

## AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF

Kathleen D. Hanneman for the degree Doctor of Education in Education. Presented on April 1, 1997. Title: Middle School Change: A Process for Restructuring in a Large School District.

Abstract approved: \_\_\_\_\_ *Redacted for Privacy* \_\_\_\_\_

Joanne B. Engel

This qualitative study examined organizational change including the necessary steps that a large school district took in planning and implementing a reform effort. This project told a story of one school district's experience.

The study covered a five year period from 1990 to 1995 in the 30,000 student Salem-Keizer School District of Salem, Oregon. The examination included a description of school board action in 1989 where a staff recommendation to reform middle schools and move sixth graders to middle schools with a seven-eight grade configuration was denied. The study then continued with an examination of the change process during which sixth graders were moved to middle schools, reforms were implemented, three new schools were opened and five schools were remodeled to accommodate the new programs. This reform, however, was not without problems. Those issues were discussed in the study.

The retrospective part of the study reflected upon the project through the analysis of district documents and the results of nine field interviews of middle

school principals using a set of seven questions designed to reveal the principals' perceptions of the process. The study then triangulated the results of the interviews by examining information from a focus group comprised of Salem-Keizer curriculum directors and staff development specialists who were asked the same seven questions. The study answered the questions: "Did the district do what the community asked it to do in creating middle schools that afford students a more effective educational program?" and "What are the implications for the district in undertaking a major reform effort?"

Themes that emerged from the study included the following: organizational change is highly personalized; change should have a literature and research foundation; stakeholders must participate in the change process; communication must be consistent and must be "two way"; one person must be the individual in charge of the change; a change process requires vigilance, constant reevaluation and refinement; staff development is crucial in a change process; and if a district wants new thinking, then new people must help in organization change.

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Middle School Change:  
A Process for Restructuring in a Large School District  
by  
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I understand that my dissertation will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my dissertation to any reader upon request.

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Kathleen D. Hanneman, Author

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This thesis is dedicated to my husband,  
Craig, my children, Molly, Paul, and  
Annie and my parents, Joe  
and Ruth Davin.

# **Middle School Change: A Process for Restructuring in a Large School District**

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1 Problem Perspective:**

Middle school reform efforts began in the Salem-Keizer School District in Salem, Oregon in 1972 as student enrollment began to exceed school capacities and district officials began to consider the best educational environment for young adolescents. By 1976 all of the six junior high schools which housed grades seven, eight, and nine were seriously overcrowded.

Simultaneously the district began to examine and analyze young adolescent needs. Thus, issues of overcrowding, adolescent development and educational reform became mixed and contributed to a decision to restructure middle schools and move all ninth graders to high schools in 1979. Six junior high schools remained and housed grades seven and eight.

In 1986 new, district wide adopted middle school standards prompted a need to enhance programs to meet these standards. A survey and evaluation of these standards was administered in 1987 and the results were submitted to the school board in 1988. Reforms began, however, to be affected by another, serious overcrowding problem in the district. Buildings at elementary, middle, and high school levels were “over capacity” and the district began to consider moving a grade level to achieve more stability.

As discussions were occurring, Turning Points (1989) was released and became part of the thinking about enhanced middle school education. The district central office administrators began meeting with middle school principals to craft a recommendation related to both the reform issue and the space issue. The principals felt the move of sixth graders to middle schools would create a better environment for these students. This decision was made quickly and was prompted by severe overcrowding at many of the 36 elementary schools.

On November 28, 1989, a proposal for middle school change was presented to the school board. Angry parental testimony accompanied the presentation. Most parents at the meeting vehemently opposed the move of sixth graders to middle school. I was a middle school principal at the time and sat with other principals listening to the intense parent testimony which was one hundred percent against the proposal. As a result, the school board had no choice but to reject the total reform package. The board, in turn, directed the superintendent to study the middle school issue, including the grade configuration question (i.e., Do sixth graders move?) and return with a more substantial recommendation on middle school education. The board asked for community input before any recommendation came back to them. It was obvious that public input and support was lacking and the board was forced to reject the proposal to move sixth graders. This issue also helped contribute to the superintendent's decision to reorganize. He decided to eliminate five central office positions and create five area director positions, each with a regional responsibility in addition to other responsibilities.

This dissertation is a chronicle of the five year process in Salem-Keizer from 1990 to 1995 which started with the November 1989 school board directive and eventually led to the move of 2,000 sixth graders into newly configured middle schools consisting of grades six, seven and eight, the opening of three new schools and the remodeling of five middle schools.

The following is a historical time line which begins in 1972 and ends with a planned opening of the last new middle school in 1997.

**Table 1.1**

<b>HISTORICAL OVERVIEW - Middle School Education Salem-Keizer Public Schools Salem, Oregon</b>	
1972	The student enrollment exceeded 1,100 at four of the six junior high schools.
1976-77	The District's six junior high schools had "over capacity" enrollments, grades seven to nine.
1976-78	The District analyzed mid-level educational needs.
1977	<p>Phase I - The District, with community and staff involvement, researched the appropriateness of the middle school concept.</p> <p>Phase II - The District involved community members and staff in identifying the characteristics of middle school students.</p>
1978	Phase III - The District, through the involvement of community members and parents, developed reports for a) curriculum, b) students needs, c) student activities, d) community relations.
1978	The School Board adopted Phase III of the middle school report, which included the middle school philosophy. District-wide, middle school educational planning occurred during 1978-79.

Table 1.1, Continued

1978-79	Due to overcrowding at Whiteaker Middle School, 200 9th graders attended McNary High School. Judson 9th graders attended Sprague High School.
1979-1980	The middle school concept was implemented in the six middle schools which changed the grade configuration from grades 7-8-9 to grades 7-8.
1986-87	Middle School Standards were established as minimum requirements for all middle schools.
1987	<i>Caught in the Middle</i> was released by the California State Department of Education. This report had an important impact on middle level thinking in Salem-Keizer.
1987-88	Surveys were administered to students, parents, and staff regarding the current status of middle schools in light of the recently established middle school standards.
April 1988	An evaluation report on the middle school standards and results from the survey process was compiled.
June 1989	<i>Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century</i> , released by the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development impacted the thinking and planning in Salem-Keizer.
November 1989	District staff received direction from the School Board to review the middle school concept in response to current research, educational need and grade configuration after rejecting a staff developed proposal to move sixth graders to middle schools.
June 1990	The superintendent initiated Phase I of the Middle School Planning Process.
1990	The Middle School Improvement Process was initiated involving staff, parents, and community members.
1991	Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century (House Bill 3565) was passed by the Oregon Legislature. The goal of this bill was to provide a restructuring vision for elementary and secondary schools.



**Table 1.1, Continued**

December 10, 1991	The Middle School Improvement Process Recommendations were approved by the School Board after extensive public hearings and public input.
January 1992	District staff used recommendations to develop bond measures to go to Salem-Keizer voters to build and remodel middle schools.
March 1992	\$92 million bond was approved by voters to build four new middle schools and remodel five existing schools.
January 1993	Action Plan was produced by staff and brought to School Board. This served as a blueprint for activities related to Middle School Improvement Process Recommendations.
January 1993	Oregon Department of Education submitted Middle level Task Force Report to Oregon Legislature. Salem-Keizer uses this report in their work.
1993-94	Salem-Keizer's Middle School Implementation Committee used Action Plan to address recommendations.
1994	The Progress Report was given to the School Board to explain planning.
1995-96	Three new middle schools were opened, five were remodeled, 2,000 sixth graders were moved to newly reformed middle schools for a grade six, seven, eight configuration.
1996-97	Middle school programs scheduled for implementation at nine schools.
1997-98	Leslie Middle School is scheduled to open to sixth, seventh, and eighth graders.

**Table 1.1 Historical Overview - Middle School Education, Salem-Keizer Public Schools, Salem, Oregon.**

## **1.2 The Setting**

In the Salem-Keizer District teachers, other school staff administrators, parents, and community leaders examined the research on middle schools, attended state and national conferences, and visited model middle schools in an attempt to craft the recommendations for the school board. These groups knew that reform efforts had to be tailored to the district. Our school district was located in a state capital, meaning that educators lived in a political “fishbowl” where all movements were visible. Opinions appeared strong because the community was comprised of opinion-makers and people who advanced political ideas. The positive effect of working in this type of community is that our district has active, intelligent community members to engage in committee work. The negative side is that sometimes people are politically motivated and the opposition gets more headlines than do supporters.

The Salem-Keizer School District is also very diverse; over twenty languages are spoken by students. Differences exist in the socio-economic composition of the community. Some of the state’s most impoverished schools as well as some of the state’s wealthiest schools are part of the district. This diversity affords students a rich opportunity to understand each other; however, it also provides challenges. As we tried to implement a single reform effort with a clear set of goals, we came to understand, as this research will later point out, that different middle schools had different needs.

Our school district was also committed to a belief that middle school students should have equal resources. This philosophy, held strongly by our superintendent

and board, resulted in schools in impoverished areas receiving more staff and material resources at times. The staff solidly supported this position.

Another factor that makes Salem-Keizer one of the most unique districts in the country is that according to state law many major correctional and mental health institutions are located in the city area. Since the state correctional facilities are a highly visible part of the community, I believe that the educational system sometimes comes second. Increasingly, the public appears more concerned about crime, safety and protection than about issues like middle school reform. More articles and letters to the editor to major newspapers in Salem and Keizer deal with the former issues. Reforms cost money, but if money has to go toward prisons, education falls short. A major issue throughout the middle school improvement process was a shortage of resources.

Finally, the Salem-Keizer District, like many districts in Oregon, is geographically diverse, spanning rural and urban populations. In seeking consensus on reform issues, a difference often exists between these two groups. Often their expectations differ regarding schools and change issues. As the middle school improvement process was undertaken, many elements were considered as committees developed, hearings were scheduled, and needs established.

### **1.3 Researcher as Participant Observer**

In January, 1990, I was appointed the South Area Director which was a central office position with a regional responsibility for the district's south area. I was also given the assignment of coordinating middle schools, which included the

unenviable task of leading the middle school study which was directed by the School Board in November of 1989. I was asked to develop the middle school improvement process, determine whether sixth graders should be moved to middle schools, design recommendations for the school board, and most importantly, ascertain that the district had sufficient staff and community support in order to proceed. I took the assignment with hesitation. I called colleagues in other districts who had been engaged in similar projects. All of them attempted to dissuade me. Many had experienced such fierce political opposition that they ended up with a variety of professional problems. However, I felt I could learn from the challenge if I entered the leadership role expecting success. At the same time, knowing that the project might fail, I realized that I would not be devastated. It was, after all, a reform effort most districts across the U.S. were undertaking.

I believed that I had opportunities that prepared me for this undertaking. I had spent seven years as a middle school teacher in grades six, seven, eight in Bethel Park, Pennsylvania. As a beginning teacher in 1971, I was on a design team to help write the specifications for a new middle school; little did I know I would use this knowledge as an administrator twenty years later. Also, I taught in an "open plan" middle school in England in the summer of 1973. This school had no walls and it had open planning among teachers. In 1977 to 1980, I served as a teacher and principal of Hillcrest School of Oregon. It is the state's correctional, residential, co-educational facility for felons ages twelve to eighteen years old. This role helped me to understand the importance of collaboration in working with staff and students, as well as how to diffuse anger. This experience also showed me how matching

appropriate programs to student needs, even when students have failed repeatedly can lead to student success in such areas as reading comprehension. All of these bits of experience would later augment my middle school work. Finally, before working as an area director, I served as principal of McNary High School from 1981 to 1987, temporary principal at Walker Middle School in 1987, and principal of Judson Middle School from 1988 to 1990. These principalships which I requested contributed to my operational knowledge of Salem-Keizer's teacher, student, and parent organizations.

Training also proved to be of great benefit. From 1981 to 1995, I participated in the Oregon Leadership Academy, a series of seminars sponsored by the Confederation of Oregon School Administrators, focusing mainly on school reform research. These sessions created a network of educators who engaged in discussion and collaboration related to the implementation of school improvement efforts. Through this academy, I met Peter Senge and a number of other nationally recognized writers on the process of instituting change to create more effective educational programs. Graduate school course work helped me form a research base for my work. Many of the classes afforded a foundation for application to public school systems. Course work also offered a respite from the crisis-driven, emotion-laden nature of today's school system. Another facet of training which helped me write the design for the Middle School Improvement Process was the "training of trainers" program I participated in under the tutelage of University of Oregon faculty members Steve Goldschmidt and Kate Dixon in 1988. This training focused on strategic planning in school districts. I was trained as a consultant and

the training was valuable in my role. Also, I received training under Vicki Willis of the Northwest Institute in 1994 in “Key Skills for Facilitators,” “Facilitating Challenging Situations,” “Large Group Designs,” and “Facilitation Skills for Educators.” These sessions helped me through the last phase of the Middle School Improvement Process as I had to use group process and problem solving skills to help move the district to final recommendations for the school board.

The combination of my training, experience and graduate course work proved beneficial to the design and ultimate implementation of the middle school reform effort in Salem-Keizer from 1990 to 1995.

#### **1.4 Problem Statement:**

The purpose of this study was to examine retrospectively the process of organizational change during a period of rapid middle school reform in a large school district located in the state capital with a strong history of parental involvement in the state capital.

## **Chapter 2: Methodology**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The design employed in this study is qualitative research. Strauss and Corbin (1990) define qualitative research as “any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification. It can refer to research about...organizational function.” (p. 17)

This study examined organizational functioning and the way that change occurred in one organization during a five year period. Even though “there is no one route all schools will follow.” (Conley, 1993).

The methodology for the study reflected the five features identified by Bogdan and Biklen (1992).

- Qualitative research has the natural setting as the direct source of data and the researcher is the key instrument.
- Qualitative research is descriptive.
- Qualitative researchers are concerned with process rather than simply outcomes or products.
- Qualitative researchers tend to analyze their data inductively.
- “Meaning” is of essential concern to the qualitative approach. (pp. 29-32)

In this study, I served as a participant in a school district's process to implement a change to a middle school model in concert with current research about effective middle schooling. The study attempted to derive meaning from retrospective reflections as I asked interviewees to “make sense” of the process. The study employed three phases in an examination of Salem-Keizer's Middle School Improvement Process.

1. A content analysis of the documents produced by the school district over the five year period. I took notes on consistencies and inconsistencies and looked for major themes and issues.
2. A set of two interviews each for the ten middle school principals in the district. The first interview was preliminary to explain the process; the second interview involved my asking a series of seven open-ended questions to each principal. These interviews lasted between one and two hours. The second interview was designed to elicit perceptions about the process. These individual interviews were designed to elicit major themes.
3. A focus group which consisted of two central office curriculum directors and two staff development specialists, all whom had been heavily involved in the process. The focus group was asked the same seven questions as the principals. The focus group lasted two hours. The last phase also was designed to elicit major themes and to determine if the perceptions of the focus group matched the perceptions of the principals.

## **2.2 Subjects**

All of the subjects were selected because they had rich histories in the field of middle school education. All had also demonstrated considerable influence with staff and parent groups. All participants had at least ten years of experience in middle school education. All participants had served as middle school teachers at one time.



### **2.3 Research Instrument**

The following set of questions was asked of all participants:

1. Please describe your role in Salem-Keizer's Middle School Improvement Process.
2. As you reflect upon the process, do you believe we as a district followed our process? Did we do what teachers, parents, the school board and others asked us to do?
3. Did we follow the eight tenets of Turning Points (Carnegie Council, 1989) which were used as a philosophical base for the process?
4. What has been improved or refined in the process?
5. What is left to accomplish?
6. What have we learned?
7. If we were to design and implement this process again, to what elements should we pay particular attention?

