Paradigm Transformation: Preparing Students for the Transition To Middle School

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PARADIGM TRANSFORMATION:
PREPARING STUDENTS FOR THE TRANSITION TO MIDDLE SCHOOL
A CHANGE LEADERSHIP PROJECT

LaSabra Warner Patterson
Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of
Doctor of Education
in the Foster G. McGaw Graduate School

National College of Education
National Louis University
June, 2015
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2015

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This document was created as one part of the three-part dissertation requirement of the National Louis University (NLU) Educational Leadership (EDL) Doctoral Program. The National Louis Educational Leadership EdD is a professional practice degree program (Shulman et al., 2006).

For the dissertation requirement, doctoral candidates are required to plan, research, and implement three major projects, one each year, within their school or district with a focus on professional practice. The three projects are:

- Program Evaluation
- Change Leadership Plan
- Policy Advocacy Document

For the Program Evaluation candidates are required to identify and evaluate a program or practice within their school or district. The “program” can be a current initiative; a grant project; a common practice; or a movement. Focused on utilization, the evaluation can be formative, summative, or developmental (Patton, 2008). The candidate must demonstrate how the evaluation directly relates to student learning.

In the Change Leadership Plan candidates develop a plan that considers organizational possibilities for renewal. The plan for organizational change may be at the building or district level. It must be related to an area in need of improvement, and have a clear target in mind. The candidate must be able to identify noticeable and feasible differences that should exist as a result of the change plan (Wagner et al., 2006).

In the Policy Advocacy Document candidates develop and advocate for a policy at the local, state or national level using reflective practice and research as a means for supporting and promoting reforms in education. Policy advocacy dissertations use critical theory to address moral and ethical issues of policy formation and administrative decision making (i.e., what ought to be). The purpose is to develop reflective, humane and social critics, moral leaders, and competent professionals, guided by a critical practical rational model (Browder, 1995).

Works Cited


ABSTRACT

This Change Leadership Plan is the second part of a three-part dissertation on effectively transitioning students from elementary school to middle school. Currently, there is no local program to aid students in transitioning from elementary to middle school. The rationale is that by addressing the need for increased focus on improving current practices, students’ needs will be met. This is important to the school, the district, and the educational community at large in preparation for implementation of the Common Core State Standards where all learning will spiral from grade level to grade level, continually allowing students and teachers to make vertical connections. Elements addressed in this research include the context, culture, conditions and competencies of the focus school.
PREFACE

What do you want to be when you grow up? This question is often asked of young people by the nervous adult just to past the time or by the proverbial educator to get their juices flowing, making them about undesired behaviors. In my nearly 20 years an educator, I am guilty as charged. In my current position as an assistant principal at a Title I elementary school, I often pose this same question to my students in an effort to build relationships and to get them thinking about the future, much the same as I did when I served in secondary education environments. What are we doing? Where are we going? Are we there yet? These are the questions that lead to change, and those that lie at the base of my role in initiating and advancing this change project.

I am all about doing what’s right and doing it the right way—a strong C personality—cautious, careful, complete, contemplating. Therefore upon noticing how my 6th graders stuck out like sore thumbs among middle and elementary students in an alternative education setting, I began to ponder the WHYs behind their behavior, then to look into the conditions and culture they came from in elementary school to the middle/high combination alternative education school. Within that same year, I requested a transfer. Little did I know I was being assigned to an elementary school, although all of my experience was in middle and high school. Once there, I noticed remarkably similar behaviors upon my 5th graders. And as I delved deeper, I found a need. One if the many things I’ve learned in this journey of life is that if God brings you to it, he will bring you through it. He brought me to recognize the need even when I wasn’t really paying attention, just contemplating, and he set up divine appointment for me to be in the right place at the right time to help facilitate the need.
Among the leadership lessons learned through this project are: Educating a child is about reaching them where they are and continually raising expectations to bring them to their unrealized potential. Also, students should be taught to be lovers of knowledge in an effort to potentially create lifelong learners. Finally, helping them to do this through researching to find ways to help them make connections on the next level that will lead to real-life connections creates a win-win for us all. This project is important to the focus school, the district, and the educational community at large as we prepare for full transition from the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards to the Common Core State Standards where all learning will spiral from grade level to grade level, continually allowing students and teachers to make vertical connections, as well as we develop the minds of those who will lead us in the future.

This experience has influenced my growth in leadership by providing a platform for me to answer that initial question just like most kids do, I want to be a doctor when I grow up, and fulfill part of my purpose in life. I still remember telling my dad this when I was younger, although my focus at that time was being a heart surgeon. It has also exposed me to utter truths about the world of education, about leadership, about my spiritual walk in relation to my career, and about the importance of relationships.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the work of my dissertation committee, with Dr. Carol Burg as Chair—thank you so much for your expertise, as well as the other professors who trod the journey with us as NLU’s first Florida doctoral cohort: Dr. Stu Carrier, the dynamic duo--Dr. Dan Buckman & Dr. Jim Schott, and Dr. Joan Minnis. I am grateful for NLU bringing doctoral studies to The Sunshine State—go TA001…there can only be one number one! Thank you to Dr. Sherrie Nickell and Kathryn LeRoy for your leadership as superintendents during this phase of my career and to all of those who participated in my research studies. I would also like to acknowledge those who will grab a hold of the work I began for the betterment of our future leaders—the earlier we start, the more we can do together to make lasting change.
DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to the loving memory of my daddy, Jonathan Warner, “World’s Greatest Fisherman” who went to Heaven two days before I began this journey. He lived his life supporting, encouraging, and improving the lives of others—and along with Mama were my first teachers. I am only one of the many persons changed by his servant leadership, as the fruits of his labor will forever manifest through his legacy of excellence and faith in Almighty God.

I also dedicate this work to my daughter, Toniah Jai, who spent countless nights curled up beside my office chair, refusing to go to bed without me as I burned the midnight oil… to the Best Mama and Granboo in the world, LaRosa Warner for the phenomenal woman she is to me and others—for your unending support throughout this process and others I’ve endured—thanks a million for the armor you bear—there’s truly none like you…to my sister and niece (Camille & Jade), Kat, P.Stef, P.Hope, The Gibsons and others who let TJai babysit them and who helped me in so many ways…to Auntie G & Uncle Jeff for your continued words of encouragement and the outings you provided for TJai allowing me to study…to my favorite teacher, Kathy Langford, who sparked my love of writing and a desire to make every word count as I braved through years of AP English & Humanities at MHS, then as a fellow ‘Nole provided guidance as I changed my undergraduate major to English… to my Uncle Myke who planted the seed a long time ago for me to pursue as much education as possible with a reminder that neither Egypt nor Rome were built in a day…to my shepherds, Pastor Steve & Apostle Shirley Arnold for your epic leadership, your dedication to seeing Heaven on Earth, and your devotion to train, equip and release…last and certainly not least, to I Am, Jehovah,
my Heavenly Father for being who you are; for your Grace and your Mercy; for the mantle of strength, endurance, and wisdom you bestowed upon me; for Jeremiah 29:11; and for allowing the opportunity for me to put my faith in action and work your plan—the connections with The Word along the way were astounding; thank you for speaking to me, speaking through me, and giving me understanding that you make no mistakes—through you, *I can do all things.*
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SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

During the 2012-2013 school year, upon requesting a school transfer within the school district, I was assigned to an elementary school, although all of my professional experience had been on the secondary level. In noting the various differences between the primary and secondary levels, I also immediately noted a need to improve current practices related to student readiness to transition to middle school. Transition is basically moving from one level to the next and in current culture, the prevalent attitude that states, “Since we have never done anything to prepare students for transition before, we don’t need to do anything now,” must be changed in order for implementation of transition activities to effectively prepare students to move from elementary to middle school. In order to evoke noticeable change in preparing the students, the staff must first shift to change existing culture and conditions.

