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Why Are Schools Reorganizing?

Pick up any newspaper; listen to any radio or television talk show; check the book catalogues clogging our mailboxes. When the focus is education, one theme permeates them all: change. The demands for change seem to challenge the mentality that Dolan (1994), in *Restructuring Our Schools*, calls “system-in-place” (p. 5), the mentality that resists attempts to reform, restructure, or reorganize. Along with Dolan, others caution us to recognize the complexity of a system’s interconnections that place obstacles in the path of change (Jackson & Davis, 2000, pp. 27–28; McAdams, 1997; Senge, Cambron-McCabe, Lucas, Smith, Dutton, & Kleiner, 2000, p. 11; Zmuda, Kuklis, & Kline, 2004). Part of this complexity includes the five pressure groups identified by Erickson (2001, pp. 2–10): business and the world of work, state governments, social forces, media, and parents. McAdams suggests five somewhat different factors: “quality of leadership, local politics and governance, state and national politics, organizational characteristics, and change.” Within this challenging climate, school districts and educators alike may feel controlled by the tides of change rather than in control of them. In the attempt to navigate the sea of expectations, a danger exists of losing education’s true mission: to meet the academic needs of each student by “recreating schools to serve students who will grow up in a post-industrial world” (Senge et al., p. 9).

To fulfill their role and meet the challenges, many secondary schools seek to incorporate the change process as a common and ongoing element of their culture. Through observation and evaluation of their specific needs, successful schools take an inside out, step-by-step approach to change, each step dependent on the implementation of the previous steps (National Association of Secondary School Principals [NASSP], 1996; Zmuda, Kuklis, & Kline, 2004). Some identified school changes include reorganization of time, materials,

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resources, students, and teachers; new approaches to scheduling; curriculum delivery; and professional collaboration. Impetus for these changes is generated by expectations of community, parents, boards of education, and accreditation agencies. Individually and as part of a school improvement team, teachers along with administrators contribute their voices to the reform process. Through their research of theory, best practices, and classroom initiatives, they can create models for schoolwide adoption.

Today and especially since the reform of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, more familiarly known as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, laws mandate change. These changes include increased accountability for states, school districts, and schools; greater choice for parents and students, particularly those attending low-performing schools; more flexibility for states and local educational agencies (LEAs) in the use of federal education dollars; and a stronger emphasis on reading, especially for our youngest children. Those laws require schools and districts to demonstrate that adequate yearly progress and the needs of all student populations are being met.

FIFTEEN FACTORS FOR RESTRUCTURING

This chapter identifies fifteen factors for leaders and teachers to consider as they evaluate their purposes and options for the improvement of learning. These options apply to schools that are challenged to improve performance as well as schools that are currently performing well and seeking ways to provide even greater learning opportunities. These factors include the most frequently identified catalysts for change: points that cry out for increased support of students and targeted elements that require restructuring.

Ideally, purposes for reorganizing should be clearly identified throughout the early stages of the restructuring process. Prior to a revision of schedules, curriculum, and models of professional collaboration, leaders and teachers should analyze these topics as they relate to the local setting. The final assessment of the reorganization effort should be based upon reasons that address community needs, not just the schedule, student scores, or a survey. Fifteen factors to guide the decision-making process follow:

1. Respond to student needs.
2. Ease transition from elementary school to middle school.
3. Facilitate transition from middle school to high school.
4. Make effective use of available full-time equivalent (FTE) positions.
5. Increase or decrease the number of periods in the day.
6. Lengthen the instructional module.
7. Address state and national standards.
8. Improve student achievement.
9. Provide remediation.

10. Establish teams, houses, small learning communities, magnets.
11. Move locus of control from management to teacher.
12. Incorporate looping.
13. Provide opportunities for inclusion of special needs students.
14. Group and regroup students for a variety of instructional purposes.
15. Establish advisory programs.

These considerations are numbered for convenient reference but are not presented in order of importance. In fact, multiple purposes for reorganization exist, and many of these reasons are interrelated. School leaders and teachers should look at options for change presented in the following chapters, including schedules, small learning communities, and teaching in variable time periods. They may identify important factors that may be of interest or mandated. At the end of this chapter and each subsequent chapter, a set of questions appears for both leaders and teachers. The process of answering these questions is key to the effective utilization of the book as a tool in restructuring.

