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July 28, 1976
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ORGANIZATIONAL PATTERNS IN MONTANA MIDDLE SCHOOLS

by

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ABSTRACT

In this study the prevalent organizational patterns utilized in middle schools in Montana during the 1975-1976 school year were determined.

A questionnaire was administered to 151 principals of Montana middle schools. Emphasis was placed on determining the types of vertical, horizontal, and grade organization employed in individual middle schools. Findings were organized numerically in categories according to the school district's classification, and presented in tabular form. A composite figure from each of the categories was shown, along with a corresponding percentage of the returned questionnaires. A brief discussion on the results of each item was also presented.

It was found that a graded middle school, using a combination of grades seven and eight was the most popular vertical method of organization. The popularity of the inclusion of grades seven and eight in the middle schools is directly related to the additional funding available for students in these grades under the provisions of section 75-6905.1 of the Revised Codes of Montana.

A large majority of the respondents listed the departmental method as the preferred horizontal organization.

The growth of the middle school has occurred primarily in class two and class three districts. It is also noted that in these districts, a majority of the middle schools share facilities with their local high schools.

The results of the survey seem to indicate that even though the words "middle school" are often used by many districts, a true commitment to the adoption of the middle school philosophy, with its resulting effect upon organizational patterns, has been slow in developing.

It is suggested that guidelines for the establishment and development of middle schools be prepared by the Montana State Department of Public Instruction and be made available to interested districts.

Teacher training institutions are encouraged to examine their programs, and prepare to meet the needs of the staffs of the middle schools by offering relevant courses.

It is recommended that further studies be conducted by interested parties to gather additional information on Montana middle schools in order that a more detailed assessment of their growth can be made.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The middle school has been experiencing increasing popularity throughout the United States in recent years. Its growth may be traced to an attempt by school districts to adopt a new educational pattern designed to overcome observed weaknesses in junior high schools.

Central to the middle school concept is the establishment of an educational institution which will provide a smooth transition from the elementary school to the high school for students in the 10 to 14 year old age group. An effort is made to furnish an environment providing for the child's unique social, physical, emotional, and psychological development. By developing programs based on knowledge concerning characteristics of children in this age group, meaningful educational experiences may be provided for individuals during this period of transescence.

In Montana the growth of the middle school occurred primarily after the passage of a school funding bill by the 1974 Montana legislature. (See Appendix A.) This bill, which became section 75-6905.1 of the Revised Codes of Montana, provided increased funding for seventh and eighth grade students in schools meeting the Montana State Department of Public Instruction's standards for accredited middle schools.

This study was concerned with obtaining and compiling data pertaining to the organizational patterns of middle schools in Montana.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem of this study was to determine the organizational patterns of middle schools in Montana during the 1975-1976 school year.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

A preliminary review of literature pertaining to middle schools had revealed an almost total lack of information concerning any aspect of Montana middle schools. Consequently, one objective of this study was to provide current information on organizational patterns in Montana middle schools.

Through this study, information was obtained and compiled in order that districts considering the establishment of a middle school may obtain referent information on how presently established middle schools are organized.

In addition, those districts having established middle schools may obtain a compilation of data related to present organizational patterns in Montana middle schools.

Information obtained through this study may also motivate

teacher training institutions to review their programs concerning the training and preparation of personnel specifically for the middle school.

GENERAL QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED

1. What types of vertical organizational patterns are being utilized in Montana middle schools?

2. What types of horizontal organizational patterns are being used in Montana middle schools?

3. What grade organizational patterns exist in Montana middle schools?

GENERAL PROCEDURE

In order to meet the stated objectives of this study, the following procedures were utilized:

1. Working definitions of a middle school, and of vertical and horizontal organizational patterns were established.

2. A review of literature covering all aspects of middle school organizational patterns was conducted.

3. A determination of Montana middle schools was made by contacting the Elementary Education Department of the Montana State Department of Public Instruction.

4. To determine current organizational patterns, an

instrument was constructed and sent to all building principals of Montana middle schools.

5. The data compiled from the instruments returned to the investigator is presented in subsequent chapters.

DELIMITATIONS

The population of this study was confined to those Montana middle schools which have met the standards for accreditation as established by state law and determined by the Board of Public Education and the Montana State Department of Public Instruction for the 1975-1976 school year.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following terms are defined as they were used in this study:

Middle School - a school unit which follows the elementary unit and precedes the high school unit; it includes students from grades seven and eight, and does not extend below grade five or above grade eight.

