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A Qualitative Examination of Middle Grade Practices in Christian Schools: Could They Become Models for Middle Level Reform?

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A QUALITATITVE EXAMINATION OF MIDDLE GRADE PRACTICES IN
CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS: COULD THEY BECOME MODELS FOR MIDDLE LEVEL
REFORM?

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Masters of Education

By

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I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY Teresea Lynne Baumann ENTITLED A Qualitative Examination of Middle Grade Practices in Christian Schools: Could They Become Models for Middle Reform? BE ACCEPTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF Master of Education.

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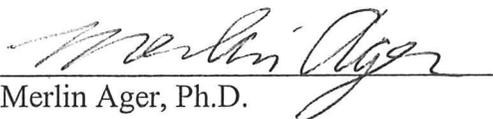
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ABSTRACT

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There has been much debate concerning the educational structures best suited for the teaching of students during the pivotal years from ages ten to fifteen. Many researchers and educators believe that the educational experiences for this age group need to be tailored to the unique qualities of this time in the life of a student. One purpose of this thesis is to examine the best practices for educating children during this time period. Another purpose of the study is to compare and contrast the practices in private Christian day schools to similar studies done of public school settings. The study found that although Christian schools are strong in areas like dedicated teachers, communication with parents, and ease of transition to the middle grades, they are not strong in things like teaming, heterogeneous grouping, and being task oriented.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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and your desire to be excellent as an educator are an inspiration to me.

CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

Educational Significance

Since the development of public high schools in the early 1900's, there have been differing ideas about how to structure education for students in early adolescence. Much research has been done to confirm that adolescents ranging from age 10-15 are in a very difficult time period in their lives. They are changing physically, socially, and mentally. These changes are complicated by the fact that each individual adolescent is going through these changes at his or her own irregular rate (Knowles and Brown, p.4). The challenge of handling students dealing with these changes at varying rates has caused educators much difficulty throughout the history of education. Often, students of this age have been lost in the transition between elementary school and high school.

Traditionally, there have been several approaches to dealing with students in grades 5-8. One approach has been to keep them in a more elementary setting in K-8 schools. Another approach has been to have junior high schools in which grades 7-9 are placed in separate settings that are very much like high school in which they go through 45 minute periods with different teachers and students in each class. Finally, a more recent approach has been the development of a middle school model. In a middle school model, students are grouped together in teams and tend to move through the day together through blocks of time with fewer teachers (Williamson and Johnston, 1999, p.9).

Much research has been done to document a drop in achievement during the time of early adolescence. Motivation for learning also seems to drop at this time. Many times it is assumed that this drop is mostly due to physiological and psychological

changes that occur due to the onset of puberty. However, educational researchers such as

Anderman & Midgley have challenged this notion by studying the effect of school

structure changes on adolescent achievement and motivation. They have found that these

drops are due at least partly to the kind of school structure being faced by the adolescent

(1998).

Another factor in the education of early adolescents is the drop in parent

involvement. Williamson and Johnson found that during the elementary grades, parents

volunteer more and seem to know more of what is going on in the life of their children

while they are at school. When students reach middle school or junior high, they are

often in larger schools and have six or seven different teachers throughout the course of

the day. Parents have a harder time keeping involved and appreciating the education that

is occurring for their children. All of this happens at a time when the children themselves

are acting like they want less involvement from their parents (Williamson & Johnston,

1999, p. 5). Developing the kind of schools that are more effective at keeping parents

involved through middle school is important.

Due to the many unique factors of this time period in the life of a student,

much research and effort has been made to reform the education of students in grades 5-

8. The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development published a classic report called

Turning Points (1989). In this report the authors called for the formation of middle

schools that are responsive to the unique needs of early adolescence. These schools

would differ greatly from high schools. They would need to have smaller groupings

within larger school settings. The schedule would need to be more flexible with the

possibility of having longer blocks of time for more cooperative and open-ended learning

opportunities. The curriculum would need to be more appropriate to the everyday lives of the students. The teachers would teach more than one subject and be given freedom to develop curriculum plans with the students. These teachers would be specially trained to deal with students in this stage of life.

This report and much other research in this area caused the state of Ohio, as well as other states, to change licensure of teachers from either a K-8 or 9-12 certificate to now having teachers certified to specifically deal with students in grades 4- 8. These teachers are being certified in at least two areas of curriculum so that they will be able to teach more than one subject. As this difference in teacher training trickles down to schools, it is important that administrators be able to take advantage of hiring teachers that are experts in dealing with middle school children. It will be difficult to fully use these teachers if the model for dealing with middle school children is unclear or if it is kept strictly traditional (Brockett, 1999, p.2).

Middle school models became popular at about the same time that many Christian parents became displeased with public education. As a result of this displeasure, many churches and parent groups began forming their own private Christian schools. Much of this movement was driven by a desire to return to the traditional days of education. The parents were unhappy with the teaching of evolution in the classroom and the removal of prayer or any references to God. As a result of the reaction, most Christian schools follow the more traditional methods of education.

The Christian school movement often reproduced schools that were much like their public counterparts in their structuring of educational procedures. In the early days of the movement, many of the schools were quite small and included only the lower

elementary grades. As the movement grew, grades were gradually added to schools until they eventually reached high school. Because they were small, grades 7-12 would usually share the same set of high school teachers while grades K-6 were usually kept in self-contained classrooms. As the size of some of the schools grew, eventually students in grades 6-8 were separated at least for administrative purposes.

In recent years, the middle school reform movement has come under criticism. Some claim that it focuses too much on developmental issues and not enough on academic preparation. According to Weilbacher, state mandated tests have caused interdisciplinary teaching and student-centered curriculum to take a backseat to preparation of students to pass state proficiency tests (Weilbacher, 2000, p.20). During this time when it is becoming difficult to use all of the elements of the middle school model in public school, it would be of interest to see what is happening in private Christian schools that are not as strongly tied to state mandates on curriculum.

A closer look at the advantages and disadvantages of the middle school reform movement is needed. The research supports the need to design special procedures and settings for this unique period of development in education. Christian schools have the freedom to continue to educate middle school students in a way that best suits their needs.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study will include several components. First of all, it will include a best evidence synthesis (Slavin, 1986, p. 6) of what the research seems to be saying is the best way to educate students in the middle grades. The second component will be an analysis of the history of the Christian school movement and how most

Christian schools have traditionally handled the education of middle school students. The third component will be a study of the current practices of a cross-section of Christian schools in the area of mid-level education. Finally, this study will analyze the components of progressive middle school reform and find which aspects Christian schools are already doing well and which aspects of the reform could be improved or implemented in Christian schools.

The emphasis of this study will be to look at whether Christian schools are doing more than just referring to grades 6-8 as middle school in name only, but that they are attempting to adjust the philosophical approach of the teaching these grades to focus on the specific developmental issues for the learners in this time period (Knowles, 2000, p.47-8).

The researcher will be looking at Christian school treatment of grades 5-8. The key elements that will be evaluated include the following factors that define a middle school according to the research. It includes small learning teams, a core academic program, elimination of tracking, giving teachers and administrators creative control of planning experiences, finding staff that is qualified to teach in more than one subject area, developing a staff that is expert at dealing with middle school students, allowing time for focus on health and fitness issues, engaging families in the education of their middle school students, and connecting the school to the community (Knowles, 2000, p.49-50).

The researcher will be examining the components of a true middle school model and analyzing whether the educational benefits of this approach would justify any restructuring of the ways most Christian schools currently handle middle school students.

It will also study the explicit and implicit philosophy of Christian education to see if the middle school model is a good fit with its philosophy.

Research Methodology

The research methods for this project will be an in depth study of the current literature on the most effective school structures for the education of the mid-level grades. This literature will be analyzed and compared to the current practices of most Christian schools. Attention will also be given to the underlying philosophy of the Christian education movement. The researcher will be looking for areas in which the middle school model makes sense for Christian schools, and where it does not fall in line with their current philosophy.

In order to understand what is currently being practiced in many Christian schools, the researcher has designed a shadow study of 18 Christian schools across the country. The shadow study will be accomplished using Cedarville University student. At Cedarville all education majors are required to spend a week observing teachers and students in a Christian school setting. The university students must do this during one of their breaks from classes and are allowed to choose the most conveniently located school during their break for the observation. The researchers will perform an interval observation every 5 to 7 minutes throughout one day in which they record the types of activities taking place in the classrooms they are observing. They will also be asked to interview administrators and teachers at these schools about their mid-level grades educational practices. Finally, these students will be asked to fill out a survey of their reactions to the things that they observed in these classrooms.

The researcher will take the data collected by the university students and analyze it carefully, looking for trends and patterns in the practices of Christian schools and their treatment of mid-level education. This will be a qualitative study to examine what components of the middle school model already seem to be in place and what components are missing.

Biblical Integration

The importance of appropriate education is stated and implied throughout the Bible. Beginning in Genesis 1:28 and again in Genesis 3:15, God directs that man subdue creation. MacArthur (1997) in his study notes, states that this means that man is to productively order the things on earth. Man is to create culture and an important part of culture is education.

In the Old Testament, great emphasis is placed on the role of the parent. It was the responsibility of the parent to see that the knowledge of God was passed from generation to generation. In Deuteronomy 6:6-8, Jewish parents were given the following command:

> "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Similar commands are given in Deuteronomy 4: 5, 9, 10. The responsibility of developing the worldview and philosophy of the next generation was in the hands of the parents.

Another interesting idea that comes from references to training of children is that various stages in a child's life were handled differently. Scripture indicates that all Jewish children in their early years from infancy to age five were trained by their mothers. Proverbs 31:1 states that King Lemuel was uttering the wisdom taught to him by his mother. II Timothy 1:5 and 3:15 give testimony to the importance of the early training that Timothy received from his grandmother and mother. At age five Jewish boys were trained by their fathers or if they were wealthy, they were trained by a tutor. Galatians 3:24 , I Samuel 10:12, and II Kings 10:1,5 talk of this change in training. Finally, at age twelve for girls and age thirteen for boys, Jewish children go through Bat Mitvah for girls or Bar Mitvah for boys. This is a special coming of age ceremony in which the responsibility for the child's deeds pass from the parents to the individual child. In light of studying practices for teaching middle childhood students, it is interesting to note that Jewish tradition realized the importance of the entrance from childhood to adulthood that begins at age twelve or thirteen. It is even interesting that the tradition has girls going through this ceremony earlier than boys. This seems to be especially in line with the different maturation rates between girls and boys at this age documented by educational psychology.