The use of the interviews assisted in the understanding of the process of organizational change being studied. The use of the focus group triangulated the results with documents - 1991 to 1995, interviews, and focus group. Finally, the use of the literature and documents afforded a foundation on which the study was built.

### **2.4 Procedure**

All subjects were contacted by telephone and participated in either a preliminary interview or focus group. The individual interviews were conducted first

and the focus group followed. At the beginning of each interview and the focus group, I read the informed consent document and each participant signed a consent form. (see Appendix A)

## **2.5 Role of Researcher**

I served as both a participant and an observer during this process. The role carries with it both positive and negative elements. On the positive side, I knew many details of the organizational change process; I had much more information than I could use. On the negative side, as a participant, there might be a perception of bias or ownership. I worked very hard to examine this process objectively; nevertheless, this is a tracking of an experience from my point of view.

## Chapter 3: An Analysis of the Journey

### **3.1 Antecedent Years**

The introduction to this study includes a time line (pp. 3 - 5) to help frame the process chronologically. Prior to 1989 middle school education received much attention both because of reform concerns and because of space issues. The first middle school study occurred from 1976 to 1978 and in 1979 reforms were implemented and ninth graders were moved to high schools.

During the 1980's discussions and refinement of middle school education continued. Teachers and principals relied on authors such as Beane and Lipka (1986) and Johnson and Markle (1986) to design improvements. An especially important document proved to be California's landmark Caught in the Middle: Educational Reform for Young Adolescents in California Public Schools (1987). This document provided staff with a strong framework for restructuring middle schools.

It also provided an excellent foundation of research for Salem-Keizer's Middle School Improvement Process. This document clearly described the kinds of programs needed during early adolescence. Core curriculum, communication and character development were key components. Student potential was also addressed with emphasis on academic counseling, equal access, diversity, at-risk students and physical/emotional development.

One of the sections of the document which was used with parent and teacher committees was Part Five which dealt with leadership and partnership and how

parents, communities and school boards need to work together to implement middle school reform.

Considerable staff support existed for continuing to examine and enhance middle school education. The middle school principals in 1989 worked as a group to design the proposal to go to the School Board which called for further reforms and the movement of sixth graders to middle schools. This proposal was not accompanied by public hearings on the level of parent support that was part of the later proposals.

I was principal of Judson Middle School at the time and was involved in the planning. As mentioned before in this study, when parents heard about the move of sixth graders, they showed up in a large group at the board meeting on November 28, 1989 and soundly spoke against any changes in middle schools. The School Board, after the angry testimony, took a recess and came back and voted to put the matter on hold while middle school education was analyzed and public input was sought.

This board direction launched the five year Middle School Improvement Process. I received the assignment to coordinate the project because the district felt a current administrator might be able to organize the necessary public hearings easier than an outside facilitator. I worked with principals and other staff; we all agreed to base our process on the principles from Turning Points (1989).

Turning Points published by the Carnegie Council Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents, (1989) suggested that the goal of the middle years is to develop an adolescent who is:

- An intellectually reflective person;
- A person en route to a lifetime of meaningful work;
- A good person;
- A caring and ethical individual; and
- A healthy person (pg. 15)

The Carnegie Council (1989) reported that the transformation process necessary for education to achieve these goals involved eight essential principles:

- Create small communities for learning, where stable, close and mutually respectful relationships with adults and peers are considered fundamental for intellectual development and personal growth. The key elements of these communities are schools with schools or “houses” students and teachers grouped together as teams, and small-group advisories that ensure that every student is known well by at least one adult.
- Teach a core academic program that results in students who are literate, including in the sciences, and who know how to think critically, lead a healthy life, behave ethically, and assume the responsibilities of citizenship in a pluralistic society. Youth service to promote values for citizenship is an essential part of the core academic program.
- Ensure success for all students through elimination of tracking by achievement level and promotion of cooperative learning , flexibility in arranging instructional time, and adequate resources (time, space, equipment, and materials) for teachers.
- Empower teachers and administrators to make decisions about the experiences of middle grade students through creative control by teachers over the instructional program. This control is linked to greater responsibilities for students’ performance, governance, committees that assist the principal in designing and coordinating school-wide programs, and autonomy and leadership with sub schools or houses to create environments tailored to enhance the intellectual and emotional development of all youth.
- Staff middle grade schools with teachers who are expert at teaching young adolescents and who have been specially prepared for assignment to the middle grades.

- Improve academic performance through fostering the health and fitness of young adolescents by providing a health coordinator in every middle school, access to health care and counseling services, and health-promoting school environment.
- Reengage families in the education of young adolescents by giving families meaningful roles in school governance, communicating with families about the school program and students' progress, and offering families opportunities to support the learning process at home and at school.
- Connect school with communities, which together share responsibility for each middle grade student's progress, through identifying service opportunities in the community, establishing partnerships and collaborations to ensure students' access to healthy social services, and using community resources to enrich the instructional program and opportunities for constructive after-school activities. (pg. 36 to 71)

The Salem-Keizer School District used these eight essential principles as keystones to the Middle School Improvement Process. Multiple copies of Turning Points were purchased for teachers, parents and administrators to study as committee work began in 1990. These eight principles also served as topics for staff development sessions led by educators, parents and community personnel. The District believed that the strategic planning effort should be research based and the document provided a philosophical base for the project.

### **3.2 Impact of Reform Literature**

For this first document which chronicled the beginning of the process, Turning Points (1989) was the key document used. The book gave committee members a foundation from which to work.

### **3.3 Impact of Change Literature**

Staff relied on change literature and outside consultants to help craft the process. Fullan (1991) mapped the stages in a change process from initiation to outcome. He discussed the significance of access to information as well as the advocacy of central administrators, teachers, and the general community. He emphasized the importance of “relevance, readiness and resources” (p. 63) in planning for adoption of a change. These issues were critical in Salem-Keizer’s process. He also described the factors which affect the implementation of a change process, especially the practicality and complexity of the project. He spent time on what he terms “local factors” (p. 73) in which he views the social conditions which affect change, the current activities and events occurring in a school system which might make a change process work well in one system and poorly in another. The nature of the district, the school board, the community, the principal and the teachers as well as the external factors of the United States and state governments must be considered for successful implementation of a change process in a school system.

Some of Fullan’s (1991) key themes in the implementational process (pp. 80-88) include vision-building, evolutionary planning, initiative-taking and empowerment, staff development, resource assistance monitoring and finally restructuring after the change. He viewed staff development as a very powerful tool in implementing a systemic change process (pp. 319-344).

Fullan (1991) called change “a very personal experience in a social, but often impersonal, setting” (p. 350). People who are a vital part of an organization should

behave differently after a change process is implemented and that behavior should become a collective response where a social system, a school district, delivers education in a new and hopefully, a more effective way, thus improving student learning. This was the goal of the Salem-Keizer process.

Schlechty (1990) also discussed the need to view the entire system when undertaking a school reform process. Schlechty described the organizational culture in terms of its systems of meaning, value, belief and knowledge. In a change process, therefore, educators must pay close attention to all of these elements.

Schlechty emphasized that schools first need to examine their purpose, their values and commitments. He said, "the purpose one assumes an organization serves shapes the way in which organizational leaders envision their organization goes a long way to explain the structures they create and the solutions they support and pursue." (p. 8) Thus, before districts plunge into reform movements, educators need to stop and consider their purpose, not necessarily their past purpose but their present and future purpose. In the Salem-Keizer plan, an attempt was made to look at the new, emerging needs of adolescents and the cultural context in which the school improvement plan needed to take shape.

Schlechty also discussed the need to pay attention to "rules, roles and relationships and in the system of beliefs and values that give meaning to these structures." (p. 83) Change must meet the needs of the constituents; teachers and school staff must be committed to the reforms and must be willing to volunteer their time, talent and energy.



Schlechty proposed the following five essential functions for systemic change to occur:

First, the nature of the change must be conceptualized. Second, people who are going to be called on to support the change but who were not involved in the conceptualization process must be made aware of the change. Third, feedback from those who were not involved in the initial conceptualization but who will be called on for support must be solicited and, where possible and appropriate, incorporated into the change process. Fourth, activity to implement the change must begin, and people must be motivated to act in directions indicated by the change. Fifth, a system of ongoing support and training must be provided for those who are being asked to support the change. (pp. 97-98)

The reader will note in this study that research revealed that Schlechty's fifth essential function, ongoing support and training, proved to be the weakest component in Salem-Keizer's middle school improvement effort.

Bolman and Deal (1987) afford a number of cautions as organizations undertake complex change and they emphasized that an understanding of organizational cultures and behaviors is crucial. The first caution is that flexibility is integral to finding new solutions as problems inevitably arise. Rigid patterns of behavior are counterproductive. The second pitfall is over responsiveness and appeasement. Often an organization attempting a change process tries to please

everyone and focus is lost. Finally, organizations are urged to remain committed to core beliefs and values shared by everyone.

Senge (1990) discussed systems thinking as the “fifth discipline”. The other four disciplines are personal mastery, mental models, shared vision and team learning. Senge believes that organizations need these five disciplines to enhance effectiveness and learning. This system thinking is a critical component of organizational change. Conley (1993, pp. 363-365) summarized Senge’s disciplines. These summary statements provide more guidance as schools consider reforms. Conley’s illustrations also help clarify and frame the disciplines in educational terms.

- *Today’s problems come from yesterday’s “solutions.”* One solution often simply shifts the problem from one point in the system to another where it goes undetected for a time. Many pullout programs in education, for example, have fallen prey to this law.
- *The harder you push, the harder the system pushes back.* This phenomenon, what Senge calls “compensating feedback,” occurs when a well-intentioned intervention causes system reactions that offset the benefit of the intervention. Class sizes may drop slightly, but teachers may have to assume other duties that offset any marginal advantage that accrues from the smaller class size.
- *Behavior grows better before it grows worse.* Many low-level interventions work in the short term, making them very attractive. However, they often lay the groundwork for more serious problems several years hence. A school

that adopts all the “latest” programs without much understanding or commitment so that it looks good and helps advance the careers of those who want to look “progressive” can actually end up worse off when teachers become disenchanted with what is expected of them, or the programs have unintended effects over the long run that cancel their short-term benefits.

- *The easy way out usually leads back in.* There is a tendency to select familiar solutions to problems, whether these solutions actually solve the problem or not. Constant revision of discipline and attendance systems in the hopes of eliminating undesirable behavior and absenteeism is an example. Rather than understanding why the behaviors occur and how the system could be altered to result in more of the desired behaviors, changes in known programs seems to be much simpler and more logical.
- *The cure can be worse than the disease.* Some “solutions” are not only ineffective, they are addictive and dangerous. They can result in dependent behaviors that foster increased dependence and decreased ability of people to solve their own problems. This is called “Shifting the Burden to the Intervenor.” The organization or agency becomes responsible for solving the clients’ problems. For example, short-term solutions that result in parents being asked to take less responsibility for the child’s education lead to a dependent relationship where parents come to expect the school to do many things it is incapable of doing. The proper role of the school and parents becomes the subject of serious misunderstandings.

- *Cause and effect are not closely related in time and space.* In complex human systems, the cause of a problem is often quite separate from the effect the problem has on the organization. In schools, problems from one grade level may not become apparent for several years. One bad secondary school teacher may be causing problems throughout the school for other faculty who have to deal with angry or disillusioned students as a result. A poor decision by a textbook selection committee has ramifications throughout the district for years.
- *Small changes can produce big results-but the areas of higher leverage are often the least obvious.* “Small, well-focused actions can sometimes produce significant, enduring improvements, if they’re in the right place,” Senge states. This is referred to as the principle of “leverage.” The only problem is that such responses are usually not obvious to most participants in the system. “There are no simple rules for finding high-leverage changes, but there are ways of thinking that make it more likely. Learning to see underlying ‘structures’ rather than ‘events’ is a starting point... Thinking in terms of processes of change rather than ‘snapshots’ is another.” Schools will have to learn to solve their problems by understanding what their problems really are and by identifying high-leverage responses.
- *You can have your cake and eat it too-but not at once.* Senge observes:

Sometimes, the knottiest dilemmas, when seen from the systems point of view, aren’t dilemmas at all. They are artifacts of “snapshot” rather than “process” thinking, and appear in a whole new light once you think consciously of change over time....

... Many apparent dilemmas, such as central versus local control, and happy committed employees versus competitive labor costs, and rewarding individual achievement versus having everyone feel valued are by-products of static thinking. They only appear as rigid “either-or” choices, because we think of what is possible at a fixed point in time. (pp. 65-66)

Education may be improved if educators come to understand that many of the either-or dilemmas they create can be resolved if they are reconceptualized in the context of systems thinking. Higher salaries/lower class size is an example of an insoluble dilemma that causes continuing frustration for those who believe the only answer is to do both simultaneously.

- *Dividing an elephant in half does not produce two small elephants.* Simply dividing an organization up into smaller units does not necessarily result in the integrity of purpose being retained. Separate schools tend over time to operate independently. People in schools rarely see the results of their work or notice how decisions they make affect others in the organization. Problems are left for others to solve or are not addressed in any systematic manner. Dividing the elephant can make it impossible to find the high-leverage points, since the system is incapable of responding as a system in any meaningful way.
- *There is no blame.* Educators have become all too practiced at displacing responsibility for their performance to others in the system and those outside the system. Systems thinking demands that this response stop and that examination of the total system replace the process of ritual blame.

This last law, the idea of giving up blame is important as organizational change is undertaken. As Conley and Senge suggest, an examination of the total system is very important. This could be viewed as a good first step in a major change process.

### **3.4 The Documents**

#### **3.4.1 Overview**

As a first step in this study, I compiled five documents which reflected the five years in the Middle School Improvement Process - 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994 and 1995. There is a document for each year; however, each of these documents looks quite different from the others. There are a variety of purposes and a variety of writers reflected in these documents. They do, nevertheless, portray the process accurately. Each document was written for the School Board by the staff. Any interested community members could obtain copies. Each document also reflects the major accomplishments related to middle school reform and communicated plans for the next year.

#### **3.4.2 Document 1 - 1991: "Learning in a Time of Change and Challenge"**

This first document began with an introduction from the superintendent. It was intended to communicate the importance of middle school reform and to relate this to the major strategic improvement project in the district. The intent of this

introduction was also to build support by stating that 137 parents, educators and community leaders were involved in the study of middle school education.

This document reflected the activity of the process during the period from January of 1990 to December of 1991. Essentially the nine months work of the following seven sub-committees culminated in a set of middle school recommendations which went to the school board on December 10, 1991. This was the most important part of this document. The duties of the seven sub-committees are presented in Table 3.1.

The 1991 document, includes the committee recommendations along with the names of committee members. We as a district believed that none of the chairpersons should be an administrator so the chairs included an architect, the YMCA Director for Salem, two parents, a child psychologist, a State Department of Education Assistant Superintendent and a facilitator from the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. A rationale for the recommendations accompanied the recommendations. In this document, the appendices were very important because they included middle school standards, philosophy, a time line, survey results and a historical overview of middle school education.

The document included the mission statement and listed all of the people involved in the planning. Each of the recommendations relating to middle school education was listed along with a rationale.

This document also included a short summary of each committee meeting as well as a summary of each visitation which committee members took to other middle schools in Oregon.

