associated with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the major financial contributor to the Learn and Earn program of the New Schools Project.

Determined to open a fourth high school in Chatham County that would address the needs of those students who had indirectly expressed through their failure or near failure a need for something different, the school system and its community college partner forged ahead. As the proposal documents show, the planning committee, consisting of central office, building administrators, and teachers from the school system and senior and dean-level administrators from the community college had carefully adhered to design principles as outlined by the funding source as well as what they had embraced as best practices. The school would begin with no more than 50 students in its first year and expand to about 200 distributed over four grades at its peak. As a school of choice, a committee of both the early college and community college staff would select the students, and student potential and the ability to benefit from the early college high school would be primary considerations for selection. The high school portion of the early college would be taught mainly in the afternoons to give students maximum access to college courses as they progressed through. This design also took into consideration literature indicating the preference of later starting times as a support for better attendance, with the idea that once students became acclimated to a freer environment and more choice and flexibility in scheduling that strong interest in certain courses would motivate them to choose college courses either in the mornings, evenings, or online. Not only had the community college worked

hand in hand with the school system in designing the school, but the college allocated prime space on its Pittsboro Campus and suggested to align the school principal with the college staff by assigning the title of "associate dean" in order to enhance campus recognition and acceptance of the high school as part of the college. The partnership between the two institutions was evident on paper as the implementation grant was awarded in early 2005, and as the project entered the season for blooming, the shared governance and responsibility for the success of the project could be seen in action. Up until this point, all key decisions about the future early college high school had been based upon substantive discussion and collaboration between the two institutions (Chatham County New Schools Project, 2004; Chatham County Early College Grant, 2005).

Though the efforts of the planning team and the submission of the proposal by the Chatham County Schools were received favorably by the New Schools Project and received notification that it would receive $300,000 a year for 5 years as a Learn and Earn high school, augmenting the pending grant funds with local resources caused discomfort, especially for the retiring superintendent. Even the planning team had operated under the impression that favorable information from the funding source would make the highly prioritized special high school a reality. The enthusiasm was dampened when the superintendent remained hesitant to authorize the hiring of the principal recommended by the planning team. Not even assurances from staffers from the New Schools Project could assuage the superintendent, who wanted the funds in the hands of the district before offering a new principal the customary 2-year contract.

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Subsequently, the superintendent's cautionary approach led the top choice for principal to withdraw from consideration.

Though planning members from both the school system and the community college recognized this development as a setback, it was not considered fatal, especially when the incoming superintendent was hired in June 2005. The measure of comfort that preceded the new school leader was the superintendent's direct familiarity with early college high schools, as the new chief of schools had shepherded the establishment of such a school in another school system. In fact, some members of the planning team had visited the school with which the new superintendent had been associated, and some consideration had been given to borrowing the school's curriculum model for the Chatham early college. Therefore, the planning moved forward as planned, and (taking this view as a participant in this project) the perspective from the planning team was that the design of the project had taken into account the key elements as they understood them. Again, the fact that the plan had been endorsed with a $1.5 million grant over 5 years buttressed the confidence of the planning team.

The superintendent, who, arguably, had more direct exposure with an early college high school than any member of the planning team, understandably expressed opinions about the project and the process. The superintendent's previous success in establishing an early college gave added weight to central office input and feedback. In a conference call with the New Schools Project just prior to the superintendent's official start date, the superintendent suggested postponing the fall start date until January 2006, since the delay in hiring the principal had also delayed crucial planning and recruitment

activities necessary to a successful implementation. When the superintendent officially took the reins of the school system in July, a principal for the early college was appointed outside of the collaborative process to which the planning committee had pledged itself and had grown accustomed. Whether coincidentally or not, the project began a rapid unwinding, which included the departure of the director of secondary education, who was the school system's chief architect and advocate for the project. The core principles that the planning group had come to understand, accept, and embrace became severely compromised in a gradual realization that the new administration of the school system had a different perspective on the structural and operational philosophy of the early college. Key theoretical components such as integration of the early college into the fabric of the community college culture and an autonomous school governance structure thought previously settled regressed to stages of review and discussion. Therefore, it came as no surprise when the implementation date was pushed back even further and eventually postponed until further notice.

This narrative is offered to illuminate the consequences of core principles either neglected or understood differently by key stakeholders. As the planning and implementation documents show, this early college high school incorporated the theoretical framework in terms of the principles. All the core elements, including authentic commitment by both the school system and the host institution, favorably marked what would have become Chatham County's fourth high school. Detailed attention had been given to the target population; the curriculum embraced innovation and stressed rigor and relevance; the school would be significantly different structurally,

in terms of how it would be situated on the community college campus as well as in terms of deliberate decisions made to support its integration into the community college environment. These ideals had been thoroughly worked through, understood, and endorsed under the previous administration. The fact is that partnering institutions must work through the process of coming to the same understanding of the theoretical framework so that what they wish to build collaboratively follows the same code. What happened with Chatham Early College High School is a positive lesson in that it stalled the creation of a school that may have worn itself down by trying to satisfy competing philosophies.

Therefore, the question to ask is how could a project that seemed exceedingly strong and viable in principle fizzle away. As this study suggests, the core principles do not play well in isolation; they really are one super principle, one principle nourishing another in order to achieve the desired goals. One element the Chatham County project could not overcome during the transition from one administration to another is the authentic relationship and common understanding of the project that had been developed between the school system and the community college. When it became obvious that changing circumstances had introduced new perspectives that needed consideration and deliberation, concerns about the ability of the early college high school to become what had been envisioned overshadowed all else.

North Carolina Schools to Watch

Several other projects deserve mention, either for some unique feature that has drawn special attention or for some aspect that has generated criticism. In its first year, Middle College High School at Durham Technical Community College is noteworthy because of its multi-district student body. This middle college high school enrolls students from three different school districts, Chapel Hill-Carrboro, Durham County, and Orange County school systems (Durham Technical Community College). For 2005-06, its composite test results are 43.2% (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2006). Time will tell how well this arrangement will work regarding collaboration among the three systems in terms of resource sharing, student selections, and other areas that invite conflict. For its challenging and unique service area challenges, this school is worthy of close observation and will no doubt offer useful lessons for other multi-district projects. By traditional measures, newer middle or early college high schools such as Buncombe County Early/Middle College High School at Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College and J. D. Clement Early College High School at North Carolina Central University have carded noteworthy initial performance (see Appendix I). Robeson County Early College High School at Robeson Community College is off to a promising start, and Middle College of Forsyth County at Forsyth Technical Community College continues to improve (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2006).

The eight middle and early colleges operated by Guilford County Schools provide as useful a laboratory as can be found for studying the complex array of designs and techniques inspired by the innovative high school movement. The Middle College at

GTCC was presented earlier because it is an example of the concept fully developed and in a pure form in terms of the original goals and intents of middle and early colleges. One of its sister projects, the Early College at Guilford, is hosted by Guilford College, a private, 4-year college in Greensboro, and is highly successful in terms of all the traditional measures but has encountered considerable criticism from the community because of its selectivity. The Early College at Guilford is designed for intellectually gifted students, which makes it a variation of the early college model in that it is small high school for a group that some would argue does not need the support mechanisms associated with early colleges. Of the 19 high schools in Guilford County (this number includes the middle and early college high schools) reporting SAT scores, Early College at Guilford ranks highest with an average score of 1277 (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2005c). It ranked fourth in scholarship awards earned by its graduates in 2005 with $3.7 million, even though its graduating class comes from a total population of 175 students in a system that averages 985 students per high school (*Guilford County Schools Home Page;* Guilford County Schools, 2005). The high school with the greatest amount in scholarships earned by its students was Grimsley, with a student population of 1,700 students (*Guilford County Schools Home Page).* In many ways, this early college is the bellwether of the public secondary schools in Guilford County, and criticism it has received for its alleged elitism is unwarranted and unfair when considered in the context of how the environment of a large, traditional high school can affect students of any demographic. A seldom-discussed issue in the middle and early college movement is the degree to which it is redefining the perception of who is at-risk. Some students of

exceptional intellectual capacity and considered advantaged in other ways are sometimes stifled and unchallenged to the point of being driven from the traditional high school. Students who meet the traditional definition of at-risk have no just claim to a monopoly on being disaffected. It is to the credit of a school system, especially a very large one, to recognize this and use its resources however it can to truly leave no student behind.

Unfortunately, there are others such as the Middle College at North Carolina A&T State University and Middle College at Bennett College, both also Guilford County high schools, which have yet to show the kinds of results that have been seen elsewhere in Guilford County, the state, and the nation. Though called middle colleges, both high schools enroll 9th through 12th grades, which essentially makes them early colleges. (Labeling the schools as middle colleges is presumably a precautionary measure by the district to minimize criticism caused by the Guilford College high school.) The middle colleges at A&T and Bennett are special in that they cater to single-gender populations, males at A&T and females at Bennett, which is an all-women's college. The A&T school specifically encourages students who are not first-time ninth graders and pledges to provide a supportive academic environment that focuses on the basics so that students can catch up to grade level and then launch toward greater success from there (Guilford County Schools, *Middle College at North Carolina A&T State University*).

The targeted population creates even greater challenges for the A&T high school; however, it faces the same measures as other Guilford County Schools and thus far has achieved few of the benchmarks that would make it successful in the traditional sense. In the 2004-05 reporting year, fewer than five of its seniors took the SAT (Public Schools of

North Carolina, 2005c). According to recent statistics released from the North Carolina

Department of Public Instruction, only 17.6% of the students at Middle College at N.C.