Respond to Student Needs

Technically, all schools exist to serve students and to respond to their needs. In actuality, some schools accomplish this task better than others. In essence, the middle school concept arose from a concern about meeting adolescent needs. In the middle of the twentieth century, studies looked more closely at the early adolescent student. Through those studies, researchers found that the needs of these students differed from the needs of the elementary student. Dr. William Alexander and Dr. Donald Eichorn, two of the early pioneers in this effort, wrote extensively about early adolescent students, describing their characteristics and introducing pedagogy designed to meet their needs. Today, the authors of *Breaking Ranks* (NASSP, 1996) and *Breaking Ranks II* (NASSP, 2004) reinforce those findings and extend them into the high school arena. Programs such as freshman academies, advisory programs, magnet experiences, and house plans for Grades 9 to 12 emerge in this response to student needs.

Ease Transition From Elementary School to Middle School

Parents perceive that the elementary school is a safe, secure environment where one classroom teacher is responsible for coordinating the learning experience of one class of students. In *The Handbook of Research in Middle Level Education*, Anfara (2001) reports the study completed by Williamson and Johnston (1998) regarding parental attitudes toward middle level schools. Parents in four communities voiced four major concerns: potential student anonymity within the larger middle school, unclear curriculum content, minimal curriculum rigor, and instruction that did not engage students. Based on these observations, Anfara suggests that the results of the Williamson and

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Johnston study may be attributed to community perceptions rather than reality or to inadequately prepared middle school faculty.

Since test scores at the elementary school level are frequently higher than comparable scores in Grades 6–8 (Alspaugh, 1998), parents wish to extend the security and perceived success of elementary school beyond Grade 5 or 6. Consequently, some communities are creating K–8 schools in an effort to keep the student in what they believe to be a safe environment. Many of the K–8 schools, however, lack the comprehensive secondary curriculum, resources, and teachers trained in content areas. This becomes a dilemma.

In a *New York Times* article, Deborah Nussbaum (2004) identifies some of the attitudes for and against middle level schools, noting especially the urban school situations in which truancy and the loss of individual attention play a part. A K–8 advocate, Cheri Pierson Yecke (2006) created a stir in the middle level school community when she questioned the success of middle level education by calling to account its academic rigor. In part, the rebuttal to her charges occurred before the accusation: Felner, Jackson, Kasak, Mulhall, Brand, and Flowers (1997) emphasized that achievement and success in the middle level grades require full implementation of the middle school philosophy and practices rather than the cafeteria selection approach that has too often perpetuated the system-in-place. According to McEwin, Dickinson, and Jenkins (2003), however, the trend to reorganize from middle level schools to K–8 remains limited. Therefore, the burden to provide a safe transition is incumbent upon the middle level school. Overall, decision makers recognize the importance of addressing the specific needs of this unique population, which includes the recognition of developmental needs and academic rigor.

Another related issue appears to be the transition from a self-contained environment to departmentalization. While some middle schools include self-contained fifth- and sixth-grade classes, most middle schools feature interdisciplinary teams. School personnel develop a variety of activities to ease the transition for the student as well as for the parent, activities such as middle level and elementary student visitations, parent-student orientations to the building, and team letters or phone calls. As required by current law (No Child Left Behind), middle level teachers are more often subject matter specialists. They collaborate to deliver the total core curriculum according to the individual needs of their student team. When effective, the team becomes the security for students.

McEwin, Dickinson, and Smith (2004) maintain that middle level schools can carry out their original mission and attain the goals of intellectual and individual development during these early adolescent years. As evidence, they cite the ongoing research completed by Mertens, Flowers, and Mulhall at the Center for Prevention, Research, and Development (CPRD) at the University of Illinois, Champaign (1998, 2001, 2003). In November 2002, Mulhall, Flowers, and Mertens reported the importance of considering and understanding all of the data regarding this age group, not only the standardized achievement score data. By implementing a larger body of disaggregated data, schools and districts are better able to develop intervention methods for immediate action and for program evaluation.