Vertical Organization - a method of organization which is concerned with the classification of pupils for their movement upward from the time of admission to the time of departure.

Horizontal Organization - a method of organization which is concerned with the manner in which the student body is divided among available

teachers during a specific school year.

Graded - a method of vertical organization built around the lock-step progression of students through various grade levels.

Nongraded - a method of vertical organization in which students' progress is related to personal characteristics rather than to age or grade level.

Self-contained - a type of organization under which one teacher is assigned a group of children for instructional purposes throughout the school day. This may be modified through the implementation of specialty teachers who enter the classroom at certain times to help the regular teacher in such areas as music and physical education.

Departmental - a type of organization in which the education of a specific group of children is handled by a number of individual teachers who have been selected to teach certain areas of the curriculum on the basis of their qualifications.

Team Teaching - a plan for organizing and assigning members of a school staff in which two or more staff members are responsible for cooperatively planning and carrying on the classroom activities and educational experiences of a group of children.

Differentiated Staffing - a plan for assigning staff members to various levels of responsibility. Each level has differing amounts of governing and teaching responsibilities.

Interdisciplinary Teams - a plan for organizing and assigning members

of a school staff in which team members are selected from different subject matter disciplines, and they are responsible for cooperatively planning and carrying on co-ordinated classroom activities and educational experiences for a group of children by combining instruction in the different subject areas.

Individualized Instruction - a plan by which each individual student has a personalized course of instruction.

SUMMARY

The effort on the part of educators to develop a middle school which would act as a transitional bridge from the elementary school to the high school, has been receiving nationwide attention. In these middle schools, efforts are made to meet the various, social, physical, emotional, and psychological needs of the students during the difficult period of transescence.

The establishment of the middle school is a comparatively new development in Montana. Its growth was greatly stimulated by the passage of a school funding bill in 1974 which became section 75-6905.1 of the Revised Codes of Montana. This bill provided for increased funding for seventh and eighth grade students in schools meeting the standards of accredited middle schools as established by the Montana State Department of Public Instruction.

Because of its newness, there is a lack of information

pertaining to Montana middle schools. In an effort to partially fill this gap, this investigator proposed to conduct a survey of middle school principals. Through this survey, information pertaining to the types of organizational patterns employed in Montana middle schools during the 1975-1976 school year was collected and compiled.

The information obtained from this survey provides current reference information for those people who have an interest in the types of organizational patterns presently utilized in middle schools in Montana.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, four areas dealing with different aspects of the middle school are reviewed in order to provide background information on the middle school.

Initially, the general background and the philosophy for the establishment of a middle school is presented. This is followed by discussions dealing with general characteristics of the students in this age group, the type of curriculum needed, and the organization of the middle school.

This material is presented in an effort to provide pertinent information on a rapidly developing area of education ---- the middle school.

HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY

The first recognized middle school was opened in Bay City, Michigan in 1950. It was organized around grades five through eight. Instruction took place primarily in self-contained classrooms with the exception of special classes such as music, art, home economics, and industrial arts (Kindred, 1968).

The initial development of middle schools was hindered and

over-shadowed by the fantastic growth and acceptance of another intermediate school, the junior high.

It wasn't until the late 1950's and early 1960's that interest was directed toward the middle school. The renewed interest came about as a result of growing dissatisfaction on the part of some educators with the direction taken by the junior high school. The trend for the junior high school to become just that ---- a "junior" high school by copying the curriculum, social events, and the philosophy of the high school, gave rise to the call for a school in the middle that would truly provide a meaningful transition from the elementary school to the high school. A school which would "combine the elementary school's concern for the whole child with the secondary school's stress on scholarship and intellectual development (Vars, 1968:4)."

Coupled with what some called the failure of the junior high to meet the needs of the age group involved, was the realization that children were maturing more rapidly, social interest patterns were developing earlier, and social peer interaction was occurring at an earlier time (Eichhorn, 1966).

In view of these developments, Eichhorn (1966:vii) felt that what was needed was:

> A school that would provide the careful integration of an educational program resulting from cultural forces, mental, emotional, and physical growth factors, administrative variables, guidance activities, and teaching requirements.

Another factor involved in the development of the middle school was the renewed interest in the benefits gained from a high school which contained a ninth grade. The idea was advanced that a four year high school could provide for better sequential development of courses, and allow for more intensive and effective preparation of college bound students.