A&T scored at or above grade level on end-of-course tests, down from 24.6% in 2004-05

(Public Schools of North Carolina, 2005a, 2006). Bennett offers special support for

student mothers and provides transportation to and from daycare facilities, allows middle

college students access to college opportunities such as auditioning for the choir and

theatre productions, and pairs each student with a Bennett College student mentor

(Guilford County Schools, *Middle College High School at Bennett brochure*). Though the

Bennett high school had a slightly higher percentage of its students, 18.7%, performing at

or above grade level than did the A&T high school, in the most recent report, it joined the

A&T middle college in showing a decrease from 2004-05, down from 20.6% (Public

Schools of North Carolina, 2005a, 2006). Both Bennett and A&T middle colleges are

labeled "priority" schools and warrant close observation (Public Schools of North

Carolina, 2005a, 2005b). Perhaps the most telling statistic that indicates the unstable

foundation of both schools is that neither Bennett nor A&T middle colleges reported

enrolling any of its students in college courses in 2004 and 2005, though students making

good academic progress are eligible to do so (*NC Schools Report Cards Home Page*). A

middle or early college high school that enrolls none of its students in college courses

cannot claim to be offering its students a substantive college experience and fulfilling its

promise to accelerate its students toward a college degree. The Bennett and A&T high

schools rank second and third, respectively, as the lowest performing high schools out of

365 evaluated by North Carolina's school performance measures (Public Schools of

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North Carolina, 2005a; see Appendix I). The worst scenario is for too many middle and early colleges to fall short of such measures and thereby prompt premature conclusions that middle and early colleges fail children as well.

Summary

The discussion of the North Carolina A&T Middle College High School and the Middle College High School at Bennett is not meant so much as criticism as it is to highlight the point that the mere creation of these very small high schools have not been nearly enough to foster the ultimate measure of success – which is the success of its students as determined by their educational achievements. Recent reports show that these two schools are joined by five other Guilford County high schools, two of which are also middle colleges, with 2005-06 composite test results of less than 60%; in total, 10 Guilford County high schools scored below 70% (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2006). If smallness and the wherewithal to offer individual attention could suffice, then all high schools of 400 or 500 would perform demonstrably better than much larger ones, but this is not necessarily the case. As this chapter points out in its discussion of the often-cited success of Middle College High School at LaGuardia Community College as the nation's premier school of its type, it bears repeating that the LaGuardia school operates from an unwavering commitment to the theoretical framework set forth in this study. As supported by the data, well-designed, well-established, and well-run middle and early colleges have, in general, yielded positive results for many students who were challenged to find success in the traditional high school setting. However, North

Carolina's experiment with middle and early college high schools has met with mixed results when considered within the context of what the State has determined as a successful high school further influenced by national measures of No Child Left Behind legislation. In the 2004-2005 ABCs of Public Education Growth and Performance Report, 5 of the 9 middle and early college high schools were below 60% on the composite scores, which means that less than 60% of the students in those small high schools were below grade level on one or more end-of-course exams (see Appendix I). In 2005-06, 10 of the 115 high schools with composite scores of less than 70% were middle or early college high schools (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2006). Further evidence that local educators have found the task of implementing middle and early college high schools a greater challenge than anticipated is the increasing frequency with which existing projects are being further redesigned based on the principles and guidance set forth by the New Schools Project, whose approach is, in part, based on the theoretical framework described in this study. Nine of the current NSP Learn and Earn early colleges are either acceleration of already established early college high schools or conversions of middle colleges to early colleges (*NSP*).

The only one of these high schools started during the last 6 years that could be considered an unqualified success based on its consistently high performance in all categories in every reporting year is Early College High School at Guilford College. However, it is perhaps considered less than pure because of its targeted population of students "with a distinguished record of academic performance" (*Early College at Guilford*). Its academically elite student population makes it unlike most middle and early

college students that strive to support students whose academic potential has yet to be realized. It has proven that layering academically gifted students with the effective practices of an early college can result in near perfection. Nearly all of its 180 students perform at or above grade level, and of the middle and early colleges in Guilford County, it is the only one in which the average daily attendance exceeds the district average of 95% and has the highest attendance rate of any high school in the county (Early College at Guilford Report Card).

As successful as the Guilford College early college is, the perspective, whether warranted or not, that it has few challenges to success makes it less a role model for the students profiled in the Janet Lieberman vision for which the first middle and early colleges were designed. Of the 227 end-of-course tests taken at Early College at Guilford in 2004-05, 35% were administered to non-white students, even though slightly over 55% of Guilford County's students are non-white (Early College at Guilford Report Card; Guilford County Schools, 2005). While nearly 48% of Guilford's end-of-course test takers were categorized as economically disadvantaged, none of the students at Early College at Guilford who took the test were in this category (Early College at Guilford Report Card). Such statistics raise the profile of Middle College at GTCC and its increasing respect and notoriety in North Carolina and the nation as an innovative school that embraces potential and therefore serves as a true alternative for the average student imperiled by the trappings of the traditional high school setting. In the minds of practitioners, what the GTCC model has achieved is more worthy of accolades and study

because, through philosophical and structural changes supported by rigor, relevance, and

affective support, the previously marginal student is now persisting and finding success.

CHAPTER V

REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Reflections and Summary

My role as a community college administrator has required my sustained participation in the operational aspects of various college/high school collaborations. As such, I have provided input into the selection of students, developed a mentoring relationship with a few high school students, responded to parents and the public, and decided logistical matters such as allocating space, scheduling appropriate courses, and sharing resources. In general, I have been involved with high schools enough to appreciate and understand the enormity and seriousness of establishing a new high school. At Forsyth Technical Community College, where I worked for 12 years, and at Central Carolina Community College, where I currently work, I have participated in the development of a middle college high school and an early college high school, respectively. I will draw on my experiences with both as I move toward a point of why much more attention should be given to the way in which middle and early colleges are planned and implemented.

As discussed earlier in this study, Central Carolina Community College's first foray into a partnership involving an early college high school ended in an aborted mission. The community college found the failed project especially bitter because for many years its relationships with the three school systems within its service area have

been a major source of pride. In 2005, for instance, more than 800 of the college's

students were high school students enrolled in college classes from psychology to

bioprocessing fundamentals. The college has contorted its schedule to suit the logistical

needs of the high schools, whether stretching out a course to fill time or compressing a

schedule to conform to high school exams. Several of the college's full-time teachers are

employed to teach at the high schools exclusively and even follow the high schools'

holiday and break schedules rather than those of the college. This is to underscore the

grave disappointment the college felt when its collaboration with Chatham County

Schools to start an early college did not materialize. When Lee County asked the college

to enter a partnership to establish Lee Early College, which opened Fall 2006, an

understandable hesitancy on the part of the college seemed justified.

However, all who had toiled on the Chatham project were resolved to use what

we had learned from a well-designed project that did not come to fruition. The feeling

was that we now knew where the pitfalls were; moreover, instinctively, we knew that the

key principles had to work together. We borrowed as much as we could from the

Chatham project because we knew the concepts incorporated within that initiative were

sound and genuinely proposed. The funding document for the Lee Early College High

School is somewhat similar to its predecessor, but this time the planning team took even

greater pains to recognize core principles that we thought would make or break the

project (Lee County Early College Grant, 2006). Even though what was originally

proposed is not as close to what materialized, it can be claimed with certainty that the

philosophical and structural underpinnings remain even though logistical matters such as

transportation and food service had more influence on the design than the planning team would have desired.

Among the major changes was a traditional high school day instead of the afternoon starting time for the students, which would give them access to many college classes in the morning once they progressed through the program. A more spacious common office and planning area for teachers, designed to promote collaborative planning and other interaction, was compromised in favor of dedicated classrooms for the early college that were not a consideration in the original design. The school system administrators thought the teachers needed classrooms they could "call their own;" the planning team did not want the teachers to think in terms of the familiar. The lack of sufficient teachers assigned to the project seriously threatened support of the affective tilt; however, advocates for the new school, especially the new principal and the coach assigned by the funding source, championed this key component and persuaded the school system to decide otherwise. Therefore, small class size promised in the funding proposal would stand. Though the curriculum model as presented in Appendix H does not graphically represent its creative approach, the integration of high school and college curricula is evident, and how each student schedule will eventually look will depend upon the college major each student chooses.

At various turns when an obstacle appeared from nowhere and specters of previous projects formed, I needed a reason to consider this project worthwhile, and that is when I thought back to the reservations I had initially felt about the Middle College High School at Forsyth Tech – that is, until I began to know the students and why they

had chosen the middle college. The well-read young man who was too different to go unnoticed but who was invisible nonetheless in his high school of 2,000, the student who worked her middle college schedule around driving a cab to support herself and her ill mother, and the student who found no relevance in his expensive private school because it lacked a vocational program made me realize that any decisions I could make or influence should chiefly consider the students who would likely benefit.

I needed a reason to believe that what we were about to embark upon was worth the considerable effort, and hearing the students and their reasons for choosing the Lee Early College gave me reasons to keep believing. The selection committee heard student after student, some more articulate than others, but all with honesty and passion, describe in different ways their hope that early college would liberate them from their current educational experiences they found unpleasant and unproductive. The committee listened to academically gifted students who had encountered mostly failure upon entering middle school express that everything *but* learning seemed to be going on around them. Several Hispanic students, who seemed to realize the educational opportunity more than others did, viewed as the chance of a lifetime to get a head start on a college education and a path to an enriched life. In fact, Hispanics represent 32% of the 140 students who applied for admission to Lee Early College's inaugural class but make up only 22% of Lee County's public school students. Some students approached the process more formally than did others and even dressed the part to be sure they were viewed as serious candidates. There were the students who considered themselves misfits in their current

middle schools such as the one who spent much of his time warding off bullies. His take on early college was that it would probably not appeal to those he hoped to leave behind.