Aware of the challenge before them, today's middle schools are reorganizing to achieve the necessary balance between the security of the elementary-oriented

teacher and the subject matter specialization of secondary teachers. In this way, they facilitate the transition of students.

Facilitate Transition From Middle to High School

An equally important transition takes place between middle school and high school. From the inception of the middle school concept, districts assigned ninth grade students to high school campuses. Whereas middle school education attempted to create a different experience for those sixth graders housed in a 6–8 building, ninth graders were given the “standard” high school schedule and often were not successful in that model. Success was measured in terms of grade point average, retention and dropout rates, attendance and tardiness, participation in extracurricular activities as well as suspensions and expulsions.

In the current 9–12 high school model, more developmentally appropriate measures are being used to determine success. High school educators address the transition of students from Grades 8 to 9 by creating academies or small learning communities to deliver the ninth grade curriculum and an advisory component to facilitate the adjustment to Grade 9. High school counselors and administrators meet with their middle level colleagues to learn more about the nature and needs of the rising freshman class. Some districts establish separate freshman schools within the high school structure. To facilitate the adjustment, the advisory component includes study skills, test preparation, conflict resolution, decision making, career development, and communication skills. In the NASSP report *Breaking Ranks* (2004), this advisory component appears as one of the strategies necessary for essential high school reform.

As in the transition from elementary to middle school, ninth grade teachers strive to achieve the proper balance between the security provided by the team or small learning community within the middle school philosophy and the subject matter specialization ultimately needed in Grades 10–12.

Make Effective Use of Available Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Positions

In many school districts, the superintendent allocates FTEs or a fixed number of personnel to each building principal, who then apportions these positions to each department, team, house, or academy. When a district loses positions because of budget reductions or declining enrollment, when special education or bilingual positions displace regular education positions, or when graduation or state requirements change, adjustments affect the FTE distribution.

Several subtopics further compound the issue of FTE allocation:

- Number of periods in the school day
 - Schools moving from a six- or seven-period day to an eight-period day realize the need for additional staff to offset an increase in average class size and/or average daily pupil loads. Because of reductions in staffing mandated by the district, some schools change to a six-period day.

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- Number of periods per day a teacher can teach
 - Beyond the question of the number of periods in the day is the issue of the number of periods in the day a teacher can teach. Districts looking to move to an eight- or nine-period day with contract language limiting a teacher to five teaching periods will recognize the need for more staff when restructuring.
- Allocation of team meeting or department meeting as a non-contact period (that time spent without students)
 - Ideally, teachers should have a team or department meeting as well as a personal planning period. Effective implementation of the middle school concept and small learning communities in the high school requires professional planning meetings during the school day.
- Teacher availability for duties
 - As teachers dedicate time to team and/or department meetings, they may not be available for various duties typically associated with the function of the school. Hard decisions must be made regarding the best use of teachers' non-contact time.
- Average daily pupil load per teacher
 - Boards of Education and union associations work hard to minimize the number of students a teacher sees during a particular day. Revisions of the program of studies, course offerings, or number of periods in the day may have an impact on the average daily pupil load of each teacher.
- Provisions available for teachers to teach extra classes
 - As districts strive to offer magnet as well as remedial programs, the staff available on a contractual basis may not be adequate for the number of sections to be offered. In some districts, teachers can volunteer to teach an extra class and receive a stipend.

Because of the many forces that have an impact on the utilization of available FTEs, decisions on the effective use of available FTEs are critical.

Increase or Decrease the Number of Periods in the Day

In the discussion of the effective use of available FTEs, the number of periods in the school day emerges as a key piece in the saga of school restructuring. Typically, schools are organized into four-, six-, seven-, eight-, or nine-period days. Four-period days are associated with extended or variable time-period instruction.

Generally, the six-, seven-, eight-, or nine-period options present both positive and negative issues. In a six-period day, districts minimize the number of courses a student may take and the number of teachers on staff. In this model, teachers teach five of the six periods. Students receive fewer elective classes and have less opportunity for higher levels of mathematics, science, or foreign language; however, periods approximate sixty minutes in length.

In a seven-period day, greater opportunity exists for electives as well as upper level courses in high school. In many schools, teachers teach five classes and are scheduled for a team meeting as well as a personal planning period. Further, this schedule allows a fuller encore or exploratory program in the middle school. Classes in the seven-period day are 40 to 50 minutes.