It was also felt that the middle school, being a new organizational structure, could provide a better atmosphere for the use and implementation of innovative ideas and methods (Ruebel, 1973).

It is interesting to note that the junior high school was developed to solve many of the problems that now concern the middle school. As a result, for the middle school to successfully fulfill its role, it should look closely at the junior high movement and attempt to avoid the mistakes and pitfalls encountered by that "middle school."

STUDENTS

To fully understand the need for a middle school, one must look at the clientele served.

Terms such as the betweenager, pre-adolescent, and pre-pubescent are some that have been used by writers and speakers in an effort to describe or classify the 10-14 year old age group associated with the middle school. Eichhorn (1966:3) attempted to define the

period covered by the age group by developing the word transescence, which means:

> That period in human development which begins in late childhood prior to the onset of puberty and extends through the early stages of adolescence.

Regardless of the name, the period referred to is one of the most complex periods of human development. It is characterized by rapid growth and development, and increased awareness of the world in which the student lives.

At this particular stage of his development, internal changes in the child are starting to effect his relationship with his environment, and external forces in the environment start to influence him to a greater degree than ever before (Eichhorn, 1966).

Interests change rapidly, and attention spans vary. Peer groups become an integral part of his life as he strives for peer acceptance and approval. Conformity to peer group ideas becomes a common pattern.

As the child tries to determine his role and place in life, he tends to become more self-centered and concerned about his problems.

The apparent conflict of the desire for conformity generated by peer group pressures, and the need for development of a positive self-image are illustrative of the types of contradictions that beset the child at this stage of development.

The changes brought about by physical growth and sexual

development effect his personality and social adjustment. Tendencies to be awkward, and increasing efforts to determine their sex roles are familiar problems of this age group.

The child's ability to reason develops noticeably at this age, and he starts to question things which were once accepted without question. He often challenges the reasons behind authority and rules, and at times becomes almost obsessed with ideas of fairness and equality.

Moods ranging from extreme enthusiasm to those of a more reflective nature may be found.

The child's desire for independence is growing, yet he feels a need for support and a feeling of security (Kindred, 1968).

During this developmental stage, the student must be given help, time, and opportunities to more or less "get it all together." It's a difficult time, but a school, properly oriented, could make this transition stage less traumatic.

CURRICULUM

The curriculum of the middle school should be designed not only by teachers and administrators, but by child psychologists and the students themselves. It must allow for the diagnosis of the student's needs, and provide the necessary prescriptive activities, experiences, and services required to fill those needs (DiVirgilio, 1972).

An environment in which the child and his success is more important than the program must be fostered. Learning opportunities must be provided that develop and enhance the child's physical, emotional, social, and mental well-being. At all times it must be remembered that each student is unique and has his own special characteristics and needs.

The child should be involved not only in course work but with things of personal interest. He should be taught the skills necessary for the effective use of knowledge, and for the proper development of his own ideals and beliefs. Ample opportunity for expressing himself must also be provided.

In the curriculum, provisions should be made for a variety of approaches. Flexible modular scheduling, career education, mini-courses, individualized instruction, and interdisciplinary teams are just some of the ways in which meaningful variety can be brought to the school day.

Each child should be offered courses from a general group of subjects such as math, science, and language arts, but the approach to teaching within the subject should reflect the basic needs of the student, with emphasis on concept development rather than on memorization.

The following are characteristics of middle school curriculums as determined by a study done by Nicholas P. Georgiady, Jack D. Riegle,

and Louis G. Romano (1974:72-77):

1. Continuous Progress: The education program should feature a nongraded organization that allows students to progress at their own rate regardless of chronological age.

2. Multi-Material Approach: A wide range of accessible instructional materials should be provided, and classroom experiences should be planned around that material rather than a textbook approach.

3. Flexible Schedules: The schedule should be built around educational needs rather than standardized times. Variations of classes and length of classes, as well as group size should be included.

4. Planned Gradualism: Experiences should be provided that assist early adolescents in making the transition from childhood dependence to adult independence.

5. Guidance Services: A guidance program which is a total school program is important. Group and individual counseling services should be available. Trained counselors should be available, and each teacher should be prepared to help or counsel as the need arises.

6. Basic Skill Repair and Extension: Opportunities for improving basic skills for those who have not mastered them should be provided in each class. Special classes should also be included for those who need a considerable amount of remedial work.