As Kincheloe (1995) calls to attention, in most respects – philosophically, structurally, and operationally – today's high school is not so different from the high school of 50 years ago. While it may be true that educators, school systems, and governments have become more sophisticated in the training of teachers and in developing instruments designed to measure academic achievement meant to enforce accountability, have schools really changed to the point that they are able to educate all students? The fact of the matter is that the traditional high school is effective for a percentage of the population. In past times, even the high school dropout had a reasonable chance of making at least a tolerable living in a no-skilled or low-skilled job, and the high school graduate could reasonably expect to leave a manufacturing job after 30 years with a pension substantial enough to live out the rest of his or her years.

For states like North Carolina, restructuring the educational system to produce a skilled workforce is viewed as the key to economic survival. The eyes of the nation are upon North Carolina, and the Governor's Office push to have an early college available to students in all 100 counties is receiving notice. In a 2006 *Newsweek Magazine* article, Governor Mike Easley's initial shock-and-awe campaign of lobbing explosive dropout statistics has given way to the more diplomatic approach of connecting school reform to preparing young people for the economic realities of the times. As the article points out, the 250,000 North Carolinians employed in the textile and apparel industries in 1990 have dipped to below 100,000 today. For students who do not see high school in their

future, a middle or early college high school can be especially important, as the blending of high school and college shows how education and the future are connected (Kantrowitz, 2006). Fittingly, Middle College at Guilford Tech in Jamestown figures prominently in the national attention North Carolina is receiving for its high school reform efforts.

As I have labored with others to sketch clearly what an early college looks like, I now offer the following as a black-and-white sketch, and will leave it to the designers and implementing teams of these innovative and worthy high schools to provide the appropriate local color. As Jane Currin, a retired high school principal who now coaches early college high school projects for the New Schools Project, has helped me realize, the high schools described in this study should not look like traditional high schools, with evidence of their distinctiveness seen through their course offerings, small class size, and emphasis on rigor, relevance, and relationships. This focus on relationships goes beyond the student-teacher relationship but intends for the staff to interact and build meaningful and productive relationships with each other for the benefit of collaboratively enveloping the students with support and planning that will enhance student achievement and success. Whereas the hours of operation are a marked factor of the traditional high school, the middle and early college knows no such boundaries. Traditional high schools structure the class day in order not to interfere with sports and other after school activities; the middle or early college is designed so that the needs of students come first, and the needs of students dictate what the school provides. The middle and early college high school is authentically a school of choice. It does not seek to criticize the traditional

high school that may offer success for many other students; however, it is intended to provide a high school option, as Guilford County Schools approaches it, for those with a high risk of falling through the widening cracks that exist in the traditional setting. Middle and early college students are intended to be college students, and the schools should be designed to blend with the college as opposed to merely occupying space on the college campus. Indeed, what Gause (2003) offers in a general commentary on what it is necessary to authentically transform a stalled or failed school is appropriate to the creation and sustenance of the middle or early college: "Such institutions seek variations in routines, unlike custodial organizations. Creative learning communities ignore rules; they seek to develop procedures for encouraging desirable behavior versus establishing levels of discipline and punishment."

A moment of observation and reflection will be ruled in order to make a point about why middle and early college high schools are worth consideration – but moreover why the core principles should be considered in their design. In the spring of 2006, I was privileged to deliver the commencement address to a group of community college graduates. The college operates a program at one of its remote sites that consists of 200 students in various programs that includes GED, adult high school, and several college programs that culminate in a certificate, diploma, or associate degree. The students at this site are not judged on their past performance but rather on their potential for success – and they enter the program at various levels of achievement. Though the program is not necessarily set up as a hybrid-like program, there is somewhat of a seamless transition from the high school components to the college-level programs. The GED, adult high

school, and college instructors, most of whom are full-time employees, work in close proximity to one another and know the same students. The students live and socialize together and interact with the same set of instructors throughout their programs. The attractive student-teacher ratios of about 15 to 1 support an affective approach and connections between students and college personnel that benefit the academic performance of the students. The relationships and positive interaction between students and staff are evident. Standards and expectations are clearly communicated at this site, and students realize that this opportunity for a tuition-free education is a privilege not to be squandered.

Not only do the students rise to expectations, they do so in programs that are extremely rigorous. The curriculum has been naturally integrated, with the welding program, for instance, connecting to the carpentry program to build playground equipment for local schools. A better example of a learning community is not found anywhere at this college. The faculty and staff plan and work together for the benefit of a manageably sized group of students that they come to know not only as students but also as people who have found a purpose that they want to nourish and develop. The environment and the limited accessibility of the site have combined to spark creativity from the faculty and staff unmatched at this college. The welding students designed and built frames for motors that would simulate cars so that the limited shop space would give each student his own "automobile" for practice. The construction trades programs collaborated to build a practice facility that will allow students to fully install an electrical system for either a house or a commercial facility. Not from a directive by administrators

but encouraged by the college's program planning and review process, the program faculty and staff at this facility decided on their own that their programs would be strengthened and their students better served if external program certifications were achieved that would in turn give their students the added value of being able to claim those certifications upon completion. All of the vocational and technical programs are now certified through a statewide certification process known as the Wheels of Learning. The program I describe has been in operation over 30 years and has become widely recognized as the best of its type and design in North Carolina.

What has been described above could be that of a well-functioning and effective middle or early college high school, but it is neither. Instead, it is the sketch of a prison program that Central Carolina Community College operates in Lillington, North Carolina. Since 1972, nearly 3,500 college certificates, diplomas, and associate degrees have been awarded to inmates completing programs in masonry, automotive, electrical, welding, carpentry, electronics, food service, and business administration. For whatever reasons, many of these male inmates who did not reach post-secondary education earn a higher education credential as prisoners. As inmates, these college students benefit from an educational experience – in some aspects by design but in others out of necessity – designed to support all of their needs, academic and social, and in a rigorous, relevant way by a group of essentially autonomous group of educators who make decisions together in the best interests of their students. In essence, these inmates have been served well by a naturally developed learning community that 2- and 4-year colleges have experimented with for the last 15 years (Bailey & Alfonso, 2005).

In a special report by the Bureau of Justice Studies, Harlow (2003) states that 41% of the nation's federal and state prison inmates and 31% of probationers had not completed high school or its equivalent as compared with 18% of the general population 18 or older. As alarming as these statistics may be, when disaggregated in various ways – by race and by federal and state prisons, in particular – the numbers paint an even bleaker picture. Of the more than one million people incarcerated in state prisons in 1997, 68% did not receive a high school diploma. While Harlow's report focuses on the prison population in 1997 when the combined total in federal and state prisons and local jails was 1.7 million (Chaiken, 2000), that number had risen to 2.2 million by 2005 (Harrison & Beck, 2006). To focus what can be a dizzying array of numbers, consider the dominant demographic in the state prison male population of 20 to 39 year olds, who make up two-thirds of all the inmates. In the general population this demographic makes up about 22%, with African-Americans and Hispanics making up about 3% each. Incarcerated young white and black males are twice as likely as their counterparts in the general population not to have a high school diploma or GED; the Hispanic comparison is much closer, with 52% of the prison population versus 41% of those in general having earned the high school diploma or its equivalent (Harlow, 2003). Not that race, ethnicity, or gender should have any bearing on whether a promising educational reform deserves priority attention, it merits a mention that the demographic at greatest peril and therefore who could gain the most from well-established middle and early college high schools is the African-American male, whose incarceration rate is 5 to 7 times higher than that of white males. As illustration, the prison population for white males aged 18 to 19 is 905 per

100,000 compared with 5,306 for African-American males. For Hispanics, the number is 2,072 (Harrison & Beck, 2006).

The fact that such a vast number of inmates, and minority males in particular, enter the prison system at an educational disadvantage strips any wonderment from the fact that 91% of state prisons and 100% of federal institutions provide an educational program. Nearly 27% of state institutions and 80% of federal institutions offer college courses. For many inmates, prison is their first exposure to post-secondary education, with only 4% of inmates younger than 25 having pursued an education beyond the high school credential. Scholar and cultural critic bell hooks (2004) notes in her work *We Real Cool: Black Males and Masculinity* the push by African-Americans for separate schools as a response to education that fails black males. Though the focus of these advocates for all-black and single-gender schools emphasizes discipline over learning, hooks (2004) sees something else at work:

> . . . [O]ften it is not the strictness that leads boys to do well in these schools, rather the fact that they are cared about, given attention, and perceived to be learners who can excel academically. Individual boys educated in supportive environments often regress when they enter predominantly white schools where they are stereotypically categorized as non-learners. . . . If black males can educate and/or reeducate themselves in prisons, it is all the more feasible that concerned black folks can school black male children rightly in the communities and homes where they live. (pp. 44-45)

What hooks describes moves to the heart of the middle and early college concept when properly understood and applied. As pointed out earlier in this study, the early college movement originated from a private boarding school for affluent students whose

headmistress felt a need to create a more challenging environment for high school seniors in their final year. The fact that the nation's most well known and most copied middle college high school borrowed its founding principles from an elite boarding school makes it fair to reiterate that what is good enough for the privileged among us is good enough for the rest of us. Since few would dispute the greater likelihood that the least educated are more likely to find themselves behind bars, it is at least as interesting to turn that thought in other ways and note that a model of education that is working for incarcerated students may well have merit for those at greatest risk of becoming the incarcerated. Superior Court Judge Howard E. Manning, Jr., who has overseen North Carolina's longest running legal case on school quality, known as the Leandro case, is of the same mind: "You've got to take these kids coming out of the ninth grade and capture them academically," he said. "Otherwise, you're going to see them in criminal court Monday morning" (Judge says schools are making progress, 2006).