Using the 4 C’s change model for organizational renewal from Change Leadership: A Practical Guide to Transforming Our Schools (Wagner, Kegan, Lahey, Lemons, Garnier, Helsing, Howell, & Rasmussen, 2006), I identified one main area in need of improvement at Redd Elementary School (RES – a pseudonym) as the lack of preparation of grade 5 students to transition to middle school with ease. A plan for organizational change at RES starts with identifying factors that appear to affect this problem area in need of improvement. Known as the As-Is/To-Be diagnosis-to-visioning change process, the four organizational areas examined for possibilities for change and renewal are context, culture, conditions, and competencies. For this particular problem, these are available for review in Appendix A: As-Is 4 C’s Analysis and Appendix B: To-Be 4 C’s Analysis.
Statement of the Problem

The problem context is the need for increased focus on improving current practices to improve student readiness to transition to middle school. The problem that calls for change is for teachers to fully understand that educating students involves preparing them for the next level academically and socially as a primary strategy to prepare students for transition, and to provide assistance to students as they transition. Current practice needs to be changed, beginning with helping teachers to make a paradigm shift regarding their capacity to prepare students for middle school.

I envisioned the consequences being not only students primed for academic success at the middle school level, but also competent social preparation for the conditions and culture of middle school as spearheaded by classroom teachers in collaboration with administration. Successfully initiating transition processes and procedures calls for better preparedness for students to transition to middle school.

Rationale

Having been the main disciplinarian at RES for two years, I could not help but to notice that the amount of student discipline incidents in 5th grade was steadily on the rise. As I conferenced with individual students about their displayed behaviors, the correlation to their grades and how much of what we were experiencing would not be tolerated at the next level, then followed up with their teachers, I began to notice that the majority of teachers were not able to have these candid conversations with their students. Only the few who had previously taught middle school were aware of the conditions of middle school, and even they were not using the information in order to prepare students. The purpose of this study was to ascertain the current level of understanding of selected
personnel at RES regarding the typical issues 5th grade students have in transitioning to 6th grade, and to ultimately propose systems and supports to put in place that help prepare students in grade 5 to transition to middle school with greater ease.

My primary research questions included:

1. What are the current practices teachers use to aid in the transition process to middle school?

2. Why is the current level of understanding of 5th grade teachers and administrators regarding the issues that fifth graders typically have aiding or hindering the transition from fifth to 6th grades?

My secondary research question include the question, How and when can the preparation strategies and activities are established within the school climate to aid in the transition of grade 5 students to middle school with ease?

The reasons I selected this problem as the focus of my change plan included my desire to help teachers achieve higher expectations for themselves and their students; to help teachers gain ownership of what takes place daily within the school; and to help teachers establish sufficient rapport with students to offer better preliminary preparation for students to transition to middle school with ease, ultimately ensuring their success academically and socially. My personal desire to help revealed itself more after being assigned to an elementary school where I observed teachers and students as the newcomer, like a social scientist for approximately six months. As Payne (2008) states, “The newest members of a social setting often make the best informants; they ‘see’ things that older inhabitants have come to take for granted.”
The variation of things I witnessed caused me to reflect on experiences I had working in the secondary education setting. For example, students dropping out of school for no apparent reason--some during the second semester of their senior year. Another illustration is students in eleventh grade being on a 2nd or 3rd grade Reading level, labeled as FCAT Retakers and frustrated at repeatedly failing state assessments to the degree of almost dropping out of school after struggling to keep up with their peers and meet graduation requirements. Yet another case in point I have witnessed repeatedly is the over-aged students who are so far behind academically that it is nearly impossible to catch up, so they become the habitual discipline offender at age 16, while still in middle school. Viewing the current state of elementary school began to pinpoint some of the whys behind these and other challenges faced by students today, which I witnessed time after time. I supposed that if we as educators taught transition skills to students as early as elementary school, students might face fewer challenges later in their educational career, and possibly later in life.

I saw the problem as persistently the same, the lack of competency to change the current conditions and culture at the focus school. Teachers did not appear to fully grasp what they should be teaching students, outside of the ABCs and 123s. Many had lost sight of educating the whole child with the inclusion of socials skills along with academic course work. With this, teachers did not provide opportunities for students to participate in learning activities that helped them foundationally to succeed and to prepare them to relate to the real world in order to transition to middle school with ease.

The proposed change plan is important to the stakeholders, the district, and the educational community as we are in the business of doing what is best for children and
taking the steps to do what is necessary to help them see their own potential in an attempt to educate the whole child. Educating a child is about reaching them where they are and continually raising expectations to bring them to their unrealized potential. Students should be taught to be lovers of knowledge in an effort to potentially create lifelong learners. This is important to the focus school, the district, and the educational community at large as we prepare for full transition from the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards to the Common Core State Standards where all learning will spiral from grade level to grade level, continually allowing students and teachers to make vertical connections, as well as we develop the minds of those who will lead us in the future. As lovers of knowledge and creators of lifelong learners, as educators we use what we know to help build capacity among our students and staff. This is important to our community stakeholders in order to help students prepare for college and career, then apply to compete adequately in business and industry. Ultimately, this enables us to survive as a nation—to rank as a school among the topic schools with our district; as a district, among the topics districts within our state; as a state, among the elite states within the nation; and as a nation to compete globally with other nations as a powerhouse with which to be reckoned.

**Goals**

The goal of my study was to focus on improving current practice to increase student readiness to transition to middle school. I investigated how teachers and administrators in a Title I elementary school within a Central Florida school district provide assistance to aid in student preparation for transitioning from elementary to middle school. I surveyed administrators and teachers to collect data on the processes
used to plan for student transition and related activity. I also surveyed staff members regarding the school climate and transition. My change plan analyzed the change process and methods of collaboration used at the focus school, identified actions that have been successful, and suggested some areas for improvement of facilitating learning related to transition for implementation in subsequent years, as well to eventually create a prototype of a transition program. Specifically, I analyzed how well the change process, communication methods, and professional development training provided at the focus school furthered the intended consequences for successfully initiating transition to middle school with ease.

The goals of this project specifically address the problem situation—the need to improve current practices—that needs change by honing in on the competencies needing development that lead to improved culture and conditions. In short, teachers do not engage students in activity to prepare for middle school transition; teachers do not demonstrate skills to help students prepare for middle school transition; and teachers do not make connects regarding what students need at each level.

Setting

Redd Elementary School is located within the Central region of Florida. The school is located in one of the most impoverished areas in the district. As the focus school of this study, Redd Elementary serves as a federally funded Title I school in a high poverty area. The demographics of the focus school include a population of 730 students in grades Pre-kindergarten through Grade 5, with over 90% of students approved for free or reduced breakfast/lunch (55 paid, 23 reduced, 652 free), and the entire student body qualifying for
a federally-funded Community Eligibility Program which provides free breakfast and lunch for all students.

By grade level, the male to female ratios are: Grade Pre-Kindergarten, 17 to 9; Grade Kindergarten, 70 to 62; Grade 1, 65 to 59; Grade 2, 57 to 57; Grade 3, 49 to 50; Grade 4, 42 to 38; and Grade 5, 53 to 47. The school data overall is representative of a community school in a low-income, high-poverty area within the district where only 5 buses run daily with all other students transported to school as car riders or walkers.

Table 1 provides a breakdown of the school’s demographic data into more detail. It specifically includes the racial and gender make-up by grade level for Redd Elementary School. Among the student population, the racial makeup includes 21.3% Black students (139), 26.9% Hispanic students (176) and 51.8% White students (339), in grades Pre-kindergarten through fifth grade for a total enrollment of 654 students. The focus group of fifth grade students represents a total of 15.2% (99) of the total student population. The breakdown of fifth graders by subgroup includes 3.1% 20) Black students, 3.4% (22) Hispanic students, and 8.7% (57) White students.

Table 1

*Redd Elementary School Race and Gender Totals by Grade, Ethnic Group, and Gender*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRADE LEVEL</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Other Totals</th>
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<td>Totals</td>
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Of the students at the focus school who participated in the latest round of statewide assessments, those testing satisfactory or higher in Reading were 37%, Math 25%, Writing 57%, and Science 20%. Among this data, only the Writing scores were purely 5th grade students. Writing data was purely 4th grade students. Reading and Math data included students in 3rd grade, 4th grade, and 5th grade. Ninety-eight percent of the total students eligible for testing were tested. The school earned a school grade of F, indicating a failure to make adequate progress.

**Conclusion**

In using Wagner’s 4 C’s Change Model for organizational renewal (Wagner et al. 2006), I have identified an area of need within my organization, as teachers are not fully understanding that educating students involves preparing them for the next level socially as well as academically, and incorporating activities that can be measured to help prepare grade 5 students to transition to middle school with ease. It is my hope that when teachers’ understanding of teaching as facilitating learning on all levels—academic and social—is realized, this will also lead to increased student proficiency in Reading and Math.