Eight- and nine-period models provide greater opportunities for exploratory, elective, or remedial classes. As schools move from a six- or seven-period day to an eight- or nine-period day, more staff positions may be needed if teachers are contracted to teach five classes per day. Without an increase in staff, class sizes increase. Interdisciplinary team teachers may offer a flex or student support period to minimize the increase in staffing. Unless teachers can be assigned six instructional periods or five instructional and one flex/support period, the eight- or nine-period day is less likely to occur with the existing staff. When schools reorganize, restructure, or create small learning communities, the number of periods in the day becomes a crucial factor.

Lengthen the Instructional Module

Discussing the number of periods in the school day is tangential to discussing the length of each instructional module. Before the early 1990s, most secondary schools operated on a seven-, eight-, or nine-period day with periods from 40 to 50 minutes; some schools operated on a six-period day at 60 minutes each. Teachers' schedules were based upon a class meeting of 40 to 50 minutes. Their preservice training, including student teaching, provided this as the norm or another example of system-in-place. Lessons that were not completed in 40 to 50 minutes were completed the next day. The lesson consisted of a drill, warm-up activity, major presentation, guided practice or follow-up, summary, and announcement of homework. Rarely, did teachers think in terms of a series of engagements that provided in-depth learning of a topic within the 40 to 50 minutes.

As early as the late 1960s, middle schools started to experiment with 80–90 minute classes on a flexible basis. When the schedule was so constructed, teachers of the interdisciplinary team had the potential to use extended periods for a variety of instructional purposes. For the most part, however, middle grade lessons remained at the traditional length. O'Neil's 1995 study cited by D. F. Brown in "Flexible Scheduling and Young Adolescent Development" (2001) reported that only 15% of secondary schools attempted this model in the 1960s and 1970s (p. 127).

Circa 1990, at the high school level and later at the middle level, teachers' interest in extended periods expanded, energized by developments in the study of students' cognitive development. As the extended period programs began in Grades 9–12, teachers experimented and ultimately implemented 80- to 90-minute class periods. Although many middle school teachers or teams did not choose to implement formal extended period programs, they experimented with flexible schedules.

As early as 1993, McEwin et al. (2003) conducted a study that indicated the impact of time allocation for high-stakes testing. They discovered that language arts and mathematics received proportionally larger allocations of instructional time (pp. 18–19).

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The concept of extended time becomes a factor in what Marzano (2003) calls “opportunity to learn.” He illustrates the need for extended time by comparing the amount of content to be taught with the actual amount of instructional time available in a standard 40- to 50-minute class period (pp. 22–34). Besides advocating for extended time, he indicates the need for curriculum reform as well so that teachers know, identify, and teach essential content. Additionally, the fifth cornerstone strategy presented in the NASSP report (2004) includes flexible time frames for classes within which instructional strategies address students’ individual learning needs. Consequently, in the process of reorganizing, middle and high schools explore not only the impact of the length of the instructional module as a factor in the learning process but also the impact of varied instructional strategies that occur within that extended time period.

Address State and National Standards

Implementing or aligning with state and national standards impacts the organization or structure of secondary schools. Marzano (2003) raises the issue that the intended curriculum (national, state, and/or district standards) may not necessarily match the implemented curriculum, that content delivered by the teacher (p. 23). To develop a decision-making basis for change, schools and districts must answer these five questions:

1. Do all courses meet state and national standards?
2. Have teachers participated in a review of curriculum?
3. Have teachers received training to develop and implement a curriculum consistent with state and national standards?
4. Does a monitoring system exist to confirm the teaching of all required topics?
5. Do textbook purchases provide staff with resources necessary to meet state and national standards?

Specific questions may be raised at the school level:

Middle School

1. Has adequate time been provided daily for reading, language arts, and mathematics?
2. Are science and social studies courses offered each year? Does the content of these courses meet state and national standards at each grade level?
3. Are there adequate periods in the school day to enable the delivery of all required and elective classes?
4. Are courses offered in the year or semester congruent with testing?
5. Are teachers certified or endorsed for courses they teach?