Table 3.1

Middle School Improvement Process 1990-1991	
<u>COMMITTEE CHARGES</u>	
STEERING COMMITTEE	
<p><b>Steering Committee:</b> The most important role of the Steering Committee was to take the recommendations of the planning committees and to assimilate them into a final recommendation to the Superintendent and School Board regarding the future of middle schools in the Salem-Keizer School District. The Steering Committee's "umbrella" function was also to include research of middle school literature.</p>	
PLANNING COMMITTEES	
<p><b>Communications Committee:</b> This committee accepted information from the Steering Committee and informed the public as to the status of middle school planning.</p>	
<p><b>Curriculum and Instruction Committee:</b> The Curriculum and Instruction Committee had two sub-committees, core curriculum (English, social studies, mathematics, PE, health, science, reading, etc.) and exploratory curriculum (all elective classes). This committee was charged with developing a recommendation regarding the total middle school curriculum and instruction program. The committee also determined the methods by which middle school curriculum should be taught. Instructional strategies such as teaming, grouping and direct instruction were examined. Middle school grade configurations were also studied and a recommendation regarding grade configurations was made. Grading and evaluation were also studied.</p>	
<p><b>Staffing Committee:</b> The Staffing Committee looked at the various aspects of staffing middle schools including issues such as certification, staff development, interdisciplinary teaming, and staff placement.</p>	
<p><b>Activities Committee:</b> The Activities Committee studied activity programs which enhanced the lives of middle school students. Clubs, intramural, athletics, special programs, community service, performances, music productions and student leadership programs were reviewed.</p>	
<p><b>Personal Development Committee:</b> The Personal Development Committee studied guidance, student services, student management programs, student advisory programs, Youth Service Teams, and alcohol programs.</p>	
<p><b>Facilities and Support Committee:</b> This committee studied middle school, non-instructional issues such as facilities, food service and transportation. This committee eventually designed the specifications for new and remodeled schools.</p>	

Table 3.1 Middle School Improvement Process 1990-1991



Each of the chairs of these sub-committees served on the Steering Committee to ensure good communication and continuity. These sub-committees each had to submit their work to the Steering Committee which assimilated the recommendations for the 1991 document which included a compilation of the recommendations. (See Appendix F) The purpose of the first document was to have a set of published, agreed-upon recommendations to go to the school board for approval on December 10, 1991. These recommendations were approved by the board, thus initiating the project. The document did contain the names of the 137 parents, educators and community leaders who participated in committee work and designed the recommendations.

The strengths of the document included the fact that the Middle School Improvement Process recommendations were tied to the school district's overall mission, goals and strategic planning and that monthly summaries of committee work were included as well as meeting calendars and time lines. There was documented evidence to support the recommendations of the committees. Also, the recommendations of Turning Points (1989) appeared to support the work.

The major weakness of the document laid in the nebulous nature of the language of the recommendations. This issue later haunted the process because clear directions were not given at the beginning. The most salient example of this problem laid in the Curriculum and Instruction Recommendations. The language was conceptual rather than concrete and reflected the compromises that occurred in the committees as a result of controversies. When teachers of various disciplines got together, the tendency for each to advance his or her own discipline took place.

Thus the music and language teachers debated with science or health teachers about which classes should be allocated which amount of time. The recommendations in this document were very general; however, the controversies that led to them were very detailed. The meeting minutes detailing the controversies are not in the document.

### **3.4.3 Document 2 - 1992 - “Middle School Educational Specifications”**

This document took the concepts from the 1991 document and used those concepts to design specifications for such middle school elements as “schools within a school” or “houses” with flexible walls, technology centers, special education areas and activity areas. The document relied on the middle school philosophy and goals of the district and again included the recommendations of Turning Points (1989). Unlike the first document this document was more linear and presented a clear picture of what middle school facilities needed. Architects served on the “Ed Specs” Committee and proved quite helpful. A particularly interesting section included floor plans and narrative descriptions of model Oregon middle schools visited by members of the committee. This document became the “bible” for the construction and remodeling process.

This document was co-authored by a project coordinator who was a former middle school principal and a consultant with a doctorate in school facilities. Turning Points (1989) served as a guiding document for this part of the project as the functions of a middle school were determined before the architectural specifications were written.

This 123 page document became very important to both the architects and the school board. The document included a complete description of ideal middle school requirements from the point of view of the committee which included architects and teachers. One of the most helpful sections is the school visitations summary which describes fifteen relatively new middle schools in Oregon which the committee visited.

This document was different from the other four in that it described buildings rather than programs. This document described the specific types of facilities the Salem-Keizer School District needed to support the new educational program. During this time frame the voters in Salem-Keizer approved a \$96 million bond, two-thirds of which was allocated to building four new middle schools and remodeling the other five, older middle schools.

The document listed the members of the Educational Specifications Committee who worked on the process, the district's mission statement and an introduction to the middle school improvement process. The majority of the document, approximately 80 pages, described the facility space needs and relationships needed to match buildings to middle school student needs. Each part of the school is covered in detail. The document also included floor plans of model middle schools in Oregon.

Upon reflection the strength of the middle school educational specifications document prepared mainly for the Planning, Construction and Property Management Department of the district was that it was very clearly written and tied to the goals of the first document. It also lucidly gave the best thinking of the

Educational Specifications Committee which had come out of their tours of relatively new Oregon middle schools. The document presented an ideal middle school model. The weakness of the document, however, was that it did not take into account reductions that would eventually need to be made due to budget limitations. In retrospect what occurred was that the four new schools built had to be “pared down” through a painful process using a two hour principals’ meeting. It might have been useful for this document to include a prioritized list of reductions that could be made to buildings, instead of providing merely a model template. It might also have provided a decision making model since we were not prepared or equipped to make cuts and this became a reality in the process. Conley (1993, pp. 386, 387) discussed education’s “declining resource base” and challenged educators “to ‘think outside of the box,’ to conceptualize new ways to organize or reallocate resources.” Limited resources are a reality in education.

#### **3.4.4 Document 3 - 1993 - “An Action Plan”**

After the March 1992 passage of the \$96 million bond to build and remodel schools set to open in 1995, the superintendent appointed a Middle School Implementation Committee consisting of thirty-three teachers, parents and other school staff to initiate the school board approved reforms. The process also involved four sub-committees in the areas of curriculum, instructional practices, school environment and staff development. The document, “An Action Plan” produced in 1993 was intended to give clear direction to the committees regarding the process of middle school reform. Turning Points (1989) and Caught in the

Middle (1987) helped in crafting the Action Plan. They are listed in the references section of the document. The “Middle level Task Force Report” (1992) from the Oregon State Department of Education was also used and related to the work during this year as the District was correlating efforts with the State of Oregon.

As the Action Plan was examined and the recommendations were becoming more focused, theories about how to successfully implement change became even more important. Fullan (1994) suggested eight lessons which educational reformers might note in considering the complexities of organizational change. He posited that “controlling strategies don’t work” (p. 19) because the change process is unpredictable and uncontrollable due to all of the forces for which one cannot plan. He discussed the ways in which policies are redefined, leaders leave, new technology emerges, resources become limited and conflict occurs.

In the Salem-Keizer process, school board members changed over the five years; principals and key teachers changed positions. New technological systems also became available at the time that Oregon’s Ballot Measure Five passed which limited the property taxes which fund education. Finally, in Salem-Keizer a conflict which Fullan alluded to erupted which sapped energy, time and resources from the reform plan. The school board selected site for a new middle school was challenged by a group of parents who felt it was too far from the former school site. This group filed a number of appeals to stop the construction of the new middle school on this site. The school is now under construction; however, strong feelings remain even today with respect to the original district decision to build a school on this particular site.

Fullan described the inevitability of a conflict such as the one mentioned when he set forth The Eight Basic Lessons of the New Paradigm of Change which he co-authored with Matt Miles (pp 21-41).

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### **The Eight Basic Lessons of the New Paradigm of Change**

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| Lesson One:   | You Can't Mandate What Matters<br>(The more complex the change the less you can force it)   |
| Lesson Two:   | Change is a Journey not a Blueprint<br>(Change is non-linear, loaded with uncertainty and excitement and sometimes is perverse)               |
| Lesson Three: | Problems are Our Friends<br>(Problems are inevitable and you can't learn without them)  |
| Lesson Four:  | Vision and Strategic Planning Come Later<br>(Premature visions and planning blind)  |
| Lesson Five:  | Individualism and Collectivism Must Have Equal Power<br>(There are no one-sided solutions to isolation and groupthink)                        |
| Lesson Six:   | Neither Centralization Nor Decentralization Works<br>(Both top-down and bottom-up strategies are necessary)                                   |
| Lesson Seven: | Connection with the Wider Environment is Critical for Success<br>(The best organizations learn externally as well as internally)              |
| Lesson Eight: | Every Person is a Change Agent<br>(Change is too important to leave to the experts, personal mind set and mastery is the ultimate protection) |

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(Fullen, 1994)

Fullan discussed in detail the requirements for a successful change process, especially the role of skills and motivation. He emphasized that blunt force will not work. As he said, "If there is one cardinal rule of change in human condition, it is that you cannot make people change." (p. 23) He suggested that skills, training and

staff development are critical components of the process. He said that the “acid test of productive change is whether individuals and groups develop skills and deep understandings in relation to new solutions.” (p. 24) Mandates do not work as well as skill development. Mandates are often seen by teachers as faddish and superficial. Fullan said that mandates must be used only as “catalysts to reexamine” (p. 24) what organizations are doing. In the eight lessons Fullan suggested that uncertainty is the norm; problems are inevitable; individuals must be valued as much as groups; and personal, individual change is the true path to systemic change.

The document, essentially, turned the board approved recommendations into goals. Each goal was explained and given a set of activities, a time line and any information about budget impact. As an example, under the goal of “Implement a strong curriculum supported by appropriate instructional practices,” one activity was “Document outstanding current practices (especially the use of projects, portfolios, and presentations). The time line was Winter/Spring 1993 and the budget impact was to pay for teacher release time. This document was clear, concise and readable. Goals were supported by committee meeting minutes which appeared in the Appendices of the report.

The weakness, however, of this phase, was not so much the construction of the document as the decision to separate into two major sub-committees: Curriculum and Instructional Practices.

This document which, again, began with a letter of support from the superintendent took nebulous recommendations from the 1991 document such as

“Implement a strong curriculum supported by appropriate instructional practices” and turned the recommendations into a clear set of objectives which included the person responsible for each objective; suggested activities to accomplish each objective; the time line in which the objective needed to be accomplished and the budget impact of each objective. This document was highly readable and detailed and gave “action plan time lines” to staff and parents so goals were clear. The document also included names of committee members, meeting minutes and information from the State Middle School Task Force.

#### **3.4.5 Document 4 - 1994 - “Progress Report”**

The 1994 document, “Progress Report” was simply an update for the school board, staff and parents about the status of the Middle School Improvement Process. Committee work from the groups formed in 1993 continued in preparation for a target of the 1995-96 school year. The document was broken into sections for each committee, background material and again, the summary of the Turning Points (1989) recommendations.

The 1994 document included a letter from the superintendent and was essentially a progress report which took the objectives imbedded in the 1993 document and afforded the community an update on the work accomplished to fulfill these objectives. The document was organized by committees - Curriculum, Instructional Practices, School Environment and Staff Development. A section also was included which described each goal, the essential indicator, the extent of implementation and whether any staff development was needed. One of the most



important aspects of this document was a glossary of middle level terms (see Appendix D).

The four subcommittees based their work on the tenets of Turning Points (1989). The staff development subcommittee even designed a series of eight voluntary sessions for teachers; each session focused on one of the principles of Turning Points (1989). Fullan (1994) talked of change in terms of it being a journey and this document truly was simply a “progress” update on the journey. He also spoke of “Every person being a change agent.” (1994). During this year and reflected in the fourth document is that belief. Many more teachers began to be involved in the process during this stage.

The strength of the document was that a reader could see evidence that change in thought was beginning to happen and school reform ideas were a real possibility. The major weakness in this document was that it appeared that three committees, Curriculum, Instructional Practices, and School Environment were all working and reporting on designs for interdisciplinary teaming. One subject- three committees. All three committees believed they had a vested interest in how interdisciplinary teaming ought to look. One committee thought the teaming ought to include more than one grade; another thought it ought to be limited to, for example, sixth grade. As part of the process committees gave reports to an Implementation Committee which met monthly. It was this committee which resolved the issue by stating that interdisciplinary teaming was a goal that would be left to individual school site committees to implement. For this reason the next

document, the 1995 “Summary Report” is the first document to show quite a bit of differences among the schools.

This document was widely disseminated to staff and parent groups after being received by the school board. This dissemination helped communicate the process. I made over forty presentations both inside the district to staff and parent groups and to external groups such as the Oregon Middle Level Association and I used this document to assist me.

#### **3.4.6 Document 5 - 1995 - “Summary Report”**

This document published in May 1995 reviewed the work from district driven committees and reflected the planning done by the nine individual school planning teams. The intent was for this document to be utilized during the 1995-96 academic year as initial middle school reform efforts were implemented. Each of the nine schools used the 1994-95 year to make final preparations for the launching of a new middle school model and the opening of new and remodeled schools in the 1995-96 school year.

Each section began with a piece of student art work from the school or area being described in that section. Transition activities were communicated and reflected back to board-approved recommendations and Turning Points (1989) principles. This document also contained references to the Oregon Middle Level Task Force work as do the other documents. It is important to note that this district effort was in relation to reforms occurring statewide in Oregon.

This final document was the most extensive with 129 pages. The document began with a message from the superintendent and the district's mission and goals. A background of the five year improvement process was presented. The document was organized into nine sections, one section for each of the nine middle schools. The intent of the document was to describe how each of the nine schools used the 1994-95 academic year to prepare for the launching of the new middle school reforms, the move of 2,000 sixth graders to grades six, seven, eight middle schools, the opening of three new middle schools and the remodeling of five schools. One middle school was delayed due to a parent legal challenge related to the school site. Thus, one school remained a seven, eight grade configuration school for the 1995-96 year. This document also included an appendix of 25 pages which reviewed the process.

In revisiting the district summary report, the guidelines of the 1996 publication, Great Transitions: Preparing Adolescents for a New Century (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1996) became apparent. The notion that middle schools must match the needs of today's young teenagers is emphasized in this document.

A middle school education designed specifically to meet the developmental needs of young adolescents can provide potent intellectual challenge and social support that both enhance educational achievement to help young adolescents:

- Feel a sense of worth as a person
- Achieve a reliable basis for making informed choices
- Know how to use the support systems available to them
- Express constructive curiosity and exploratory behavior
- Find ways of being useful to others
- Believe in a promising future with real opportunities

Meeting these requirements has been essential for human survival into adulthood for millennia. But in a technologically advanced democratic society - one that places an increasingly high premium on competence in many domains - adolescents themselves face a further set of challenges. They must:

- Master social skills, including the ability to manage conflict peacefully
- Cultivate the inquiring and problem-solving habits of mind for lifelong learning
- Acquire the technical and analytic capabilities to participate in a world-class economy
- Become ethical persons
- Learn the requirements of responsible citizenship
- Respect diversity in our pluralistic society (pp. 10,11)

Great Transitions (1996) concludes with a significant call to educational and political leaders to pay attention to early adolescence and change educational institutions to help this age group learn to flourish.

As all the documents relating to this 1990-95 project were retrospectively examined, the principles from Great Transitions (1996) were helpful. This document was intended to be used to prepare staff and schools for the 1996-97 implementation year. Ultimately, however, the goal of the entire middle school effort was to create more effective schools for young adolescents. Any change is challenging. Much research (e.g., Conley, 1993) points to a variety of difficulties encountered as school systems attempt to undertake major reforms. Leadership is often a key. Change agents and individuals committed to school improvement are integral in implementing reform. In a discussion of organizational culture and leadership (Schein, 1987) posits that the two must be inextricably linked if any change is to occur. Most researchers would agree that strong leadership is fundamental to school reform. But where do districts find these leaders or are

leaders developed through training programs? In Schools for the 21st Century: Leadership Imperatives for Education Reform, Schlechty (1990) emphasizes the need for a philosophy and plan for school leaders.