My vision for solving the problem is to focus on changing current practices at the focus school, which may also exist in similar elementary schools, and thereby facilitate the change process. By looking at teacher professional development and training opportunities related to assisting students (in essence, the use of proven research-based strategies), it is my hope that teachers can be aided in making a paradigm shift to understand the concept of facilitation of learning on all levels and how to follow through.
with appropriate actions. Ultimately, my vision for success is that student achievement and readiness to transition to middle school is elevated.
SECTION TWO: ASSESSING THE 4 C’S (AS IS)

By exploring the details of the context, culture, conditions and competencies that exist in the organization according to my As-Is Analysis in Appendix A, I conducted organizational research via survey and document analysis. At the same time, I explored personal biases, competencies, and leadership styles. With this dual focus—of organizational and individual change—I gained better understand of my organization, and how I can be a more effective leader within the organization.

Using the As-Is Analysis in Appendix A, I elaborated on the factors identified in each of the four arenas of change (context, culture, conditions, and competencies) that are in need of change. To assist in thinking about what to include in each of the four arenas, I referred to “Arenas of Change” in Chapter Six of Change Leadership (2006). I also referred to each of the 4 arenas (context, culture, conditions, and competencies) that are in need of change, as included on the Strategies and Actions diagnostic chart presented in Appendix C.

My observations included informal classroom visits to grade five classrooms. There I viewed those teacher-to-student and student-to-student interactions that took place daily while conducting formal and informal evaluative observations. I observed a culture of low expectancy for students to learn, a lack of ownership of the learning environment, and a general distrust of students. The many scenes I observed collectively supported my assertion that grade 5 teachers in general had no idea of what students are expected to do in middle school. With this, they could not tailor their conversations to a build better relationship with students or to effectively express the relevance of curriculum matters with regard to learning being building blocks.
During formal professional development (PD) trainings held periodically and weekly professional learning communities (PLCs), I informally observed teacher-to-teacher interactions. Here I observed a culture of inconsistency, lack of preparation, and unwillingness to change. In general, students’ best interest was not at the forefront of teacher decision-making. The overall impression was that if I make things look like they are okay, it will be okay. Teachers were afraid to ask for help, even in small group settings, or to follow up with an email request for further explanation or assistance with an expectation. For example, during a PLC, the principal presented raw data from a progress-monitoring tool revealing that 324 students cannot read, with the intention to address barriers and look at how to improve instruction, and an overwhelming majority of teachers responded that basically there is nothing wrong with what we have been doing. The data came from a progress-monitoring tool, which rated student comprehension. It revealed that although some students can accurately say the words on a page, they lack the ability to provide a sufficient summary of the contents; in essence, they lack the ability to comprehend the text, the ability to read.

**Context**

In the context of the As-Is chart, I listed internal elements to my organization. Increasing focus and improving current practices are the main features that are specific to student readiness to transition to middle school. The central theme was lack of preparation of grade 5 students to transition to middle school with ease. Many of the elements often seemed within our control and deeply affected the work of the organization. Generalities that lapsed over all 4 arenas were the lack of communication,
lack of understanding middle school protocol and procedures, and the prevalent attitude that we have never done anything to prepare students for transition.

With regard to the existing context of my organization, teachers had a general lack of communication with all parties—with parents about their child’s progress, with students about how they can improve and with administration about their professional needs to improve their performance for the betterment of students. This type of dysfunction is addressed through a few elements of the framework presented by the Consortium on Chicago School Research through Payne (2008, p. 46) as among the Five Fundamentals of school improvement:

- Family and Community Involvement, including how teachers and parents communicate and the level of human and social resources in the community;
- Quality of Instruction, including the level of intellectual challenge in instruction and the degree to which students are academically engaged; and Professional Capacity, which includes the quality of professional development available in a school, the capacity of teachers to talk about their teaching with one another, and the degree to which the adults in a building take collective responsibility for what happens there.

From this viewpoint, I concluded that the existing context of the focus school needs to address these essential supports for improvement to take place, in general, and with regard to students transitioning to middle school. Only aspects of student transition preparation existed before I was transferred to the school. This included only having the guidance counselor from the feeder middle school to speak with the students briefly during the second semester to present registration forms for the next school year.
Culture

In speaking of culture, Wagner et al. (2006) refers to the invisible but powerful meanings and mindsets held individually and collectively throughout the system. The culture of my organization is engrained with staff being accustomed to doing whatever they want to do. My first hint at this was during my first visit to the campus to meet my new principal before my transfer was effective. I walked in to not one, but two secretaries walking around the main office with bare feet. Upon joining the staff, I quickly found out the degree to which this self-centered culture was prominent. Examples included everything from requesting teachers to meet for individual feedback from observations and them never showing up, to office staff openly making comments that principals come and principals go—APs come and APs go, but I’ve been here and I’m going to be here, followed a complete disregard for procedures put in place. I recall assigning the task of reorganizing emergency contact information alphabetically school-wide, instead of by grade level and teacher, providing an explanation that one should not have to know a student’s grade level and teacher to pull their information. The result was completing these tasks as requested, however within a couple months, switching the entire system back as it previously was organized, according to the belief that can be stated as, “How we have always done it here” line of though. Within this, not only is progress hindered administratively with such attitudes, the existing culture is one that also inhibits students from being prepared for the next level. This is evident from the school-wide retention data, which reveals that 30.5% of students (224) were previously retained. Of these students, 13.8% (31) had multiple retentions; 11.2% (25) were overaged; and 24.5% (55) had been retained initially in kindergarten. This data is reflective evidence of the culture,
which includes a lack of ownership, inconsistency of follow-through, low expectations, and distrust; as well, that change is needed.

Teachers have no ownership of the learning environment, from the aesthetics and physical preparation for learning, to the overall taking responsibility of ensuring student learning is taking place daily. From the follow-through of meeting administrative expectations, like having classroom procedures in place, to the process of ensuring student safety and following established protocols, like having classroom doors locked at all times, there is a prevalence of inconsistency of follow-through. The basic attitude I observed may be stated as “I am going to do what I want to do, regardless of what I am told to do.”

As evident from classroom observations, there is a low expectation of students to learn beyond basics, and a belief that some students are incapable of learning. This is apparent by the multiple students seen throughout the campus that are placed away from the whole group and simply allowed to color in a separate area of the room or work on non-curriculum materials on the computer all day, while other classmates are engaged in the district-approved curriculum. Teachers not only have low expectations of their students, they also display this same attitude about themselves in addition to a low confidence about being able to help students prepare for transition.

The final as-is culture aspect of my organization is the teachers’ distrust of students. Some teachers have openly made comments about not trusting students, while others show it more, like not wanting to allow students to check out more than one book from the media center for the fear that they may lose the book; or, if a book is lost, not allowing the student to check out any more books until the first book is paid for; or the
classroom teacher checking out additional books in his or her name on behalf of the student and the book to remain in the classroom at all times until returned to the media center. Teachers need to reflect on the realities of the existing culture and what is revealed through the spoken and unspoken aspects of the existing culture in order to adequately move to change the culture. The reality is that many have a me-centered approach, instead of being student-centered and doing what is best for children. Not changing this will only cause the culture to diminish even more.

**Conditions**

Applying the Four Cs framework of Wagner et al. (2006) reveals examples of conditions at the focus school concerning transitions between grade levels, time spent with and for kids, explicit expectations around roles and responsibilities, and organization of physical plant. Within my organization’s As-Is conditions, displayed is a lack of understanding the need to prepare students for transition, therefore no structuring of the physical environment to accommodate student preparation to transition to middle school. This also includes that students are not given the opportunity to interact with middle school students and staff before transition, and there is no meaningful collaboration with feeder middle schools.

I also observed conditions of transitioning between grade levels, which revealed that too many students are unaware of what to expect after elementary school, they are not exposed to enough hands-on opportunities, and not allowed to participate in enough student-focused activity to prepare them for transition. Overall, the existing conditions set them up for major culture shock upon arrival at middle school, especially since students currently spend the majority of their day self-contained with one teacher and provided
with all the resources they need to operate throughout the day. They need to prepare to have multiple teachers every day with a variety of rules and procedures to follow, less supervision, and more responsibility—like, changing classes upon a bell ringing and providing their own basic resources with the use of storing them in a locker.