The best examples for education and teaching in the New Testament come from the teaching style of Jesus himself. It is interesting that Jesus used many of the methods and structures for his teaching style that research today finds effective. Jesus sometimes used the lecture style in his teaching. Matthew 5 and 6 are the record of Jesus' famous Sermon on the Mount. Other times in the gospels Jesus taught using parables to powerfully illustrate the points he was trying to teach. Matthew 13:1-3 talks of him using

this style of teaching. Other places in the gospels, Jesus used discussions to interact with the people around him and to hold their attention. Sometimes Jesus used modeling to teach a skill such as when he was demonstrating to the disciples about how to pray. In Matthew 6:8-14, he begins his giving of the Lord's Prayer by saying when you pray, pray like this. Jesus also often used object lessons to emphasize his point. In the story of the woman at the well in John 4, Jesus took a familiar object in the woman's life, her need for water from the well, and he used it to make her see her need in her spiritual life for a Savior. Finally, Jesus used hands on experiences for his disciples when he felt they were ready to minister on their own. Matthew 10:5-15 and Luke 9:2-6 tell about how Jesus sent the disciples out to minister to surrounding towns and villages. Jesus clearly used many varied effective teaching strategies during his earthly ministry.

In the Bible in Colossian 3:17 all Christians are called to be excellent at what they do and say. According to Schindler, former superintendent of Dayton Christian Schools, in his book *Sowing for Excellence*, the Christian school should be an extension of the family and of the church. In this role the school has a responsibility to do whatever it can to provide all students with an excellent education. One goal of Christian education is to train students to think and function with a Christian worldview. Dealing with middle school students is often challenging because they are not afraid to ask difficult questions. What better time to develop a model that harnesses the energy and innate curiosity of students of this age?

Application to current school

A difficult thing for conservative evangelical Christians to do is to separate what is truly biblical and what is cultural tradition. In conservative circles, there is a lot of emphasis on the basics and core curriculum. The issue of curriculum and control of what is taught will be a very difficult issue for the administration of most typical Christian schools. The intent of this researcher will be to look closely at current practices in Christian schools and analyze how they fit with a middle school model. If some aspects of the current practices do not fit with a middle school model, are those aspects truly biblical and therefore not likely to be changed or are they cultural traditions that could be changed?

Much of the Christian philosophy of education is centered on developing positive character qualities in each of the students. There is also a strong emphasis on integrating God's word throughout the curriculum (Schindler, 1987, p. 157). Attempts to integrate the Bible should go hand in hand with attempts to integrate all areas of the curriculum. God has placed man in the position of being a wise steward over all of creation. Middle school seems like an excellent opportunity to begin to give students hands on experience with this stewardship in all areas.

The researcher is currently a teacher in a large Christian school that was one of the early pioneers in the Christian school movement. Currently, the school treats grades 7 and 8 like high school and grades 5 and 6 like elementary school. In grades 7 and 8 very little of the middle school model is evident. The content of this report could be helpful as the school is in the process of restructuring the treatment of grades 5-8.

It will also be important to consider restructuring practices there so that as newly certified teachers for the middle grades become available to be hired, they will be able to

fully use the preparation that they have been given for this level of teaching. It will be difficult to attract and keep these new graduates if they are faced with strictly a traditional treatment of these grades.

Summary

In studying the research it becomes clear that the education of students during the middle level grades is a unique time period in their development and calls for special structures and strategies to be designed and used by educators. Christian schools desire to provide excellent educational opportunities for all of their students. Christian schools are also free from state mandated curriculum and pressure to pass state tests. Christian schools have an opportunity to be on the cutting edge of shaping programs that are developmentally appropriate for this age level. This study will try to understand what Christian schools are already doing and what they could be doing better to achieve excellence in this area.

CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Developmental Period of Adolescence

Developmentally, the period of early adolescence is one that many parents and educators often face with fear and trepidation. Students in this time period go from being sweet, naïve children to worldly, sarcastic teenagers who are often quite difficult to deal with at home and at school. In the past, this period was characterized as a phase that was part of the necessary evils of growing up. Much of the difficulty was blamed on hormones, self-esteem, and rebellion. Often the period was viewed as a time simply to be endured. However, since the late 60's into the early 70's, educators and developmental psychologists have attempted to study and understand the unique qualities of this developmental time in the lives of children.

Many names are used to refer to this time period. Sometimes it is referred to as transescence because humans of this age are in a transitional period. This term was first used by Donald Eichhorn, who was a pioneer in reform for middle level education. It is often the favorite term for educational researchers focusing on this level (George &Alexander, 1993). Other times this period is referred to as early adolescence or preadolescence. Informally, children of this age are just referred to as middle schoolers or junior highers. For the purpose of this paper this period will be referred to as middle childhood. This period stretches from ages 10-14. Often, children go through puberty during this time period. Children of this age are going through similar physical, mental, social, and emotional stages, but they go through these stages at their own pace (Schurr, 1992).

One area of immense variation is in physical development. Knowles and Brown (2000) note that during this time period, the body has its major growth spurt. This obvious physical change is probably one of the most visible and dramatic factors of this period. Girls tend to grow around seven inches during this time period while boys will probably grow around nine or ten inches. This growth occurs with rapid and uneven skeletal changes. Often youths of this age appear lanky and graceless because their legs grow more rapidly than the rest of their skeletal frame. These changes are complicated by the fact that every adolescent goes through these dramatic changes on his or her own individual time table. (Lounsbury & Johnson, 1988) Not only is the body growing taller, it is also maturing sexually, again on a timetable that varies from individual to individual. These individual differences in rate of change cause early adolescents to spend much time focusing on their body's changes and worrying that they are not normal (Knowles & Brown, 2000).

Knowles and Brown (2000) also note that along with the physical changes also come the mental or intellectual changes. At the beginning of early adolescence most individuals are concrete thinkers, however during this time some begin to think and reason at a higher level. Others continue to be very concrete in their thinking processes. This leads to the irony of dealing with middle school students. Often their behavior and thinking shifts rapidly between being very adult-like in one moment and very child-like in the next moment. According to Atwell (1998), they often look old enough to be treated like adults and they demand to be given their independence while at the same time they act child-like and demand constant attention. Also because of the self-absorption over physical changes, they become very ego-centric in their thinking patterns. They

tend to think that if they are thinking about something then everyone else must also be thinking about it. This leads to the development of an imaginary audience where they think that everyone is watching and judging everything about them (Walley & Gerrick, 1999), (Knowles & Brown, 2000).

According to Knowles & Brown, the self-absorption of this stage continues in their social development. During this stage they begin to realize that some students are popular and others are not. They start trying to figure out what they must do and how they must act in order to be liked by others. Making decisions about which students they will be friends with is one of the first real choices that they will be given the opportunity to make. This often leads to experimentation with how they behave and think in order to try to identify where they fit in (2000). Shoffner and Williamson found that during this time, transescents shift from reliance on parents to reliance on peers and other non-family adults. This usually results in adolescents being much more focused on social needs than they are on academic needs (Shoffner & Williamson, 2000). Adolescents during this time period, according to Lounsberry and Johnson (1988), begin to see significant adults in their life as fallible. They begin to realize that these adults make mistakes. They also realize that adults do not have complete control over them and can be defied.

As adolescents begin to see the fallibility of adults, they also are developing morally. Kohlberg (1981) proposed that individuals go through developmental stages much like Piaget's stages for intellectual development. They are the following:

Level One: Preconventional
      Stage 1 Punishment and Obedience: literal obedience to avoid punishment
      Stage 2 Individual Instrumental Purpose and Exchange: serving one's own or other's needs for personal benefit
Level Two: Conventional
      Stage 3 Mutual Interpersonal Expectations, Relationships, and

Conformity: the
desire to please others and conform to perceived norms of "right" and
"wrong."
Stage 4 Social System and Conscience Maintenance: doing one's duty to
preserve social order
Level Three: Postconventional and Principled
Stage 5 Prior Rights and Social Contract: commitment to relative social
order; rules may change if needed.
Stage 6 Universal Ethical Principles: action determined by conscience,
based on lf-chosen ethical principles.

Most educators at this level find students developing through the first four stages. Early

adolescents are especially ready to learn about group citizenship. In fact, Kohlberg,

George, and Alexander believe that this is a pivotal time in moral development. They

believe that if students do not reach stage three by the end of the middle school years,

they might never reach it. This development of adolescents morally has significance for

how educators structure school and how teachers handle moral discussions (George &

Alexander, 1993). Students of this level do have morals, but they often need help making

sense of them while they are in this confusing transitional period of their lives (Wallley &

Gerrick, 1999).

Many studies have been done to document a drop in motivation for learning and a

drop in academic achievement during the mid-level years (Mullins & Irvin, 2000). This

seems to be especially true during major transitions from one type of school structure

such as elementary school to larger school structures such as middle schools, junior

highs, or high schools. Students often go from attending small schools that are located in

their own neighborhoods to being bussed to larger schools that are further from their

home.   Researchers Williams and McGillicuddy (2000) from Lafayette College in

Pennsylvania studied students coping strategies in early, middle, and late adolescents to

understand how those strategies change and develop. Younger adolescents seem

particularly vulnerable to the stress caused by major transitions because they have not developed the coping strategies to help them handle the stress (p. 545). They found that older adolescents were better equipped to handle stress because they were better at using problem solving strategies to find ways to alleviate their stress (p.546).

Knowles and Brown point out that due to the stress of changes in schools and changes physically, despite good or bad home background, behavioral issues during this time period are especially tricky. One never knows quite what to expect. Because adolescents are in a search for identity, their behavior can change from situation to situation. One moment they can be kind and compassionate, and the next moment they can be cruel and without mercy. Usually they are making attempts to gain control of their constantly changing world. Sometimes they are acting certain ways to try to protect themselves (2000).

All the tricky bends and turns in adolescent development call for educators to develop schools and teachers that are sensitive to all of these factors. The middle school movement developed out of a need to address the unique qualities of the students being educated during this time period. The desire to know how to best help students at this age is at the heart of this movement. *Turning Points* the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989, p.20) states the importance of a strong understanding of this time period in the following quote:

> Young adolescents today make fateful choices, fateful for them and for our nation! The period of life from ages 10 to 15 represents for many young people their last best chance to choose a path toward productive and fulfilling lives.

16

Models for Educational Structures at the Mid-Level

The middle school movement developed out of a desire to form developmentally sensitive, academically appropriate schools to handle the education of students during this middle level of education. Prior to this movement there was a tendency to either treat students at this level as elementary students or as miniature high school students. Much research has been done in the development of the elements that would make up an ideal middle school.

In 1992, a group of researchers for the National Middle School Association (NMSA) in a report titled *This We Believe* developed a list of what they believed should characterize developmentally responsive middle schools.

> The National Middle School Association believes: Developmentally responsive middle level schools are characterized by:
>
> - educators committed to young adolescents
> - a shared vision
> - high expectations for all
> - an adult advocate for every student
> - family and community partnerships
> - a positive school climate
>
> Therefore, developmentally responsive middle level schools provide:
>
> - curriculum that is challenging, integrative, and exploratory
> - varied teaching and learning approaches
> - assessment and evaluation that promote learning
> - flexible organizational structures
> - programs and policies that foster health, wellness, and safety
> - comprehensive guidance and support
>
>   (NMSA, p.11)

This list is similar to the list presented by the Carnegie Council in *Turning Points* in 1989. All of this is done in an attempt to override the developmental mismatch of dramatic school structural change at a time when so much other dramatic change and upset is occurring in the life of the early adolescent.