7. Social Experiences: This age is the time of sensitivity, and acute perception. It is the time for developing social skills, and the age for sex-role identification. As a result, appropriate experiences should be provided for all students. Common areas should be provided in the building for social interaction among small groups. Every effort should be made to help the student through this crucial time in preparation for adulthood.

8. Physical Experiences: Activities in this area should be based on student needs. The student should be involved as a participant, not a spectator. A broad range of intramural experiences should be provided, and they should be centered

around helping the student to use and understand his body.

9. Individual Study: Time should be provided for students to investigate areas of personal interest which may or may not be associated with a particular course.

10. Creative Experiences: Provisions for creative expression in areas such as music and drama should be made. These should be primarily student-directed, student-centered, and student-developed.

11. Exploratory and Enrichment Studies: Elective courses and programs should be provided for the students in order that they can become more aware of the world around them, and through enrichment, improve their own self-concept.

12. Security Factor: Every student should have a security group comprised of a teacher who knows him, and whom he relates to, and a peer group. This group should be more than an administrative convenience.

The middle school then, must reflect the nature of the child and provide a truly transitional program to fit his needs as he moves from childhood to adulthood, and from elementary school to high school.

ORGANIZATION

At present, no unanimously accepted pattern of organization for the middle school has been developed. It is generally agreed that ninth grade students should not be included in the middle school. Other than that principle, almost any combination of fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students can and is being used.

Determining the correct combination of grades for the middle

school is complicated primarily by the diverse character of the age group involved, and the rapid changes that they under-go. This wide range of differences, both physical and mental, led Gatewood (1973:223) to state, tongue-in-cheek perhaps, " that the best grade organization for the middle school would have all the seventh and eighth graders, plus the sixth grade girls, and ninth grade boys."

Line 1 of Table 1, as excerpted from an article by Coppock (1974), illustrates the continuous growth and acceptance of the middle school concept. Lines 2, 3, and 4 show the organizational patterns utilized by responding schools. This information is expressed in percentages.

Table 1

Types of Middle School Organizations

Year of Survey	1966	1968	1970
1. Number of Middle Schools	499	1,101	1,696
2. 5-3-4 Organization	55%	60%	78.6%
3. 4-4-4 Organization	30%	27%	
4. 3-5-4 Organization	9%	7.3%	5.4%

Source: Data from three surveys are quoted by Bough, McClure,

and Sinks: 1966 from Cuff, 1968 from Alexander, and 1970 from Mellinger and Rackauskas.

The issue of organization of the middle school can perhaps best be settled by the idea that it really doesn't matter what grades are included in the organizational pattern. What does matter, is how the needs of the students included are being met.

SUMMARY

In an effort to provide some insight into the middle school, four general areas dealing with different facets of the middle school have been discussed.

An examination of the historical development of the middle school has been presented in order to make the reader aware of the growing acceptance of the middle school concept.

The discussion of characteristics of students in this age group was presented in an effort to enable the reader to gain greater understanding of the clientele of the middle school, and therefore be better able to understand the function of the school in dealing with these students and meeting their varied needs.

The sections dealing with curriculum, and the organization of the school were presented in an attempt to show the prevalent thinking as to how the middle school must be developed and operated if the students are to receive full benefit from its programs.

At present the middle school is experiencing increased popularity. Whether or not it fulfills its great promise, depends on the manner in which individual schools develop their programs.

Chapter 3

PROCEDURES

INTRODUCTION

The problem under investigation was to determine the types of organizational patterns utilized by middle schools in Montana during the 1975-1976 school year. Information concerning the vertical, horizontal, and grade organization of middle schools in Montana has been collected, compiled, and presented for reference purposes.

In this chapter, the procedures for conducting this study are presented. Information pertaining to the description of the population and the definition of categories is stated. The methods utilized in collecting and organizing the data are discussed, and the questions answered by the study have been restated.

POPULATION DESCRIPTION

This study was designed to survey all principals of middle schools in Montana. This population consists of 151 principals as determined from a list of middle schools provided by the Montana State Department of Public Instruction.

No sampling procedure was used because the total population of middle school principals was surveyed.

DEFINITION OF CATEGORIES

The following categories were considered in this study:

Vertical Organization - The vertical organization of a school is concerned with the classification of pupils for their upward movement from the time of admission to the time of departure. In order to accomplish this, one of three principal plans are usually adopted by a school system. These plans are: grading, multi-grading, and nongrading.