Another problem in implementing school reform comes from the rigid framework of most school systems. Schools operate within the strictures of labor union contracts, traditional philosophies and shrinking resources. How do districts change and adapt to student needs given such limitations? In Organizational Architecture: Designs for Changing Organizations (Gerstein, et al., 1992) discusses strategies in reforming business organizations that may be applied to school systems. As change processes are described, however, the challenges are amplified. The elements of these organizations - people, tasks, technology and information - are very much the same as those found in schools. The chapter, "Teaching Organizations to Learn" could aptly be used in school systems before reforms are initiated.

The major problem in examining the notion of middle school restructuring lies in the ways that both organizations and individuals resist change. Though a clear reason for reform is evident, persons or groups may reject efforts to modify their operation within schools or classrooms.

This summary document looked very different from the other documents authored by district staff in that it was divided into nine individual sections - one for each school. Implementation of reforms was set for the 1995-96 school year. The other four documents reflected a district perspective; this document showed that each of the nine schools had different priorities and plans. A parent looking through

each of the nine sections might wonder why each format was different and might look for a program that had a certain element. This was the document that reflected de-centralization as each school took ownership in the reform effort.

### **3.5 Summary of Documents and Implications for Research**

After reviewing the documents which constitute over 500 pages, I decided to include portions in the Appendices of this study. (See Appendices B - I). I also reviewed the documents for questions to be used in the next phase of the study: the individual interviews and focus group. I was particularly interested in finding the best questions to ask in order to elicit responses which could eventually be categorized into major themes. I wanted to come to know whether or not the people who lived through the organizational change believed if the process that we “sold” to our board and public was, in fact, the real process we followed. I saw a process outlined in the first document. Did that process actually evolve into a reform that changed behavior five years later?

I also believed that philosophically we invested heavily in Turning Points (1989). I wanted to know if this meant anything. Did a document, Turning Points (1989) truly affect the thinking and behavior of Salem-Keizer educators since it was a keystone to all five documents? I, furthermore, wanted to gain perceptions about the change process itself. What could have been improved? What is yet to be done? What have we learned? Finally, I believed the most important question which became the last question and eventually led to the themes that emerged from this study was “If we were to design and implement the process again, to what

elements should we pay particular attention?" This last questions came from an examination of documents that framed the process. Were the priorities in the process the best priorities? Did we pay attention to the wrong activities? Did we ignore or not pay enough attention to elements of change? An example of this last question was the notion of staff development. The documents clearly indicated that attention was paid to planning for staff development; however, interviewees felt that this was very important component of the change process and it did not receive the appropriate amount of attention.

## Chapter 4: Results

### **4.1 Questions that Emerged from the Retrospective Analysis**

After reviewing all of the documents and reflecting upon the change process, I became interested in attempting to find thematic meaning in what had taken place. I was equally interested in knowing whether other participants in the process ended up with some of the same thoughts that were present in my mind after I had reviewed the documents. I was interested in whether the thoughts of the middle school principals matched the thoughts of the curriculum directors and staff development leaders. Consequently I crafted a series of framing questions that emerged from the document analysis. I asked both the middle school principals and the four members of the focus group the same seven, open-ended questions. I took notes and kept the notes in two notebooks, one for principals and one for the focus group. The individual principals were assigned a number to protect their identities. I did not look at the results of the principal interviews before beginning the focus group to help maintain an integrity to my process. After both the interviews and the focus group work was complete, I began to pencil notes in the margins related to emerging themes. Consequently I wrote anecdotal memos to begin to consolidate this information. I also used colored highlighting pens to “color code” the emerging themes. I started with yellow for all of the information related to training. After a thorough analysis, I began to eliminate themes that had not emerged as major and I narrowed my number to eight emerging themes. I used the following questions during discussions with both groups:



1. Please describe your role in Salem-Keizer's Middle School Improvement Process.
2. As you reflect upon the process, do you believe we as a district followed our process? Did we do what teachers, parents, the school board and others asked us to do?
3. Did we follow the eight tenets of Turning Points (Carnegie Council, 1989) which were used as a philosophical base for the process?
4. What has been improved or refined in the process?
5. What is left to accomplish?
6. What have we learned?
7. If we were to design and implement this process again, to what elements should we pay particular attention?

#### **4.2 The Interview Process**

I asked participants in the study to reflect back upon middle school experiences by describing their roles in the Middle School Improvement Process. I included in the principals' group nine middle school principals in the district and in the focus group four people who were leaders in the Middle School Improvement Process. The focus group included two staff development leaders and two curriculum directors. All of these people were selected because of their rich histories in middle school experience in Salem-Keizer and because all possessed significant influence with school staff.

The principals' group included a person who was the Oregon Secondary Principals' Association Principal of the Year and a Milken \$25,000 award winner for educational leadership. This person had served as a middle school assistant principal and was a ten year veteran as a middle school principal in Salem-Keizer. Another principal had served as a site council chair as a teacher and as an assistant principal before assuming the principalship. Another principal who was bilingual and spoke fluent Spanish had served as a guidance counselor in another state; this principal had the largest middle school with approximately 1,200 students. All of the principals except one had enjoyed the experience of being in more than one middle school. This person had served in two high school principalships and was called back to "fill in" as a middle school principal in the same school where he had served as a middle school teacher and coach twenty years earlier. This person was retired and was asked to work as a "substitute principal" while the assigned principal was on an extended leave of absence. His perspective was unique in that he was a junior high teacher in the 1960's and returned in 1995 to work in a vastly different middle school model. He was very positive about the changes. One principal had worked as a teacher or administrator in five Salem-Keizer middle schools in a thirty year career with the district. All of the nine principals had served on at least one of the Middle School Improvement Process Committees.

The focus group included two staff development leaders who had served as sixth grade teachers in Salem-Keizer elementary schools. This experience was important as they discussed their perceptions of how important it was to move sixth graders to middle schools. These two individuals were teachers whose full time

assignment was leading instructional improvement efforts. They were perceived by other teachers as competent and influential and both taught in higher education evening classes. The two curriculum directors had served as teachers in Salem-Keizer junior high schools in the 1970's. This experience augmented their perspectives as they reflected upon the middle school improvement process. They knew the experience of teaching in a junior high classroom in Salem-Keizer and how the curriculum design had to change in the reform effort.

Finally one characteristic that all participants had in common was that no one was new to the district. All had experience that led to their intimate knowledge of the school district culture.

The following section includes a summary of each question and set of responses and the themes that began to crystallize as the discussions were analyzed. I have also included a table (Tables 1 - 7) for each question. I have selected responses to serve as examples from both the principals and focus group members. These responses help to sketch the thematic picture that emanates from the document.

### **4.3 Answering the Questions**

Table 4.1 presents some seminal quotes in response to the first question. The focus group and principals summarized their roles. For the most part they functioned as trainers, facilitators, resource points and information centers. They were utilized by staff, parents, the community. They supported each other and attempted to put the literature they read into practice. Each of the individuals had

a history of middle school education in Salem-Keizer; no one was a “new comer” to the district. These people relied on the documents previously described in the analysis to help frame their thoughts and their experiences frames their perception. They relied heavily on their own reservoirs of experience and skill to assist them in their leadership capacities.

Table 4.2 contains comments relative to the concern about processes.

First the focus group confirmed my perception that the process evolved because the first document was nebulous and conceptual. As the third document, the Action Plan, was published, goals were much more clear than they were at the beginning. This led to a theme that change requires constant re-evaluation and refinement, Fullan (1991) wrote of the issue of “evolutionary planning” (pp. 80-88) where organizations need to adjust to changes such as current activities or social systems. A change to be practical and workable must have clear goals.

The principals and focus group also affirmed the fact that the process worked because many people were involved, Fullan (1994) said “Every person is a change agent”. This thought and the results of the document analysis led to the theme that stakeholders must participate in the change process.

Finally, the focus group spoke of the fact that as the process evolved, more elementary teachers became interested, involved and trained. (Fullan (1994, 1991) discusses the notion that an organization cannot make people change but as more and more people are trained and assume readiness, a change can occur. This thought, substantiated by the document review and focus group, led to the theme

**Table 4.1**

**Question 1: Please describe your role in Salem-Keizer's Middle School Improvement Process.**

Examples of Principal Responses	Examples of Focus Group Responses
<p>"I've been a middle school administrator for fourteen years and I have served on many local, state and national committees. My biggest contribution to this process is my work in the area of the activities programs. For middle school co-curricular may be as important as curricular."</p>	<p>"I helped the principal work with the site council and the site council work with the staff."</p>
<p>"I believe I have helped to teach people to adjust as they go, to be flexible. Adults adjust to change at different rates, and a principal needs to help a staff work through their differences and problems with the change process."</p>	<p>"I assisted staffs... everything you read about change is true. It's very messy and ugly and you can't let people get ugly in the process."</p>
<p>"We all need to be counselors, parents and problem solvers because this change process is so major."</p>	<p>"I helped work with pressure groups. You know that the decade of the 90's is the decade of pressure groups. They are not always external, and they can sink any change process no matter how neat it looks on paper."</p>
<p>"I functioned as an enabler of people- nothing more. I was the one who encouraged the staff through this process."</p>	<p>"I had to reign in the curriculum piece and try to develop some standard curriculum... working with these middle schools in this area was like trying to herd cats."</p>

**Table 4.1** Question 1: Please describe your role in Salem-Keizer's Middle School Improvement Process.

**Table 4.2**

**Question 2: As you reflect upon the process, do you believe we, as a district followed our process? Did we do what teachers, parents, the school board and others asked us to do?**

Examples of Principal Responses	Examples of Focus Group Response
<p>"The process was followed carefully - on many occasions, things would 'steer off course' and we would have to go back to the document and see what the intent was... we 'dialogued' a lot."</p>	<p>"The process had to change because the documents were not consistent. The beginning documents were more conceptual and the later documents were clearer." Also changes took place because adjustments were needed and because along the way, we added new people and incorporated their ideas into the process."</p>
<p>"Yes, we did what we could to meet those expectations with time and money limitations."</p>	<p>"With each successive year in the five year process, we added more elementary people and the elementary model for middle school began to be embraced; this was positive."</p>
<p>"The process was thorough because we involved so many people and laid so much groundwork - especially in the move of sixth graders from elementary to middle school."</p>	<p>"We followed our process and the plan worked. In 1978 it didn't work because original committees were run by "junior high" people who wanted the middle schools to look like little high schools. The leadership was prepared this time."</p>
<p>"Yes, but some interpretations were different. Example - the older schools are not equal to the new schools - especially in technology."</p>	<p>"Yes, but we always underestimate the power of the school culture... We underestimate both at the school and district level... "Critical mass" starts in the classroom."</p>

**Table 4.2** Question 2: As you reflect upon the process, do you believe we, as a district followed our process? Did we do what teachers, parents, the school board and others asked us to do?

that if a school district wants new ways of thinking, then it must bring new people into the process.

The entire Salem-Keizer middle school improvement process relied on the document Turning Points (1989) for guidance. For this reason, I felt that since it was discussed in each of the five documents, it should be a separate question for the principals and focus group. Table 4.3 contains pertinent information about this topic. I was attempting to determine first whether it was a good idea to base a five year process on one book and second, did the district truly follow Turning Points (1989) or was the book “window dressing” for the public. Was the use of the book artificial and contrived?

What I discovered through interviewing both the principals and the focus group was that most felt the eight tenets of Turning Points (1989) were followed philosophically but that the tenets were not measurable. One participant called them “squishy”. Another said that the “degree of compliance is ‘building specific’” meaning that different schools were at different stages in implementation. Also a number of participants felt that resources were lacking and this problem impeded the true implementation of the process based on a set of eight, philosophical tenets.

This set of responses and the document analysis did lead to the identification of another theme: a major organizational change process should have a literature and research base to help validate the work.

Schlechty (1990) discussed the need to determine purpose and to conceptualize change before a process is designed. Turning Points (1989) did this.

Table 4.3

**Question 3: Did we follow the eight tenets of Turning Points (1989) which were used as a philosophical base for the process?**

Examples of Principal Responses	Examples of Focus Group Responses
"We did. The one that was weak dealt with outside agency support. Nobody has money."	"Yes, but we have a philosophical understanding without the necessary framework. Example... <u>Turning Points</u> talks about teaching a core academic program that results in students who are literate. What does that mean? I believe that we are weak in curriculum, in the academic piece... We have lost sight of the basic learning."
"Yes, but the degree of compliance is 'building specific'... example, the 'health ed' tenet is tailored to individual schools."	"Yes, but in the zeal of opening new schools and moving sixth graders, the philosophy gets lost while people try to 'do it all'... buy textbooks, write a tardy policy, figure out if kids should line up to go to lunch."
"We do up to a point. We don't have the proper funding to properly do 'schools within a school; or 'service learning.' These things require resources."	" <u>Turning Points</u> was a concept and the documents were like blue prints; however, just as in building a house, changes take place... that one tenet of <u>Turning Points</u> about teachers having adequate time, space, equipment and materials... that one has been 'downsized'... teachers feel they need more of all four things."
"Yes, our school has all the tenets in place."	
"We followed the eight tenets, but have fallen short on full implementation."	
"Those eight tenets are not measurable' they're squishy. We need to have clear goals, consistency followed... Yes, we have followed the tenets as a philosophy, but philosophies are nebulous."	

**Table 4.3** Question 3: Did we follow the eight tenets of Turning Points (1989) which were used as a philosophical base for the process?



It served to build a process on a concept. Senge (1990) also emphasized the notion of a “shared vision” as one of his five disciplines needed to enhance effectiveness and learning in organizations.

The question of what could have been improved or refined led to an extended amount of discussion dealing with the lack of time and resources for staff development. Everyone participating spoke of this issue as the major problem that needed to be improved. Table 4.4 contains sample comments.

Everyone felt that the issue was important and that more time, money, and attention should have been devoted to it. This particular issue did not come out of the document review because plans were designed to implement staff development. The reality, however, was that not enough resources were available to carry out the plans.

This information led to the identification of another theme that staff development is crucial in a change process. This theme is substantiated in the change literature. Schlechty (1990) said that “A system of ongoing support and training must be provided for those who are being asked to support the change.” (pp. 97-98) Fullen (1994) suggested that skills, training and staff development are critical components of the process. He said that the “acid test of productive change is whether individuals and groups develop skills and deep understandings in relation to new solutions.” (p. 24)

Other issues to emerge from this question and its responses were that we had too much change occurring at once. New state laws and a number of social issues such as gangs and drugs took away time from the middle school reform

Table 4.4

**Question 4: What could have been improved or refined in the process?**

Examples of Principal Responses	Examples of Focus Group Responses
<p>"We needed more orientation, training and time."</p>	<p>"We tried to do both 'top down' and 'bottom up' organizational change at once... Sometimes the two collided. When they did, everything went to the site council. The councils helped in the process, but they needed training in group process skills."</p>
<p>"Staff development... more discussion on creating 'schools within a school.'"</p>	<p>"There was not enough time or training for individual teachers. We should have said, 'look at <u>Turning Points</u> and note the elements of a good middle school then take three to five years to put these elements in place starting with a plan from a site council.'"</p>
<p>"Deeper, more on-going staff development. You must train and follow-up. We should have had one person strictly in charge of training staff."</p>	<p>We've set up too many expectations and we're dealing with so many new social issues like gangs, drugs, weapons that the task is overwhelming for some..."</p>
<p>"We had a massive, central office-driven change process occurring simultaneously with state school reforms and the arrive of site counsels. There was too much change at one time."</p>	<p>"We needed so much more time for staff development and time for teachers to talk about this process... They need more tools to make the change work."</p>
<p>"To be cost effective, we made our middle schools too large. It is difficult to create intimacy for kids in schools that big."</p>	
<p>"Schools were being asked to do too much without adequate training or resources."</p>	

**Table 4.4:** Question 4: What could have been improved or refined in the process?

activity. We attempted to correlate the district work with the new Oregon state reforms; however, one principal felt that it was still too much at one time.