Conclusions

In terms of what the middle and early college movement hopes to do, perhaps the mission of North Carolina's New Schools Project succinctly states the intent nationwide:

> The clear intent of the NSP is to engender dramatic structural change as opposed to supporting a 'program.' NSP's essential thrust is straightforward: in order to improve public high schools everywhere, individual schools must be encouraged and assisted to invent and implement more effective means of serving students. The successes of these schools must be sustained, their processes must be supported, and their new structures for success must be replicated. The focus of NSP initiatives is the individual school, but the intent over time is to re-invent high school education in North Carolina. (New Schools Project Request for Proposals, 2006, p. 3)

The constant refrain sung by educators, politicians, parents, and even students that today's traditional high school does not provide an opportunity for all students to achieve drives the need as well as the opportunity for such innovative concepts as middle and early college high schools. Perhaps not surprisingly, it has taken some non-educators such as billionaire Bill Gates of Microsoft to use his fortune to bring nationwide attention to these innovative high school reforms, but projects attempted before and since Gates's involvement have proven to flourish or flounder on a set of principles just fully emerging. The three North Carolina projects profiled in this study cast light on the theoretical framework presented. The most successful project that can be measured in North Carolina, the Middle College at GTCC's Jamestown campus, is so distinguished because it has defined well its audience, which facilitates the process of designing a school that meets the needs of that target audience. As a school of 135 students integrated for the most part into the fabric of its host community college, rigorous standards and curriculum are supported by a cohesive faculty and staff who stress affective and academic support for students. The curriculum is also relevant because the middle and early college students may choose college courses and programs that align with their interests and goals, whether vocational or designed to further their educational aspirations.

The high school at GTCC has prospered because it bases itself upon the core principles, and it has done so with demographics mirroring those of the general high school population in its district, which also supports the notion that core principles of structure and environment do matter. Any student who can benefit, regardless of circumstances, is welcomed. As the high school students are also the college's students,

the arrangement between the two entities is more than legally prescribed; it is imbued with an ethical understanding that everyone benefits from the relationship. The early college enjoys ample and comfortable surroundings, and students avail themselves of the campus and its amenities as do other college students. The school and the college do not merely suffer one another; they productively co-exist and blur the lines where it is natural or better to do so. This middle/early college is deliberately different in terms of structure and operation insofar as it can be in order to create a path to success for its students. The student support systems in place are both formal and informal; after all, as one Guilford teacher says, "This is what education should be – caring for the kids" (Kantrowitz, 2006). The balance between the autonomously operated school and the central office has been achieved along with the ethical responsibility to ensure that the students in this school receive as much as they would have in a traditional high school. In most cases, they are receiving much more. Democratic school governance as analyzed in this study matters as well, and a top-down system that acquiesces to central administration directives for traditional and politically safe reasons will choke the transformative life from a truly innovative middle or early college.

Research of middle and early colleges done for this study led this researcher away from his original thinking that an actual "blueprint" could be developed and followed that would guarantee successful implementation and sustainability. Instead of a pattern approach, this study has found greater value in the careful study and internalization of the theoretical framework before embarking upon an implementation. Popular and functional building plans are copied from attendance zone to attendance zone and from district to

district, but a new building, no matter how well-designed and constructed, does not mean that students who were underserved before will somehow be better served in new surroundings. The same is true of middle and early college designs. If the theoretical framework is sound, a middle or early college high school can take on whatever outerwear best suited for its students and other stakeholders.

A theoretical framework and an implementation strategy are fundamentally different in that the latter is an event and the former is a process. Events tend to acculturate, institutionalize, and stabilize. Processes are more apt to support the evolution of thought and practice that will energize and revolutionize. The theoretical framework is about inspiring new ways of structuring a high school and incubating evolutionary and revolutionary thinking about achieving success with students who are at the margins in a variety of ways. Therefore, this study offers the following recommendations in terms of the position that designers of middle and early colleges should take in exposing themselves to the theoretical framework: First, take the time needed to fully understand the theoretical constructs behind the concept. Understand the target population in general and then localize it, as it is often surprising who suffers from disaffection once the stereotypes are banned from the discussion. Settled thinking about what is and is not good curriculum content and approaches must become unsettled – and must remain so. Even after a revised, new, or creative curriculum is created and implemented, a truly innovative middle or early college will continuously engage in its own action research to determine whether to stay the course or move in other directions. A structural anomaly in the current high school tradition is more detrimental than often realized, and *breaking it*

to fix it, so to speak, is bold, drastic, and risky but required. It must be understood as well that a high school integrated into the fabric of a college presents its own set of legal and ethical issues, and as many of these as can be noted should be understood and considered prior to implementation in order to give the project a reasonable chance of success. Finally, these core principles do not operate in isolation. They tend to be nourished by one another, and too much neglect of any one can weaken the project into submission.

What should be learned from the nation's first middle college high school at LaGuardia Community College in New York and from promising innovative middle and early colleges elsewhere is that the time-tested success of the former and the solid foundations upon which other successful ones are built are not accidents or products of good fortune. They are based upon a deliberate and careful theoretical framework that takes into consideration the needs of a certain population of students. Perhaps the greatest lesson that can be taken from the LaGuardia school is that the commitment to substantive high school reform has to be sincere. As for the North Carolina experiment, time will tell, and the proliferation of these innovative approaches to high school restructuring is drawing the attention of researchers, as evidenced by the $2.9 million grant the University of North Carolina at Greensboro received in July 2006 from the United States Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences to conduct a 4-year study of North Carolina's Learn and Earn Early College High Schools (Monte, 2006). Efforts must be made to resist the tendency to abandon the reform that middle and early college high schools can foster because the results hoped for do not present themselves in the early phases of an implementation. Likewise, it becomes a sleight of hand to prevent

today's solutions from becoming tomorrow's problems, which is prone to happen if the reforms of today are judged in need of reforming before they are fully implemented.

Further Significance and Implications of this Study

The significance and implications for this study of a theoretical framework to support the design, implementation, and sustainability of middle and early colleges have increased during the period in which this document has come to its final form. (This also means that this study will invite revisions and updates as the high school reform landscape continues to be contoured to match the educational needs of today's communities and their students.) Two significant happenings support the belief that more attention will be paid to middle and early college high schools, and both a general and state-level example can be cited.

On a national level, the higher education academy is forgoing its neutral observer's and critic's role in the discussion of poorly performing high schools and what to do about them. In a summary of a special report of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* in March 2006 focusing on ways K-12 schools and higher are connecting to support educational reform, Schmidt (2006) reports that colleges and universities are being dragged into the fray of both elementary and secondary school reform whether they wish to be there or not. His report opens with the following:

> After two decades, the revolution in the nation's elementary and secondary schools has finally reached academe's ivory towers. If college administrators listen beyond their institutions' walls, they can hear crowds of students and parents voicing frustration over colleges' high remediation rates and low graduation rates, visionaries urging the creation of entirely new education

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systems that would closely link schools and colleges, and political leaders issuing an ultimatum: Tend to the education of the masses, or the next thing you will hear will be battering rams. (p. B4)

The report summary goes on to suggest that colleges escaped the 1983 highly critical "A Nation at Risk" report calling for school reform. "Now, however, it appears that colleges themselves are at risk unless they become more engaged in the transformation of elementary and secondary schools" (Schmidt, 2006, p. B4). As political entities, private foundations, and educational organizations join forces to overhaul the nation's schools, the education experts are being called upon to put their expertise into practice by becoming actively engaged in helping to reorient the thinking and discussion about what makes a high school effective, which, in turn, will support the practical stage of redesigning them to match new philosophies. As has been addressed in this study, small high schools, of which middle and early colleges are but two concepts, figure in prominently into fixing what has been deemed broken.

As a state-level example, this study contends that North Carolina is as good a laboratory as any regarding high school reform. Much has been said about the State's governor-led emphasis on high school reform through such structures as the New Schools Project and Learn and Earn High Schools that support both the redesign and new design of high schools to fit the needs of the 21st century. Whether coincidentally or not, the governor's initiatives have received rather strong endorsement from Judge Manning, who, in the 2002 Leandro case that contested whether impoverished counties were being adequately funded for public education, sided with the counties and was unequivocal in three points regarding the responsibility of the State to provide K-12 education. Manning

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ruled that every classroom must be staffed with a competent, qualified, and well-trained teacher; that every school must be led by a well-trained and competent principal; and that every school must receive in the most cost-effective manner resources necessary to provide an effective instructional program to all students, including those at-risk. His ruling was subsequently upheld in 2004 by the North Carolina Supreme Court (Manning, 2006).

What does the Leandro ruling have to do with early and middle college high schools and high school reform? In March 2006, the connection became evident. As Manning has monitored the progress of the State's schools, he has turned particular attention to the high schools. In March, Manning (2006) threatened to close 19 high schools for end-of-course test results below 55%. In a letter to the state superintendent for public instruction and to the chair of the state school board, the subject line reads "Re: The High School Problem – Consequences" (p. 1). His letter makes specific reference to the New Schools Project, conversion high schools, and other reform-minded organizations and approaches. He references specifically Governor Mike Easley's strong position on high school reform and mentions Learn and Earn high schools and middle college high schools as avenues for bringing the State's high schools into the 21st century. In essence, Manning's March update recognizes and supports state-level initiatives to reform high schools, and he acknowledges that middle and early colleges figure prominently in those reform efforts.