The middle school movement has tried to structure middle schools in ways that would help make schools more developmentally appropriate. Exemplary middle schools seem to share various elements that are there in an attempt to meet the need for a more positive school environment. For example, typical middle schools are often structured in teams, have heterogeneous grouping, develop a curriculum that is student centered, have a curriculum that is integrative and exploratory, and have teachers that are specifically trained to work with this age group. The following section will examine the research on these elements of middle schools.

Teaming

Structuring schools in teams has been an attempt to solve the problems that students face once leaving the smaller elementary school setting. Often students leave small personal settings to face large impersonal settings at a time when they are already starting to feel lost. In order to have more flexible organizational structures and a positive school climate, middle schools have tried to structure small communities for learning inside the larger school structure. This has been accomplished by using teaming. According to Knowles and Brown (2000) teaming is the placing of students in heterogeneous groups that stay together and move through their classes together throughout the day. Each team usually has from 2-4 main teachers rather than the 6 or 7 that a student might have in a large junior high setting. The most common teaming structure has math, science, language arts, and social studies teachers handling 100 to 125 students.

A variety of researchers have found that the purpose of teaming is to allow students and teachers to get to know each other better in smaller units. There is evidence in the research that teaming benefits both teachers and students. It reduces teacher isolation and can help them plan learning for their team that will appropriately meet the need for social, emotional, and academic growth (Berkowitz, J. & Uline, C., 1999). The best use of teaming is suppose to be when teachers have common planning time so that they can structure the learning of their team together across each teacher's subject area to form interdisciplinary units. Teaming is supposed to allow them to use flexible time structures to provide a varied teaching and learning experience. However, in realistically looking at the research in this area, it appears that little interdisciplinary planning actually takes place (Walley & Gerrick, 1999), (Weilbacher, 2000), (Elmore, 2000), (Storz, M. & Nestor, K., 2003).

An advantage of teaming over departmentalization is the opportunity to plan for flexible scheduling. In self-contained elementary classrooms, teachers can set aside whole days or whole afternoons to work on interdisciplinary, hands on learning activities. It is much more difficult to pull off these kinds of activities if the school is tied to 40 minute class periods with no flexibility. Part of the idea of teaming is that the four teachers can work together and flex when they need more time to carry out creative, active learning scenarios.

Heterogeneous Grouping

Another part of the teaming principle is heterogeneous grouping. Students are put together with other students of varying ability. One of the criticisms of junior high was

19

that most of them used tracking. According to the Third International Math and Science

Study (TIMISS), Germany and the United States are the only developed countries in the

world that practice tracking. Researchers have found that if students are not introduced

to challenging math and sciences courses during middle school, it is found that they will

not be likely to take these kinds of classes later in their education (Bandlow, 2001). What

constitutes an excellent education for one student should be available to all students not

just those students that do well on academic tests or go to wealthy district schools.

Student Centered

Another element of exemplary middle schools is student-centeredness. In this

view of schooling, education centers on topics that are related to the world of students at

this level. Much of this is supposed to be accomplished by involving students in the

decision making process (Hargreaves & Moore, 2000). Gehlbach and Roeser (2002)

comment on the mismatch for adolescence when they enter larger schools after

elementary and have no choice about anything in their environment. In order to help

make learning more relevant and maintain a curriculum that is challenging and

exploratory, teachers in middle school need to tap into student ideas and choices in

planning. Students seem to become more motivated when given the opportunity to make

some of the decisions about the goals for their learning. Professors Malloy and Rayle

from the University of North Carolina looked closely at a middle school development

program called the Comer Process. In this process of building a school, three principles

guide it: consensus, collaboration, and no-fault. (2000, p.13).

Along these same lines other schools have encouraged a democratic atmosphere in their schools by creating ways for students to participate in writing rules for the classroom. This seems to be a bit time consuming in the beginning of the year, but the benefits seem to make the effort worth it. In order to maintain a positive school environment, developmentally, students of this age need to understand the idea of community and the rule of law. When they have logically deduced the rules for their setting, there is evidence that they take more ownership in following them or accepting discipline when the do not follow them (Frost, R., Olson, E. & Valiquette, L., 2000). In a classroom where the atmosphere is warm and comfortable and the children feel safe, learning is better facilitated. Involving students in decision making about rules helps them to learn about democracy and develop a moral sense for the purpose of rules and laws in society.

Curriculum

Finding the ideal curriculum and learning theory for middle school that is challenging, integrative, and exploratory is another hot point in the issue of structuring schools. Ideal middle schools, according to Anderman, Maehr, and Midgley (1999), in general try to develop a curriculum that is task focused rather than performance focused. The latter is more concerned with demonstrating ability or hiding the lack of ability. There is more of a focus on competition and there is more ability grouping in performance based learning. In task-focused learning, learning for the sake of learning is emphasized. There is a focus on mastering the task. Often problem solving and

cooperative activities are employed in the learning. Grouping is based on need or interest rather than ability.

In dealing with educating students at the mid-level, teachers and educators have to align their focus. Traditional junior high settings were departmentalized by subject and focused on preparing students in subject areas for high school. Middle schools, in theory, are more concerned with educating students in a connected meaningful way than they are about subject matter in specific areas (Berkowitz, J. & Uline, C., 1999). Educators also have to find developmentally appropriate ways to tap into the energy and enthusiasm of students at this level. Lancaster and Rikard (2002) report that recent brained-based research has found that classrooms need a variety of methods to reach every child. Using hands-on activities and cooperative learning activities in which the students teach other students can account for a 90% retention rate in students. Making learning activities as active as possible seems to be most appropriate for students at this level.

Finding ways to take the curriculum outside is another way to actively engage students of this level in learning. One of the findings in Lounsbury and Johnston's classic study *Life in the Three 6th Grades* (1988) was the amount of time students spend indoors often without even the benefit of a window. Many of the shadow researchers commented on how good it felt to be outside when the student they were shadowing was allowed out for recess or lunch. Broda of Ashland University in Ohio advocates the use of the outdoors in education to fit with the type of intellectual development that is occurring in the middle grades. He found that it fits well with many of the "best practices" for this level. The learning situation can add relevance to what is being learned. In order to use the outdoors in education there needs to be flexible scheduling

where longer blocks of time are available. The outdoors provides an excellent setting for hands-on activities. It appeals to the idea of multiple intelligences. Some students are fascinated by nature and will learn more efficiently when things are tied to it. Outdoors there is plenty of room to spread out for cooperative learning activities. Finally, nature can be used as the tie between interrelated subjects to create connectedness across subject areas (Broda, H., 2002).

Motivational Drop

Research has documented the drop in motivation that comes with the transition to middle school or junior high. Researchers Anderman, Maehr, and Midgley of the University of Michigan (1999) found in a quantitative study of two middle schools that had qualitative differences in their structure of learning that the type of school attended can affect that motivation drop. In their study, they looked at two middle schools; one had a more performance orientation more along the lines of a traditional junior high while the other had a more task oriented focus more along the line of middle school reform. They found that the students in the more task oriented school had less of an achievement drop than did the students in the more traditional school. This study seems to indicate that the achievement drop at this level is not just caused by the nature of early adolescence or by the society, but that how schools are structured can be a factor in the drop (Anderman, E., Maher, M., & Midgley, C., 1999). Providing a curriculum that is challenging, relevant, and interconnected using a variety of methods that make learning active rather than passive is what the middle school reform is all about.

Teachers

In looking at all of the research on building effective middle schools, there is no aspect that is more important than the teacher. Lounsbury and Johnston in *Life in Three 6th Grades* studied three 6th grades using three different structures. They looked at 6th grade in self-contained classrooms, in departmentalized organizations, and in teamed settings. They found that overall it was "…not the school setting or organization, interdisciplinary units, relevant curriculum content, or anything else, that is the essential factor in the improvement of middle level education. It is the quality of the classroom teacher. Teachers make the difference." (1988, p.112). In light of this, change in teacher certification in many states is an exciting development for mid-level reformers.

Over the years of the middle school reform movement, there has been a need for teachers that have been specifically prepared to deal with middle childhood students. These new teachers are committed to students at the middle school level. They are more rigorously trained in two areas providing a stronger background and more expertise in the areas that they become certified to teach. In the late sixty's to early seventy's only a handful of states had any special credentials for teaching at this level. In 2000, Peggy Gaskill, the director of Middle School in Education Program at Walden University in Minnesota, conducted research on the current status of licensure and credentialing for mid-level teaching in the various states in the U.S.A. She found that there has been a 75% rise in the number of states requiring a mid-level credential (2002, p. 38). The only states currently not requiring mid-level certification are California, Idaho, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, Montana, and New Jersey (p.35). The major impact of this requirement is on teacher education institutions. Few colleges or universities offer

24

specific mid-level preparation courses unless it is required by their state offices of teacher preparation and certification (p. 38).

Presently only 50% of the states requiring certification for mid-level are using it as a determining factor in hiring practices. Only 41% of the states require it for teaching at this level. Many worry that it is going to become difficult to require it for teaching at this level because of impending teacher shortages. "Demographics predict that the administrative and teaching force in the United States will turn over by up to 75% within less than ten years." (p.39) Much depends on teacher training institutions continuing to prepare graduates to teach at this level. In many ways the continued survival of the middle school movement reform will depend on young teachers being prepared to carry it on (George, 1999).

Criticism of the Middle School Movement

While much progress in the education of early adolescents has been made in the last twenty years, it has not been without it critics. Falling test scores in comparison to other developed nations have caused many politicians and parents to begin pointing fingers. Critics claim that the middle school reform has placed too much emphasis on the emotional/social well-being of the child at the expense of providing academic rigor. Others claim that the understanding of early adolescence which was the foundation of the movement was based on an understanding of white, middle class adolescence which is not necessarily the same understanding across cultures. All adolescents face similar struggles, but the context for those struggles can differ greatly from community to community (Williamson, R. & Johnston, J.H., 1999).

Beane found that there are many difficult factors in evaluating the effectiveness of middle school structures and methods. First of all, many who criticize the reform, base their criticism on achievement test scores. The problem with this is that all schools with the name middle school are lumped together in one group. When this is done, achievement scores generally do not show improvement. However, there is a great disparity in the actual practices of middle schools. Some are middle schools in name only. Others have worked for a long time to really try to implement and practice exemplary model middle school elements. Most other middle schools are somewhere in between those two extremes because they are just on the edge of trying to implement and practice ideal elements of middle schools. Several large scale studies have indicated that the kind of middle school attended can greatly affect achievement scores. "Schools that seriously pursued the middle school concept with high fidelity over a number of years fared better on measures of both academic achievement and social behavior than their counterparts in schools that were in early stages of reform or had pursued change only half-heartedly." (Beane, 1999).