The issue of the need for staff development again emerged as I questioned what was left to accomplish. Both principals and the focus group shared the perception that training was not complete. This part of the discussion substantiated the theme of the significance of staff development. Table 4.5 reflects this theme.

Another theme that was reaffirmed was the notion that a change process requires constant re-evaluation and refinement. One focus group member talked of a perception from staff that the “process is over”. This member, a staff development leader, says that “We need to go back and assess our plan and see what teachers now believe we need.” One principal felt that an assessment plan was needed. This principal felt that both a comprehensive evaluation of the process that surveyed students, parents and staff should be accomplished as well as a three to five year assessment of student achievement. This principal felt that the district needed to implement another five year plan to determine whether the reforms have made a difference in student success in all three grades using grading and testing data.

Finally I asked “What have we learned?” This question provided a variety of responses. In the document analysis, I learned that the change evolved and goals became more clear. This led to my belief that a theme should be that change processes require vigilance and refinement. The focus group and principals, however, seemed to have other perceptions and priorities about the learning that occurred. Their quotes in Table 4.6 reflect a diversity of opinions.

Table 4.5

<b>Question 5: What is left to accomplish?</b>	
<b>Examples of Principal Responses</b>	<b>Examples of Focus Group Responses</b>
"All of the training... the building of staff families. I don't see how we can create communities of students if we don't have communities of staff."	"We need an evaluation of the process to see if we have tangible results. The evaluation should be data-driven and schools need to be accountable to district and state standards."
"If this is a fluid process, we've come to the dam... Now we need to design a leadership group comprised of members of site councils from each building. This group needs to go back and re-examine the recommendations and answer this question... the answer needs to come from building staffs."	"We need much more time for staff development; teachers have said that they want training now that they have been in the new model for a year."
"In-service is needed to complete the transition.... to develop more effective teaching strategies. The buildings are built and the staff is in classrooms, now the real change has to begin in the classroom."	"There is a perception that this whole process is over and now everyone can relax. We need to go back and assess our plan and see what teachers now believe we need. They are committed to the new middle school model, but they say they need training, time, resources and more positive reinforcement to sustain the change."
"We need an assessment of this process based on an expectation that the recommendations are fully implemented."	"We need to continue to recruit the strongest middle school teachers possible and sustain the notion of continuous middle school improvement. This effort is not over."

Table 4.5: Question 5: What is left to accomplish?

Table 4.6

**Question 6: What have we learned?**

Examples of Principal Responses	Examples of Focus Group Responses
"Not everybody wants to change and not everybody changes at the same speed."	"Everything we read about change is true. It is painful and frustrating and it takes time to convince people - especially educators - that it is real. Teachers are used to trends and many things changes like this will 'just go away.'"
"we've learned what was predicted... We have given middle school students a better learning environment."	"You have to learn to read the group, the people and time your changes. See what else is happening in the school first."
"We've learned that it takes planning, preparation, training and a lot of committed people to make a major change work. We need good communication all the time."	"Pay attention to the unspoken leadership group in a school; assess where the real power lies before committees are formed. The chemistry of committees is important to make change work."
"We have learned that a whole bunch of sixth, seventh and eight graders are still little kids who need structures and adults to cling to."	"Choosing the right leaders is essential; the wrong leaders can destroy a change process."
"You cannot plan enough or do enough training for the massive amounts of staff shifting in a change this extensive. If teachers are chosen to go to new schools, they feel 'anointed.' If they have to go to a school they may not want, they feel like unwilling immigrants."	"We always need to ask ourselves, 'What is the purpose of what we are doing.' The purpose must be student learning."

**Table 4.6:** Question 6: What have we learned?

Much of the discussion involved how important “ownership” and individual support was in the process. This contributed to the theme of the importance of the stakeholders in the process.

A number of the principals discussed the importance of constant communication with internal and external groups. Caught in the Middle: Educational Reform for young Adolescents in California Public Schools (1987) provided excellent communication models throughout their process. This portion of the discussion emerging from the interviews led to a theme that communication must be consistent and “two way”. Conley (1993, p. 215) discussed the importance of communication with both staff groups and community groups. In a section on the importance of community involvement, he emphasized that parents must join staff in school governance and be a part of “shared decision-making and advisory function.” In 1989 parents were not brought into the middle school reform process early enough or substantively. In the process that began in 1990 parents became significant leaders in middle school reform and their involvement coupled with the heavy involvement of staff led to greater acceptance of the reform. This was a critical learning outcome of this study.

Finally, the issue of change process as a result of this experience was explored. The responses to this question were varied; it appeared that individuals had a number of elements that they felt were of particular importance in designing a change process. A few of the elements led to themes discussed in other portions of this chapter such as the importance of adjusting and refining the change which I perceived as I examined the documents. Another element was the importance of

staff development and the significance of paying attention to stakeholders, both of which become strong themes. Vision and communication were also issues which emerged as themes again in this section. Table 4.7 contains some perceptive information.

One idea discussed by a principal involved leadership and the need for one person to be in charge of the change process. This notion of leadership is supported by the literature. There needs to be one “change agent,” but others must assume leadership as well. This became another theme of the study.

As organizational change is contemplated another important issue is the selection of a leader or “change agent” who must focus first on the vision. In Salem-Keizer’s case, the vision was encapsulated in the eight tenets of Turning Points (1989). Second leaders must know and understand the culture, history and operational nuances of the district. These elements may be far different from those found in other districts. The leader must take a “big picture” look at the system and how the educational staff operates within the system.

In the book, Changing the Essence: The Art of Creating and Leading Fundamental Change in Organizations (Beckhard, Pritchard, 1992) the authors suggest a shift in the way managers approach change.

... top leaders will need to reduce their personal “hands-on” involvement in current operations and replace it with management systems and structures. Leaders must focus on taking the organization into the future. This means developing a vision of the

Table 4.7

**Question 7: If we were to design and implement the process again, to what elements should we pay particular attention?**

Examples of Principal Responses	Examples of Focus Group Responses
"Evaluation of the process. We need to have a well-defined, collaborative effort to evaluate where we are on a building basis. We need to look at our deficiencies and plan for corrections and refinements."	"We need to be careful about what we tell people when we 'sell a new model.' Parents want absolutes and we need to think about how we communicate a process that is still being refined. Communication is extremely important."
"People. We need to pay attention to human needs when you decide to implement a change that 'unbalances the status quo.'"	"Some of the students didn't understand the change. We need to pay attention to their needs for communication."
"Staff development. It's absolutely the biggest issue."	"Unintended consequences. If we put sixth graders in middle schools, how will elementary schools change? We can't implement a process in isolation of other levels like elementary."
"One person needs to be in charge."	"All affected groups must be highly involved - teachers, parents, students. We need to pay attention to how these groups played a part in the change."
"Not too much change at one time. Changes need to be paced."	"Keeping change in sync with other reform efforts... The process needs to mesh with state and national middle school reforms."
"Transitions need to be well planned."	
Develop a vision and take the time to get consensus. Involve all pressure groups."	
"Training and communication... They need to be an integral part of the plan with adequate time and resources."	

**Table 4.7:** Question 7: If we were to design and implement the process again, to what elements should we pay particular attention?



desired future state of the enterprise, creating management structures to achieve this state, and providing personal leadership in directing the process of managing the dynamics of both the organization and its interfaces with its environment (p. 2).

Beckhard and Pritchard also emphasize that leaders must focus on relationships and systems thinking in viewing the whole organization. The authors say this approach involves the following:

- Having an overall picture of the organization in the future when the change has been completed, and determining how the relationships between the parts of the organization will look
- Obtaining commitment to this picture from key managers
- Using the vision as a common context for developing goals for business and organizational change and improvement
- Understanding the relationships between the culture of the future, the structure of the organization, allocation of work to particular tasks, the information systems, and employees' sense of meaning in working there (p. 34)

The employees "sense of meaning" is critical in a large, impersonal district like Salem-Keizer where feelings of anonymity prevail. Efforts were made to create a sense of team commitment.

Kanter's Change Masters (1983) offered concepts that apply to school change even though the focus of the book is corporate America. Kanter (1983) used action research as she promoted her notions of how to create effective, innovative organizations. Kanter (1983) defined Change Masters as "those people and organizations adept at the art of anticipating the need for and of leading, productive change" (p. 13).

Kanter (1983) emphasized the need for organizations to empower employees. She stated "the degree to which the opportunity to use power

effectively is granted to or withheld from individuals is one operative difference between those companies which stagnate and those which innovate” (p. 18).

In the Salem-Keizer Middle School Improvement Process, teachers led the committees which designed the innovations. Any individual leading a school change effort today knows that the change must emanate from the classroom teacher. Schools must empower staff to enact reforms.

Murphy and Schiller (1992) in Transforming America's Schools: offered a balanced plan for reform as well as a call for action. A particularly helpful section dealt with changing roles for educators involved in the transformation process. The emphasis was on the importance of rethinking the allocation of tasks. Superintendents, teachers, governments and parents all needed a new perspective as schools moved toward new scheduling options, individualization, new assessment methods and creativity. Teachers and parents must be seen as leaders in the process. Old notions of leadership must give way to new perspectives about who can really implement change. One person must be assigned the leadership role in a major strategic effort, but the real reform comes from classroom experts. Empowerment of staff and shared-decision making are critical to school reform.

The last theme to emerge from a retrospective analysis comes from my examination of the documents, literature and an overall reflection of my notes from the principals and the focus group. This theme is that organizational change is highly personalized and must be tailored to a school district. As I reflected upon the Salem-Keizer plan, I realized it was a change prompted by both a population

increase and a belief that middle school reform was necessary. Fullan (1991) discussed local factors (p. 73) which are the social conditions which affect change, and the current activities and events occurring in a school system which might make a change process work well in one system and poorly in another. The nature of the district, the school board, the community, the principal and the teachers as well as many governmental directives must be considered for successful implementation of a change process in a school system.

Schlechty also discussed the need to pay attention to “rules, roles and relationships and in the system of beliefs and values that give meaning to these structures” (p. 83). Change must meet the needs of the constituents; teachers and school staff must be committed to the reforms and must be willing to volunteer their time, talent and energy.

Bolman and Deal (1987) afford a number of cautions as organizations undertake complex change, and they emphasized that an understanding of organizational cultures and behaviors is crucial. The first caution is that flexibility is integral to finding new solutions as problems inevitably arise. Rigid patterns of behavior are counterproductive. The second pitfall is over responsiveness and appeasement. Often an organization attempting a change process tries to please everyone and in so doing loses its focus. Finally, organizations are urged to remain committed to core beliefs and values shared by everyone.

An organizational change design must be tailored to a particular school district. This is a theme which emanated from an overview of my notes from all

parts of the study; the document analysis, the principal interviews, the focus group information and the literature.

#### **4.4 Concluding Themes**

Combining document analysis, follow-up interviews, the focus group session and the literature, it was clear that the following themes were consistently presented in all of the three sources:

1. Organizational change is highly personalized.
2. Change should have a literature and research foundation.
3. Stakeholders must participate in the change process.
4. Communication must be consistent and must be “two way”.
5. One person must be in charge of the change.
6. A change process requires vigilance, constant re-evaluation and refinement.
7. Staff development is crucial in a change process.
8. If a district wants new thinking, then new people help in organization change.

## **Chapter 5: Implications for the District**

In reflecting upon the themes which emanated from the study, some implications for the Salem-Keizer School District emerge.

### **5.1 Organizational Change is Highly Personalized**

In this study, the complexities of a large school district in the highly charged, political atmosphere of a state capitol with a growing population that needed new facilities necessitated a tailor-made change process. The district could have consulted with change agents in other districts and read other restructuring plans; however, in the end, the district had to design a process and personalize it within the context of its organizational operation. Conley (1993) is an author whose view of reform includes the notion that a variety of strategies may be used and personalized according to individual needs.

### **5.2 Change Should Have a Literature and Research Foundation**

Organizations should not whimsically reform themselves according to the latest fads or trends. Major organizational change cannot be undertaken with a cavalier attitude. If it is, it will be constructed like a house without a foundation and will likely crumble. Change is difficult and people resist change without research. The Salem-Keizer District used the tenets from Turning Points (1989). Other reforms have used other documents.

Almost three-fourths of the principals interviewed and members of the focus group said the tenets of Turning Points (1989) were adhered to. The other fourth gave a “yes and no” response saying that different people interpreted the tenets differently and that the tenets were nebulous and difficult to measure.

### **5.3 Stakeholders Must Participate in the Change Process**

Top-down leadership which assumes that an authority figure such as a superintendent can direct successful, organizational change is “dark age” thinking according to such authors as Conley (1993) and Bolman and Deal (1984). Today managers are fully aware that parents and teachers must help launch and implement any school reform effort. Oregon mandates individual school site councils comprised of teachers and parents to oversee school improvement efforts at the local level.

Kanter (1983) discusses the issue of empowerment as being a vital part of a change effort. This research study validated that concept. Many parents and teachers were involved in the five year process and the interviews and focus group supported their involvement. Frankly one principal stated “There is no such thing as too much involvement.” Most of the principals expressed the same thoughts.

### **5.4 Communication Must Be Consistent and “Two-Way”**

Communication is integral to any organizational change process and this communication must be “two way” - that is, it must go from steering committees to

parents and staff and from parents and staff to leadership committees (Conley, 1993, p. 215). Early on in this process, a communications committee was formed and a process for informing the staff and community was developed. These people helped publish committee minutes, manage “rumor control,” meet with controversial groups and establish communication as a priority. Both principals and the focus group felt communication was a vital part of this process.

### **5.5 One Person Must Be the Individual in Charge of the Change**

The focus group emphasized that in this change process one person needed to be the change agent who quietly gave others the credit if the plan succeeded, but would publicly take the blame if the plan or part of the plan failed. A principal also said that the leader of the change effort must be free of other responsibilities to be effective. This is different in a school district where everyone has multiple responsibilities and the district cannot afford a full time consultant.

Beckhard and Pritchard (1992) focus on leaders who have a vision yet understand the limitations of a school culture. These leaders must also understand how a district operates and how leaders must help move the operation into the future.

### **5.6 A Change Process Requires Vigilance, Constant Re-Evaluation and Refinement**

Organizational change is dynamic. In schools processes change as quickly as children change. The process being examined underwent constant change - in

the documents and in the design. The principals interviewed emphasized that they constantly had to re-adjust according to changes in directions, resources, people, policies and student needs. One principal used a reading course as an example. This individual said that at the beginning of the five year change process the idea of a reading course as an academic requirement was abandoned in favor of a literature class. However, at the end of the five year process, this principal found that so many of the students in the low-income community could not read that she re-instituted a basic reading class to help them. Fullan (1991, p. 353) said that educators must “redesign the workplace so that innovation and improvement are built into the daily activities.” Educators must focus on “continuous improvement” and “institutional renewal.” Fullan wrote of this theme that is echoed in this study - educators must be vigilant in looking for ways to consistently improve the teaching - learning environment and a change process does not terminate when one goal is reached.

### **5.7 Staff Development is Crucial in a Change Process**

This issue proved to be the single most significant, most discussed theme among principals and the focus group. Both the principals and the focus group selected the issue of on-going training and staff development as being the most important element that could have been improved or refined in the process. Both groups also selected training as the most critical piece of the change process that is left to accomplish.