Horizontal Organization - Horizontal organizations are those organizations which deal with the manner in which students are handled during a specific year. The type of organization selected will be determined by whether you wish to focus on the capabilities of the staff or on the students. The following are some of the more common types of horizontal organizations: self-contained classrooms, departmental, team teaching, interdisciplinary teams, and differentiated staffing.

Grade Organization - The grade organization of a school refers to the manner in which a school system has organized its attendance units. Through this study an effort has been made to determine the grades each school district has combined to establish its middle school.

METHOD OF COLLECTING DATA

An instrument and definitive information was mailed to each of the 151 principals of Montana middle schools. (See Appendix C.) Each principal was asked to complete the questionnaire and return it to the investigator within four weeks. A self-addressed, stamped, return envelope was provided each principal for his convenience in returning the instrument.

A follow-up request for information was sent to each principal who failed to respond to the original request within the four week period.

METHOD OF ORGANIZING DATA

The data collected for each question through the survey has been organized and presented in tabular form. The number of responses in each category of the various questions on the instrument are indicated numerically. A composite figure from each of the categories is shown along with a corresponding percentage of the returned questionnaires.

GENERAL QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED

1. What types of vertical organizational patterns are being utilized in Montana middle schools?

2. What types of horizontal organizational patterns are being used in Montana middle schools?

3. What grade organizational patterns exist in Montana middle schools?

PRECAUTIONS TAKEN FOR ACCURACY

The number of responses in each category of the instrument have been counted twice. The percentages were calculated by the use of an electronic calculator.

SUMMARY

A questionnaire was sent to each of Montana's 151 middle school principals. Through this instrument, the various grade organizational patterns adopted by middle schools in Montana were determined. In addition, the types of vertical and horizontal organizations used in these middle schools were also identified.

The data collected through the survey procedures has been compiled and presented in tables. This information will provide current referent data on the types of organizational patterns utilized by middle schools in Montana.

Chapter 4

FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

Questionnaires were sent to the 151 principals of Montana middle schools. At the end of the survey period, 127 questionnaires had been returned with the requested information. Five instruments were returned with attached notes stating that their particular districts did not have middle schools, and nineteen principals failed to return the survey instrument.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

On the basis of the 127 completed and returned questionnaires, the following data is presented. The various items of the questionnaire are listed, and followed by a commentary and a related table containing the survey findings.

1. What type of vertical organization is used in your middle school?

In item one of the questionnaire, it was found that the graded classroom was the most common vertical arrangement utilized in the responding schools. A graded vertical organization was used by 122 schools. Two schools employed a nongraded approach, and three schools utilized a multigraded vertical organization.

Table 2

Types and Distribution of Vertical Organizations

Type of Organization	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Composite	
	No. of Schools	No. of Schools	No. of Schools	No. of Schools	% of Total
Graded	7	63	52	122	96%
Nongraded	0	1	1	2	2%
Multigraded	1	0	2	3	2%

2. What grades are included in your middle school?

As indicated in Table 3, ninety-four schools list a combination of grades seven and eight exclusively as their middle school. The second most popular combination is grades 6-8, with seventeen schools in this category. Twelve schools combined grades five through eight, and one school combined grades four through eight in its middle school. At this point it is interesting to note that 148 schools utilized grades seven and eight in their grade organizational pattern. On the other hand, two schools used only grades five and six, and one school combined grades four, five, and six for its middle school.

Table 3

Types and Distribution of Grade Organizations

Type of Organization	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Composite	
	No. of Schools	No. of Schools	No. of Schools	No. of Schools	% of Total
4-5-6-7-8	0	1	0	1	1%
4-5-6	0	1	0	1	1%
5-6	0	1	1	2	2%
5-6-7-8	0	6	6	12	9%
6-7-8	3	11	3	17	13%
7-8	5	44	45	94	74%

3. What type of horizontal organization is used in each level of your middle school?

Table 4 shows that 101 of the responding schools used a departmental type of horizontal organization for their middle schools. Twenty-four of the schools used a combination of those patterns represented. One school indicated the use of self-contained classes, and another school utilized interdisciplinary teams.