It becomes clear that while many educators agree about the needed components for effective middle schools, the actual implementation and practices have been slow in coming. A recent study by Anfara and Waks (2000) found the following statistics about the actual practices in schools. Of 73 schools studied only 14 had advisories, only 6 had interdisciplinary teams, only 5 utilized flexible scheduling, and 0 had an exploratory curriculum. Middle school seems to be more of an ideal than a reality. The irony of it all is that low achievement at the mid-level is being blamed on developmental features of schools that in most case do not actually exist (Beane, 1999).

Many of the reformers in the middle school movement do not feel that achievement test scores really reflect the types of curriculum and instructional changes taking place. However, there is a lack of stability in the area of coming up with a kind of assessment that would reflect whether positive change is taking place. Even when funded by massive amounts of money from places like the Clark foundation, many urban middle schools are not able to demonstrate improvement (Lewis, 1996).

A key element in the criticism of middle schools has been their lack of academic rigor. To many people, it seems as if a student-centered curriculum where students are allowed to grow and discover their own interests will leave them unprepared for high school and college (Bandlow, 2001). The lack of rigor at this level is usually blamed on two things. One is the belief that because of raging hormones early adolescents are incapable of intellectual growth. The other is the number of teachers at the mid-level that teach with elementary licenses and lack knowledge levels needed to teach subject matter in a rigorous manner to students at this level (Norton, 2000). Even though recent studies have found that early adolescents are at a time where they grow intellectually, many educators still hold a false understanding of this. In a national survey, nearly half of all administrators and teachers still believed that students at this level were at a learning plateau (Callahan, Tomilinson, Reis, & Kaplan, 2000). Cognitive psychologist have noted that contrary to previous belief that brain growth leveled off in early adolescence, it has now been found that mid-level students are able to develop higher levels of logic and reasoning when they are given access to content knowledge. The standards signal that it's time to replace the picture of middle-grades students as captives of 'raging hormones'

with one of young people fully capable of developing "raging intellects.' (Wheelock, 1996).

Linda Perlstein (2003)in her book *not much just chillin'* notes that Middle school students are not just satisfied with being given content. They want to know the *why* of things (p. 115). However, along this line has also been the push for a standardized curriculum that comes with state and national testing. The time needed to prepare for these tests often leaves teachers little time to deal with the *why* of things. Beane reports that most of these tests and curriculums follow the traditional subject area lines such as English, history, geography, mathematics, and science. He believes that this is causing many middle schools to fall back to a junior high subject-centered approach in order to prepare for test performance (Beane, 1999).

With the emphasis on test scores and achievement, many parents are attacking the basic structures of middle school reform. Williamson and Johnson (1999) report that many parents, especially middle class ones, are demanding a return to ability grouping and competitiveness in the school structure. Many middle schools have found that exploratory classes and interdisciplinary units are not taken seriously by parents or students. Parents fail to see how they impact what the student need to know, and students see them as a break from the "real" learning (Williamson, & Johnston, 1999).

Despite the fact that one of the tenets of the middle school movement was parental involvement, Williamson and Johnson (1999) say that many parents find the schools unresponsive to their inquiries. Assuring parents that schools know best is not working with most parents anymore. They believe that middle schools need to welcome parent questions and set up advisory councils to deal with them.

Parents also see the behavior in middle schools as chaotic. Students have even

commented in surveys that students swear and teachers ignore it. They look for teachers

to intervene and provide a safe environment for them to learn in and they do not always

find it in large middle schools (Williamson, & Johnston, 1999). Parents are also

confused by the interdisciplinary units. Students enjoy them, but parents cannot always

see where they fit into the overall scheme of what their children should be learning.

Middle schools often are seen as just trying to reform according to some checklist

of ideals for education at this level. In order for this movement to continue, it is going to

have to adjust and become willing to develop along the lines that are needed by

individual communities. Learning is going to need to be driven by standards and the

issue of achievement is going to need to be addressed and not avoided. All students need

to be given access to the kind of learning that is going to enable them to continue to

succeed as they move on through the system.

The Development of the Christian Day School

The development of the middle school as a structure for educating students at the

mid-level occurred at about the same time as another movement in this country -- that is

the development of private Christian day schools. Having Protestant Christian parents

involved in the control of the education of their children is no new thing. Before the

development of the public school movement, Protestant parents were often actively

involved in the formation of schools for their children and in the formation of charity

schools for the children of poor people (Kienel, 1998). However, as the common school

movement developed and evolved into public education, most Protestant parents

supported it because many protestant Christians were at the forefront of the development of these Common schools. The goal of early public schools was to make available education for all children in a way that would develop a civilized society of Christians (Carper & Layman, 1995).

Without dwelling on the differences between various denominations of Protestant churches, traditional public schools reinforced a basic Judeo-Christian view of the world. These schools had Bible readings without comments, prayer, "moral" teachers, and strongly Christian textbooks like the McGuffey readers. Unsurprisingly, by the late 1890's 86% of children from ages 5 to 14 were enrolled in public schools. The majority of private schools at that time were Roman Catholic schools which enrolled about 11% of the school age population (Carper & Layman, 1995).

Predominant views in American society began to change in the 1900's and by the time of the 1960's public school reform was changing education. Many factors led up to these changes. A. James Reichly (1985) in *Religion in American Public Life* says that since the 1950's the value-belief system of the United States had changed. Science and reason were believed to hold the keys to progress and knowledge. There was no room for a deity in the affairs of men. This evolutionary view of the cosmos became the dominant view in the intellectual community. It also began to hold much sway over the entertainment industry, the media, and parts of the educational enterprise.

A significant minority of unhappy parents began to form. Carper and Layman report that groups of Protestant began to become alarmed at the changes that were beginning to occur in public education. The teaching of evolution as the only explanation for the beginning of our world coupled with prayer and Bible reading being expelled

from the classroom caused much dismay to many conservative Christians. At the same time the middle school movement was proclaiming the importance of age-appropriate education and the need for sex education in public schools. This caused many of these parents to become fearful that the education provided by the public school system would run counter to the education of the home and church (Carper & Layman, 1995), (Beane,1999).

By the mid-1960's many parents belonging to evangelical and fundamentalist Protestant churches started forming Christian day schools or academies. According to Edmund (1999) and Carper and Layman (1995), very few of these churches were part of any mainline Protestant denomination. Most of the schools formed in this movement have been independent schools that were formed by individual independent churches. As the movement has grown some board run schools that are independent of one direct church association have also been founded. Carper and Layman found that it is hard to know how many Christian day schools exist because many of them refuse to join a larger association of schools and do not report details about their enrollment to state or federal agencies. However, the best estimate is that from 8,000 to 12,000 have been started since the late 1960's. As of the early 1990's, it has been estimated that 20% of all private-school students are in these types of school. That means that private Christian day schools are educating around a million students in grades K-12.

These schools reflect the values and ideas of the parents and churches that support them. Much of the movement has been characterized by a desire to return to the good old days when public schools were influenced by an emphasis on good morals and basic knowledge in reading, writing, and arithmetic. Consequently, at least, in the early school

development, they tended to be structured very traditionally. Many use a very traditional

Christian curriculum published by Pensacola Bible College called Abeka. A curriculum

published by Bob Jones University is also popular in many Christian day schools. The

teaching of evolution in public schools is still a hot spot for most of the parents of

Christian school students (Stover, 1999). Stover reports that the 1987 Supreme Court

decision banning the teaching of creation in public schools has been a factor in causing

parents to withdraw their students from public education. Therefore, any textbook that

has even a passing reference to evolution is often not used in most Christian day schools.

Many parents chose private Christian day schools because they realize the effect

of peer pressure on school age students (Walley, & Gerrick, 1999). They also desire to

have teachers that are of like-faith as role models for their children. Much research has

been done to validate the importance of positive role models for adolescents. Research

also demonstrates the importance of friends during this time period. Parents feel that by

placing their son or daughter in a Christian school they will find it easier to develop

strong friendships with other students that are of like faith. Researchers Roeser, Eccles,

and Sameroff (2000) found that students were more likely to be academically motivated

when they were in environments where they felt respected and cared for by both

classmates and teachers. Researchers Issler and Habermas (2002) found that one strength

of the mid-level education in Christian day schools is the idea of spontaneous modeling.

Students spend their days with teachers and hopefully other students in which they see a

model for living by how they live their lives. Spontaneous modeling is not planned, but it

is how teachers and students reveal their true character in every day events and

conversations. Researchers on middle schools acknowledge the powerfulness of having teachers, students, and curriculum share common cultural beliefs.

The spontaneous modeling that is a strong selling point for Christian schools is also believed to be important in moral development. Because early adolescence is such a key time in moral development, many parents sense the importance of having their children in a school that will complement the moral message that students are receiving at home. Many parents feel that Christian day schools are the best setting for a moral climate that is appropriate. In a survey by Walley and Gerrick (1999) of over 2000 adolescents, it was found that adolescents do see a need for guidance in understanding the moral perspective on issues. They do not see a conflict when considering the influence of authority figures as wells as peers and their personal beliefs.

The school reform movements from the 1960's until the late 1980's have tried to have moral training in public schools. It, however, has mostly been an attempt to make students aware of their moral reasoning. It also strived to improve the quality of students' moral reasoning, but care was given not to pass judgment on anyone's moral decisions. This led many Christians to accuse the schools of teaching students embrace moral relativism. Many parents felt that it was against their beliefs in the moral absolutes stressed in the Bible to have their children schooled in a setting in which relativism was stressed (Alegra, & Sink, 2002).

Private Christian day schools have traditionally been schools that have focused on being college preparatory schools. The small size and the lack of funding for developing classes in other career pathways has caused most of these schools to provide mainly a classic college bound program. This has not caused much problem to parents because

they are of a socio-economic level if they can afford tuition that would cause them to expect a college preparatory education for their children.

Parental involvement is also an advantage of many Christian schools. Oosterhuis (2002) found that because Christian schooling is paid for by tuition dollars, parents are often more willing to invest their time and energy in volunteering and developing the sense of community in the school. Christian day schools are often smaller than their public counterparts. He also found that the circle of relationships between school families is often strengthened by attending common churches. Parents are often board members of these private schools. Parents tend to take more pride and ownership of the school and its success because they have helped start the school and they feel they have a voice in how it continues to operate. Many times parents feel free to approach teachers, administrators, and board members with problems and questions. If nothing else, the parents know that if they are unhappy about the direction a particular school is going, they can always pull out and go somewhere else. The administration of these schools has found that to stay competitive they must stay open to parent's opinions about how the school should be run (Oosterhuis, 2002).

Teachers in Christian day schools tend to be professionals that feel called to work in Christian education. They are often paid a significantly lower salary than their public school counterparts. Researchers, Joe P. Sutton and Timothy G. Watson (1995), education professors from Bob Jones University, surveyed Christian day school teachers about the biggest problems in Christian schools today and found that top-ranked problem was low teacher salaries. Yet despite these lower salaries many dedicated professionals continue to teach in these schools because of their desire to help prepare students

mentally, emotionally, and morally to function in this world. Many teachers in these schools find the quality of students and support that they receive from the family makes their job of teaching in Christian schools a little easier than their public school counterparts. Perlstein (2002) found that teachers will sacrifice receiving a higher salary to work with students that are from families that support high academic standards.