High School

1. Do the required courses reflect state and national standards?
2. Are teachers certified for courses they teach?
3. Are students able to take required courses and still have opportunity for electives?
4. Are courses offered in the identified testing years?
5. Does the enrollment in electives support teaching positions in those areas? Are more FTEs needed in English, social studies, mathematics, and science and fewer in electives?

The movement toward state and national curriculum standards provided an impetus for school reform. This reform raises organizational as well as instructional issues.

Improve Student Achievement

A reason for reorganization is to improve student achievement. Multiple studies and reports cite gaps among various groups of students considered by socioeconomic status, nationality, and gender. Some of those studies and reports appear in the November 2004 special issue of *Educational Leadership*, "Closing Achievement Gaps," and reinforce the causal complexity of the achievement gap. The journal addresses the impact of some of the ingredients of that complexity, reporting data analysis conducted to determine where and why the gaps appear. Causal factors identified include child-rearing practices, testing practices and preparation, socioeconomic status of parents and school districts, and child health.

These gaps raise issues for the community at large as well as the academic community. In part, the issues arise from the publishing of school and district scores that become a perceived beacon of educational success in the eyes of the public. Government officials, taxpayers, and parents want a quantifiable way to measure the effectiveness of the educational process. The publishing of scores in local newspapers causes the community to make judgments regarding the administration and teaching staff. When progress is not realized, these parties demand answers, a plan for improvement, and, ultimately, new leadership. If scores remain low, state agencies take over the schools.

In an effort to raise test scores, pressure exists for homogeneous grouping. McEwin et al. (2003) hypothesize that high-stakes testing may be the basis to move to more rigid tracking practices in middle level schools (p. 62). In high school, prerequisites for certain courses virtually ensure the existence of homogeneous classes.

Another implication of the analysis of student performance concerns the use of extended periods. Overall, due to the difficulty of gaining empirical evidence, the overt results do not show with certainty whether the reallocation of time has improved student achievement (McEwin et al., 2003, p. 62). On the other hand, when Marzano introduces the five school-level factors that affect student achievement, he cites the Scheerens and Bosker 1997 research studies

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that indicate the importance of time in content coverage and opportunity to learn (Marzano, 2003). The research does suggest, however, that more opportunity exists in extended time periods for teachers to use strategies identified by Marzano to raise student achievement and to implement the intended curriculum. This research reinforces the importance of time for learning emphasized by learning and brain theorists in works such as Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (2000) and Sousa (2006).

Regarding the importance or relevance of testing to determine student achievement, Arhar (2003) cites the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform (2002). The Forum's high-stakes testing policy reaffirms its position on the importance of meeting student needs: "no single test should ever be the sole determinant of a young adolescent's academic future." Rather, the emphasis should be placed on standards and assessments that "lead to high expectations, foster quality instruction, and support higher levels of learning for every student" (McEwin et al., 2003, p. 64).

To accommodate student needs in light of high-stakes testing, districts are actively involved in curriculum revision. Many districts have revised curriculum to be consistent with what is tested. Teachers work hard to disaggregate data to better identify the extent to which curriculum is aligned with standards. Effective small learning community meeting time focuses on the analysis of data and the collaborative design of pedagogy consistent with the data.

Schools restructure in an effort to improve student achievement. As curriculum is aligned with tests, teachers must identify students' strengths and needs through available data. Teams of teachers need a disaggregated picture of a student's profile to provide integrated instruction geared to student progress. Learning requires a balanced relationship featuring curriculum, instruction, assessment, and school organization.

Provide Remediation

Some schools reorganize to offer or require remediation courses for students who have not succeeded on local, state, or national assessments. Other schools have added an additional period in the school day to allow students to participate in both remedial courses and electives.

Because of the focus on remediation courses, staff for elective classes has been reduced, class size in elective courses has increased, and elective courses with low enrollment have been dropped. Consequently, schedules and staffing patterns have changed. Further, curriculum has been purchased or developed to support the remediation. Although schools and districts struggle to find the proper balance between remedial, elective, and exploratory courses, they cannot ignore the fallout of high-stakes testing. As a result of this focus on remediation, the culture of schools may be changing.

Establish Houses/Small Learning Communities/Magnets

Restructuring plans include the creation of cohorts of teachers who work together to address student needs, work to improve student achievement,

integrate curriculum, share successes with appropriate teaching strategies for the targeted population, and make decisions about the nature of the instructional module.