Table 4

Types and Distribution of Horizontal Organizations

Type of Organization	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Composite	
	No. of Schools	No. of Schools	No. of Schools	No. of Schools	% of Total
Self-Contained	0	1	0	1	.75%
Departmental	7	50	44	101	79.5%
Team Teaching	0	0	0	0	0%
Differentiated Staffing	0	0	0	0	0%
Interdisciplinary Teams	0	0	1	1	.75%
Combination of Two or more Of the above	1	13	10	24	19%

4. What is your school district classification?

In Table 5, information pertaining to the distribution of responding schools and their district classification can be found.

The growth of middle schools in Montana has occurred primarily in the class two and class three districts. There are only eight

class one districts having schools listed as being qualified under section 75-6905.1 R.C.M., (See Appendix A.), whereas there are 143 class two and class three schools in the same category.

It should be noted that many of the state's class one districts operate accredited junior high schools.

Of those schools included in the survey, eight were located in first class districts; sixty-four were in class two districts, and fifty-five were found in class three districts.

Table 5

Distribution of Survey Instrument

Category	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Composite	
	No. of Schools	No. of Schools	No. of Schools	No. of Schools	% of Total
Returned	8	64	55	127	84%
No Reply	0	12	7	19	13%
Returned With No Reply	0	2	3	5	3%

5. Are there grades other than those included in your middle school in your building?

Item five of the questionnaire was designed to determine if the middle school had its own facility, or if there were other grades in the building. Ninety-nine respondents indicated that additional grades were housed in the same building, while twenty-eight stated that no other grades were included in the same structure.

Table 6

Distribution of Middle Schools Sharing Buildings With Other Grades

Category	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Composite	
	No. of Schools	No. of Schools	No. of Schools	No. of Schools	% of Total
Yes	3	49	47	99	78%
No	5	15	8	28	22%

6. Does your middle school share facilities with your local high school?

The survey indicated that a sizeable portion of middle schools in class two and class three districts share facilities with their local high schools. As can be seen in Table 7, ninety-one schools indicated that they share facilities, as oppossed to

thirty-six middle schools which did not share facilities with their local high school.

Table 7

Distribution of Middle Schools Sharing Buildings With Local High Schools

Category	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Composite	
	No. of Schools	No. of Schools	No. of Schools	No. of Schools	% of Total
Yes	2	45	44	91	72%
No	6	19	11	36	28%

7. What is the enrollment of your middle school at each of the applicable grade levels?

Questionnaire item seven was used to determine the number of students presently enrolled in middle schools in Montana. As indicated in Table 8, the heavy concentration of students in grades seven and eight simply mirrors the fact that these grades are used in ninety-eight percent of the grade combinations of all Montana middle schools, and that the seventh and eighth grade combination is the most popular among responding schools.

Table 8

Distribution of Middle School Enrollment By Grade

Grade	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Composite	
	No. of Students	No. of Students	No. of Students	No. of Students	% of Total
4	0	97	0	97	1%
5	0	362	80	442	3%
6	357	1064	166	1587	12%
7	1274	3175	806	5255	41%
8	1313	3298	853	5464	43%
Total	2944	7996	1905	12,845	100%

8. What is the number of teaching personnel employed in your middle school?

In item eight an effort was made to determine the number of teaching personnel in the represented schools, and thereby obtain a pupil-teacher ratio of all the schools.

On the questionnaire, 865 teachers were listed. However, it was stated on some of the returns that aides, shared teachers, and

part-time teachers were also included in the totals provided, while on other returns these personnel had been omitted. As a result, it became impossible to accurately analyze this item and prepare a student-teacher ratio in the various categories.

Table 9

Distribution of Teaching Personnel

	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Composite
Number of Teachers	163	464	238	865

SUMMARY

The data collected through this survey has given some insight into the continuing development of the middle school in Montana.

According to these results, graded middle schools using a combination of grades seven and eight are the most popular form of vertical organization.

In the same manner, departmental arrangements are the most widely used horizontal organization.

The survey indicates that the middle school has its widest acceptance in schools in class two and class three districts. It

is also noted that in these districts, a majority of the middle schools share facilities with their local high schools.

It is hoped that the current referent data provided by this survey will be of use to all people interested in the middle school in Montana.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS

Upon examination of the results of the survey, it becomes quite clear that the grade level system is by far the most common vertical organization presently utilized in middle schools in Montana.

It will be interesting to see if this traditional method of organization retains its pre-eminence in the relatively new world of Montana middle schools, or if, as middle schools become a more accepted part of the education landscape in Montana, nongraded organizations become more popular. At present only two of the respondent schools indicated using such an organizational pattern. However, according to a study conducted by Georgiady, Riegle, and Romano in 1974, nongraded vertical organizations providing for the continuous progress of students is one of the main characteristics of a middle school.