Christian School Structures

Very little research exists about the educational structures found in most of these private Christian day schools. Many schools have been reluctant to allow outside researchers to come in for the fear of government interference. Most of these schools refuse government funding and are supported in a large part by tuition paid by parents. The goal of this researcher is to make a cross-sectional examination of current practices at the mid-level in Christian day schools. By nature of being smaller institutions with strong parental support, the researcher expects to find that many of the qualities called for by middle school reformers already in existence in many of these schools.

For example, teachers that are committed to adolescence would be expected in these schools because teaching in these schools is usually a sacrificial choice made by those educators. However, it will be interesting to find out how many of the teachers have had specific preparation for educating students at the mid- level. Another area that should be strong is parental involvement and the sense of community as a result of the common faith bond shared by the school and its constituents. One would also expect a positive school environment with a shared vision for the school.

The researcher will examine the perceived presence of these factors as well as examining the school structures and curricular provisions of these schools. Examination of the type of curriculum will include seeing if it is challenging, integrative, and exploratory. Observation of the teaching and learning approaches will also be made. The types of organizational structures will be surveyed. The presence of programs that focus on health and safety will be looked for in these schools. Finally, the support systems for each individual student will be examined (NMSA, 1992).

As Christians many of the goals of the middle school program should be attractive. Biblically, the development of community and the morality of the children is continually stressed. Researchers have tried to determine the best ways to educate the unique time period of adolescence. It will be interesting to learn if Christian schools include any of these best ways, and if they do not, is there a willingness to develop in areas where they are weakest.

CHAPTER III.: PROCEDURES AND RESULTS

Research Procedures

After a thorough review of the literature on the best practices for middle school education, the researcher designed a checklist of the key areas that would demonstrate the type of model for grades 5-8 being used at each school (see Appendix A). With this checklist in mind the researcher developed the plan for gathering data from a cross section of Christian schools.

The data was gathered by Cedarville University students who were doing a required observation week in a Christian school of their choosing. Most of the students chose to do this observation in their home town which provided the researcher with eighteen sets of data from a variety of schools in various locations. Using this process the researcher gathered nine sets of data from Ohio schools, three from New York schools, and one from Virginia, Florida, Colorado, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and even one set from Bermuda.

Before the students gathered this data, the researcher met with them and talked to them about the project and the procedures for collecting data. At these meetings the students were given packets containing the directions, forms, and interview questions that they would need for the data collection.

The first page of the packet had the basic instructions for the project (Appendix B). Students were instructed to give a letter and a survey to the administrator the first day of their observation (Appendix C and D). Each student researcher was allowed to choose to shadow either a teacher or a student. The procedures to shadow either a student or a teacher varied slightly. Because of this there was included in the packet, directions for

shadowing a teacher and for shadowing a student (Appendix E). Whether the researcher

was shadowing a teacher or a student, the plan was to write down observations about

what was happening in the classroom every five to seven minutes. In order to do this,

several blank observation forms were included in the packet (Appendix F). On the

observation form, the researcher was to record the time, the specific behavior, the

environment, and an impression/comment. If the university student was shadowing a

student, a permission slip (Appendix G) was sent home and approval was gotten for the

researcher to interview the shadowed student. At the end of the day or the next day

whether a student or teacher was shadowed, the university student was to interview the

person that he or she shadowed that day (Appendix H and I). Finally, the Cedarville

student was asked to fill out an end of the day reflections of the researcher for their

impressions about the day (Appendix J).

Analysis of the Observations

After all of the data sets were turned in, the researcher began to go over the data

using the checklist from Appendix A to begin to gather a picture of a day in the life of a

student or teacher in a Christian school. One thing began to emerge as the researcher

examined the data, despite the fact that these schools were in a variety of locations, they

were all very similar to each other. The size, the structure, the flow of the day was

somewhat similar in all of the schools.

In order to analyze the data gathered by the student observers taking observations

every five to seven minutes, another chart was designed that would provide a picture of

what was happening in the class rooms observed. After reading through the collected

data several times, the researcher designed a list of the typical activities that were

reported on the observation forms. Some of the student observers were more vigilant

about taking an observation every five to seven minutes. Therefore, the number of

observations for each school varied from as low as thirty observations recorded to as high

as sixty-six observations. For comparison sake, the researcher tallied the observations in

each area and then turned them into a percentage based on the total number of

observations taken for that school.

   To begin analyzing the data, a random number was assigned to each school. Then

each observation was tallied on the Chart of Activities (Appendix K). The Chart of

Activities on the following two pages gives a quick view of the types of things that were

happening in these classrooms. The great variety of activities in each classroom

throughout the course of a day was very interesting. Many of the schools had working on

an independent assignment as one of their highest percentages. When one considers the

teacher led activities such as lecture, discussion, review, class games, and class grading

papers together, they were the highest percentage of the day for most of the classrooms.

The uniqueness of this type of study is in the fact that it is just a quick snapshot of a

typical day in this type of school. On the following page is the chart showing the results

of tallying the observations and turning them into a percent based on the total number of

observations taken.

Chart of Activities Observed

	Working on an Independent Assignment	Silent Reading	Group Reading Together	Lecture/Notes	Teacher Led Discussion	Teacher Led Review	Class game	Cooperative Learning Activity	Class Grading Papers
1	19%	2%	7%	2%	7%	7%	2%	4%	-
2	17%	-	-	20%	10%	27%	-	13%	-
3	3%	3%	10%	7%	10%	7%	-	3%	13%
4	22%	-	-	6%	13%	-	-	26%	-
5	19%	-	12%	6%	14%	1%	-	-	1%
6	30%	-	7%	4%	6%	-	-	-	-
7	5%	-	12%	10%	17%	5%	-	-	-
8	2%	-	6%	18%	6%	3%	-	2%	8%
9	3%	-	6%	11%	21%	8%	-	-	5%
10	30%	-	4%	15%	5%	-	9%	-	-
11	22%	-	-	15%	3%	2%	-	7%	10%
12	28%	-	6%	11%	9%	-	-	-	3%
13	19%	-	3%	10%	10%	-	-	-	6%
14	7%	-	2%	-	5%	5%	-	7%	2%
15	10%	-	-	8%	2%	-	5%	10%	-
16	48%	4%	7%	7%	-	-	-	17%	-
17	38%	-	4%	6%	11%	2%	-	9%	4%
18	26%	3%	5%	19%	7%	-	5%	7%	-

Chart of Activities Continued

	Lunch, Snack, Break time, or Recess	Teacher Prepar-ation Time	Dealing w/a Discipline Problem	Transition Times	Watching a Video	Student Present-ations	Students Doing Work on the board	Prayer or Devotions	Chapel or Program Practice	Total Observations
1	23%	7%	-	9%	-	-	-	-	9%	53
2	3%	-	-	7%	-	-	-	3%	-	30
3	10%	10%	3%	20%	-	-	-	-	-	30
4	10%	10%	-	13%	-	-	-	-	-	31
5	3%	5%	3%	15%	5%	-	3%	3%	-	64
6	19%	9%	-	2%	-	19%	-	2%	-	46
7	12%	15%	2%	20%	-	-	-	2%	-	41
8	6%	16%	3%	19%	-	-	-	15%	-	62
9	14%	8%	3%	11%	5%	-	-	14%	-	63
10	6%	11%	1%	17%	-	-	-	1%	-	66
11	10%	8%	8%	12%	-	-	-	2%	-	59
12	14%	11%	3%	6%	-	6%	-	-	3%	35
13	13%	13%	-	13%	10%	-	-	3%	-	31
14	9%	9%	2%	16%	14%	7%	-	-	14%	43
15	12%	-	-	15%	8%	-	-	-	30%	40
16	9%	-	-	9%	-	-	-	-	-	46
17	-	-	4%	15%	-	-	-	-	6%	47
18	15%	-	-	9%	-	-	-	3%	-	58

41

The timing of when these observations were taken does have some impact on the results. The first third of my student observers made their observations in the week before Christmas vacation. Several of the schools had unusual schedules because they were preparing for a Christmas program or because they had special chapel services. Despite this timing of the observations, some patterns appear in the data. All of the teacher led activities were combined into one percentage in the following chart so that a comparison of typical classroom activities could be made.

Activity Comparison
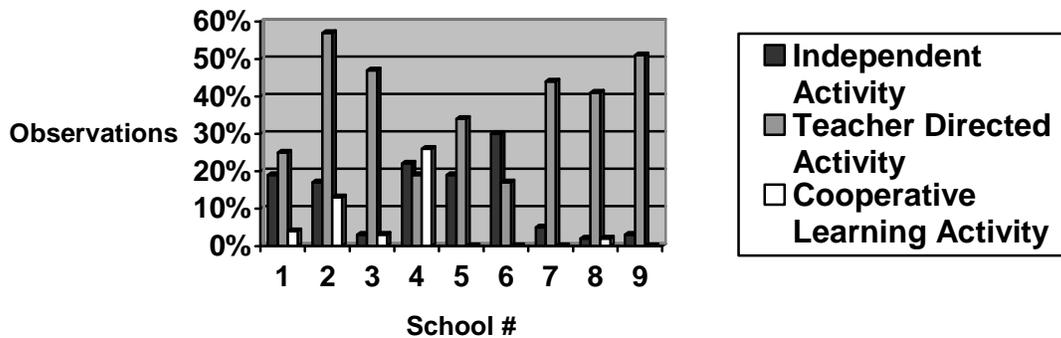
Activity Comparison Continued
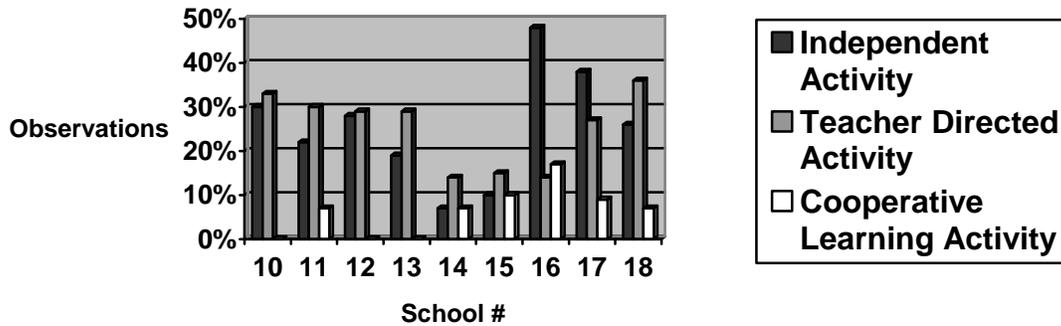
The graphs demonstrate the amount of time spent in teacher directed activity and independent activity to be quite high in most of the schools observed. Cooperative learning was used in a limited way in eleven of the eighteen schools studied. One school had 19% of its observations be of student presentations. The observer did not mention whether these were group presentations or individual presentations. The results in these graphs seem to indicate that most of the schools observed were performance oriented and teacher-centered.