**Competencies**

The skills and knowledge people have are also referred to as their competencies. Within my organization, the current soft competencies revolve around teachers not wanting to collaborate, accept feedback or do research. Another example of the existing competencies related to students are teachers not engaging in professional development and teachers not providing activities for students to prepare for transition. Although there are school-wide expectations for teachers to plan collaboratively within teams to create lesson plans, for teachers to meet with administrators to review constructive criticism about classroom observations and for teachers to use student data to drive their decision-making, many do not do these things, displaying a lack of competencies.

The current hard competencies I observed include teachers not making connections with students to adequately build relationships, teachers not demonstrating the ability to help students prepare for transition, and teachers’ lack of understanding the student condition. Most of our teachers have only taught elementary, therefore they are not able to make connections regarding the differences between and what students need in middle school versus elementary school. This is in direct connection to their general lack of understanding students’ need to prepare for transition, as well as teachers not having the skills to prepare these students for transition to middle school. Oftentimes, the willingness to change one’s disposition allows the acquiring of necessary skills and
knowledge to manifest easier. By teachers doing this, we can more readily set in motion what needs to be done to help students prepare for transition.

Conclusion

In concluding the 4Cs, one cannot help but to reflect on the statement, “the interactions of these parts naturally create some kind of product or result…your system—any system—is perfectly designed to produce the results you’re getting,” (Wagner et al., 2006). The breakdown of each arena of change allows one to see how these interrelated influences combine to show the makeup up of our system as a whole organization. Ultimately as leaders, we must lay the foundation to help our teachers change to work within the given context, adjust the conditions of teaching and learning, convert the culture, and to improve their competencies.
SECTION THREE: THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

My research methodology involved data that is quantitative in nature, generated from communication with individuals about their experiences. I gathered and analyzed this information for a more in-depth understanding of the as-is context, culture, conditions, and competencies within the focus organization. I referred to Chapter Eight of *Change Leadership: A Practical Guide to Transforming Our Schools* to help me think about the kinds of data that change leaders need to gather and analyze before making plans for strategic action. For example, I considered what data might help me better understand the situation or problem and I envisioned what data might help me to convey the urgency of the need for a change to stakeholders (Wagner et al., 2006). Data included in this research was surveys, observations, and document analysis. Patton (2008) states, “Implementation evaluation focuses on finding out if the program has all its parts, if the parts are functional, and if the program is operating as it’s supposed to be operating” (Patton, 2008, p. 308).

**Research Design**

The kinds of data I collected for my change plan were surveys, observations, and document analysis. These types of data, according to Wagner et al. in a 2006 version of *Change Leadership*, are particularly powerful in illuminating and communicating key insights…Hearing the stories, hopes, and opinions of those in our community reminds us of the moral imperative behind our work, and enables us to see the information as living in three dimensions instead of in just one.
In pursuit of this research, I believed this data would help reveal the true reality of the existing context, culture, conditions, and competencies with my organization. I looked forward to also gaining an accurate understanding of the as-is, and attaining strategies to transfer the urgency of the need for the organizational change I am proposing.

Although the number of actual participants was less than anticipated, I think the data collected helped me to prepare for the later process of enacting a transition program. The opinions of those directly involved in a current situation are always invaluable in future decision-making. Too many times, particularly in the field of education, decisions are made by those higher up on behalf of teachers and students without their input. I believe that by connecting with stakeholders and using their input, along with research-based strategies to propose change to a more formal structure of preparing students for transition, they are more willing to accept the change and not just go along to get along, but rather authentically engage in helping students to prepare for the next level.

**Participants**

The key participants from whom I gathered data were elementary educators. The ages of the participants varied, including administrators, teachers, and staff members, all selected by their association with the target group of fifth grade students. The teachers are those who provided fifth grade classroom instruction. The administrators and staff members are those who have interaction with fifth grade students in non-instructional circumstances. My interaction with adult participants took place during non-instructional time, before or after school, during planning time, or during other pre-arranged times that were convenient for the participants.
I recruited school personnel via writing through electronic means using district email as approved. I sent an email with a brief description of the research being done and requested that those who are interested in completing a survey and/or sitting for an interview to see me. I provided all participants with a consent form to sign upon ensuing participation. In the end, although a few staff members said they would participate in an interview, no one committed to an appointment for this to take place. As well, only one administrator, two teachers and eight staff members followed through with the survey process by returning their completed consent form and survey by the final deadline I provided. I sent periodic reminders school-wide by email and announced through the intercom system to gain participation, however only 14% of the targeted population actually participated.

Data Collection Techniques

For each of my data collection sources, I used established protocols as approved through the university and district IRRB processes. To gain insight into the change leadership needed at the focus school, I used the following processes and procedures:

Surveys

I gathered data from those who have non-instructional interaction with grade 5 students using the Staff Survey: School Climate & Transition. This was a survey of staff members at Redd Elementary School regarding the current school climate. Sections I, II and II specifically address the culture, conditions and competencies related to preparing 5th grade students to transition into 6th grade, as outlined in my as-is analysis. Section IV asked staff to respond with their level agreement with specific statements related to transition. I asked 75 staff members to take the survey, however only eight participants
followed through with their agreement to participate by returning the consent form and completed survey. For a copy of this survey, see Appendix D.

I gathered survey data from the school administration who communicated with grade 5 students. Two surveys were prepared, however only one administrator participated by returning the consent form and survey. Page one of the survey asked the administrator to respond with his level of agreement after reading 15 statements regarding the current understanding of typical 5th to 6th grade student transition elements. Page two of the survey asked administrators to read statements, then mark whether they agree or disagree that each is a student concern upon entering middle school. The bottom of the survey provided for the opportunity to list additional student concerns upon entering middle school. For a copy of this survey see Appendix E: Administrator Survey.

I also gathered survey data from those who had contact with grade 5 students on an instructional level. I completed this through a survey of teachers who currently or previously taught grade 5 students in a classroom setting. I created ten surveys, however only two teachers participated by returning the consent form and survey. Page one of the survey asked the teachers to respond with his level of agreement after reading 15 statements regarding the current understanding of typical 5th to 6th grade student transition elements. Page two of the survey asked teachers to read statements, then mark whether they agree or disagree that each is a student concern upon entering middle school. The bottom of the survey allowed teachers to list additional student concerns upon entering middle school. For a copy of this survey, see Appendix F: Teacher Survey.

I adapted the statements in all of the surveys from Koppang’s Student Concerns Survey (2004), where he presents a transition program based on identified student and
parent concerns. My procedure for distributing and collecting each type of survey was the same: using the district email system, I sent an email with a brief description of the research being done and requested for those stakeholders interested in completing a survey to see me. All who responded received an envelope the included an instruction sheet, a consent form and a survey (based on their job title), after I briefly explained the purpose of the research, and procedure to follow with the importance of returning the signed consent form with the survey. For each week leading up to the deadline, I emailed reminders through an all staff distribution list. A few days leading up to the deadline, I announced through the intercom system a reminder in an effort to drum up more participation. In the end, only 14% of the targeted staff participated.

**Document Review**

In an attempt to review the current “As-Is” documents and policies at Redd Elementary School in preparing grade 5 students to leave elementary school, none existed. There was no student handbook, no mention of transition preparation in the staff handbook, and no potential documents in general classrooms that could be used to better prepare grade 5 students to leave elementary school. The only documents I reviewed that could relate to student performance academically and socially, as well as improve current policies or supports to assist students in preparation to leave elementary school, was the curriculum materials used by the guidance counselor to teach social skills.

The 2013-2014 school year student standardized test data revealed that learning was not taking place at Redd Elementary School, at least not adequate yearly gains. After Spring 2014 testing, the school not only received a grade of F, but also ranked among the bottom 300 schools within the state, making it categorized as a turnaround
school for the next school year, which would have mandatory Department of Education intervention. As well, I reviewed discipline data, which revealed that discipline referrals increased from the previous school year and that the majority of discipline incidents occurred in grade 5, to be close in rankings only with kindergarten.