Manning's (2006) 17-page letter with 16 pages of exhibits attached also reveals an evolution in his thinking about school quality and how it is achieved and maintained.

In preparing his correspondence to the state superintendent and the chair of the state school board, he requested from the State Department of Public instruction the cost of operating the State's 44 lowest performing high schools for 2004-2005 and the same for the 44 highest performing high schools. Lowest performing was defined as composite scores of less than 60%, and top performing was defined as scores of 86.7% or above. The lowest performing high schools cost the State $268, 011,986 and served approximately 44,000 students. The highest performing high schools operated at the cost of $254,413,043 and enrolled approximately 47,500 students. Manning's conclusion: ". . . [I]t is obvious that 'money' is not the answer to the disparity. All children can learn but learning is not occurring as it should in these sorry schools" (p. 7). In addition to Manning's strong characterization of failing high schools, he references a task force considering solutions for low performing high schools in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg system and includes among several points a recommendation that "CMS should restructure its large comprehensive high schools to create a portfolio of small, highly focused, personalized high schools" (as quoted in Manning, 2006, p. 14). The point he makes is that approaches recommended to Charlotte-Mecklenburg are readily available to educators there through such structures as Learn and Earn – with its decided focus on small, personalized high schools, early colleges included.

What can be taken from Manning's strong statements about failing high schools and what can be done about these schools? Evidently, as this study purported in its beginning, educational activists, politicians, and educators agree on the charge that the State's high schools are ineffective for far too many students. Now the courts have

weighed in. The Manning directives that threaten to close high schools that consistently fail unless they find a way to turn around obviously support the side of reform. This means that some North Carolina districts may find themselves drastically redesigning low performing high schools by force of law rather than by their own will. Problematic, though, is Manning's acceptance of statewide and nationwide reliance upon test scores as the measure of what makes a successful high school. The truest understanding of the transformative nature of middle and early college high schools is a deep sense of the theoretical concepts that underlie the best of these high schools. Who knows, for instance, what Middle College High School at GTCC *could* become were it not for the shackles locked upon it by traditional methods of measuring success.

For the present, the system is what it is, and some school systems will no doubt choose middle and early college high schools as the routes to take, which gives even more credence to a strong theoretical framework toward design, implementation, and sustainability. The ever-growing focus on middle and early colleges as methods of rescuing high schools, and therefore those they educate, begs for greater scrutiny as well as research because the option to failure cannot be failure in another form.

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APPENDIX A

TEN RESOURCES FOR PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING
MIDDLE AND EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOLS

1. Becoming a Middle College – Early College
    http://www.lagcc.cuny.edu/mcnc/becoming.htm

    This site supports the Middle College National Consortium and encourages the
    development of middle and early colleges. Funding is available for start-up schools,
    and services offered include a site visit to an established middle or early college
    associated with the consortium.

2. Core Principles of Early Colleges (Early College High School Initiative)
    http://www.earlycolleges.org/Downloads/CorePrinciples.pdf

    This article provides an overview of the core philosophical and design principles as
    articulated by the Early College High School Initiative, an organization sponsored by
    the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. This piece serves as a basic primer and gives a
    good overview of the fundamental principles underlying the early college high school
    concept including the rationale, benefits, and attributes.

3. Costs Associated With Implementing and Operating an Early College
    http://www.earlycolleges.org/Downloads/FinanceReport.pdf

    This analysis of the pre-implementation and implementation costs of operating an
    early college high school offers data that can be used as a general guide to financial
    considerations. This 48-page financial analysis of costs associated with implementing
    early college high schools is based on actual budgets of four differently designed
    early college high schools. The six budgets include three from high schools on public
    2-year campuses and one each from a school at a public university, a charter early
    college school, and an early college within a traditional high school building where
    all college courses are taught on the high school campus. This study addresses the
    following topics: reasonable costs and funding streams for various early college
    designs, how costs differ from traditional high schools, and how projected costs and
    revenues differ across the different early college designs.

4. Early College Design Principles (Middle College National Consortium)
    http://www.lagcc.cuny.edu/mcnc/downloads/MCNC_EC_Design_Principles.pdf

    Early College Design Principles and Effective Practices (Middle College National
    Consortium)
    http://www.lagcc.cuny.edu/mcnc/downloads/MCNC_effective_practices.pdf

These are outlines of design principles, beliefs, and effective practices for collaboration of early college high schools and their host colleges. Both documents are variations on several key principles along with supporting effective practices.

5. Early College High School Initiative
   http://www.earlycolleges.org/

   The Early College High School Initiative is a general information portal that serves as an introduction to the early college concept. Its library of articles on early college and related topics is particularly useful, and its list of sponsors is also a potential funding source for schools seeking financial support. Its main sponsor is the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

6. Jobs for the Future
   88 Broad Street, 8th Floor
   Boston, MA 02110
   (617) 728-4446
   http://www.jff.org/

   Jobs for the Future is a non-profit research, consulting, and advocacy organization focused on creating educational and economic opportunity. It lists as its two main activities creating successful transitions for youth and building economic opportunities for adults in an ever-changing global economy. Toward those goals, the organization "believes that all young people should have a quality high school and post-secondary education, and that all adults should have the skills needed to hold jobs that pay enough to support a family." Among its many funders are the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the U.S. Department of Labor. Its many partners include corporations, advocacy and research organizations, public school systems, community colleges, the North Carolina Community College System, the New Schools Project, and the Middle College National Consortium.

7. Middle College National Consortium (MCNC)
   29-10 Thomson Avenue, Room C223
   Long Island City, NY 11101
   (718) 609-2025
   http://www.laguardia.edu/mcnc/

   Formed in 1993, MCNC is the most prominent organization in the high school reform movement. It mainly serves as a professional development organization for secondary and post-secondary public-sector educators and provides ongoing technical support to new and developing middle college high schools. In 2002, it launched an early college initiative and aids in the conversion of middle colleges to early college high schools.

8. Middle College National Consortium Newsletters
   http://www.lagcc.cuny.edu/mcnc/newsletters.htm

   The Middle College National Consortium periodically publishes a newsletter, *Fulfilling Promises*, a good source into the trends, insights, and good practices of middle and early college high schools along with general information about activities of MCNC.

9. North Carolina New Schools Project (NCNSP)
   4600 Marriott Drive
   Suite 510
   Raleigh, NC 27612
   Phone: 919.277.3760
   Fax: 919.277.3799
   http://www.newschoolsproject.org/

   North Carolina's New Schools Project is a governor-headed initiative that recognizes that the century-old model of the comprehensive high school does not serve all students well. NCNSP has embarked on a plan to transform the modern high school in North Carolina by providing support for the creation of early college high schools or the redesign of existing traditional high schools into discrete, smaller units within the same walls. The signature program under this project for the redesign of high schools is called Learn and Earn, and to date has funded 35 redesign or early college high school projects.

10. Shared Characteristics (Middle College National Consortium)
    http://www.lagcc.cuny.edu/mcnc/downloads/MCNC_Shared_Characteristics.pdf

    This is a brief, but useful, document that lists common characteristics of middle and early college high schools.

APPENDIX B

MIDDLE COLLEGE NATIONAL CONSORTIUM MEMBER SCHOOLS

(As of November 2005)

<u>EAST</u>

BOYCE Campus MCHS @
Community College of Allegheny
595 Beatty Road
Monroeville, PA 15146
724-325-6609 fax: 724-325-6826
Principal: Kathy Jones
bcmckj@yahoo.com

Brooklyn College Academy @
Brooklyn College
2900 Bedford Ave.
Brooklyn, NY 11210
718-951-5941 fax: 718-951-4441
Principal: Nicholas Mazzarella

CEC Middle College of Denver
2650 Eliot Street
Denver, CO 80211
720-423-6651 fax: 720-423-6604
Prinicpal: Scott Springer
scott_springer@dpsk12.org

Great Path Academy @
Manchester Community College
P.O. Box 1046, MS#2
Manchester, CT 06045-1046
860-512-3560 fax: 860-512-3561
Principal: Thomas M. Danehy
tdanehy@crec.org

International High School @
LaGuardia Community College
31-10 Thomson Ave.
Long Island City, NY 11101
718-482-5455 fax: 718-392-6904
Principal: Lee Pan

lpan@lagcc.cuny.edu

Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter
School
Middlesex Community College
67 Middle St.
Lowell, MA 01852
978-656-3400 fax: 978-459-0456
Principal: Marge McDevitt
mcdevittm@middlesex.cc.ma.edu

MCHS @ LaGuardia Community
College
31-10 Thomson Ave.
Long Island City, NY 11101
718-349-4001 fax: 718-349-4003
Principal: Aaron Listhaus
alisthaus@lagcc.cuny.edu

RFW Jr. Arts and Technology @
LaGuardia Community College
47-07 30th Place
Long Island City, NY 11101
718-472-5671 fax: 718-472-9117
Principal: Bruce Noble
bnoble@nycboe.net

<u>WEST</u>

Academy of the Canyons @
College of the Canyons
26455 Rockwell Canyon Rd.
Santa Clarita, CA 91355
661-362-3056 fax: 661-255-2954
Principal: Jill Zubov Shenberger
jzs@hartdistrict.org