In terms of moral development the following graphs will look at the time spent in chapel, devotions, or dealing with a discipline issue. Although the percentages of time spent are low, almost every school spent some time in one of these three areas.

Moral Development Activities
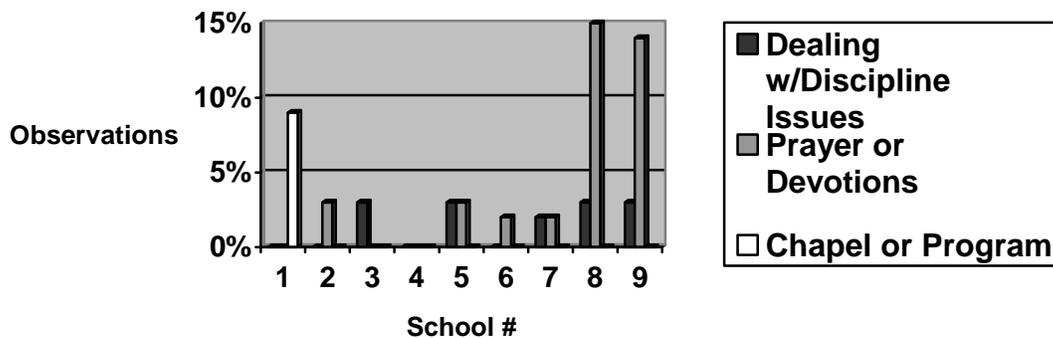
Moral Development Activities Continued
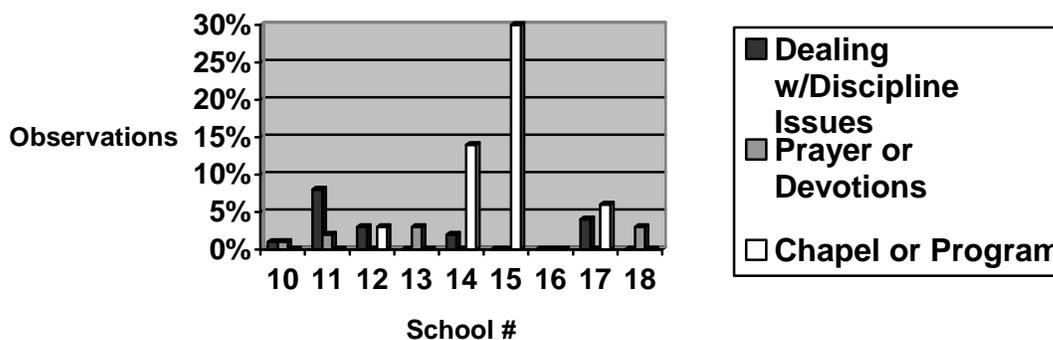
Administrative Survey Data

The administrative survey gave information about the size and structures of the various schools. Unfortunately, one set of data did not have a completed administrative survey. However, all of the other sets did have the survey giving the researcher basic information about 17 of the 18 schools in the study.

The size and structures of the schools were very similar. The survey showed that eleven of the schools ranged in size from 100 to 400 students. Six of the schools had more than 400 students. Three of the schools served grades Kindergarten through eighth grade while the other thirteen served Kindergarten through twelfth grade.

Most of the schools had a traditional structure for the middle grades. Eleven schools were divided between sixth and seventh grade. Kindergarten through 6th grade in these schools was considered elementary and seventh grade through twelfth grade was considered secondary. The other five schools reported structuring grades kindergarten through fifth grade as elementary, grades sixth through eighth as middle school, and grades nine through twelve as high school.

All of the schools seemed well established because all of them have been in existence for more than twenty years. Six schools were twenty plus years old, eight schools were more than thirty years old, and three schools were more than forty years old. The combination of size and years of existence demonstrates that these are all established schools.

Teacher Certification

One of the perceived weaknesses in Christian schools is that there are often teachers teaching that are not certified. However, according to the administrative survey

44

nine of the schools reported that almost all of their teachers have specific training for the level that they teach. Six of the schools reported that some have specific training, and one school reported that none of the teachers had specific training. The wording on the survey did not clearly ask if teachers of the middle grades had middle grade only certification. It can probably be safely assumed that most of the reported specific training would be through a basic grades 1-8 elementary certification or a secondary 7-12 certification.

Plan for the Transition to the Middle Grades

The administrative survey results showed that the majority of schools had at least a limited plan to ease the transition from the elementary grades to the middle grades. Three schools reported that students go from having one primary teacher to having several teachers without much specific preparation for that change. Two schools reported that students are gradually introduced to more than one teacher, but that nothing specific is done to ease that transition. Finally, twelve schools reported that they have specific plans in place to ease the transition of students from the elementary grades to the middle grades. All twelve schools mentioned that they gradually shift students from one teacher to many teachers. Most of them reported going from one teacher in elementary to two or three teachers in sixth grade, and then to four or five teachers in seventh and eighth grade. Six of the schools reported having parent meetings in fifth or sixth grade to help ease the transition. Six schools also reported that they had the transitioning students visit the middle grades for a day or part of a day some time in the spring prior to the year that they would make the transition.

Teacher Interview Data

The strongest point of these schools seems to be their committed teachers. Fourteen of the eighteen sets of data collected were where the Cedarville student shadowed a teacher. Eleven of these teachers were female and three were males. The majority of the teachers had their own children in the schools. In the end of the day interviews, several of the female teachers mentioned that they felt that teaching blended well with being a mother. Many of the teachers mentioned feeling called to teach in a Christian school. Several commented that lower salary and fewer benefits for teaching in a Christian school was frustrating. However, despite that frustration, all of the teachers seemed committed and seemed to enjoy teaching at their school.

The circle of the community of home, school, and church seems very strong in these schools. Many of the teachers spoke of how much they enjoyed the freedom to speak about God and their relationship with him freely in their schools. Family partnership with these schools seems quite strong. Sixteen of the eighteen schools reported having strong parental involvement. Several teachers voiced the idea that often parents are more involved because they are paying tuition and feel more ownership for the school and what is going on in it.

School Climate

Most of these schools have a positive school climate. The school, the students, and the families usually have the best interest of the students at heart. Although most teachers indicated that students could talk to an adult if they had a problem, most of the schools did not seem to have a person that was specifically in the position of advocate for the students. The typical response on the majority of the interviews was that the students

could always come and talk to a teacher or to the principal if they needed an adult to talk to about a problem. However, the interviews of several teachers indicated that students could come for help but that very few ever took advantage of being able to do that.

Several teachers mentioned the high expectations of the school; however this was usually mentioned in reference to high achievement test scores. The teachers and the students in the end of the day interviews indicated that they felt students were getting a good education at their school. Despite the perception of receiving a good education, there were very few instances of teachers using challenging, exploratory, or task oriented activities. Even integration of subjects including Bible did not come across in the data collection of observations.

In fifteen of the eighteen sets of observation, a Bible class, a chapel, or at least a gathering of prayer requests for a prayer time was observed. Several teachers commented that discipline was better at their school because they could deal with the misbehavior on a spiritual level. There were not extremely specific instances of moral development going on in every class. However, it does seem that the pervasiveness of prayer and the Bible points the students to the importance of their spiritual walk in every day aspects of life.

Styles of Classrooms

In order to have this harmony of spiritual beliefs in the everyday aspects of the classroom, something seems to be given up. All of the data sets indicated that the classrooms in these Christian schools were very teacher centered. One Cedarville student even commented on how much the teacher he was observing seemed to like his stool at the front of the class. In the end of the day interviews, most of the teachers honestly

admitted that their curriculum did not allow for much in the way of students being allowed to make decisions. A typical day in these class rooms consisted of lots of teacher/student discussion or teacher lecturing. All of the schools seemed very performance oriented. Fifteen of the eighteen sets of data had significant amounts of time in which students worked independently on assignments, tests, or quizzes. Ten of the sets of data showed at least a limited use of cooperative learning such as working with partners at some point during the day. Only two of the classrooms observed had any kind of hands on or interactive type of learning activity on the day of the observation.

Discipline Styles

The various styles and levels of discipline was the area in which the most diversity from one school to the next was observed. In one classroom, the students were earning dollars to pay for a party. In four of the class rooms teachers used a lot of verbal reprimands and refocusing of attention without much action taken to back it up. In seven of the classrooms the teachers seem to use a balanced authoritative style of discipline in which they dealt quickly and consistently with misbehavior. In four of the observations, the teachers seemed very permissive in what they allowed to go on in their class rooms. In one of the student shadowing observations, it was difficult to settle on one style because the student moved from class to class.

The most obvious conclusion from observations of Christian schools is that middle school age students struggle with the same behavior issues that they struggle with in other settings. Middle school students love to make noise. In one observation a boy was continually making noise with his mouth. Another observer noticed excessive pencil tapping and stated that it was nearly driving her crazy. In almost all of the observations,

the students loved to chatter any time that they could whether they were suppose to or not. Finally, it was clear from these observations, that if a teacher does not take charge of the students at this age, chaos will reign.

School Structures

In terms of school structures, very little evidence of teaming was observed. Most of the teachers stated that they did not work with other teachers in their daily planning of activities. Some referred to teaming because they worked with another teacher so that they could teach a subject more than once. Other than that the teachers all seemed somewhat independent of each other. In almost half of the schools, grades five and six were in self-contained or nearly self-contained class rooms. In eleven of the schools grades seven and eight were departmentalized and had a variety of teachers.

The diversity of these schools was very limited. Most of the students came from similar church backgrounds and were probably from similar social-economic levels of society. One teacher mentioned that it did not keep students from coming to their school based on their I.Q. However, in the next sentence she went on to say that their school had a high, medium, and low track for students. Another words, even if there was some diversity of ability in the school, the class rooms themselves were very homogenous. Race was not a factor examined in this study although racial diversity in most of these schools was probably somewhat limited.

The following chart was compiled as the researcher went over the packets of data collected from each school. If there was any evidence that pointed to the qualities on the chart, the researcher checked that category for the school. The research used the overall

data from the observation sheets, the interviews, and the administrative survey to compile this chart.