In the process of becoming middle schools, interdisciplinary teams became a part of the schedule. In some cases, these teams had maximum opportunities for control over time; in other cases, teams had limited opportunities for flexibility. In both formats, team meetings were an integral part of the prototype.

As high school faculties have become more aware of the needs of adolescents, they have created small learning communities (SLCs) in conjunction with magnet themes or academies such as arts and sciences, health careers, technology, performing arts, or visual arts. The successful implementation of the various small learning communities requires administrators, teachers, and community members to provide input and fulfill their roles as practitioners of systems thinking, as discussed by Dolan (1994) and others. These programs are being created at an ever-increasing rate to raise performance, grade point average (GPA), and promotion rates of ninth graders. SLC faculties typically consist of English, social studies, mathematics, and science teachers, as well as representatives of specialty areas (Allen, R., 2002; NASSP, 2004).

The cohort group helps students with the transition to high school and focuses on skills that are integral to student success. Collaboratively, teachers provide an integrated curriculum and conduct parent conferences as needed. In one example of meeting student needs in a large high school, Rick Allen reports Evanston Township High School's solution in *Educational Leadership* (2002). By creating home bases, this school seeks to overcome the anonymity experienced by many students in a large high school. The same teacher meets with the same group of students over the four-year high school experience. One teacher explains, "If you don't have a personal relationship with students, you can't ask questions. We know an awful lot about them by the time they're seniors" (p. 38). Evanston's process fulfills the requisite for each student to have an adult advocate as cited in *Breaking Ranks* (NASSP, 1996).

As part of the restructuring effort, the master schedule should be designed to maximize opportunities for flexibility. The key to establish flexibility requires the same teachers to work with the same students during the same periods of the day. These teachers should be scheduled for a common planning time and trained to implement the collaborative process. As addressed in a conversation with Dennis Sparks, Executive Director, National Staff Development Council, and reported in *Breaking Ranks II*, a common meeting time encourages a professional bond with other teachers. Sparks maintains that daily interactions among teachers are "one of the most powerful yet underused sources of professional development and instructional improvement" (NASSP, 2004, p. 45). At the high school level, these cohorts should be placed in the master schedule early in the process as an initial priority. A major consideration in Grades 9 through 12 is to move from a departmentalized approach in all grades to an interdisciplinary model that better serves students.

Creating or modifying schedules for houses, magnets, and small learning communities typifies the restructuring effort. Concurrently, in order to maximize the impact of the restructuring process, classroom practice needs to change. In support of this need, Noguera (2004) cites the Fullan and Miles

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(1992) study: If organizational changes are not accompanied by intense focus on other areas, especially in instruction, effective change will not occur. Without a more systemic approach, the schedule alone cannot bring the desired outcomes.

Move Locus of Control From Management to Teacher

Beyond site-based decision making (central office vs. local school), locus of control looks at the broader spectrum of decision making. The continuum of control begins with the district office and moves through the principal to the small learning community and, ultimately, to the classroom teacher. The effectiveness of more teacher control appeared in a longitudinal study of middle school teaming initiatives completed by the University of Illinois Center for Prevention Research and Development. The research affirms the impact of strong, effective teams on student success (Felner et al., 1997). Part of the effectiveness of these teams comes from their empowerment to make decisions. Other reports (Jackson & Davis, 2000; NASSP, 2004) indicate the correlation between the various levels of decision making regarding time, pedagogy, and student success.

A district's policy on locus of control can be achieved by working through the following questions:

District Office

1. What decisions regarding instruction does the superintendent make?
2. What is the basis of the superintendent's decisions or recommendations?
3. Are all decisions subject to the negotiation process? Why or why not?
4. How do teachers demonstrate their response to district office decisions?
5. Are all middle and high schools in a district organized similarly?

Principal

1. Is the principal able to make decisions within the guidelines of the superintendent and other district office personnel?
2. Under what conditions is the principal able to make decisions independently?
3. Does the principal empower teams, departments, and/or teachers to make decisions independently?

Small Learning Communities

1. What training is available to small learning communities to help them make decisions?
2. What types of decisions do these subgroups make?
3. What accountability exists? To whom?