**Data Analysis Techniques**

For each of my data collection techniques, I configured the results and looked for themes within each of the arenas of change. By doing this, I was able to better able to make correlations between the as-is and the to-be analyses of change. I analyzed the survey data through means of organization that included tallying the responses according to each group by classification as administrator, teacher, or staff member. I classified the survey items to categorize the context of the text of the question as related to culture, conditions or competencies. I analyzed the document review data in relation to the organization’s structure as a stuck community, in contrast to the restorative community. According to Block, in the stuck community, “The future is defined by the interplay of self-interests, dependent on the accountability of leaders…and we try harder at what we have been doing all along; we are committed to trying harder at what is not working” (2008, p. 39).

I planned to use the data gathered to share with the principal to provide evidence for the need for providing students assistance with transitioning. My hope was that he would take the information into consideration for the following school year for implementation. As well, as the survey research reveals, administrators and teachers agree that a sound transition program can directly influence formation of identity for an
adolescent and by beginning the process as soon as possible, the more likely positive influence can be provided for students.

**Ethical Considerations**

The ethical considerations I took into account during the study included precepts to maintain confidentiality of all participating individuals and organizations after permission was received from the university’s IRRB Committee and the school district to conduct research. I made every effort to minimize harm to individuals, including the use of pseudonyms in place of actual names, not sharing information with others not involved in the research process, and having research materials at my home office out of reach of others.

For the focus organization, permission to conduct research at the school was received in written from the building principal (see Appendix G). As well, for each individual participant, a written consent form (see Appendix H) was provided and signed before participation was ensued. At all times, I maintained professional competence, principles of integrity, and motives of scholarly, social, and professional responsibility. No one was provided undue pressure, subtle influence, or promised compensation of any sort to participation. Efforts were made to be “honest, fair, and respectful of others,” as stated by the American Research Association (2011, p. 1460).

**Conclusion**

I created the research design with future implementation in mind. My original thought was that by providing evidence of the need for transition assistance to the principal, he would agree to either departmentalizing 5th grade for the upcoming school
year or the semester of the next school year, or at least to change classes for a specified subject. With this strategy, teachers and students would be eased into the change process.
SECTION FOUR: THE RELEVANT LITERATURE

People must be allowed to experience the need for change by recognizing, as in recovery programs, that first, there is a problem. As inferred here, there must be a willingness to accept change. Heifetz et al. (2009) also asserts that there is a need to determine whether or not the organization is ready for change. He also says,

When you realize that what you see as dysfunctional works for others in the system, you begin focusing on how to mobilize and sustain people through the period of risk that often comes with adaptive change, rather trying to convince them of the rightness of your cause (Heifetz et al., 2009, p. 18).

In order to help achieve my organizational change goal, authentic partnerships must be formed where people first recognize the need for change: “Such partnerships require new mental models that are no long based on deficit thinking but rather on a strength-based perspective” (Auerbach, 2012, p. 44). In accordance with Auerbach’s thinking, we must see the organization through a strength-based perspective, instead of as starved of resources and expertise in relation to transition. I do not think we are dealing with a lack of inability to respond to the needs of our students, but rather a lack of willingness to respond.

I truly think that most staff members, especially teachers in my organization, lack ownership due to their loss of belonging. It goes back to be transformed from a stuck community and focusing on the fabric of community. As Block asserts,

The social fabric of community is formed from an expanding shared sense of belonging. It is shaped by the idea the only when we are connected and care for
the well-being of the whole that a civil and democratic society is created…it occurs in an infinite number of small steps (Block, 2008, p. 9).

This thought helps to validate my intention to gradually incorporate change within my organization for example, allowing the students to change classes for only one subject; then the next semester, for all subjects, yet the following school year, departmentalize the entire grade level. Additionally, to celebrate successes along the way and tweak processes as needed.

Block also reveals that questions are more important than answers, which means leadership is not a matter of style or vision but about getting the right people together in the right way, in the effort to change the existing context of community from one of deficiencies, interests, and entitlement to one of possibility, generosity, and gifts (2008). I agree with this belief, however also think that as a leader, as sense of urgency must be created for those have no connection to the community and who know change is needed, however do not readily admit it because they do not want to change.

On the other hand, Kotter & Cohen (2002) says there are eight steps for successful large scale change with the central challenge being changing people’s behavior. They reveal the steps in The Heart of Change, beginning with creating a sense of urgency among relevant people. Doing this, people are positioned for your launch. They also provide a list of what works:

- Showing others the need for change with a compelling object that they can actually see, touch, and feel; showing people valid and dramatic evidence from outside the organization that demonstrates that change is required; looking constantly for cheap and easy ways to reduce complacency; and never
underestimating how much complacency, fear, and anger exists, even in good organizations (p. 36).

From the adaptive leadership framework, adaptive leadership is defined as the practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive (Heifetz et al., 2009, p. 14). Within this framework, Heifetz et al. also reveals that the thriving organization has characteristics of exceptional customer service, high workforce morale, and positive social and environmental impact. As well, that the challenge in this frame is to engage people in distinguishing what is essential to preserve from their organization’s heritage from what is expendable—that the most effective leadership anchors change in the values, competencies, and strategic orientations that should endure in the organization (2009).

Finally, Heifetz et al. also agrees with Block’s assertion to ask more questions, saying, “you need some non-confrontational ways to slow down your organization’s momentum and the first idea is to ask more questions rather than issuing more directives” (p.111), and other ideas to get started are to “softly exercise a veto, build extra time into meeting agendas, expand the circle of individuals needing consulting, and distinguish facts on the table” (p.111) Patton sums it up with the utilization focused stance that the central problem is getting people to apply what is already known (2008). Our ultimate task is to get students to realize what they know and apply it in the classroom and in life situations. As stated Contemporary Readings in Curriculum,

The really important dependent variables in education are not test scores or even skills performed in the context of schools; they are the tasks students are able to compete successfully in the lives they lead outside of school. There is a huge
difference between knowing how to read and having an interest in doing so. In addition, interest shows up in out-of-school contexts (Stern & Kysilka, 2008, p.13).

**Related Research Studies**

Several aspects of leadership apply to the educational arena and to modern business. In relating to non-school based leadership, Hargreaves reveals that a distribution of leadership in which everyone has a voice, dialogue is respectful, the culture is professional, and the leadership always takes final responsibility; that the work should promote systematic improvement and move toward innovation (2006). This assertion is applicable as well in order for an effective transition program to be implemented by school-based leadership. It is important for all stakeholders to provide input in the planning stages, sound implementation set forth by administration and support for continued enhancements to go forth for advancement.

Establishing a firm foundation is essential as groundwork before implementing such change. In *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership* the author warns that too often leaders do not take time first to diagnose the system, including a group’s culture (Heifetz et al., 2009), as included in the as-is analysis preceding this research.

Previous research found that students entering middle school have various concerns about using a locker at school, finding/remembering where their locker is, remembering their locker combination, etc. (Akos, 2002; Koppang, 2004). It was interesting to see if the administrators and teachers perceived that lockers might produce as much anxiety as students indicated.
By looking at what is currently taking place during student transitions from elementary to middle school other research provides an analysis of the transition into middle school as revealing links to academic setbacks. A study in *Education Week* noted as part of the Program on Education Policy and Governance Working Paper Series at Harvard University, that transition problems might happen when students enter middle school. It found that,

Students moving from grade 5 into middle school show a ‘sharp drop’ in math and language arts achievement in the transition year that plagues them as far out as the 10th grade, even thwarting their ability to graduate from high school and go on to college (Sparks, 2011, p. 1).

This provides additional support for the need to provide assistance to students as they prepare to transition to middle school while also reversing the long-term effects of what this research found.

Main elements needed here are also accountability and enforcement. Without these elements, even the best programs have no last affects. In a policy brief on partnership between home, school, and community, The National Education Association agreed that more enforcement is needed, stating that “while some states and school districts have enacted laws and policies to encourage parent-community-school partnerships…at the same time, locally developed practices should be rewarded, sustained, and expanded” (National Education Association, 2008). The NEA also asserts a requirement of “addressing students’ social service needs, as well as their academic ones” (2008).
SECTION FIVE: THE DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

This research will contribute to the field of education by providing evidence to support the need for transition activities to aid 5th grade students in their transition to middle school by focusing on relevant issues they face and concerns their school leaders have. Previous research has found that students entering middle school have various concerns about using a locker at school, finding/remembering where their locker is, remembering their locker combination, etc. (Akos, 2002; Koppang, 2004). The data collected during this research aided to see if the administrators, teachers, and staff have the same perceptions about what are concerns of and/or might produce for students.