School Structures Summary

SCHOOL #'S	Teaching Approaches	Mainly teacher directed	Mainly Student Centered	Mixed Teacher/student centeredness	Cooperative Learning Activities	Paper and pencil independent tasks	Hands on or interactive activities	Classroom Discipline	Assertive Discipline	Authoritarian Discipline	Authoritative Discipline	Permissive Discipline	No Discipline Observed	School Structure	Teaming	Heterogeneous Grouping	Self-contained	Departmentalized
1		X				X					X						X	
2		X			X	X	X			X								X
3		X			X	X					X							X
4					X						X							X
5		X				X			X									X
6		X				X					X						X	
7		X			X	X					X				X		X	
8		X			X	X				X								X
9		X											X					X
10		X			X		X				X							X
11		X				X				X		X					X	
12		X			X	X					X				X		X	
13		X				X					X						X	
14		X			X	X					X							X
15		X				X							X				X	
16		X				X					X					X		X
17		X			X	X				X		X						X
18		X			X	X							X		X			X

50

School Structures Summary Continued

SCHOOL #'S	General Qualities	Committed Educators	Plan for Transition	High Expectations/Rigor	Adult Advocate other than Teacher	Family Partnership	Positive School Climate	Curriculum	Challenging	Integrated	Exploratory	Performance Oriented	Task oriented	Outdoor Education Used	Examples of Prayer or Bible
1		X				X	X					X			X
2		X	X			X						X			X
3		X	X			X	X					X			X
4		X				X	X					X			X
5		X	X			X	X				X	X			X
6		X				X	X				X	X			X
7		X	X			X	X					X			X
8		X	X	X		X						X			X
9		X				X	X					X			X
10		X				X	X					X			X
11		X	X			X						X			X
12		X	X			X	X					X			X
13			X			X	X					X			X
14		X	X			X	X					X			X
15		X	X			X	X					X			
16				X			X		X			X			
17			X		X	X						X			
18		X	X			X	X					X			

51

These charts demonstrate that even though these are different schools in different locations, overall they are very similar in structure and function. The patterns that seem most obvious are that the schools are teacher-centered and performance oriented. The schools all seem to share dedicated educators that are very devoted to their schools. The structures of these schools seem to be very traditional with either self-contained or departmentalized settings. Family partnership and positive school climate are evident in all of these schools.

Many of the key elements of model middle schools were not evident in the data collected. Most of the schools did not have a specific staff person to act as advocate for the students other than the teachers and principals. There was very little evidence of integrated, exploratory, task oriented teaching going on in the classrooms observed. The classrooms appeared to be very teacher-centered with a few schools using limited cooperative learning activities.

IV. SUMMARY – CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The focus of this study has been in several areas. First of all, its purpose was to analyze the literature on middle grade structures for schools. Secondly, its purpose was to examine the structures of Christian schools. Thirdly, its purpose was to look at the patterns found in the eighteen Christian schools studied. Finally, its purpose was to examine the implications for Christian schools desiring to provide an excellent educational experience for all of their students.

Conclusions from the Literature Review

One thing was abundantly clear from the literature review; adolescence is a unique time developmentally in the life of a student and calls for special consideration when planning the educational structures and experiences of students. The literature pointed out that the extreme physical changes that children go through during this time period can also cause psychological changes. It also is clear that this is a time when children are struggling to define themselves morally. Behavior at this age is often up and down and at times extremely difficult to deal with in a calm manner. The literature also documents that going through major changes in schools during this time period can add stress to an already stress-filled time period. This stress can lead to major rebellion and drops in personal motivation.

The middle school model was developed in order to address the unique qualities of this period of development. This movement desired committed educators who had a shared vision of high expectations for this age group. It called for things like an adult advocate for every student, family and community partnerships, and positive school climates. It was believed that these things could be achieved by providing challenging,

integrative, and exploratory curriculums. Varied teaching and learning approaches in

which teachers and administrators have creative freedom to allow the students to help

design the curriculum was also considered an important aspect of teaching students at this

level. Middle schools, according to the literature, need to be committed to capturing the

curiosity of students by using a variety of methods such as cooperative learning, outdoor

education, and any other method that makes learning active, hands on, and relevant. Task

oriented schools seem to experience less of a motivational and achievement drop than

those schools that were more performance oriented.

An emphasis on teaming students into smaller groups where it would be easier to

form strong relationships and trust is also important to middle school structures. It is

important to have heterogeneous teams rather than ability tracked classes in middle

schools.

The most important aspect of the educational experience at this level, according to

the research, is the teacher. In order to provide excellent schooling at this level, it is

important to have teachers who are specifically trained to deal with the unique qualities

of the learners of this age and development. The evidence in the literature indicates that

regardless of structure or method, it is the dedicated, effective teacher that makes the

difference. Teachers at this level should be called to work with kids of this age. They

need to understand where the students are developmentally, and they need to be experts

in their subject areas. The importance of preparation specifically to educate children at

this level is reflected in the effort of many states to now specifically certify teachers to

teach in the middle grades.

All of the ideas for mid-level education sound great on paper, but in reality many of the ideals of this movement have been extremely difficult to implement. In public school or private school very few have implemented interdisciplinary teams, flexible scheduling, or a truly exploratory curriculum. It becomes very difficult to assess the effectiveness of middle school structures when very few schools have actually been able to successfully implement them.

Christian School Structures

Christian schools were formed out of a reaction to changes in society and public education. The schools in the study as well as many other Christian schools that the researcher has had contact with are structured very traditionally. These schools are financed and populated by students who for the most part are from middle class homes. The schools tend to be very teacher-centered and performance oriented partially because that is the traditional structure that parents experienced when they were in school and therefore they feel most comfortable with it.

The significant difference for Christian schools lies in the similarity of moral practices between the home, church, and school. Teachers can spontaneously model their personal beliefs in Christianity and can demonstrate a worldview that is in harmony with the worldview of the parents and the church. Christian schools can control the type of students that they accept into their student body which often leads to a very homogeneous setting. Many parents see this as a safer setting for their children to be in during their formative years.

Christian schools also often share the natural advantage of being smaller. Teachers have the privilege of watching their students grow up from preschool through

graduation. The stress of actually changing from a small neighborhood elementary to a larger middle school setting is avoided in most Christian schools. The stress of going to an unfamiliar place with unfamiliar teachers is avoided because often the entire school is housed in one building. The other advantage shared by Christian schools is parental involvement. According to research, middle class parents tend to be more involved in the education of their children. When that is combined with the fact that they are paying tuition for their children, it often causes them to be much more involved in volunteering and serving on advisory committees for their schools.

Some criticize Christian schools as not being that much different from their public counterparts. Other than the freedom to pray and discuss spiritual issues publicly, and the absence of evolution theories in science education, there are very few actual differences in teaching methods or curriculums. In comparing the *Life in the Three Sixth Grades,* a study done by Lounsbury and Johnston in 1988, to the study of life in Christian middle school done in this report, a typical day in both settings seemed quite similar.

Patterns Found in the Eighteen Schools Studied

Many of the eighteen schools studied were missing certain components of the ideal middle school model. First of all, certain elements of the middle school model were difficult to discern from one day of observation. For example, the emphasis on health and fitness was not demonstrated by any of the schools, however that does not mean that there is no emphasis in that area, it just was not visible on the day of the study. Another element that was lacking was the adult advocate for every child. The budget of many Christian schools probably makes it difficult to fund such a position. Another area that was difficult to discern from the data was high expectations or rigor. In a sense, it is

there because Christian schools tend to be college preparatory in nature. Christian schools also tend to do very well on achievement tests. However, in just looking at a single day in a Christian school, it was difficult to pinpoint specifically. Even in the interviews of the teacher or student shadowed, a sense of academic rigor did not come to light.

One area that was definitely lacking in the schools studied was student-centeredness. Teachers were definitely guiding the education process. It seemed clear that there was not much freedom in terms of curriculum development. Students seemed to have very little voice in how they were educated. Along these same lines, there was very little evidence of integrated or exploratory learning. Performance oriented learning was pervasive over task oriented learning. Many Christians do not hold a very optimistic view of man. Due to this, there is much emphasis in control and training of children because it is believed if they are left to their own devices they will not make wise choices. This causes reluctance for administrators and teachers to relinquish too much control.

While Christian schools were missing key elements for ideal middle schools in some areas, they were very strong in other areas. For example, Christian schools are very strong in having committed educators. Many of the educators in the study were parents of students in the school. Many of them stated that they felt called to teach in their particular school. Most of the schools appear to have a unique vision for middle school and had programs in place to ease the transition from elementary to middle school easier. Most of the school seemed to have a positive school climate. In the end of the day

reflections of the researcher, all of them had positive things to say about their experience and about the atmosphere of the school they were observing.

In examining the Chart of Activities (Appendix K), it is clear that all of the schools had a variety of things happening during the day. None of the schools centered on teacher lecture for the whole day, but rather there was a mix of whole class activities and independent written activities. The use of active, hands on learning activities on the days of the particular observations was limited. Many of the schools used at least a limited amount of cooperative learning activities.

The variety of discipline styles and types of misbehaviors observed were similar to what was found in studies of public schools. Again it is evident that just being a Christian student in a Christian school does not drastically change the typical behavior of kids at this age. It was quite evident in the study that they responded well when a teacher was clearly in charge and that things were chaotic when a teacher did not take charge.

Implications for Christian Schools

It is evident from the research and from the schools studied that true implementation of the ideal middle school model is extremely difficult to do. It takes a shared vision by parents, teachers, administrators, and students in order to be able to even become close to doing it. Christian schools have many advantages in dealing with students in the middle grades, and they are doing many things right.

It is the administrators of these schools responsibility to make sure that their teachers are properly trained in dealing with middle school. Enabling teachers to take graduate classes in the field, or offering in-services that are directed at preparing teachers to deal with middle school students is important. Too often middle school gets little

attention while high school and elementary schools are the stars of the system.

Administrators need to catch the vision of wanting to create an educational experience for

the middle grades that is rich and unique.

It is also important that the administration and school boards be willing to grant

creative freedom to the teachers and students. It is very easy for many Christian schools

to fall into the trap of doing things the way they have always been done. The idea of

changing to new methods and ideas goes against the grain. However, if the

administration hires competent teachers that have experience and training in dealing with

middle school education, then they need to be given the trust and the freedom to do it in a

manner that will be best for capturing the interest and the energy of this age level. If the

schools in this study represent the typical Christian school across the country, then it does

not appear that Christian schools are prepared to hire and effectively use the new breed of

teacher that is being certified specifically to deal with middle school education. Schools

need to be willing to redesign their structures to better fit the middle school model.

Public schools are struggling to maintain the ideals of the middle school model as

the battle over standard based education rages on. Christian schools have much more

freedom to decide what to teach and how to teach it right now than do many public

schools. If Christian schools are to remain competitive in this economy, they are going to

have to demonstrate that they are truly providing an alternative to other schools that is

excellent and unique.

Christian schools also need to be more open to examination of their practices by

researchers. For too long many schools have had closed doors to outside interference or

study. Other researchers need to look at the practices of Christian schools and their

effects on things like achievement, character education, and leadership development. One of the important tenets of Christianity is continual self-examination in order to attempt to glorify God in everything that is done. This same self-examination of Christian schools should be happening throughout the country to guarantee that Christian education is doing its best to provide the very best education possible for its constituents.