Classroom Teacher

1. What decisions can a teacher make regarding curriculum and instruction?
2. How do teachers gain the background to make decisions regarding curriculum and instruction?
3. How are teachers empowered to utilize best practices and research in instruction on a daily basis?

As the locus of control moves from the superintendent to the principal to the small learning community to the teacher, it becomes more likely that students receive focused, needed benefits. To maintain the locus of control leadership approach, a shared vision and collaboration among all of the political entities need to occur (Lipsitz, Mizell, Jackson, & Austin, 1997). Further, due to personnel changes, it becomes necessary to develop leadership at the various levels. Administrators who develop a shared system of governance and distribute leadership set the stage for smooth transitions when they and key teachers leave the school or district. Lambert (2005) refers to this process as “high leadership capacity” (p. 64). Essentially, districts and schools implement the practice of locus of control in an effort to improve student achievement.

Incorporate Looping

Looping allows teachers to move with students for two or more consecutive years in the same subject. Although teachers may fear leaving their areas of comfort, looping can be implemented smoothly. Few assignments need to change for the first year of the project. In some cases, a major change may be needed to modify teacher assignments in order to create teaching teams. Teachers who loop become familiar with the standards, common instructional goals, and opportunities for differentiation in each curricular area.

Vicki Mogil, principal of Emerson Middle School in Niles, Illinois, reveals (personal communication, 2005) that her teachers and administrators “love the loop.” She credits looping with creating an advocacy for students, saving exit and entrance time from seventh to eighth grade, keeping teachers fresh in their subject areas, and providing curriculum continuity. She ends her comments with “Kids really feel they have a home.”

Provide Opportunities for Inclusion of Special Needs Students

In response to federal and state directives, secondary schools appear to be wrestling with appropriate ways to provide the least restrictive environment or the opportunity for inclusion. Restructuring efforts require the expansion and/or refinement of programs for special needs students. Hines (2001) suggests that the middle school environment lends itself to inclusive practice because of the existence of interdisciplinary teaching teams. These teams often have more experience in coteaching and can utilize that experience when teaching with a colleague proficient in adaptations or special needs.

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Larger high schools can provide a continuum of services for special needs students to ensure the least restrictive environment. To establish the continuity, students can be initially placed as needed and adjusted along the slide or continuum when appropriate as noted in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 High School Special Education Slide or Continuum Model

| <i>English Department</i> | <i>Course Number</i> | <i>Explanation</i> |
|---------------------------|----------------------|--|
| Ms. Smith | 1005-01 | English 10 Gifted |
| Mr. Albion | 1000-01 | English 10 Standard—No Support |
| Ms. Greenwood | 1009-01 | English 10 Standard with Support |
| Mr. Johavi | | Special Education teacher available to support Ms. Greenwood |
| Mr. Greer | 9100-01 | English 10 Replacement for special education students with learning disabilities as described in IEP |
| Mrs. Miller | 9900-01 | Self-contained Special Education English 10 |

A student not needing support is with Ms. Smith or Mr. Albion. The majority of the special needs students, however, are in Ms. Greenwood's class with support from Mr. Johavi. Mr. Greer works with learning-disabled students whose Individual Education Programs (IEPs) call for a small class taught by a special education teacher. Mrs. Miller's class houses students who are self-contained, perhaps for English, social studies, mathematics, or science.

Middle and high schools are reorganizing to provide the least restrictive environment for special needs students. Toward this goal, the schedule complements differentiation of instruction and unique teaching strategies for this population.

Group and Regroup Students for a Variety of Instructional Purposes

The traditional junior high school schedule featured a group of 25–32 students who traveled together during the day. The traveling section was called 7A, 8D, or 9G. Theoretically, administrators attempted to create classes based on standardized test scores, teacher recommendation, and/or parent request.

In some schools, the move toward heterogeneous grouping altered this pattern. On the other hand, high school students are individually scheduled based on student requests. Some high school courses are leveled; others are grouped heterogeneously.