As is the case nationally, Montana schools have not unanimously accepted a pattern of grade organization for their middle schools. The survey indicates six different grade combinations from grades four through eight. The most common grade combination includes grades seven and eight exclusively. However, grades seven and eight are included in four of the six combinations listed by the responding schools.

The popularity of such combinations lie in no small part to the

economic benefits a school district may reap under the provisions of section 75-6905.1 R.C.M. (See Appendix A.), which provides additional funding for grades seven and eight when they meet the standards of a middle school.

Only two of the 151 schools surveyed are actually approved middle schools by state department standards. The remaining 149 schools are listed as having met the qualifications of a middle school and therefore are eligible for increased funding under section 75-6905.1 R.C.M.

The option to obtain increased funding has been most widely used in class two and class three districts. In these categories 143 schools are eligible for additional funding as oppossed to eight schools in class one districts. It should be noted that one of the approved middle schools, Lewistown, is a class one district, and the other, Polson, is a class two district. Also, it should be mentioned that the low number of schools in class one districts is offset by the fact that many of the class one districts have established junior high schools which already receive additional funding.

If the middle school fully develops in Montana, we will probably see a trend toward a 6-7-8 grade combination, which would reflect the national trend according to a survey conducted by Millinger and Rackauskas in 1970, the results of which may be found in Table 1 on page sixteen.

By a large majority, the respondents indicated that the most heavily favored horizontal organization in their schools is the departmental method of organization. It can be found at all grade levels; however, it enjoys its greatest popularity in grades seven and eight.

Once again we find a very traditional method of organization utilized in the majority of the responding schools. Though several schools indicated using other forms, there apparently has not been sufficient time for the extensive growth or development of alternate forms of instruction such as differentiated staffing and inter-disciplinary teams.

The use of varied methods of instruction and presentation is another characteristic of a middle school which apparently must slowly develop and gain acceptance in Montana middle schools.

The findings of the survey indicate that a sizeable number of middle schools in class two and class three districts share facilities with their local high schools.

This could be done simply to meet the requirements of a middle school and thus become qualified for additional funding, or the sharing of facilities, and in some cases, staff, may be the most efficient and economically feasible method of operating a middle school in many smaller districts.

The true intent of sharing facilities will be determined

when and if the middle school philosophy becomes a central part of the school's planning and developmental processes.

The results of the survey seem to indicate that even though the words "middle school" are in the vocabulary and thinking of many districts, action toward the adoption of the middle school philosophy, with its resulting effect upon curriculum, staffing, and grade organization among other things, has been slow in developing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In conducting research for this paper, the almost total lack of information on middle schools in Montana readily became apparent. Though some information has been gathered and compiled as a result of the survey for this paper, much more needs to be done.

It is recommended that additional studies be conducted, either by the Montana State Department of Public Instruction, various teacher training institutions, or other interested parties, to gather additional information on the general development of the middle schools in Montana, and to ascertain, if possible, its various needs and problems.

Types of guidance programs, curriculum construction, and the availability of opportunities for individual growth, and social interaction are just a few of the areas in which more information is required before an accurate assessment of the growth of middle

schools in Montana can be made.

Information and guidelines dealing with the middle school philosophy and detailing how to proceed with the establishment and development of a middle school should be compiled by the Montana State Department of Public Instruction and made readily available to all interested districts. They in turn must use these guidelines in establishing more specific methods for meeting the various needs of their local students.

Follow-up surveys should be conducted to determine ways in which the guidelines can be improved, and also to determine the extent of acceptance or rejection of the middle school philosophy.

Montana's teacher training institutions should begin developing and offering relevant courses to meet the needs of the instructional staffs of Montana's burgeoning middle schools.

At present it would seem that the middle school is the "step-child" in Montana education. Its relative newness prompts many to approach its promises slowly, and handle its problems half-heartedly.

However, for the middle school to reach its full potential in Montana, those districts presently including middle schools in their plans must carefully nurture its ideas and concepts, and promote its development and growth.

To be sure, the future of the middle school in our state

is tied to economic questions such as funding and efficiency, and to Montana State Department of Public Instruction directives and standards, but ultimately its success or failure lies in the hands of the local schools------their boards, their administrators, their teachers, and their patrons.