By addressing those currently working with students and likely to provide help with transition from elementary to middle school, this project provided an analysis of the compiled experiences of the transition into middle school. For the field of education, the most consistent themes that emerge from the data that seem to be issues of concern provided a focus of what needs to be addressed to provide a better transition experience. This helped to also form the basis of initiating program development. As described in the research design, I used two forms of data collection: surveys and document review.

Findings

I interpreted relevant data drawn from sources that helped guide the successful implementation of the change plan. The findings reported here are the results of all the data-gathering techniques used in my study. I used narrative summation and charts as presentation methods for the various types of data as appropriate – after giving a written description of the form of collection. I adapted the items in all of the surveys from Figure
1 Student Concerns Survey (Koppang, 2004), where he presents a transition program based on identified student and parent concerns.

**School-Site Issues Survey-Administrator Perspective**

I gathered survey data from the school administration who communicated with grade 5 students related typically through non-academic means. I received to disseminate two copies of the survey which I prepared for distribution, however only one administrator participated by returning the consent form and survey for a rate of 50% participation. Page one of the survey (Appendix E) asked the administrator to respond with the level of agreement after reading 15 statements regarding the current understanding of typical 5th to 6th grade student transition elements. Page two of the survey asked administrators to read statements, then mark whether they agree or disagree that each is a student concern upon entering middle school. The bottom of the survey provided for the opportunity to list additional student concerns upon entering middle school.

On page one of the survey (Appendix E), the administrator was asked to read a statement and place an X in the appropriate column to indicate *Strong Agree, Agree, Disagree or Strongly Disagree*. Among the statements the one responding administrator Strongly Agreed with were: students have legitimate concerns that will facilitate transition to middle school; providing a separate setting and easing 6th graders into the regular population is needed; a sound transition program can directly influence formation of identity for an adolescent. For my study, this has implications that the research has merit and the tenets within it can provide to help adolescents beyond the educational setting, help to shape their identity for adolescence.
The administrator Agreed that: student orientation is a key element to transition; student emotional needs need to be addressed during transition; students will benefit from weekly mentoring to assist in their transition; professional development for grade 6 teachers is important to aid in transition; having a faculty advisor in addition to a guidance counselor is important for grade 6 students; students need help navigating the path to middle school; addressing students’ concerns is a priority; prior to transition, vertical teaming is needed; administrators and counselors should visit elementary schools during the spring; a student survey would help to create a handbook of typical first-year concerns and coping skills; and student social needs should be addressed during transition. For my study, this means that several aspects of student needs need to be addressed and that many of the basic elements I entered the research with as basis to begin the project are agreed upon by the administrator surveyed. The administrator did not Disagree with any statements, however Strongly Disagreed with the statement: students transition easily from elementary to middle school. For my study, this is confirmation that students do not transition easily, although data from one participant does not provide merit enough to act on solely.

From page one of the administrator survey, the range of responses varied slightly regarding elements related to typical elementary to middle school transition. In general, there was an agreement with 93.3% of the statements presented and a disagreement with 6.7% of the statements presented. By the one responding administrator disagreeing strongly with the statement that students transition easily from elementary to middle school, my interpretation of the overall responses is that this individual would agree with
the need to provide assistance for students in the transition process. In summary, support for a transition program would be provided based on these findings.

On page two of the survey (Appendix E), the administrator was asked to read statements and place an X in the appropriate column to indicate Agree or Disagree, with regards to the statement being a student concern upon entering middle school. The statements the administrator Agreed that students are concerned about were:

- How they look
- Changing classes
- Joining clubs/activities
- Being sent to the principal’s office
- Being picked on/made fun of
- Changing in front of others in PE
- Taking showers in PE
- Going out for athletics
- Being offered drugs/alcohol
- Failing grades
- Getting along with older students
- Getting lost
- Finding the restrooms
- Getting to class on time
- Giving a presentation in class
- Work being too hard
- Homework assignments
Keeping up with assignments
Knowing what is expected of them
Lockers
Lunchroom seating
Making friends/fitting in
New rules and routines
Rumors heard about middle school
Taking tests
Peer pressure
Smoking
Changing classes
Being embarrassed
Riding a bike to school
Being on free or reduced lunch
Family issue(s) affecting them at school

For my study, this means that the vast majority of elements which Koppang states as students’ concerns are also recognized by the administrator surveyed. This helps to confirm that these elements related to transition are indeed those in need of address.

The administrator only **Disagreed** that students are concerned about:

- Being organized
- Size of the school
- Having many teachers
For my study, this means that what the administrator has recognized as non-issues for students are all non-academic in nature, although directly related to the culture of the school setting and this needs to be addressed in relation to my research questions.

When provided the opportunity to list additional student concerns upon entering middle school, the administrator wrote:

- Fitting in
- Adjusting to a new environment

This means for my study that the administrator has recognized other areas that may be of student concern and these should also be addressed as potential student concerns.

From page two of the administrator survey, the range of responses varied regarding what the individual thought would be student concerns during middle school transition. In general, there was an agreement with 91.4% of the statements presented and a disagreement with 8.6% of the statements presented. My interpretation of the responses is that this individual agrees with statements of students’ concerns that are more self-centered and socially related. The elements noted that are not student concerns are less social and more elements of adult concern. With these notations and the written-in responses that students are concerned with fitting in and adjusting to a new environment, an accurate summary is that the administrator’s viewpoint is that students are more concerned with social aspects of transition. In general, I think administrators support aiding students in the transition from elementary to middle school.

**Survey-Teacher Perspective**

I also gathered survey data from those who had contact with grade 5 students on an instructional level. This was done through a survey of teachers who currently or
previously taught grade 5 students in a classroom setting. I distributed 10 surveys, however only two teachers participated by returning the consent form and survey, for a response rate of 20%. Page one of the survey asked the teachers to respond with his level of agreement after reading 15 statements regarding the current understanding of typical 5th to 6th grade student transition elements. Page two of the survey asked teachers to read statements, then mark whether they agree or disagree that each is a student concern upon entering middle school. The bottom of the survey allowed teachers to list additional student concerns upon entering middle school.

On page one of the survey (Appendix F), the teachers were asked to read a statement and place an X in the appropriate column to indicate Strong Agree, Agree, Disagree or Strongly Disagree. Among all of the statements, the two teachers’ responses did not include any Disagree responses and the remaining responses were:

- Students transition easily from elementary to middle school (1 Agreed/1 Strongly Disagreed)
- Students have legitimate concerns that will facilitate transition to middle school (1 Strongly Agreed/1 Agreed)
- Student orientation is a key element to transition (2 Strongly Agreed)
- Student emotional needs need to be addressed during transition (2 Strongly Agreed)
- Students will benefit from weekly mentoring to assist in their transition (2 Strongly Agreed)
- Professional development for grade 6 teachers is important to aid in transition (2 Strongly Agreed)
Having a faculty advisor in addition to a guidance counselor is important for grade 6 students (2 Strongly Agreed)

Students need help navigating the path to middle school (2 Strongly Agreed)

Addressing students’ concerns is a priority (2 Strongly Agreed)

Prior to transition, vertical teaming is needed (1 Strongly Agreed/1 Agreed)

Providing a separate setting and easing 6th graders into the regular population is needed (1 Strongly Agreed/1 Agreed)

Administrators and counselors should visit elementary schools during the spring (1 Strongly Agreed/1 Agreed)

A student survey would help to create a handbook of typical first-year concerns and coping skills (2 Agreed)

Student social needs should be addressed during transition (2 Strongly Agreed)

A sound transition program can directly influence formation of identity for an adolescent (2 Strongly Agreed)

This means for my study that teachers do not disagree with any elements presented as not related to student transition. Whereas, a contrast to the administrator answers with the teacher answers, there are three discrepancies. I think this can be attributed to the level of involvement with students—as each participant responds from his/her level of experience. As adapted from Koppang (2004), all of these elements are thought to be important to students, I think the correlation between administrator and teacher responses just confirms that whether the participants totally agree or not, the elements are worth investigating to be taken into consideration in the implementation of a transition program.
From page one of the teacher survey, the range of responses was limited regarding elements related to typical elementary to middle school transition. In general, there was an agreement with 96.7% of the statements presented and a disagreement with 3.3% of the statements presented. By only one responding teacher strongly disagreeing and one responding teacher agreeing with the statement that students transition easily from elementary to middle school, my interpretation of this split in beliefs is that experience comes into play. Based on this data and my own personal experience, I think the individual who disagrees that students transition easily has had experience with students beyond the elementary level, whereas the individual who agrees has likely only worked on the elementary level. In summation, based on the data from page one of the teacher surveys, there is a need for students to be supported in the transition process. I think teachers support aiding students in transitioning from elementary to middle school.