The literature on organizational change supports the thinking of the principals and the focus group. McKenzie (1945) discussed the fact that staff development must involve “immersion and transformation.” The author also says that training efforts must be properly funded. This last issue is an acknowledged weakness in the Salem-Keizer change process. Total agreement exists in relation to the need for staff development; however, limited funding has impacted the entire effort. Fullan (1991, pp. 341, 344) emphasized the critical nature of staff development.

*The final overall guideline is directed at any and all agencies or groups involved in professional development. Guideline 3 is that all promoters of professional development should pay attention to and worry about two fundamental requirements: (1) incorporating the attributes of successful professional development in as many activities as possible, and (2) ensuring that the ultimate purpose of professional development is less to implement a specific innovation or policy and more to create individual and organizational habits and structures that make continuous learning a valued and endemic part of the culture of schools and teaching. (Fullan, 1991, p. 343)*

### **5.8 If a District wants New Thinking, then New People Help in Organizational Change**

One member of the focus group who had lived through twenty years of attempts at middle school reform in Salem-Keizer made a salient comment that relates to the success or failure of organization change in schools. He said,

The 1970's plan did not work in Salem-Keizer even though we had research on what good middle schools should look like because we simply moved our ninth graders and their teachers to high schools leaving seventh and eight grade teachers in schools. Many of these teachers clung to “junior high” thinking and did not feel compelled to change.

In the 1990's plan, we moved sixth grade teachers with elementary experience from elementary schools to middle schools. As they

joined the seventh and eighth grade teachers, changes really began to occur.

I believe that adding one third of a new staff with all that elementary, developmental training was the most significant factor in the success of the change process.

This single fact is more important all of the other elements of the change process.

I believe the district started with a solid framework built on the philosophical framework of Turning Points (1989). This plan underwent necessary adjustments and refinements which are the necessary steps in any change process. Most of the interviewees felt that this part of the plan worked; the ideas were accepted by most of the district and the timing was right. A history of minor steps at reforming middle schools "paved the way" for a major reform. The plan was tailored to the district. The timing was also fortuitous. Both Turning Points (1989) and Caught in the Middle (1987) helped to fortify the process.

A large number of people participated in committees; over 100 were assigned to initial committees. Nevertheless, a greater number of elementary teachers should have been part of the initial stages of the process. The feeling was clearly communicated by the interviewees. Real change of thinking resulted from an infusion of sixth grade teachers into the change process. They became the critical "change agents".

The district needs to continue to make communication and involvement priorities in a change effort. The first attempt at moving sixth graders was rejected because parents were not involved. The second effort worked because parents and staff received and gave communication through such activities as public hearings.

Having one person in charge of the change effort for five years provided consistency even though others such as a number of teachers and parents changed in the committee work.

The major implication for the school district involves the perception that not enough resources, time and talent was allocated to staff development. In the future, the district needs to make a strong commitment to providing the training support necessary to implement a successful change process.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusions**

As mentioned previously in this study this project was a retrospective examination of one, large school district's middle school change process where the researcher served as a participant - observer. It was the story of one district's experience. Some of the conclusions might be helpful to other school districts contemplating an organizational change process.

First, districts might be well-served to examine research on organizational change and build their rationale on a philosophical base or mission statement. Most of the interviewees and members of the focus group felt that this element proved important to the change process. Districts should think about why the change is being undertaken and base reform activities on some of the changing literature.

Once the rationale is developed, this study suggests that reading other designs and plans might assist school districts, however, a district cannot simply copy another district's reform design. Organizations are complex, changing organisms with highly unique cultures. A plan should be developed in the context of that personalized culture.

Recommendations framing a school change plan usually are approved by the school board and then communicated to staff and parents. This study suggests the importance of communication at every step of the process from design to implementation. One focus group member mentioned that the Salem-Keizer plan did not bring in enough voices from elementary teachers in the early stages.

Districts need to consider all stakeholders and voices from all groups must be part of the initial formation of the process.

This study suggests that the process of reform is dynamic and must change and adapt to new school board expectations and policies, personnel and politics. In the Salem-Keizer process the documents consistently changed and were refined to adapt to differing needs. Organizations must adapt to remain vital and reform efforts should mirror those adaptations.

The study also reinforces the current thinking about the empowerment of staff and parents for change processes to be successful. Staff and parents must support the change. One focus group member said, "The 'critical mass' that makes a reform effort work must start in a building, in a classroom... not in a district office." This same member also said that "The district tried to do 'top down' and 'bottom up' middle school reform at once... in reality the classroom teacher's support of the plan is the most important."

Another member of the focus group said, "Organizations underestimate the human element. The paper process might look good and feel good, but paying attention to what people say students need; how teachers view effective learning programs; what parents are saying they want from schools... those things are so important." Districts should assess staff and community expectations as the process is unfolding and make necessary adjustments. This same focus group member said, "A process will not work if major groups of people feel ignored."

A principal interviewed discussed the significance of the value of honesty. "A process needs to be honest," he said. "Too often district offices embellish

elements of a change process or inflate achievements.” He also said, “Principals do this, too. They are too competitive in a big district and tend to hide the facts and flaws. Real change involves real honesty.”

This study pointed out the greatest weakness of the Salem-Keizer plan which also was perceived to be the most important element - the resources and commitment to implement staff development. Everyone interviewed and every member of the focus group spent the greatest amount of time discussing the need for training at all levels. Principals also reported that teachers are saying that they need staff development to enhance their skills in middle schools.

The final element to which districts should pay attention is the need to see a change process as part of a larger entity. Districts cannot work in isolation. A focus group member said that “A middle school change process must recognize state and national reform efforts and make the process conform to standards while its own uniqueness is ‘maintained.’”

In retrospect, the principals’ group spent all of its time reading the reform literature and not paying enough attention to the processes involved in bringing about the changes which emerged from the literature summarized in the study. After the November, 1989 school board vote, the focus changed from reading middle school reform literature to reading literature about the organizational change process. We also realized the importance of pinning our change process on a significant piece of research. Turning Points (1989) was the research choice and works by Fullan (1994, 1991) and Conley (1993) became the focal pieces of research relative to the change process.

In summary, this study might be viewed as a first step. Much future research could follow. Other school district change efforts could be studied and compared to this effort. Future studies could also be conducted using this study as a beginning point and taking it into the next five years to assess the perceived success of the process by interviewing parents or teachers. Finally a future endeavor might involve an evaluation of student achievement which assesses which grade configuration enables students to learn more effectively - keeping sixth graders in an elementary environment or asking them to learn in a middle school, grade six, seven and eight environment.

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## **APPENDICES**

## **APPENDIX A**

### **APPROVALS AND INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENTS**

OFFICE  
OF  
DEAN OF RESEARCH



OREGON  
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March 12, 1996

Principal Investigator:

The following project has been approved for exemption under the guidelines of Oregon State University's Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:

Principal Investigator(s): Jodi Engel

Student's Name (if any): Kathleen D. Hanneman

Department: Education

Source of Funding:

Project Title: Middle School Change: A Process for Restructuring in a Mid-sized School District

Comments: Informed consent, item E, last sentence should be changed to read, "Only the investigators will have access to this information."

A copy of this information will be provided to the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects. If questions arise, you may be contacted further.

Sincerely,

Redacted for privacy

Mary E. Nunn  
Sponsored Programs Officer

cc: CPHS Chair

Feb. 14, 1996

To: Dr. Jodi Engel and Doctoral Committee Members  
From: Dr. Homer Kearns, Superintendent, Salem-Keizer School District  
Subject: Approval of Study

This memornadum confirms my approval of Kathleen Hanneman's research project related to the Middle School Improvement Process in the Salem-Keizer School District. I feel this study constitutes a valuable examination of a district's change process and I support her effort.



## INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Kathleen D. Hanneman

**A. Title of the Research Project.**

Middle School Change: A Process For Restructuring in a Mid-sized School District.

**B. Investigators.**

Dr. Jodi Engel

**C. Purpose of the Research Project.**

The purpose of this research project is to study the process of change by examining the five year (1990 - 1995) middle school restructuring process in the Salem-Keizer School District. This study involves research through which public record summary documents will be analyzed as primary sources to determine and verify that the district followed its process, that it carried out what committees asked it to implement. Principals and site council members will also be interviewed to determine their perceptions of the middle school improvement process. The purpose of the research is to identify major theories about change, to test those theories and then conclude with a set of issues that other change agents might need to address when a school district considers restructuring.

**D. Procedures:**

Participants will be asked to share perceptions about the middle school improvement process during interview sessions.

Sample questions are attached.

**E. Confidentiality.**

Any information obtained from me will be kept confidential. A code number will be used to identify any information that I provide. I will be the only person who will have access to this information.

**F. Compensation for Injury. Not applicable.****G. Voluntary Participation Statement.**

I understand that my participation in this study is completely voluntary and that I may either refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

**INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT**  
**Kathleen D. Hanneman**  
**Page Two**

**H. If You Have Questions:**

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4350 Gibson Road NW  
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1-503-362-5812

J.B. (Jodi) Engel, Ph.D.  
School of Education  
Oregon State University  
Corvallis, Oregon  
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**I. Understanding and Compliance.**

My signature below indicates that I have read and that I understand the procedures described above and give my informed and voluntary consent to participate in this study. I understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Subject

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Subject

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date Signed

\_\_\_\_\_  
Subject's Present Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Subject's Phone Number

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Principal Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date Signed

**APPENDIX B**

**SALEM-KEIZER SCHOOL DISTRICT  
MISSION AND GOALS**



## OUR MISSION

In partnership with the community, we ensure that each student will have the essential knowledge, skills and attitudes to be a lifelong learner, a contributing citizen and a productive worker in a changing and increasingly diverse world.

## STUDENT GOALS

We will focus all efforts to help each student develop the necessary knowledge and experiences to

- read and communicate effectively.
- think critically and solve problems.
- develop positive self-concept, respect for others, and healthy behavior patterns.
- work effectively in groups as well as individually.
- develop creativity and show appreciation for the arts.
- demonstrate civic, global, and environmental responsibility.
- recognize and value diversity among people.
- exhibit technological literacy.

## ACHIEVED THROUGH

### Organizational Effectiveness

As an organization, the School District will

- focus on student outcomes and quality of all services.
- be a learning organization that continuously assesses and improves.
- have high levels of teamwork and trust.
- involve people in making decisions that affect them.
- treat people fairly and with equity.
- value and celebrate diversity among people of all cultures and abilities.
- refuse to tolerate racism, discrimination, harassment, and prejudice.
- continue to develop and support a high quality staff.
- actively seek and value input from the community.
- provide a welcoming, open door environment for parents and community.

### Active Partnerships for Learning

Our partnerships with students, families, businesses and the broader community will

- provide for the safety and welfare of all children.
- be driven by a commitment to public education.
- focus on student needs.
- make full use of community resources for learning.
- operate from a spirit of mutual respect, trust, and interdependence.
- encourage active participation in the educational process by students, families, businesses, and the entire community.

**APPENDIX C****SALEM-KEIZER MIDDLE SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY**

## **MIDDLE SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY**

Together with their communities, Salem-Keizer middle schools will address the unique needs of young adolescents, promote individual success, and provide each student with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be:

- an intellectually reflective person and lifelong learner,
- a responsible, contributing citizen in our democracy and global society,
- a caring and ethical person with a respect for individual differences,
- a physically and mentally healthy individual, and
- a person enroute to a lifetime of meaningful work and self-fulfillment.

The Salem-Keizer School District's middle schools will ensure that each student is able to demonstrate progress toward the district's *Student Goals*.

## **MIDDLE SCHOOL GOALS**

Salem-Keizer middle schools will:

- Ensure success for each student through appropriate instructional strategies, activities, and resources.
- Teach curricula which result in the mastery of significant performance standards for cognitive skills, expressive skills, and affective skills in students.
- Create small communities for learning where adult and peer relationships are fundamental to intellectual development and personal growth.
- Foster the health and fitness of students in a safe and positive school environment.
- Develop student understanding of the relationships between learning, career goals, and future academic options.
- Be staffed with appropriately trained and prepared teams of teachers, administrators, and support personnel.
- Exercise site-based decision making and accountability for student and program performance.
- Engage families in the education of their children through communication and involvement in meaningful roles.
- Involve their communities as active partners in the educational process.

---

**Reference:**

*Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century (The Report of the Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents)*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989.

**APPENDIX D****GLOSSARY OF MIDDLE LEVEL TERMS**

## **GLOSSARY OF MIDDLE LEVEL TERMS**

Middle level education in Salem-Keizer Public Schools has undergone numerous changes to address the unique developmental needs of young adolescents.

Research, rethinking, and new practices have created new educational terms which describe this middle level transformation. This glossary is an attempt to de-mystify and clarify these terms for staff, parents, and the community. It should be used to supplement and complement the glossary of school improvement terms outlined in the District's recent publication, *School Improvement Resource Guide*.

---

**Active Learning** - Learning which involves the whole child (including cognitive, emotional, social, and physical needs) and stresses hands-on experiences, exploration, and discovery.

**Advisory Program** - A program which gives each student the opportunity to interact with peers and an adult about school or personal concerns in an ongoing, small-group setting.

**Age Appropriate** - Experiences and learning environments which match a predictable stage of growth and development (physical, social, emotional, and cognitive).

**Authentic Assessment** - An evaluation which accurately measures what students understand or are able to do. The measurement occurs in the context of real-life activity and should reflect the desired student performance goals. Tasks are frequently open ended and judgment is required to evaluate the level of performance. Examples of assessment methods include portfolios, journals, projects, observations, essays, tests, taped reading, video taping, and conferencing.

**Benchmarks** - Three progress checks at approximately grades 3, 5, and 8 designed to measure a student's current achievement and progress toward meeting the Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM). Also referred to as Levels 1, 2, and 3.

**Block Schedule** - Scheduling that provides longer and more flexible periods of time in which teachers can work with students, creating opportunities for different instructional practices, interdisciplinary teaching, and new uses of time.

**Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM)** - A certificate awarded to students at about grade 10 or age 16. It is based on a rigorous general educational program and represents a student's cumulative accomplishments over several years.



**Collaboration** - An instructional strategy in which students demonstrate their ability to participate as members of a team or small group, including providing leadership to achieve goals and working well with others from diverse backgrounds.

**Common Planning Time** - Regularly scheduled time during the school day during which staff members who teach the same students are available for joint lesson planning, parent conferences, materials preparation, problem solving, or curriculum development.

**Community Service** - See **Service Learning**.

**Core Curriculum** - Subject matter, topics, knowledge, experiences, and levels of proficiency considered essential for every student.

**Culturally Appropriate Practices** - Those practices that respect and recognize diversity and enable students to succeed in school regardless of race, gender, national origin, native language, religion, age, ability, marital status, family background, or economic status.

**Diversity** - Differences among individuals, families, communities, and nations in one or more demographic indicators (i.e., race, gender, national origin, native language, religion, age, disability, marital status, family background, or economic status.)

**Elective** - A semester - or year-long course selected through student choice and interest. Generally, electives address a special interest area, such as fine or performing arts, communication, foreign language, industrial technology, and home economics.

**Exploratory Programs** - Short-term learning experiences designed to help students explore and discover their changing attitudes and interests, as well as meet their developmental needs. The programs include academic and special interest areas (e.g., art, business, computers, foreign language and culture, home economics, industrial technology, and music).

**Flexible Groupings** - A grouping strategy in which students are brought together for a specific purpose for a short period of time.

**Flexible Scheduling** - Instruction organized in time blocks which include extended periods of time for interdisciplinary teaching or selected core curriculum subjects.

**Heterogeneous Grouping** - A grouping strategy that mixes students of differing abilities and achievement.

**Higher-Level Thinking Skills** - Those thinking skills that require more than rote or simple recall of information, such as analysis, application, and problem solving. (Refer to the Foundation Skills of the state's Certificate of Initial Mastery).