Harbor Teacher Preparation Academy @
Los Angeles Harbor College
1111 S. Figueroa Place
Wilmington, CA 90744
310- 834-3932 Fax: 310-834-4194
Principal: Mattie Adams
autraadams@aol.com

The High School at Moorpark College
7075 Campus Rd.
Moorpark, CA 93021
805-378-1444 fax: 805-378-1440
Principal: Daniel Arterburn
darterburn@vcccd.net

MCHS @ Contra Costa College
2600 Mission Bell Drive
San Pablo, CA 94806
510-235-7800 x4411 fax: 510-215-7927
Principal: Gary Carlone
gcarlone27@yahoo.com

MCHS @ Los Angeles Southwest
College
5431 W. 98th St.
Los Angeles CA 90045
310-410-6400 fax: 310-410-6498

MCHS @ Orange Coast College
2701 Fairview Rd.
Costa Mesa, CA 92626
714-432-5732 x8 fax: 714-432-5064
Principal: Robert Nanney
rnanney@occ.cccd.edu

Ember Schools
MCHS @Santa Ana College
1530 West 17th St.
Santa Ana, CA 92706
714-953-3900 fax: 714-953-3999
Principal: Jean B. Williams
williams_jeanb@sac.edu

MCHS @ San Joaquin Delta College
5151 Pacific Ave.Holt # 208
Stockton, CA 95207
209-954-5790 fax: 209-954-5875
Principal: Sherry Balian
sbalian@deltacollege.edu

San Mateo MCHS @ College of San
Mateo
1700 West Hillsdale Blvd.
San Mateo, CA 94402
650-574-6101 fax: 650-574-6233
Principal: Greg Quigley
gquigley@smuhsd.k12.ca.us

MCHS @ Seattle Community College
1330 North 90th Street
Seattle, WA 98103
206-252-4792/4785 fax: 206-252-4787
Principal: John German
jgerman@seattleschools.org

MIDWEST

Academy at Illinois Central @
Illinois Central College
1 College Drive Dirksen #9
East Peoria, IL 61635
309-694-5573 fax: 309-694-5735
Principal: Jimmie Moore
jmoore@icc.edu

Olive-Harvey MCHS @
Olive-Harvey Community College
10001 South Woodlawn Ave.
Chicago, IL 60628
773-291-6517 fax: 773-291-6538
Principal: Lillie Evins
levins@ccc.edu

Mott MCHS @ Mott Community
College
1401 East Court St., MMB1102
Flint, MI 48503
810-232-8531 fax: 810-232-8660
Principal: Chery Wagonlander
cwagonla@geneseeisd.org

Truman MCHS @ Truman City College
1145 West Wilson
Chicago, IL 60640
773-907-4840 fax: 773-907-4844
Principal: Tom O' Hale
tohale@ccc.edu

SOUTH

Challenge Early College HS @
Houston Community College
5601 West Loop South
Houston, TX 77081
713-664-9712 fax: 713-664-9780
Principal: Anne McClellan
amcclell@houstonisd.org

Davidson Early College HS @
Davidson Community College
P.O. Box 1287
Lexington, NC 27293-1287
336-249-8181 fax: 336-249-1062

MCHS @ El Centro College
801 Main St. Rm.A027
Dallas, TX 75202
214-860-2356 fax: 214-860-2359
Principal: Leicha Shaver
lshaver@dallasisd.org

MCHS @
Southwest Tennessee Community
College
737 Union Ave., E137A
Memphis, TN 38103
901-333-5360 fax: 901-333-5368
Principal: Michelle Brantley-Patterson
pattersonmicheller@mcsk12.net

Williamson County MCHS @
Nashville State Tech College
120 White Bridge Rd.
Nashville, TN 37209
615-353-3687 fax: 615-353-3244
Principal: Harold Ford
haroldf@wcs.edu

AFFILIATE MEMBER
John O'Connell High School of
Technology
2355 Folsom St.
San Francisco, CA 94110
415-695-5370 fax: 415-695-5379
Principal: Janet Schulze
jschulz@muse.sfusd.edu
MCHS Coordinator: Michelle Khazai
michelle_khazai@yahoo.com

APPENDIX C

NORTH CAROLINA LEARN AND EARN EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOLS
BEGUN IN 2005 FROM GRANTS AWARDED BY THE NORTH CAROLINA NEW
SCHOOLS PROJECT

The following early college high schools opened Fall 2005 as either newly designed or
redesigned high schools and received Learn and Earn grants to support their
establishment over 5 years.

1. Anson County Early College High School
    Partners: Anson County Schools and South Piedmont Community College
    Deborah Davis, Principal
    (704) 272-7635

2. Buncombe County Early/Middle College
    Partners: Buncombe County Schools and Asheville-Buncombe Technical
    Community College
    Meg Turner, Principal
    (828) 232-4123

3. Catawba Valley CHALLENGER Early College High School
    Partners: Catawba County Schools, Newton-Conover Schools, Hickory City
    Schools, Alexander County Schools, and Catawba Valley Community College
    www.catawba.k12.nc.us/schoolpages/cvechs/
    Dr. Eddy Daniel, Principal
    (828) 327-7000

4. Collaborative College for Technology and Leadership
    Partners: Iredell-Statesville Schools, Mooresville Graded School District, and
    Mitchell Community College
    www.iss.k12.nc.us/schools/EarlyCollege/index.htm
    Penny Hedrick, Principal
    (704) 878-3200

5. Cross Creek Early College High School
    Partners: Cumberland County Schools and Fayetteville State University
    www.ccechs.ccs.k12.nc.us/:
    Melinda Vickers, Principal
    (910) 672-1636

6. Davidson Early College High School
    Partners: Davidson County Schools, Lexington City Schools, Thomasville City
    Schools, and Davidson County Community College

davidsonearly.schoolwires.com/davidsonearly/site/default.asp
Larry Allred, Principal
(336) 249-8186

7. Edgecombe County Early College High School
   Partners: Edgecombe County Public Schools and Edgecombe Community
   College
   www.ecps.us/middlecol/
   Shawna Andrews, Principal
   (252) 823-5166 x297

8. GTCC Middle College High School
   Partners: Guilford County Schools and Guilford Technical Community College
   schoolcenter.guilford.k12.nc.us/education/school/school.php?sectiondetailid=3
   8520
   Tony Watlington, Principal
   (336) 819-2957

9. Josephine Dobbs Clement Early College High School
   Partners: Durham Public Schools and North Carolina Central University
   echs.dpsnc.net/index.html
   Dr. Nick King, Principal
   (919) 530-7793

10. Nash-Rocky Mount Early/Middle College High School
    Partners: Nash-Rocky Mount Schools and Nash Community College
    http://www.nrms.k12.nc.us/schools/NRMMC/
    Fay Agar, Principal
    (252) 451-2890

11. Robeson County Early College High School
    Partners: Public Schools of Robeson County and Robeson Community College
    www.robeson.k12.nc.us/earlycollege.html
    Wesley Revels, Principal
    (910) 737-5232

12. Rutherford Early College High School (REaCH)
    Partners: Rutherford County Schools and Isothermal Community College
    www2.rutherford.k12.nc.us/education/school/school.php?sectionid=1258
    Renn Dominguez, Principal
    (828) 286-3636 x290

13. Sampson County Early College High School
    Partners: Sampson County Schools, Clinton City Schools, and Sampson
    Community College
    www.sampsoncc.edu/SECHS-Home.asp
    Linda Jewel Carr, Principal
    (910) 592-8084 x2030

APPENDIX D

LEARN AND EARN EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOLS FUNDED FROM
GRANTS BY THE NORTH CAROLINA NEW SCHOOLS PROJECT SLATED TO
OPEN FALL 2006

The following early college high schools were scheduled to open Fall 2006 as
either newly designed or redesigned high schools and have received Learn and
Earn grants to aid their establishment over 5 years.

1. Brunswick County Early College High School
   Partners: Brunswick County Schools and Brunswick Community College
   Les Tubb, Director, Career and Technical Education
   (910) 253-2954

2. Caldwell Early College
   Partners: Caldwell County Schools and Caldwell Community College &
   Technical Institute
   Donnie Bassinger, Associate Superintendent
   (828) 728-8407

3. Compass Early College High School
   Partners: Carteret County Schools and Carteret Community College
   Beth Taylor, Principal
   (252) 728-4583

4. Craven Early College High School
   Partners: Craven County Schools and Craven Community College
   Dr. Annette Brown, Principal
   (252) 444-5140

5. Greene County Early College High School
   Partners: Greene County Schools and Greene County Center of Lenoir
   Community College
   Steve Bryant, Principal
   (252) 747-3434

6. GTCC Early/Middle College of Entertainment Technology
   Partners: Guilford County Schools and Guilford Technical Community College
   Ralph Kitley, Principal
   (336) 819-4111

7. Haywood Early College
   Partners: Haywood County Schools and Haywood Community College

Vice President of Academic Services, Haywood Community College (828) 565-4070

8. Lee County Early College High School
    Partners: Lee County Schools and Central Carolina Community College
    http://leeearlycollege.com/
    Rob Dietrich, Principal
    (919) 775-5401

9. Macon County Early College High School
    Partners: Macon County Schools and Southwestern Community College
    Gary Brown, Principal
    (828) 524-2744

10. McDowell Early College
    Partners: McDowell County Schools and McDowell Technical Community College
    Mike Murray, Assistant Superintendent
    (828) 652-4535

11. New Hanover County University High School
    Partners: New Hanover County Schools and the University of North Carolina at Wilmington
    Dr. Rick Holliday, Executive Director, Instructional Services
    (910) 254-4249