Checklist of Middle School Practices

SCHOOL #'S	General Qualities	Committed Educators	Plan for Transition	High Expectations/Rigor	Adult Advocate other than Teacher	Family Partnership	Positive School Climate	Curriculum	Challenging	Integrated	Exploratory	Performance Oriented	Task oriented	Outdoor Education Used	Examples of Prayer or Bible
1															
2															
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5															
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Checklist of Middle School Practices

SCHOOL #'S	Teaching Approaches	Mainly teacher directed	Mainly Student Centered	Mixed Teacher/student centeredness	Cooperative Learning Activities	Paper and pencil independent tasks	Hands on or interactive activities	Classroom Discipline	Assertive Discipline	Authoritarian Discipline	Authoritative Discipline	Permissive Discipline	No Discipline Observed	School Structure	Teaming	Heterogeneous Grouping	Self-contained	Departmentalized
1																		
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APPENDIX B
General Directions for the Data Gathering
Directions
1) Give the letter to your administrator along with the survey the first day that you observe.
2) Plan to do the observation the first day that you are there. It is important that you record your impressions without being influenced by things that happened on previous days.
3) On the observation record the terms at the top mean the following:
   a. Specific behavior – what exactly are the class and the teaching doing at that moment.
   b. Environment – physical observations such as it is very quiet, its warm in here, its noisy, the lights are out, etc.
   c. Impression – your take on what is going on. For example, the students are all listening quietly, or they seem bored, or they are all fidgeting, or they seem engaged, or they are all actively participating in the group activity.
4) Be sure to interview the teacher at the end of the day.
5) Be sure to record your impressions of the day.
6) Mail the folder to me with the needed information in it.

APPENDIX C
Administrative Letter

Teresea Baumann
1177 Arkansas Drive
Xenia, Ohio 45385

December 2, 2003

Dear Administrator:

My name is Teresea Baumann, and I am presently working on a thesis project in order to complete my master's degree at Cedarville University in Cedarville, Ohio. I also teach sixth grade at Dayton Christian Schools. For my project I am doing a qualitative study of the methods of organizing and teaching middle grades in a cross section of Christian schools.

I have asked Cedarville undergraduate students to assist me in the gathering of data for this project. All Cedarville undergraduate education majors are required to spend a week observing and assisting in a Christian school of their choice. Many of these students choose to do this observation in their home town. Since Cedarville Students come from all over the country to attend Cedarville, having these students gather data for me as one the days of their observation should allow me to gather a varied cross section of data.

All information gathered by these students will be confidential. In the reporting of the findings of the study, no names of schools will be stated. All that will be given will be size and organization of the school.

The Cedarville students have been asked to be assigned a random student or a teacher that they can shadow for the day. Throughout the day they will be noting what the student or teacher is doing at 5-7 minute intervals. For the quality of the research, it would be best that the student or teacher not know that the Cedarville student is shadowing them. At the end of the day, the Cedarville student will need to have around twenty minutes to interview the teacher that they have been shadowing. If they have been shadowing a student, they will be sending home a permission slip to the parent of the student at the end of the day to ask if they may briefly interview the student the next day. The goal of the research will be to compare and contrast the life of a middle school student in a Christian school to similar studies that have been done on public school students.

In order to understand the types of schools used in the research, I would like the administrator of the middle grades to fill out the attached survey. If your school is interested in the findings of my study, I would be willing to send you a copy of my completed thesis.

Very little data on the handling of middle school students in Christian schools exists. This is an exciting opportunity to examine practices in a number of different schools. I would just like to thank you for being willing to participate in this study. I also understand if you do not wish to participate in this study. If you have any additional questions about the nature of the study, please feel free to email me at tbaumann@daytonchristian.com.

Sincerely yours,

Mrs. Teresea L. Baumann

Administrative Survey

Please answer the following questions about your school.

1. Which statement best describes the size of your school?
    a. Small – less than 100 students
    b. Medium – between 100 to 400 students
    c. Large – more than 400 students

2. Which statement describes the grade levels served by your school?
    a. Kindergarten – 6
    b. Kindergarten – 8
    c. Kindergarten – 12
    d. Grades 5 – 8
    e. Grades 6 – 8
    f. Grades 7 – 12
    g. Other _____

3. Which of the following statements would describe the level of diversity in your school?
    a. More than 90% white, less than 10% non-white
    b. 80% white, 20% non-white
    c. 70% white, 30% non-white
    d. 50% white, 50% non-white
    e. 40% white, 60% non-white
    f. Less than 30% white, more than 70% non-white

4. Which of the following statements would best describe your school structure for the middle grades?
    a. Grades K-6th are considered elementary grades and grades 7-12 are considered secondary grades
    b. Grades K-4th are elementary, grades 5-8 are middles school, grades 9-12 are high school
    c. Grades K-5th are elementary, grades 6-8 are middle school, and grades 9-12 are high school
    d. Grades K-8th are elementary, grades 9-12 are high school
    e. Other _____

5. Do all grades of your school meet in the same building? Circle one. Yes or no.

6. If all of your grades do not meet in one building, how are they divided among buildings? _____
_____.

7. How many years has your school been in existence? _____

8. Which of the following statements best describe the assignment of teachers in your school?
   a. Teachers may be assigned to teach classes in a variety of grades from 6-12th grade.
   b. Teachers are only assigned to teach grades 9-12 or are only assigned to teach grades 6-8.
   c. Teachers in grades 5-8 have self-contained classrooms in which the students do not switch teachers for various classes

9. How many of your teachers in the middle grades have special training of licensure in that level of teaching?
   a. Almost all have specific training
   b. Some have specific training
   c. Few have specific training
   d. None have specific training

10. Which statement best describes how your school handles the transition from elementary grades to secondary grades?
    a. Students are gradually introduced to have more than one teacher and specific things are done to help them adjust.
    b. Students go from having one teacher to having several without much specific preparation for that change.

11. If you chose (a.) in number 10, briefly describe some of the things that your school does to ease the adjustment to multiple teachers and classes. _____
_____
_____

12. What is the overall attitude of the faculty toward the middle grades in your school? _____

13. Is there anything that you personally would like to see changed about the way that your school handles the middle grades?
_____
_____
_____

14. Is there anything that your school does for students in the middle grades that you feel makes your program for those grades particularly strong? _____
_____

Thank you so much for taking the time to fill out this survey.

Research Procedures for Shadowing a Teacher or a Student

Research Procedures for Shadowing a Teacher

1. Ask your administrator to be assigned to one teacher for the whole day.
2. Follow this teacher throughout the day. Do not tell them that you are recording what they are doing at intervals all day to help the validity of your observations.
3. Be willing to help them with tasks, but stress that it is important that you be in the room observing for the entire day. Try to avoid doing tasks that take you out of the classroom for large blocks of time.
4. Observe the teacher even during his or her preparation periods and lunch break.
5. Write down what the teacher is doing, the environment, and your impression of what is going on every 5 to 7 minutes.
6. At the end of the day, interview the teacher.
7. At the end of the day, be sure to reflect on your impressions of the day. Fill out the end of the day survey for yourself.

Research Procedures for Shadowing a Student

1. Ask to randomly be assigned a student that you can shadow for the day.
   - If students are numbered in a class, choose a random number. If they are not numbered than choose a letter of the alphabet, and take the first student whose last name starts with that letter.
   - Ask the administrator or school secretary to help with this rather than the teacher.
   - If possible, for the quality of the research, it is better if the teacher(s) do not know that you are specifically shadowing a student.
   - Be sure that it is okay to pull the student out for a 10-20 minute end of the day survey. Find out a good place to use to conduct your interview.
2. Get a copy of that students schedule for the day and directions to where you will first find them.
3. Discretely follow them throughout the day. Jot down observations of what they are doing every 5 to 7 minutes. This includes following them to special classes and to the cafeteria at lunch.
4. If students ask why you are there, just tell them that you are doing observations in a Christian school for your university requirements.
5. You should still be able to do tasks for the teacher. Just remember to stop and record the specific behavior, environment, and your impression every 5 to 7 minutes.
6. Near the end of the day, ask to take the student you have been shadowing out of class for an interview.
7. At the end of the day, be sure to reflect on your impressions of the day. Fill out the end of the day survey for yourself.

Observation Form

Time	Specific Behavior at 5-7 Minute Intervals	Environment	Impression-Comment

Permission Slip

Dear Parent,

Your son or daughter has randomly been chosen to participate in a qualitative study of how middle grade education is handled in Christian schools. A Cedarville University student who is observing in your school this week would like permission to briefly interview your son or daughter about his or her middle school experience. The interview will be very general and will only take 10-15 minutes. The student's name will not be included with the data from the interview. The name of the school will not be used either in this study.

Thank you for your help in this matter.

Yours in Christ,

Teresea Baumann

_____ I give permission for my son or daughter to be interviewed by a Cedarville University student.

_____ I do not want my son or daughter to be interviewed.

_____
Parent or Guardian Signature

Please return this slip to school tomorrow.

Teacher Interview at the End of the Day

1. Tell me about yourself.

2. How did you decide to become a teacher?

3. What do like best about this school?

4. How do you feel about the quality of instruction that students receive at this school?

5. Do you work with other teachers in the planning of instruction for the students?

6. Do you allow the students to have any control over what they will learn about in your class?

7. Do you feel that most students have an adult at the school that they can talk to if they have problems or concerns to deal with?

8. How do feel about the overall discipline at your school?

9. How do you feel about the involvement and support of the parents at this level of the school?

10. If there were anything about your school that you could change, what would it be?

11. How do you feel about the extracurricular activities that are offered for students in middle grades at your school?

12. Do you have any additional comments that you would like to make?

Student Interview at the End of the Day

1. Tell me about yourself.

2. What is the best thing about your school?

3. Is there anything about your school that you would change?

4. How do you feel about the quality of education that you receive at your school?

5. If you have a problem, do you feel that there is someone in your school that you can go to for help?

6. Do you feel like you are active in the activities of your classroom?

7. Does your school provide sports, clubs, or activities after school or on weekends?

8. How do you feel about the overall discipline of your school?

9. How do the students in your school treat each other?

10. What do you think makes your school different from other schools in the area?

11. Do you have any additional comments about your school?

End of the Day Reflections of the Researcher

1. What is your overall impression of the day?

2. Was the day different than you expected?

3. Did you go to this school when you were in the middle grades? If so, what has changed or what has not changed?

4. What is your feeling about the kind of education students are receiving in the middle grades at this school?

5. What did you observe about the attitudes of the students and teachers at the school?

6. What impression did you get about the atmosphere at the school?

7. Do you have any additional comments about the day?

Chart of Activities Observed

	Working on an Independent Assignment	Silent Reading	Group Reading Together	Lecture/Notes	Teacher Led Discussion	Teacher Led Review	Class game	Cooperative Learning Activity	Class Grading Papers
1									
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									
7									
8									
9									
10									
11									
12									
13									
14									
15									
16									
17									
18									

Chart of Activities Continued

	Lunch, Snack, Break time, or Recess	Teacher Prepar-ation Time	Dealing w/a Discipline Problem	Transition Times	Watching a Video	Student Present-ations	Students Doing Work on the board	Prayer or Devotions	Chapel or Program Practice	Total Observations
1										
2										
3										
4										
5										
6										
7										
8										
9										
10										
11										
12										
13										
14										
15										
16										
17										
18										

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