**Inservice** - Classes, conferences, workshops, or meetings which help practicing educators improve their professional skills.

**Integrated Curriculum** - A conscious and planned effort to tie together various content areas to make natural connections between the knowledge and skills being taught. Commonly accomplished through themes, projects, and real-life tasks.

**Interdisciplinary** - Teaching by an individual or team which combines subject matter traditionally taught as separate, non-related content.

**Interdisciplinary Teams** - Two or more teachers representing different disciplines who form a team and organize their instructional program and curriculum for a common group of students. These teams are often referred to as IDTs.

**Middle Level Education** - Schools and educational programs organized to address the unique needs of young adolescent students (typically, 10- to 14-year-olds).

**NMSA** - National Middle School Association.

**OMLA** - Oregon Middle Level Association.

**Peer Helpers** - Students trained to provide tutorial or social support to their peers.

**Performance-Based Assessment** - Measuring of student progress based on appropriate performance tasks.

**Performance Task** - An assessment which requires the student to generate a response rather than select one from a list of options. It specifies the activities students complete to demonstrate proficiency and mirror as closely as possible the conditions under which the particular outcomes are exercised in authentic settings.

**Planning Time** - Time designated within the contract day for teachers to plan and collaborate.

**Portfolios** - A collection of items completed by an individual student which can be used to assess growth, progress, and proficiencies.

**Quest** - An instructional program and activities developed by the Lions Club, International to teach skills in decision making, effective communication, problem solving, goal setting, and self-esteem to young adolescents.

**Rubric** - An instrument used to judge the quality of student performance in relation to an outcome. Rubrics for the Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM) will typically be based on six point scales and will define the range of performance from not being able to perform in the outcome area at all to being able to perform at a superior level. Narrative descriptions at each point on the scale will provide the information needed to help form a judgment about where a student performance falls on the scale.

**School-Within-A-School** - A grouping strategy designed to reduce the impact of large numbers of students by dividing students into stable, ongoing groups smaller than the full student population. Each group would have its own staff members. These groups often are referred to as “houses,” “communities,” or “small communities for learning.”

**Self-Directed Learning** - An instructional approach in which students demonstrate their ability to direct their own learning, including planning and carrying out complex projects.

**Service Learning** - Community service programs that are integrated into the curriculum to help students understand the connection between what they learn and how they live.

**Student Learning Outcome** - A broad statement describing what students are expected to know and be able to do upon earning a Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM). There are eleven student learning outcomes for the CIM.

**Teacher as Facilitator** - The teacher’s role is to organize the environment so students can be actively involved in the learning process (different from the traditional role of the teacher as an imparter of knowledge).

**Thinking Classroom** - An instructional model in which students demonstrate their ability to think critically, creatively, and reflectively in making decisions and solving problems.

**Twenty-First Century Council** - Site-based decision-making group composed of teachers, classified staff, administrators, parents, and others. This council was established by the passage of HB 3565 (Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century) and is frequently referred to as a “site council” in 24J.

**Young Adolescents** - A term described students usually between the ages of 10 to 14-year-olds. This stage of physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development often is referred to as “transescence.”

**APPENDIX E**

**OREGON STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S  
MIDDLE SCHOOL LEVEL TASK FORCE  
SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**



## HB 3565 Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century

Oregon Department of Education  
Salem, Oregon

### *Middle Level Task Force Summary of Recommendations*

The Oregon Educational Act for the 21st Century (HB 3565) passed by the 1991 Legislative Assembly, calls for a restructured education system to achieve the state's goals of the "best educated citizens in the nation by the year 2000 and a work force equal to any in the world by the year 2010." To begin this massive restructuring effort, ten task forces were created to explore ways to initiate the reform and provide guidance for implementation: Alternative Learning Environments, Certificate of Advanced Mastery, Certificate of Initial Mastery, Employment of Minors, Extended School Day/Year, Integration of Social Services, Middle Level, Non-Graded Primary, School Choice, and Site Based Decision Making. Representation on each task force included educators, parents, members of business and industry, and others interested in assisting with the initial phase of development.

The Middle Level Task Force took its charge from Section 19g of HB 3565:

*The Department of Education shall study and develop plans to insure that the school restructuring efforts framed in this Act address the unique learning and developmental needs of the middle educational levels between the early childhood education and Certificate of Initial Mastery levels detailed in the Act. This shall be done in consultation with teachers, parents and administrators from schools serving middle level students. The Department of Education shall report to the Sixty-seventh Legislative Assembly as to agency plans and legislative considerations needed on the matter.*

The following is a summary of the recommendations included in the task force final report (January 1993).

#### **Students**

1. Grades 4-10, or the educational programs serving students leaving early childhood education and working toward completion of the Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM), have the following characteristics:
  - a. Upon entering middle level programs, students join a small community in which people get to know each other well to create a climate for intellectual development.
  - b. Every student have a least one adult within the school community who takes the time to talk with the student about academic matters,

personal issues, and the importance of performing well in school.

- c. Every student participate in community service.
- d. Each student be perceived as an individual. Instruction and curriculum will address the student's learning style, interests and achievement level.

#### **Curriculum**

1. Curriculum for the middle level should integrate all areas of learning, take into account the full range of individual abilities, needs, interests, and styles, include developmentally appropriate strategies,

culturally appropriate strategies, and the essential components of a middle level curriculum as referenced in the position statement.

2. Time and inservice opportunities be provided for teachers to create and implement developmentally appropriate and culturally appropriate strategies.
3. Districts provide adequate daily time for teachers to meet as teams to plan to integrate instruction.
4. Teacher education programs provide training specific to the needs of middle level teachers and administrators as outlined in this position statement.
5. The Department of Education develop middle level curriculum models.
6. The Teacher Standards and Practices Commission allow flexibility during the transition period to middle level endorsement so teachers can be assigned outside their current area of endorsement.
7. Exploratory programs be developed as part of middle level education. At the upper levels (grades 9-10 under current structure), the exploratory program would provide exposure to, at a minimum, the strands of the Certificate of Advanced Mastery (CAM).

#### **Assessment**

1. Districts provide fiscal resources and staff inservice for the development and implementation of developmentally appropriate, culturally appropriate, and varied assessment practices in grades 4-10.
2. The process of obtaining the CIM include ongoing assessments through the middle level grades.
3. Students who transfer to Oregon schools, who are home schooled and/or have attended private schools, be asked to demonstrate proficiency of outcomes leading to the CIM by participating in state-mandated procedures for assessment.
4. Statewide assessments take place at grades 4, 8 and 10 (CIM).

#### **Staffing**

1. By 1995, educators (teachers, counselors, media specialists, and administrators) entering middle level grades have a middle level endorsement.
2. Districts provide inservice training to current middle level staff to implement the recommendations made in this report.
3. Teacher education institutions provide programs leading to middle level endorsement.
4. Districts be required to use the 30 hours of staff development in OAR 581-22-503 for activities to create developmentally appropriate and culturally appropriate educational practices, with a minimum of 15 hours dedicated to the recommendations presented by the Middle Level Task Force.

#### **Resources**

1. Funding be provided for new buildings in districts with increasing enrollments and for remodeling in districts where buildings are in need of repair and/or where programs necessitate facility alterations.
2. The same level of funding be provided in districts where funding has been supported by the community (hold harmless districts).
3. Increase resources in districts where the lowest per pupil expenditures have been in existence.
4. Multiple parent/family outreach programs be provided.
5. Technology be funded as separate expenditure.
6. Tax credits be provided for businesses and employers who participate in serve learning endeavors.
7. Adequate funding and time be provided for staff development.

#### **Social Services**

1. The delivery of social services to students and their families by the joint responsibility of the school district and social service agencies.
2. School districts be responsible for providing space for social service agencies that will be centrally located within the school community.
3. Social service agencies assign staff to address the needs of the school and/or community (assignment will be defined by case load).
4. Resources be provided to the schools for on-site day care for teen parents.
5. School districts be responsible for providing on-site drug and alcohol counseling services to students.
6. School engage in partnerships with students, teachers, parents/families, and other professionals dealing with the student.
7. After-school child care be available.
8. Community-based routine health services be available to students and their families at the local school site or nearby.
9. Community education programs, which include resource libraries, parenting classes and workshops, be available for parents/families and the community.

**APPENDIX F**

**SALEM-KEIZER'S 1991 SYNOPSIS OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

## **LEARNING IN A TIME OF CHANGE AND CHALLENGE** **The Middle School Improvement Process**

### **Synopsis of Recommendations**

**(Approved by the Salem-Keizer School Board December 10, 1991)**

#### **Grade Configuration Recommendations**

- 1.1 The Salem-Keizer School District should move to a 6-7-8 grade configuration in middle schools.

#### **Curriculum And Instruction Recommendations**

- 2.1 All middle school students should develop learning strategies and study skills to become independent learners. Specific study skills instruction should be provided to students upon entering middle school. These skills should include:
  - Organizational skills.
  - Study skills.
  - Discussion skills.
  - Reference skills.
  - Skills for understanding personal learning styles.
  - Skills of independence.
  - Cooperative learning skills.
- 2.2 Middle schools should identify, develop, and integrate activities to promote the following in curriculum areas:
  - Communication skills—written and oral.
  - Problem solving and critical thinking skills.
  - The ability to work as a group member.
  - The ability to perform research and manipulate data.
  - A positive work ethic.
- 2.3 The middle school curriculum should develop the student's capacity to think clearly and critically and to act ethically.
- 2.4 Middle schools should provide a core academic curriculum which includes the sciences, multicultural education, and the arts. The goal is to prepare students to think critically; lead an active, healthy life; behave ethically; and assume the responsibilities of citizenship in the 21st Century.
- 2.5 The core curriculum should be organized to allow for flexible scheduling of people, space, and time. The core curriculum for grades 6-7-8 will include language arts, social studies, mathematics, science, personal life skills (such as health, consumer awareness, decision making, and mental fitness), physical education, and technology.



- 2.6 An exploratory curriculum should be provided for all middle school students as part of the instructional program. Exploratory courses should be presented in blocks of time less than a semester in length. Example subjects include the following: art, drama, writing, language sampler, journalism and computer awareness. Examples of these blocks include:
  - A six-week introductory course to promote student interest.
  - A twelve-week introductory course to provide hands-on experience.
- 2.7 The middle school should contain some year-long electives. There are elective subjects which are developmental and require a long-term commitment.
- 2.8 An alternative grading system should be developed for the exploratory classes. Furthermore, students should be allowed to enroll in the exploratory classes without predefined levels of knowledge and/or skills mastered.
- 2.9 Curriculum and instruction should be integrated to enable all students to develop skills in critical and creative thinking, decision making, and problem solving.
- 2.10 Current technology should be introduced to students in all curricular areas and integrated during their first year of middle school. Current technology also should be incorporated into all facets of the teaching and learning process. The following are examples of the ways technology should be integrated:
  - As a research, data manipulation, and work production tool for students.
  - As a communication tool for parents and students.
  - As a teaching tool by teachers.
  - As an instructional management tool by teachers.
- 2.11 The existing performance standards should be formally communicated to students, parents, and the community at regular intervals.
- 2.12 Assessments should be administered in all curricular areas, both core and exploratory courses. Assessments should be varied and match the methods and products of instruction as well as student learning styles. Assessments include:
  - State assessments such as the Essential Learning Skills Tests.
  - District assessments such as the six areas of Basic Skill Competency testing, the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), performance assessments, and criterion reference tests.
  - Individual teacher assessments such as paper and pencil tests, portfolios, presentations, and projects.
- 2.13 The middle school program should emphasize positive self-concept and student success.
- 2.14 Curriculum and instruction should be matched to individual student needs and strengths allowing students to progress at their own rate.
- 2.15 Middle schools should be organized in small communities for learning. This model encourages stable, close, mutually respectful relationships with adults and peers.

- 2.16 Interdisciplinary teacher-teams, rather than subject-matter specialists, should be organized to allow flexible scheduling of time, people, and space to reflect the needs and characteristics of middle grade students.
- 2.17 A key feature in the restructuring of the middle school should be flexibility in the duration of classes. Instruction should be organized in terms of time blocks that facilitate multiple goals and include extended units of time for teaching selected core curriculum subjects through interdisciplinary teachers or teams.
- 2.18 Exclusive tracking systems should be eliminated and replaced whenever possible by flexible systems of grouping for instruction.
- 2.19 The middle school curriculum should provide time in the instructional day for an advisor/mentor program. The activities in the advisory program should focus upon increasing the self-esteem of the student. The advisory teacher should become an advocate for his or her students to allow students to connect to at least one adult role model in the school.

#### **Personal Development Recommendations**

- 3.1 Each middle school student should be assigned an advisor. The middle school curriculum must provide time in the instructional day for an advisor/mentor program. The advisor should contact the student and parents prior to the student's starting middle school. This contact should continue through middle school with advisors conferring with parents and students to discuss programs and progress.
- 3.2 Because teachers need to understand the needs of the "whole child" (social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development), inservice training should be provided for all middle school staff in such areas as:
  - Personal development skills for adolescents (such as REACH, Quest).
  - Adolescent development.
  - Principles of guidance.
  - Multicultural education.
- 3.3 Self-esteem and self-worth, plus strong adult models, are keys to young adolescents having successful lives. Activities, both curricular and co-curricular, need to be paired with staff training, parent training, and outreach. A school environment that provides for the well-being of the "whole child" needs to be developed. The specific skills middle school students should learn are:
  - Developing the ability to say "no" to drugs and alcohol; refusal skills.
  - Communicating; interpersonal relations.
  - Decision making; problem solving.
  - Cooperating; working together.
  - Making appropriate life decisions.

- Developing a sense of self-worth and self-esteem.
- 3.4 The involvement of parents, families, citizens, business, and industry are critical to the effective partnership necessary for school improvements and student success.
  - 3.5 The middle school should develop strategies for student outreach to the community through activities such as:
    - Performances of musical groups at community events.
    - Assistance with community needs.
    - Identification of a service project.
  - 3.6 Ongoing, quality, two-way communication between school and parents is vital. The middle school should provide support to parents of middle school students to enhance their understanding of the diverse needs of their children. Families and schools have separate but interdependent responsibilities in the education of students. Suggested components include:
    - Development of opportunities for parental involvement.
    - Development of a transition program for parents of students moving from elementary to middle school.
    - A Parent-school partnership model.
  - 3.7 Care should be given to define middle grade education on its own terms as opposed to the use of organizational patterns appropriate to the other levels of education.
  - 3.8 An orderly transition should occur between the elementary school, the middle school, and the high school.
  - 3.9 Strategies should be adopted which facilitate an orderly, enjoyable, and successful transition for students as they enter the District's middle schools.

#### **Activities Recommendations**

- 4.0 Consider the following goals for middle school activity programs:
  - Ensure that middle school activities are available to all students.
  - Ensure that scheduling within the school day facilitates the opportunity for participation in clubs and intramurals.
  - Develop self-esteem and personal "connectedness" to school through opportunities which promote participation, interaction, accomplishment, and service.
  - Provide an opportunity to apply previously-acquired academic skills in a less formal educational setting.
  - Provide an opportunity for social interaction in a setting involving teamwork and cooperation which leads to the completion of a common task or product.
  - Provide opportunities to experience success, personal satisfaction, and learning for the

joy of discovery.

- Promote physical fitness and exposure to fulfilling, healthy, lifetime, physical leisure activities.