Are they ready for the challenge?

SUMMARY

The growth of the middle school has come about as educators try to develop a school which would act as a transitional bridge from the elementary school to the high school.

The middle school concept is comparatively new in Montana. Its growth has been stimulated by the passage of a school funding bill in 1974 which became section 75-6905.1 of the Revised Codes of Montana. This section provides increased funding for students in grades seven and eight in schools meeting the standards of accredited middle schools as established by the Montana State Department of Public Instruction.

Because of its newness, there was a lack of information dealing with middle schools in Montana. To gain some insight in this area, the author conducted a survey of 151 principals of Montana middle schools. Through this process, the prevalent organizational patterns were identified.

It was found that a graded middle school using a combination of grades seven and eight was the most popular method of organizing the individual middle schools. The favored horizontal organization was the departmental method of arrangement.

The growth of the middle school has occurred primarily in class two and class three districts. It is also noted that in these districts, a majority of the middle schools share facilities with their local high schools.

The results of the survey seem to indicate that even though the words "middle school" are often used by many districts, a true commitment to the adoption of a middle school philosophy, with its resulting effect upon organizational patterns, has been slow in developing.

It is recommended that additional studies be conducted by interested parties to gather additional information on Montana middle schools in order that a more detailed assessment of their growth can be made.

Furthermore, it is suggested that guidelines for the establishment and development of middle schools be prepared by the Montana State Department of Public Instruction and be made available to interested districts.

The middle school is in an embryonic stage in Montana. Its growth, development, and success will depend upon the manner

in which it is accepted and used by school districts in our state.

Their actions will determine whether or not the middle school, with a challenging program and an abiding interest in the welfare and growth of its clientele, will fulfill its promise.

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REFERENCES

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

75-6905.1 Seventh and Eighth Grade Average Number Belonging

The Average Number Belonging (ANB) calculated for grades seven (7) and eight (8) shall be at the high school ANB rate provided that the school meets the standards for accreditation of a middle school. When such pupils are actually enrolled in an elementary school, the amount of general fund budget per ANB shall be the same as that of the high school district within which the elementary school is located. To determine the total enrollment of such an elementary school for ANB purposes the seventh and eighth grade pupils shall be included in such total.

APPENDIX B

COVER LETTER
(Sample)

Dear Sir:

I am conducting a survey of middle school principals in Montana to determine the types of organizational patterns presently utilized in their schools.

The attached instrument is being sent to each building principal whose school is a fully accredited middle school or has met the standards for increased funding for seventh and eighth grade students as provided by section 75-6905.1 of the School Laws of Montana.

For the survey to be successfully completed, your co-operation in responding is of the utmost importance. The instrument contains nine items, and it will probably take only ten minutes of your time to complete the form. Directions for responding and a list of definitions of terms as used in this study are included. Information related to individual principals, schools, and districts will be kept confidential.

Your co-operation in completing and returning the attached instrument by March 31 would be greatly appreciated. For your

convenience in returning the instrument, a stamped, self-addressed return envelope has been enclosed.

Sincerely,

/s/Darrell Layman

APPENDIX C

QUESTIONNAIRE
(Sample)

DIRECTIONS: Please complete the following questions by placing a check in the appropriate blank.

1. What type of vertical organization is used in your middle school?

Graded	_____	Multigraded	_____
Nongraded	_____	Other (Specify)	_____

2. What grades are included in your middle school?

5-6-7-8	_____	5-6	_____
6-7-8	_____	Other (Specify)	_____
7-8	_____		

3. What type of horizontal organization is used in each level of your middle school?

	5	6	7	8
Self-Contained----------				
Departmental----------				
Team Teaching----------				
Differentiated Staffing--				
Interdisciplinary Teams--				
Other (Specify)----------				

4. What is your school district classification?

Class 1 _____

Class 2 _____

Class 3 _____

5. Are there grades other than those included in your middle school in your building?

Yes _____

No _____

6. Does your middle school share facilities with your local high school?

Yes _____

No _____

DIRECTIONS: Please complete the following questions with appropriate numerical answers.

7. What is the enrollment of your middle school at each of the applicable grade levels?

5 _____

6 _____

7 _____

8 _____

8. What is the number of teaching personnel employed in your middle school?

_____

9. Do you desire a copy of the results of this study?

Yes _____ No _____

If your answer to question nine was yes, please give your mailing address in the following spaces.

Send to: _____

_____

_____

_____