12. North Carolina A&T State University Early/Middle College High School
    Partners: Guilford County Schools and NC A&T State University
    Russell Harper, Principal
    (336) 691-0941

13. Pender Early College High School
    Partners: Pender County Schools and Cape Fear Community College
    Angela Jeffrey, Principal
    (910) 259-9048

14. Randolph Early College High School
    Partners: Randolph County Schools and Randolph Community College
    Cathy Waddell, Principal
    (336) 318-6040

15. SandHoke Early College High School
    Partners: Hoke County Schools and Sandhills Community College
    Anna McPhatter, Hoke Center Director
    (910) 875-8589

16. Southeastern Early College High School
    Partners: Columbus County Schools, Whiteville City Schools, and Southeastern
    Community College
    Keith Jefferys, Director, CTE and Student Guidance Services
    (910) 642-5168

17. Stanly Early College High School
    Partners: Stanly County Schools and Stanly Community College
    Dr. Terry Griffin, Asst. Superintendent, Stanly County Schools
    (704) 983-5151

18. Surry Early College High School of Design
    Partners: Surry County Schools, Elkin City Schools, Mount Airy City Schools
    and Surry Community College
    Patsy Turner, Program Director
    (336) 401-0504

19. Tri-County Early College High School
    Partners: Cherokee County Schools and Tri County Community College
    Community College
    Alice (Sue) Ledford, Program Director / Principal
    (828) 837-6810

20. Union County Early College
    Partners: Union County Public Schools and South Piedmont Community
    College
    Nancy Addison, Dir. of Secondary Education, Union County Public Schools
    (704) 283-3651

21. Wake Learn and Earn Early College High School
    Partners: Wake County Public Schools, Wake Technical Community College,
    and WakeMed Health and Hospitals
    Richard Murphy, Senior Dir. of High Schools, Wake County Public Schools
    (919) 850-1793

APPENDIX E

NORTH CAROLINA MIDDLE AND EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOLS
CURRENTLY UNAFFILIATED WITH THE NEW SCHOOLS PROJECT

1. Andrews Early College of Health
   Sciences
   1920 McGuinn Drive
   High Point, NC 27265
   (336) 819-2800
   Monique Brooks, Principal

2. The Early College at Guilford
   George Wilson White House
   5608 West Friendly Avenue
   Greensboro, North Carolina 27410
   336.316.2860
   Tony Burks, Principal

3. Greensboro Middle College
   108 Odell Street
   Greensboro, NC 27403
   (336) 370-8300
   Lora Hodges, Principal
   Grades 11-12

4. GTCC Middle College East
   501 W Washington St
   Greensboro, NC 27401
   (336) 370-8984
   Jennifer Topper, Principal

(Grades 9-12)

5. Middle College at Bennett
   Correll Street
   Greensboro, NC 27401
   (336) 370-8636
   Esther Coble, Principal
   Grades 9-12)

6. Middle College High School at
   Durham Technical Community
   College
   1637 Lawson Street, White Bldg.
   Durham, NC 27703
   (919) 686-3815
   Dr. Charles Nolan, Principal

7. Middle College of Forsyth County at
   Forsyth Technical Community
   College
   Snyder Hall, Room 6146
   2100 Silas Creek Parkway
   Winston-Salem, NC 27103
   (336) 734-7163
   George Johnson, Principal

APPENDIX F

SAMPLE MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

This understanding reflects the agreements between _____ and Central Carolina Community College (CCCC) for the creation of a small public high school situated on the ____ _____ Campus of Central Carolina Community College.

1. _____ Early College High School will be a public high school under the direct authority of the _____ County Board of Education, with collaboration from the Central Carolina Community College Board of Trustees.
2. _____ Early College High School will provide sufficient classroom and related space for the high school academic program. Appropriate access to the college library and academic assistance center will be granted to students of the Early College High School, provided that supervision from appropriate Early College High School personnel is present during the use of such college facilities and resources.
3. All facilities associated with the Early College High School will remain under the control of Central Carolina Community College. All students, faculty, and staff of the Early College High School will abide by college policies and regulations concerning its facilities and resources.
4. _____ Early College High School will have a Principal/Associate Dean with direct authority over the high school programs and activities. For matters concerning facilities, space utilization, and resource sharing, the Principal/Associate Dean will act in consultation with_____.
5. _____ Early College High School will have a College Liaison who will coordinate the needs of the high school on the community college campus, including such items and activities such as books and supplies from the bookstore, IDs, and parking passes. The College Liaison shall report to _____ with a communication link to the Principal/Associate Dean.
6. Selection of students for enrollment in _____ Early College High School will be made by a committee of two school representatives and two college representatives. Selection will be based on ability to benefit from the program, including academic coursework taken, disciplinary records, and potential for successful completion of college coursework, with a goal to serve a diverse student population that mirrors that of the school system.
7. As agreed upon by representatives of Central Carolina Community College and representatives of the _____ County Schools in consultation with representatives of the New Schools Project Learn and Earn initiative, the initial class of _____ _____ Early College High School shall consist of sophomores and juniors, with freshmen being phased into the selection process beginning no earlier than Summer 2006 for the school year beginning in August 2006.
8. _____ Early College High School will align its course schedule and activities with Central Carolina Community College's calendar as allowed by an approved waiver.
9. Students will attend college classes determined by their interest, ability, and pathway. Students will be enrolled as college students with the accompanying rights and responsibilities. The Boards will adopt any rules necessary to their governance of the school, provided that those rules will not be inconsistent with those in force at Central Carolina Community College.
10. While in CCCC facilities, on CCCC property or in CCCC classes, the students, faculty and staff of _____ Early College High School will comply with all state and local laws, applicable CCCC regulations and applicable CCCC policies. Failure to follow these prescriptions will subject the individual to the disciplinary procedures of the CCCC and may result in dismissal from _____ Early College High School.

11. Students may be disciplined or dismissed by CCCC for violation of federal or state laws or CCCC rules or policies. CCCC will consult with the Principal/Associate Dean before a final decision is made to dismiss a student. Students disciplined or dismissed by CCCC shall have due process rights in accordance with CCCC's Student Appeals Procedure. The Principal/Associate Dean, any other _____ County Schools official, or the _____ County Board Education may not veto the ruling of the College or the outcome of an appeals decision.

12. Students may be disciplined or dismissed by the Principal/Associate Dean for violation of Early College High School or _____ County Schools rules or policies. CCCC may not veto these disciplinary decisions, but the principal may seek advice from CCCC prior to making such decisions.

13. Equipment and technology ordered with grant funds or any other funds controlled by _____ shall be inventoried and imaged through _____ . Central Carolina Community College's technology support staff will assist with ordinary and simple matters; however, it will be the responsibility of _____ to make major installations, repairs, etc. A separate DSL wireless network will be installed and maintained by _____ for _____ staff and students.

14. _____ County Schools will serve as the fiscal agent for ___ _____ Early College High School grant monies. As fiscal agent, the LEA will be responsible for distributing all funds budgeted for the Early College High School to the community college upon request and as dictated by the New Schools Project Learn and Earn initiative.

15. _____ County Schools will provide documentation of the coverage agreement made through the NC School Boards' Trust with coverage as follows:
   - General Liability: $1,000,000/occurrence; $2,000,000 aggregate.
   - Errors and Omissions: $1,000,000/occurrence; $2,000,000 aggregate.
   - Workers Compensation: _____ shall provide workers' compensation coverage for its employees at the amounts provided by law.
   - Property & Casualty: _____ shall insure its own personal property located on the CCCC campus.

16. The _____ County Board of Education will pay for the college fees and book costs of students enrolled in college courses.

17. This Memorandum is effective until _____ . During this time, this agreement may be amended or supplemented by mutual written consent of both the Boards and Central Carolina Community College. The Boards and the community college reserve the right to terminate this agreement upon service of written notice to the other party 90 days prior to the date of termination. In this event, the date of termination will be either 90 days from the notice date or the day after the end of the semester during which the 90 days expires, whichever is later. This agreement may be renewed at the end of the term noted above upon such terms as the parties agree.

Affirmation of Support

We affirm that we have read and approved this Memorandum of Agreement to establish _____ _____Early College High School and we are prepared to support all assurances and program commitments made in this agreement.

_____
Chair, Board of Education   Date

_____
Superintendent   Date

_____
Chair, Board of Trustees, CC   Date

_____
President, Community College   Date

APPENDIX G

SAMPLE EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL APPLICATION

Personal Information:
Student
Name:_____ Sex: M F
     Last   First   Middle
Residence Address:_____

City/State/ZIP:_____

Birth date:_____ Birthplace:_____ SS #:_____

Last grade level of school you have completed: _____   Current Grade Level_____
 Student lives with:
___Both parents ___Father ___Mother ___Grandparent ___Other

If you checked "other" above, please explain:_____

Home Phone_____ Guardian Work Phone _____

Additional Contact Information (cell phone, email address):
_____

Student's Education Data:
What schools have you attended? (Provide addresses and phone numbers if the school is outside this
school system.) _____

_____

Student should mail the completed application (the first 5 pages) along with an unofficial copy of your
transcript to the associate dean of Early College High School at the address above. Give pages 6-7 to two
teachers who will return the forms independently.

To be completed by the student

In a brief personal expository essay, please explain the reasons why you want to enroll in Early College High School. Please use your best handwriting.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Your signature below indicates that the above essay is your handwritten work and
that you agree to abide by the following expectations for the Early College
High School.
• To attend school daily and arrive on time to all classes.
• To abide by and cooperate with Early College and Central Carolina Community College
regulations and guidelines.
• To have a parent/guardian notify the school on the day of an absence.
• To devote a minimum of 2 hours each evening to homework and study.
• To keep your parents/guardians informed of your academic progress.
• To stay in school until you graduate.
• To enroll and be successful in college classes.
• To attend support classes as required.