On page two of the survey (Appendix F), the teachers were asked to read statements and place an X in the appropriate column to indicate Agree or Disagree, with regards to the statement being a student concern upon entering middle school. Among all of the statements, the two teachers’ responses were that Students are concerned about:

- How they look (2 Agreed)
- Changing classes (2 Agreed)
- Joining clubs/activities (1 Agreed/1 Disagreed)
- Being sent to principal’s office (1 Agreed/1 Disagreed)
- Being picked on/made fun of (2 Agreed)
- Changing in front of others in PE (2 Agreed)
- Taking showers in PE (2 Agreed)
- Going out for athletics (1 Agreed/1 Disagreed)
- Being offered drugs/alcohol (1 Agreed/1 Disagreed)
- Failing grades (1 Agreed/1 Disagreed)
- Getting along with older students (2 Agreed)
- Getting lost (2 Agreed)
- Finding the restrooms (1 Agreed/1 Disagreed)
- Getting to class on time (2 Agreed)
- Giving a presentation in class (2 Agreed)
- Work will be too hard (2 Agreed)
- Homework assignments (2 Agreed)
- Keeping up with assignments (2 Agreed)
- Knowing what is expected of them (2 Agreed)
- Lockers (1 Agreed/1 Disagreed)
- Lunchroom seating (2 Agreed)
- Making friends/fitting in (2 Agreed)
- Being organized (2 Agreed)
- New rules and routines (2 Agreed)
- Rumors heard about middle school (2 Agreed)
- Size of the school (2 Agreed)
- Taking tests (2 Agreed)
- Peer pressure (1 Agreed/1 Disagreed)
- Smoking (1 Agreed/1 Disagreed)
- Changing classes (2 Agreed)
 Having many teachers (2 Agreed)
 Being embarrassed (2 Agreed)
 Riding a bike to school (1 Agreed/1 Disagreed)
 Being on free or reduced lunch (1 Agreed/1 Disagreed)
 Family issue(s) affecting them at school (2 Agreed)

For my study, this means that in general, teachers agree with the greater majority of student concerns presented. Compared to the administrator data, teachers agreed even more with what are identified as student concerns. However, in strict comparison to Koppang (2004) relaying all of the elements as student concerns, the teachers surveyed disagreed with nearly all of the statements 16%. Yet when provided with the opportunity to list additional student concerns upon entering middle school, neither of the teachers provided a response.

From page two of the teacher survey, the range of responses was more assorted regarding what they thought would be student concerns during middle school transition. In general, there was an agreement with 84.3% of the statements presented and a disagreement with 15.7% of the statements presented. My interpretation of the responses is that teachers overall agree that statements of students’ concerns are legitimate. An accurate summary is that the teacher viewpoint is that these concerns need to be addressed, as well that they would assist in the process.

Climate Survey-Staff Perspective

Upon approval of my research request, I gathered data from 75 staff members who have non-instructional interaction with grade 5 students using the Staff Survey: School Climate & Transition (Appendix D). This was a survey of staff members at Redd
Elementary School regarding the current school climate. Sections I, II and III specifically address the culture, conditions and competencies related to preparing 5th grade students to transition into 6th grade, as outlined in the “as-is” analysis. Section IV asked staff to respond their level of agreement with specific statements related to transition. Eight participants followed through with their agreement to participate by returning a signed consent form and completed survey, for a response rate of 10.6%.

In sections I, II, and III of the staff survey, staff members were asked to read statements and place an X in the appropriate column to indicate Agree or Disagree, with regards to the statement about school climate related to culture, conditions, and competencies. It is important to note that some responses were left blank. I created the survey and made 75 copies; 8 surveys were returned completed with an accompanying consent form, for a response rate of 10.7% as revealed in Table 2.

As an introduction to the staff survey regarding school climate and transition, I requested demographic data in the form of 6 questions related to their age, gender, position, grade levels taught, current grades and years of experience. Participating staff reported as being all female, averaging forty-two years of age, and having an average of 14 years of experience in education. Together, they have taught levels kindergarten through college and currently work as secretaries (2), classroom teachers (2), resource teacher (1), secretaries (2), and Title I Facilitator (1). For survey items related to culture at Redd Elementary School, the number of responses in general was split, as some staff members agreed and some staff members disagreed with each item, except the item related to instruction presented through departmentalization before students complete 5th grade. For this statement, 100% of participants agreed. The other immediately noticeable
rating was the 50% who agreed and 50% who disagreed with the statement that consistency is prevalent for all processes and procedures. This means for my study that future implementation departmentalized grade level is recognized as significant among the staff and something that should be done. For the remaining results that were basically, split, it lends itself to vast interpretation. I accept it as a notion that work needs to be done—especially when there is a split among half of the participants. For me, this hints at core issues that need to be addressed in order for true progress to take place.

Aspects of the culture which the majority of staff agreed with include 62.5% agreed teachers have high expectations of students (opposed to 37.5% who disagreed), and 57.1% agreed teachers have confidence in themselves and each other to prepare students for transition (opposed to 42.9% who disagreed)—there was one non-response which is also reflected in calculation. On the other hand, aspects of culture which the majority of staff disagreed with include 62.5% disagreed there is sufficient rapport with students (opposed to 37.5% who agreed); 75% disagreed adequate ownership exists among all stakeholders (opposed to 25% who agreed); 85.7% disagreed teachers trust students (opposed to 14.3% who agreed); 71.4% disagreed students trust teachers (opposed to 28.6% who agreed); and 71.4% disagreed there is effective collaboration with families (opposed to 28.6% who agreed). There was one non-response in each of the three previous questions, which is also reflected in the calculation. For my study, this hints at uncertainty based on obvious discrepancies. Overall, upon reading beyond the numbers, it does not make logical sense that more than half the responding staff says teachers have high expectations of students and that teachers have confidence in themselves to prepare students for transition yet only one quarter say there is adequate
ownership. As well, only a few more than a quarter agree that there is sufficient rapport with students. How can there be confidence and high expectations with no ownership and rapport? This would have to be addressed in order for the transition program at this site to be effective.

Table 2. Survey Results for Culture at Redd Elementary School, summarizes the high percentages of disagreement related to cultural aspects of the staff are reflect of a core issue that needs to be addressed—especially the alarming data that basically says students do not trust teachers and teachers do not trust students. This is huge—how can we accomplish anything together if there is not basic level of trust among us? In addition, the ultimate question is not what most would automatically reflect on—rather than asking Who is to blame? Instead, the pertinent question is the more actionable inquiry, How do we fix the problem?

Table 2

*Redd Elementary School Survey Results for Culture*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I. Culture…</th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There is sufficient rapport with students</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistency is prevalent for all processes and procedures</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers have high expectations of students</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers have confidence in themselves and each other to prepare students for transition</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate ownership exits among all stakeholders</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a need to incorporate instruction through departmentalization before student complete their 5th grade school year</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers trust students</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students trust teachers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is effective collaboration with families</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For survey items related to conditions at the focus school, results are relayed in Table 3. The responses again were split, except two items which 100% of participants disagreed—that students are afforded the opportunity to interact with middle school
students before they transition and students are afforded the opportunity to interact with middle school staff before they transition. Again, one noticeable rating was 50% agreed and 50% disagreed with a statement, this time related to student-focused activities provided to prepare students for middle school. This means for my study that there is work to be done, beginning with providing basic opportunities for students to build relationships and gain trust of and from adults, as well to interact on various levels for positive collaboration.