Recently, the middle school has moved toward more individualized scheduling. Although a cohort of students, numbering 125 to 140, may be assigned to a group of core teachers for academic subjects, these students may be grouped and regrouped during the course of the five core periods. Williamson and Johnston (1998) emphasize the importance of fitting the educational practice to the needs of the students rather than staying within a rigid grouping. By grouping and regrouping within the academic block, both high- and low-achieving students' needs can be met. Throughout the remainder of the day, students move to art, music, physical education, technology, and family and consumer sciences.

When schedules facilitate grouping and regrouping, teachers have opportunities to reorder and address the individual needs of students. Regrouping examples include the following:

Middle School

- Students needing remediation may be placed in the class that houses special education students in the inclusion program.
- Cross-team regrouping may permit gifted students to be spread over two or more teams.
- In physical education, students can choose certain activities based on their interests.
- Students can be grouped and regrouped in a specific class according to instructional needs, strategies, and learning styles.

High School

- Students are individually scheduled for gifted, remedial, and/or regular program classes throughout the day.
- Two teachers of mathematics or foreign language classes can group and regroup students based upon learning styles and performance on diagnostic pretests.
- Teachers committed to group work or cooperative learning can continually place students in a variety of settings and monitor student performance.
- A course could be organized on a self-pacing curriculum.

Individual teachers can regroup within their classrooms to provide differentiated instruction. Tomlinson's (1999) three-part model of content, process, and product for differentiated instruction encourages this type of organization. By having different groups within a classroom, a teacher can focus on the same concept with the entire class but vary the level of complexity of the process or product.

Establish Advisory Programs

In keeping with the Carnegie Task Force's report on adolescent development, *Turning Points* (Task Force on Education of Young Adolescents, 1989), an essential element of the original middle school concept was the advisory component. Advisory time provides the student with a significant adult who provides support and direction (Jackson & Davis, 2000). A teacher's advisory assignment exists in addition to subject area responsibilities. Daily or at least weekly, teachers are scheduled with a group of 15 to 20 students for a program called advisory, home-base, advisor-advisee, or group guidance. Topics typically include conflict resolution, decision making, understanding self and others, communication skills, loyalty, responsibility, and character education. In addition, students select topics to be discussed. When needed, teachers talk individually with students who have questions or concerns.

Anfara and Brown's (2001) discussion of the advisor-advisee program cites Alexander and George (1981) who determined not only that the program benefits students but that effective teachers need and want an opportunity to know at least some of their students in a more meaningful way. Further, in the NASSP publication (2000), *Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution*, the researchers advocate that each high school student should have a Personal Adult Advocate similar to the middle school model.

In either scenario, advisory programs impact the schedule. In some cases, advisory is embedded in content area instruction or a magnet program; in others, advisory is a period segment or a full period. At the high school level, interest continues to surface for advisory, freshman seminar, and other student support experiences. In the high school experience, topics include the following:

- social-emotional issues of students in Grades 9–12
- moral development, values, and issues of students in Grades 9–12
- study skills
- career development theory
- career pathways
- school-to-work programs and experiences
- college admissions process
- transition from middle school to high school as well as from high school to college or the world of work

Although advisory is a key element of the secondary curriculum, it is one that is difficult to implement.

SUMMARY

The first step in the reorganization or restructuring process is to identify reason(s) for change. The fifteen factors can be viewed both as reasons for change

and as models for change. In all cases, the reason needs to support the focus for change: improving student achievement and meeting student needs. One of these factors, establishing teams, houses, small learning communities, or magnets, might be examined as an option for schools that want to integrate the learning experience and improve student achievement.

A Guide for Collaborative Conversations

To set the stage for further discussion of the fifteen restructuring factors, the following questions should be considered:

Leader Questions

1. Which reasons or topics are of greatest concern?
2. To what extent will restructuring impact student achievement?
3. How do we confirm or validate the reasons for our school or district?
4. What, if any, is the relationship among the reasons selected?
5. What data do we need to move to the next step?
6. How do we arrange for teacher, team, and department conversation?
7. To what extent will restructuring impact teacher accountability?

Teacher Questions

1. From an instructional perspective, which are the major reasons for restructuring?
2. How will restructuring impact curriculum and instruction?
3. How will teachers work in the new organization?
4. How will these changes impact student performance? How will this be measured?
5. What responsibility or accountability exists for teachers in the restructuring process?