Student Signature: _____Date:_____

To be completed by the parent/guardian

Student Name: _____

Please explain why you want your child to attend Early College High School?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Students succeed best when the school, the parent, and the student work together. Your signature below indicates that you agree to the following expectations of yourself as a parent of a student at Early College High School:
• To require your student to attend school daily and arrive on time to all classes.
• To expect your student to abide by and cooperate with Early College and Central Carolina Community College regulations and guidelines.
• To notify the school on the day of an absence.
• To provide for a minimum of 2 hours each evening for homework and study.
• To expect and follow up on progress reports and report cards.
• To attend and participate in Early College activities and conferences.
• To expect and encourage your student to stay in school until graduation.
• To expect and encourage your student to enroll and be successful in college classes.
• To expect your student to attend support classes as required.

Parent/Guardian Signature:_____Date:_____

To be completed by the parent/guardian

Student Name: _____

This page is to be completed by the parent/guardian. All information given on this page is confidential and is needed for Federal/State reports.

Ethnic / Race Data

Please check as appropriate for student:
___American Indian/Alaskan Native   ___Asian/Pacific Islander ___ Hispanic
___White (not Hispanic)   ___African/Black   __Multi-racial

Family Income Level
Less than $10,000
$10,000—$20,000
$20,000—$30,000
$30,000—$40,000
$40,000—$50,000
more than $50,000

Education
Please check as appropriate for parent/guardian:

Father's Education	**Mother**
Some high school	Some high school
Completed high school	Completed high school
Some college	Some college
Completed Bachelor's degree	Completed Bachelor's degree
Complete Master's degree or higher	Complete Master's degree or higher

To be completed by a teacher
Confidential

Teacher's Name: _____

Subject(s) Taught: _____How long have you known the applicant? _____

When and where did you teach this student?_____

Are you currently teaching? ____ May we contact you for additional information?____

If so, please provide contact information:_____

The student named below is applying for admission to Early College High School. Students enrolled in this program complete a high school diploma and a community college associate degree or two years of college transfer credit in four to five years of high school. Students begin ninth grade with all high school courses and then as upperclassmen add concurrent college courses to their high school schedule. Students must be ethical and must be capable of rigorous academic work, of self-direction, and of multi-tasking.

Your honest assessment is invaluable in helping the Early College staff identify the students who will benefit from and succeed in the Early College High School. Thank you!.

Characteristics typical of students for whom the program is designed are listed below.

Please check as many as apply to this student:

Seeks academic challenges
Can manage her/himself on a
college campus
Shows leadership capabilities
Follows through on homework
Bright/intelligent
Eager to join the adult world
Accepts and bonds with supportive
adults

Participates in class discussion
Needs personal attention and
encouragement
Demonstrates artistic abilities
Challenged by study, organizational or
time-management skills
Desires more freedom/independence
Bored with limited course offerings
in traditional high school

Please check as applicable	Exemplary	Acceptable	Needs Improvement
Attitude			
Behavior			
Attendance			
Potential for success in a college environment			

We encourage you to write a personal response to share additional information on the back of this form.

APPENDIX H

DRAFT CURRICULUM OF
LEE EARLY COLLEGE

9th grade Fall	9th grade Spring	Summer	10th grade Fall	10th grade Spring
English I	English II	Service Learning	English III	College Physical Science
Geometry (Alg I)	Civics and Economics	3 SHC College Elective	Algebra II	College Elective (Eng IV)
Earth Science	Technology Unit (Geometry)		Biology	College Political Science Course (HIS 121)
College Skills	College PE (Art)		US History	College PE (Art)
11th grade Fall	11th grade Spring	Summer	12th grade Fall	12th grade Spring
College Algebra	College Composition II	Co-op	College Pre-Calculus	College Humanities
College Composition I	College Biology	3 SHC College Elective	College Literature	College Fine Arts
College Western Civ I (Art)	College Foreign Language I		College Foreign Language II	College Foreign Language III
College Intro to Computers	College General Psychology		College Intro to Sociology	College PE

*** Possibly add summer after 10th grade –College elective(s)
*** Summer prior to 9th grade – enrichment or remediation

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APPENDIX I

THE NORTH CAROLINA ABCS OF PUBLIC EDUCATION GROWTH AND PERFORMANCE OF MIDDLE AND EARLY COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOLS
(2001-2004)

The charts below gives performance data for middle and early college high schools reported in the North Carolina report of the ABCs of Public Education since 2001-02, the first reporting year that any recognized public middle or early college in North Carolina had been in operation long enough to have accumulated data. As indicated by the 2001-02 chart, the first of these high schools was established in 2000 in Guilford County and became part of the ABCs report for the following year. Of the 41 such schools either in existence or in the planning stages, only 9 have been in operation long enough to be included in the State's performance report. A legend follows the last chart.

LEA	School Name	Grade Span	Expected Growth	High Growth	Performance Composite	Special Conditions	ABC Status	AYP	AYP Code	Type
The ABCS of Public Education **2004-05 Growth and Performance of Middle and Early College High Schools**										
Buncombe County	Buncombe County Early College	9-12	Yes	No	79.8	~	Exp	Yes	CI	A
Durham Public	J D Clement Early College HS	9-12	Yes	No	76.4	~	Pro Exp	UR	SE	R
Forsyth County	Middle College of Forsyth Cnty	11-12	No	No	53.8	9	NR	UR	SE	A
Guilford County	Middle College High at Bennett	9-12	Yes	No	20.6	~	Pri Exp	Yes	CI	R
Guilford County	GC Middle College High	10-12	Yes	No	55.8	~	Pri Exp	UR	SE	R
Guilford County	Early College at Guilford	9-12	Yes	Yes	98.6	~	HE Hgh MI	Yes		R
Guilford County	GTCC Middle College High	11-12	Yes	Yes	62.7	~	Pro Hgh	Yes	CI	R
Guilford County	Middle College High at NC A&T	9-12	No	No	24.6	~	LP	No		R
Nash-Rocky Mount	Nash-Rocky Mount Middle College High	9-12	Yes	No	51.7	~	Exp	No		A

LEA	School Name	Grade Span	Expected Growth	High Growth	Performance Composite	Special Conditions	ABC Status	AYP	AYP Code	Type
The ABCS of Public Education **2003-04 Growth and Performance of Middle and Early College High Schools**										
Buncombe County Schools	Buncombe County Middle College	9-12	Yes	Yes	82.7	~	Hgh	No		A
Forsyth County Schools	Middle College of Forsyth Cnty	11-12	No	No	-	~	N/A	No		A
Guilford County Schools	Middle College High at Bennett	9-12	Yes	Yes	12.7	~	Pri Hgh	No		R

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LEA	School Name	Grade Span	Expected Growth	High Growth	Performance Composite	Special Conditions	ABC Status	AYP	AYP Code	Type
Guilford County Schools	Middle College High at NC A&T	9-12	Yes	No	17.3	~	Pri Exp	No		R
Guilford County Schools	GTCC Middle College High	8-12	Yes	Yes	43.8	~	Pri Hgh MI	No		R
Guilford County Schools	GC Middle College High	8-12	Yes	Yes	66.7	~	Pro Hgh MI	Yes		R
Guilford County Schools	Early College at Guilford	8-12	Yes	Yes	95.2	~	HE Hgh MI	Yes		R
Nash-Rocky Mount Schools	N-RMS Middle College High	10-12	Yes	No	47.0	~	Exp	No		A

The ABCS of Public Education
2002-03 Growth and Performance of Middle and Early College High Schools

LEA	School Name	Grade Span	Expected Growth	High Growth	Performance Composite	Special Conditions	ABC Status	AYP	AYP Code	Type
Guilford County Schools	GTCC Middle College High	12-Aug	Yes	Yes	64.3	~	Pro Hgh	Yes	N/A	R
Guilford County Schools	GC Middle College High	12-Aug	Yes	No	66	~	Pro Exp	No	N/A	R
Guilford County Schools	The Early College at Guilford	12-Aug	Yes	No	96.9	~	Exc Exp	Yes	N/A	R
Nash-Rocky Mount Schools	N-RMS Middle College High	12-Nov	Yes	No	34.8	~	Exp	No	N/A	A

The ABCS of Public Education
2001-02 Growth and Performance of Middle and Early College High Schools

LEA	School Name	Grade Span	Expected Growth	High Growth	Performance Composite	Special Conditions	ABC Status	AYP	AYP Code	Type
Guilford County	GC Middle College High	10 12	Yes	No	66.3		Pro Exp			
Guilford County	GTCC Middle College	10 12	Yes	No	50.9		Pri			

ABCs Status: HE-Honor Schools of Excellence; Exp-Expected Growth; Hgh-High Growth; Exc-School of Excellence; Dst-School of Distinction; Pro-School of Progress; Pri-Priority School; MI-25 Most Improved K-8 Schools or 10 Most Improved High Schools; LP-Low-Performing; NR-No Recognition; 95R-Less than 95% tested

9 School did not meet data requirements

AYP Code CI-Confidence Interval; SH-Safe Harbor; TAS-Targeted Assistance Schools; FE-Feeder; SE-Special Evaluation 95A-Participation Rate Averaged; 01-Option 1

Type: R-Regular; C-Charter; A-Alternative