- 4.1 Implement the following guidelines for student councils:
  - Student council should be open to all students who meet GPA and citizenship requirements.
  - Each semester, each "homeroom" should select 1-2 representatives and alternates depending on school size.
  - Student body officers should be elected one or two times a year; candidates may give campaign speeches in homeroom/assembly settings.
  - Committees for student body activities should be open to all students.
- 4.2 All middle schools should provide some form of academic honor club such as National Junior Honor Society. Appropriate guidelines need to be adopted by each school and communicated to each school community.
- 4.3 A wide range of activity clubs should be offered at the middle school level to increase the students' social, intellectual, and physical development.
  - Clubs should have nonrestrictive membership requirements.
  - Funding options might include Associated Student Body funds, parent scholarships, or special fund-raising projects.
  - School schedules should facilitate regular student club meetings and other extra-curricular participation.
- 4.4 Middle schools should strive to give official recognition and rewards for every student's positive behavior, academic achievement, skills, talents, accomplishments, and service. Opportunities for involvement and special effort should be made to recognize average and below-average achievers for tasks or achievements accomplished.
- 4.5 A wide variety of special activities should be offered frequently and designed to involve the entire student body, staff, parents and community. Suggestions include:
  - Assemblies, activity fairs, breaks, holiday parties, special days and weeks should be offered for such reasons as entertainment, teaching/motivational tools, promoting school spirit, and providing recognition.
  - Certain activities may lend themselves to separation by grade levels, i.e., dances.
  - Schools should publicize widely to ensure maximum student participation and family awareness of the event.
- 4.6 Middle schools should provide a variety of organized intramural activities.
- 4.7 Middle schools should provide an intramural program which gives the students the opportunity to participate in activities outside the school's regular athletic program.
  - An emphasis should be placed on instruction and participation.
  - There should be no interschool competition in the intramural component.

- 4.8 Middle schools should provide students with an opportunity to compete in an organized athletic program. Students should compete against opponents of comparable age, maturity, and skill levels.

### **Staffing Recommendations**

- 5.1 Identify certification needs by curriculum areas considering the allocation and constraints of each middle school.
- 5.2 Develop a survey to determine the personal preference of each staff member currently teaching in the grades affected by the new middle school plan.
- 5.3 Staff each middle school according to each school's specific program needs and the teacher placement and hiring guidelines.
- Coordinate staff placement consistent with district personnel policies, procedures, and contracts.
  - Plan and provide necessary inservice training for all staff members.
- 5.4 Interdisciplinary teams may be organized around the needs of building populations and staffs. It is suggested that, in staffing these teams, consideration be given to educators who have a commitment to the philosophy of the organizational structure and are able to use instructional strategies for the intended age group. Such strategies may include:
- Responding to individual student needs.
  - Maintaining flexible groupings.
  - Creating assignments, interactions, and assessments.
  - Possessing skills in working successfully across subject areas.
  - Involving students actively in the learning process.
- 5.5 The district should recruit and hire teachers reflecting a variety of races and cultures.
- 5.6 Staff development activities including courses and training should focus on the physical, intellectual, social, and emotional needs of middle school students. Training should be provided for all staff.
- 5.7 The Salem-Keizer School District should actively support activities and programs that enhance quality middle level training. For example, support should be extended to middle level associations, the Teachers Standards and Practices Commission (TSPC) certification changes, and higher education programs focused upon the middle school.

### **Communication Recommendations**

- 6.1 Effective communication should facilitate understanding of the Middle School Improvement Process recommendations. This task can be accomplished by concentrating on three target

audiences: (1) parents of school-aged children, especially those with primary students who will be affected by restructuring, (2) other segments of the community without school-aged children, and (3) District staff. A viable plan needs to be instituted that will enrich our community for the present and the future.

#### **Facilities/Operations Recommendations**

- 7.1 The instructional program and the organization pattern of the middle school dictate the facility requirements. The facilities should allow for varied instructional experiences, support the middle school concept, and meet the personnel and support staff needs.
- 7.2 The four-classroom pod arrangement allows for a cluster of interdisciplinary team instruction, with adjacent teacher planning/work/conference areas. The classrooms need to be large and flexible enough to accommodate both large and multiple small group instruction. At least one-third of the rooms should be equipped with sink, counter, and storage units.
- 7.3 The utilization of both cable television and computer-related technology will increase in all of our schools in the future. In order to meet this heavy demand, the electrical modifications will need to be increased. Careful planning will need to take place regarding the purchase of equipment and the transition to new equipment, in light of the rapid technological changes occurring in the field of computer science.
- 7.4 The installation of covered play areas will be needed for sixth grade students in the middle schools depending upon the structure of their day and the nature of their P.E. curriculum. Private rest room stalls and showers should be installed in both boys' and girls' locker rooms to maintain privacy which at this age is a major concern to students.
- 7.5 Courses such as foreign languages, home economics, art, vocal and instrumental music and technology will need lab spaces which are flexible and allow for exploratory activities within the subject areas.
- 7.6 There will be an increased demand for in-school health care services as more students with serious health problems mainstream into the public school system. The projected enrollment increases will also put additional pressure on health room facilities. Schools will need to have adequate space designed specifically for limited health care services. Storage for medicines needing refrigeration, disposal units for contaminated items, and additional cots and cot space will be needed.
- 7.7 Our increasing enrollments will require additional parking for staff, parents and community members assisting in the support of the middle school.

**APPENDIX G**

**ACTION PLAN TIMELINESS**

# ACTION PLAN TIMELINES

Middle School Improvement Process  
Salem-Kelzer Public Schools

→ = Time Frame

♦ = Critical Activity

GOAL 1: CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION	ACTIVITY TIMELINE BY YEAR/QUARTER												
	1993				1994				1995				FUTURE
	W	SP	SU	F	W	SP	SU	F	W	SP	SU	F	
1.1 Revise philosophy, goals, and standards	→												
1.1.7 Print and distribute		♦											
1.2 Define common curricula	→											→	
1.2.3 Define core curriculum				♦									
1.2.4 Define exploratory curriculum				♦									
1.2.5 Define elective curriculum					♦								
1.3 Develop authentic assessments	→											→	
1.3.5 Promote changes to grading practices						♦							
1.4 Develop interdisciplinary teaching practices	→											→	
1.4.5 Recommendation for planning time					♦								
1.5 Coordinate improvement with technology plan	→								→				
1.5.2 Define technology instruction for sixth grade				♦									
1.6 Develop appropriate instructional practices				→	→	→	→	→	→				
1.6.2 Recommend changes to current practice					♦								
1.7 Develop service learning strategies				→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	



## ACTION PLAN TIMELINES

Middle School Improvement Process  
Salem-Keizer Public Schools

→ = Time Frame

♦ = Critical Activity

GOAL 2: SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT	ACTIVITY TIMELINE BY YEAR/QUARTER												
	1993				1994				1995				FUTURE
	W	SP	SU	F	W	SP	SU	F	W	SP	SU	F	
2.1 Create small communities for learning	→									→			
2.1.1 Recommend best practices to pilot				♦									
2.2 Implement transition activities				→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	Through Spring 1996
2.2.1 Assess current transitional activities					♦								
2.3 Provide co-curricular opportunities		→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	
2.3.7 Recommend intramural/activities block within school day					♦								
2.4 Involve community in meaningful partnerships	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	
2.4.3 Incorporate recommendations into LSAC/site-based councils				♦									
2.5 Ensure student access to health services				→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	
2.5.2 Develop model for site-based delivery						♦							

# ACTION PLAN TIMELINES

Middle School Improvement Process  
Salem-Keizer Public Schools

→ = Time Frame

♦ = Critical Activity

GOAL 3: STAFF DEVELOPMENT	ACTIVITY TIMELINE BY YEAR/QUARTER													
	1993				1994				1995				FUTURE	
	W	SP	SU	F	W	SP	SU	F	W	SP	SU	F		
3.1 Identify licensed staffing needs/goals				→	→									
3.1.3 Determine recruitment goals						♦								
3.2 Identify internal resource pool						→	→							
3.2.2 Survey staff on 1995 desires							♦							
3.3 Select and assign staff					→									
3.3.3 Select core teams						♦								
3.4 Prepare and train staff		→												
3.4.1 Survey staff			♦											
3.4.2 Implement training		♦												
3.4.4 Provide time to develop curricula							♦							

# ACTION PLAN TIMELINES

Middle School Improvement Process  
Salem-Keizer Public Schools

→ = Time Frame

♦ = Critical Activity

GOAL 4: COMMUNICATIONS	ACTIVITY TIMELINE BY YEAR/QUARTER												
	1993				1994				1995				FUTURE
	W	SP	SU	F	W	SP	SU	F	W	SP	SU	F	
4.1 Communicate with/involve target audiences	→											→	Through Fall 1996
4.1.10 Present plan to ODE regarding curriculum and CIM								♦					
4.1.11 Name new facilities						♦							

## ACTION PLAN TIMELINES

Middle School Improvement Process  
Salem-Keizer Public Schools

→ = Time Frame

♦ = Critical Activity

GOAL 5: OPERATIONS	ACTIVITY TIMELINE BY YEAR/QUARTER												
	1993				1994				1995				FUTURE
	W	SP	SU	F	W	SP	SU	F	W	SP	SU	F	
5.1 Determine student attendance for 1994		♦	→				→						
5.1.2 Communicate impact		♦											
5.2 Determine budgets for '94 and '95 openings	♦				♦				♦				
5.2.3 Pinpoint underfunded needs	♦												
5.3 Implement boundary change process	→				→	♦	→		→				
5.3.4 Assist with boundary hearings					♦								
5.4 Implement school day structure					→			→					
5.4.4 Recommend changes to start/end times								♦					
5.5 Evaluate progress, impact, and success				→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	Through Summer 1996
5.5.4 Conduct formal evaluation													♦ Spring 1996-Summer 1996

**APPENDIX H**

**ACTION PLAN GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

## **ACTION PLAN**

### Goals and Objectives

#### **Goal 1**

#### **CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

**Implement a strong curriculum supported by appropriate instructional practices.**

- Objective 1.1      Revise district middle school philosophy, goals, and standards to reflect target student outcomes.
- Objective 1.2      Define district common core, exploratory, elective, and advisory curriculum consistent with target student outcomes.
- Objective 1.3      Develop authentic assessment methodology consistent with target student outcomes.
- Objective 1.4      Develop integrated curricular and interdisciplinary teaching practices which promote target student outcomes.
- Objective 1.5      Coordinate middle school improvement with district technology plan.
- Objective 1.6      Develop appropriate instructional practices which address individual student needs and target student outcomes.
- Objective 1.7      Develop service learning strategies consistent with target student outcomes in appropriate curricular areas.

#### **Goal 2**

#### **SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT**

**Provide a positive school environment which fosters intellectual development, personal growth, health, and fitness.**

- Objective 2.1      Create small communities for learning.
- Objective 2.2      Implement activities which successfully transition students into and out of middle school.
- Objective 2.3      Provide all students co-curricular opportunities for learning, self-esteem development, school connectedness, and fitness.
- Objective 2.4      Involve the community in meaningful partnerships which support the educational process.
- Objective 2.5      Ensure student access to appropriate health and human services.

**Goal 3****STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

**Staff middle schools with appropriately trained and prepared teams of teachers, administrators, and support personnel.**

- Objective 3.1 Identify licensed staffing needs and recruitment goals for 1995-96.
- Objective 3.2 Identify internal human resource pool.
- Objective 3.3 Select and assign staff with desired background, experience, and training to work effectively with young adolescents.
- Objective 3.4 Prepare and train staff to successfully teach young adolescents and implement middle school improvements in curriculum, instruction, and school environment.

**Goal 4****COMMUNICATIONS**

**Engage parents, staff, and community in the Middle School Improvement Process through comprehensive, two-way communications.**

- Objective 4.1 Communicate with and involve the three target audiences in the Middle School Improvement Process.

**Goal 5****OPERATIONS**

**Create systemic change in school and district operations to support, facilitate, and evaluate the Middle School Improvement Process.**

- Objective 5.1 Determine student attendance for middle school opening in 1994.
- Objective 5.2 Determine budget expenditures necessary for 1994 and 1995 openings.
- Objective 5.3 Implement a comprehensive boundary change process.
- Objective 5.4 Implement a school day structure which incorporates recommended instruction and school environment program changes.
- Objective 5.5 Evaluate the progress, impact, and success of middle school improvement implementation and program changes.

**SOURCE:**

*An Action Plan (Middle School Improvement Process).* Salem, OR: Salem-Keizer Public Schools, 1993.

**APPENDIX I**

**SALEM-KEIZER'S MIDDLE SCHOOL TRAINING PLAN**



## Training

### Introduction

Through the Middle School Improvement Process, Salem-Keizer middle schools are being restructured to meet the unique cognitive, social, emotional, and physiological needs of young adolescents. Accordingly, staff must be uniquely prepared to work effectively with middle school students.

Teachers and support staff are being asked to make changes in what they teach, how they teach, and the ways in which they support the middle school program and its students. For their part, schools and the district have attempted to provide training and technical assistance to empower staff to make these changes.

Most of the middle level professional development work has been done at the building level during 1994-95. These efforts are highlighted in each school's narrative within the preceeding SCHOOL PROFILES section.

In addition, several district-level activities have focused on providing specific training, a self-assessment instrument, a comprehensive resource library, and attendance at training seminars.

### Class trains students in quality indicators

**Middle School Self-Study.** The *Middle School Self-Study* class is in its second year, having been piloted in 1993-94. This year, the class has an enrollment of 18 people, including middle school teachers, sixth grade teachers, classified staff, and support staff. It is a 20-hour, two-credit class offered through Portland State University.

Members of the class have been trained in the quality indicators of a successful middle school. A self-study guide is one of the main components of the class. It gives teachers and other staff an opportunity to review what is now happening in

## Training

**Self-assessment  
looks at progress,  
model practices,  
training needs.**

**Library compiles  
district's middle  
level resources**

their school and classroom and examine what they can do to change or improve to meet the standard of the indicators.

Another component of the class is reading and discussion of current research relating to the topics in the self-study guide. The course description and reading list are available upon request from Grace LeBlanc at North Area Operations.

This course meets the needs of a wide range of teachers and staff members, and it has proven to be an excellent way to inform people from across the district about different programs and establish a network. The class will be offered again fall 1995.

**Middle School Survey.** A survey was conducted with staff at each middle school at the beginning of the 1994-95 school year. It was designed to accomplish three purposes:

1. Develop an inventory of current practices in the district's six middle schools to assist in networking and setting up visitations.
2. Conduct a self-assessment of middle school improvement progress being made.
3. Determine professional development needs for use in designing future staff training efforts.

Survey results were shared with the respective school's site council. In addition, every school received the full compilation of effective programs and staff able to serve as resources. Also, the district's School Improvement Program Assistants (SIPAs) received a copy of the training needs identified by the middle school(s) in their regional area of the district.

Hundreds of resources on a wide range of middle level and young adolescent related topics have been organized and cataloged into the Middle School Improvement Process Library at the South Area

## Training, continued

**Conference attendees bring back resources and ideas**

Operations office. These resources—including books, audio- and videotapes, filmstrips, notebooks, and study guides—are available for reference and checkout. The complete listing appears in the appendix to this report.

District staff attended the National Middle School Association conference in Cincinnati during November 1994 and the state conference conducted by the Oregon Middle Level Association in Eugene during January 1995. Materials, session topics, and training ideas gathered at those conferences were shared at building- and district-level meeting and discussion groups.

**APPENDIX J**

**THOSE DESIRING FURTHER INFORMATION**

## **THOSE DESIRING FURTHER INFORMATION**

The documents which served as a basis for this Middle School Improvement Process constituted over 500 pages and were authored by a variety of Salem-Keizer School District staff.

Those desiring further information should write to the following:

Middle School Coordinator  
Salem-Keizer School District  
1309 Ferry Street SE  
P.O. Box 12024  
Salem, Oregon 97309-0024