Facets of the conditions at Redd Elementary School which the majority of staff agreed with include 100% of those responding agreed there is a need to increase understanding of the need to prepare students for transition to middle school and 75% of those responding agreed there is repeated exposure/opportunities for students to demonstrate learning (opposed to 25% who disagreed)—not included in this calculation is one individual who did not respond to these questions. On the other hand, aspects of conditions which the majority of staff disagreed with include 87.5% disagreed all students are unaware of what to expect after elementary school (opposed to 12.5% who agreed); 87.5% disagreed there is sufficient collaboration with feeder middle schools (opposed to 12.5% who agreed); 87.5% disagreed effective communication takes place regarding student transition to middle school among stakeholders (opposed to 12.5% who agreed); 75% disagreed strategies that are to prepare students for transition are enacted (opposed to 25% who agreed); and 75% disagreed a system is in place to prepare students for transition (opposed to 25% who agreed). For my study, the statistics again are alarming and reflective of much work to be done and confirmation that the need for this research is on target. The results are however not alarming from the standpoint of having
interacted with the individuals, as the merit of what is exposed here is apparent in their daily interaction. Again, the question arises, what’s to be done about it? In addition, if this many people are already aware of the issue, what has been done about it? Moreover, why not more?

Table 3

Survey Results for Conditions at Redd Elementary School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>II. Conditions…</th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There is repeated exposure/opportunities for students to demonstrate learning (ex. show, tell, prove reasoning)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All students are unaware of what to expect after elementary school</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student-focused activities are provided to prepare them for middle school</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are given the opportunity to interact with middle school students before transition to middle school</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are provided opportunities to interact with middle school staff before they transition to middle school</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is sufficient collaboration with feeder middle schools</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a need to increase understanding of the need to prepare students for transition to middle school</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective communication takes place regarding student transition to middle school among stakeholders</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies that to prepare students for transition are enacted</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A system is in place to prepare students for transition</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding survey items related to the competencies at Redd Elementary School, results are outlined in Table 4. The responses again were split, with no items having 100% of participants agree or disagree to a particular statement. However, four noticeable ratings with 50% agreed and 50% disagreed with statements that teachers demonstrate skills to be able to help students prepare for middle school transition, teachers are able to make level connections between elementary/middle schools, staffing is sufficient for departmentalization, and teachers collaborate, accept constructive criticism, and use research/data to drive their decision-making. Components of the competencies at Redd
Elementary School which the majority of staff agreed with include 62.5% agreed students are provided social skills training to prepare to cope with middle school issues (opposed to 37.5% who disagreed); 62.5% agreed there is general understanding of the need to prepare for middle school transition (opposed to 37.5% who disagreed); and 87.5% agreed there is basic understanding of the student condition (opposed to 12.5% who disagreed). For my study, this data confirms that staff is aware of the competencies outlined and it brings about the questions, how do we overcome and how do we teach our students to overcome?

Aspects of competencies which the majority of staff disagreed with include 62.5% disagreed staff members feel prepared to teach strategies for transition to middle (opposed to 37.5% who agreed); 75% disagreed adequate activities are provided for grade 5 students to aid in transitioning to middle school with ease (opposed to 25% who agreed); 62.5% disagreed teachers engage in professional learning to help them prepare students for transition to MS (opposed to 37.5% who agreed); 62.5% disagreed teachers engage students in activities to prepare for middle school transition (opposed to 37.5% who agreed); 87.5% disagreed staff members are aware of middle school protocols/procedures (opposed to 12.5% who agreed); and 87.5% disagreed staff members make students aware of middle school protocols/procedures (opposed to 12.5% who agreed). This data provides concrete evidence for my study that a transition program is needed and that there are various elements that go into the creation of a sound program that need to be addressed.
Table 4

Survey Results for Competencies at Redd Elementary School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>III. Competencies…</th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff members feel prepared to teach strategies for transition to middle</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are provided social skills training to prepare to cope with middle school issues</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers are able to make level connections between elementary and middle school</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is general understanding of the need to prepare for middle school transition</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is basic understanding of the student condition… (example, Low SES/living in poverty)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers demonstrate skills to be able to help students prepare for middle school transition</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate activities are provided for grade 5 students to aid in transitioning to middle school with ease</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers engage in professional learning to help them prepare students for transition to MS</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staffing is sufficient for departmentalization</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers engage students in activities to prepare for middle school transition</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers collaborate, accept constructive criticism, and use research/data to drive their decision-making</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff members are aware of middle school protocols/procedures</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff members make students aware of middle school protocols/procedures</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Section IV of the survey, I asked staff to read a statement and place an X in the appropriate column to indicate Strong Agree, Agree, Disagree or Strongly Disagree. The number of responses for each indication is revealed in Table 5. The range of responses favored an agreement regarding elements related to elementary to middle school transition. In general, there was an agreement with 94.2% of the elements presented and a disagreement with only 5.8% of the elements presented. Within the rating of disagreement, 5% is related to the statement that students transition easily from
elementary to middle school. A summary of this section of the survey based on the data is
survey participants in general agree that students need assistance with transition from
elementary to middle school. This summative data means for my study that it is credible,
it is needed, and it addresses a need that should readily be addressed

Table 5

Survey Results for Related to Student Transition at Redd Elementary School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Survey Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Students have legitimate concerns that will facilitate transition to middle school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Students transition easily from elementary to middle school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Student orientation is a key element to transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Student emotional needs need to be addressed during transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Students will benefit from weekly mentoring to assist in their transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Professional development for grade 6 teachers is important to aid in transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Having a faculty advisor in addition to a guidance counselor is important for grade 6 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Students need help navigating the path to middle school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Addressing students’ concerns is a priority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Prior to transition, vertical teaming is needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>A student survey would help to create a handbook of typical first-year concerns and coping skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Administrators and counselors should visit elementary schools during the spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Providing a separate setting and easing 6th graders in to the regular population is needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Student social needs should be addressed during transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>A sound transition program can directly influence formation of identity for an adolescent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Document Review

In an attempt to review current documents and policies, basically none existed. I created the staff handbook that existed. There was no student handbook. No place on campus was I able to locate information about transition preparation or there ever existing any type of activity to aide in this process. The only documents located that I think could relate to helping students’ performance academically and socially, as well as improve current policies or supports to assist students in preparation to leave elementary school was the curriculum materials used by the guidance counselor to teach social skills. Grade 5 students only interacted with this select material once in an eight-week cycle, surely not enough to effectively help prepare for transition and the context through which it was presented had nothing to do with transition.

Interpretation

Student-Needs Survey

As Patton states, interpretation goes beyond the data to add context, determine meaning, and tease out substantive significance (2008, p.478). The results of the administrator, teacher and staff surveys means that an overwhelming majority of employees recognize that students do not transition easily from elementary to middle school and there is a need for assistance with transition to middle school. Although there is a slight discrepancy with regards to the details of what administrators and teachers think students are concerned about, there is clearly an understanding among the staff that students have legitimate concerns about transitioning to middle school. As well, an underlining agreement that no system is currently in place to aid students in the transition process, although needed.
Climate Survey

In general, regarding culture, conditions, and competencies, the findings reveal there is a need for aiding students in preparation for transition to middle school. Regarding teachers, however, there is no clear consensus about their current capacity to aid students in the transition process; however, increased professional development to build greater teacher capacity would be wise. A closer look at the details of the climate survey reveals that only 14% agree teachers trust students, only 28% agree students trust teachers, only 12% agree there is effective collaboration with feeder middle schools, only 12% agree staff members make students aware of middle school protocols/procedures, only 12% of staff members are of middle school protocols/procedures, and only 5% agree that students transition easily from elementary to middle school. I interpret this as the building on fire and a squad of firefighters is needed immediately. By all accounts, it is understood that it will take time to methodically put systems in place, however assistance with the transition process through a sound transition program is the appropriate hydrant for the blaze occurring within Redd Elementary School’s current culture, conditions, and competencies.

The significance of the findings is they substantiate my initial thoughts about the state of the organization. As well, the findings provide evidence to support my theme that educators responsible for grade 5 students need help in preparing them for transition to middle school—this includes not only the classroom teacher but also administrators and other staff members. Raw findings from the data reveal only 37% teachers engage students in activities to prepare for middle school transition, only 37% agreed staff members feel prepared to teach strategies for transition to middle school, and only 12%
agree effective communication takes place regarding student transition among stakeholders. This basically means we must do a better job of collaborating as stakeholders, building capacity among us, and preparing our students as our future leaders.

The findings can be utilized to propose systems and supports to improve the arenas of change, leading to a valid transition program. One conclusion I draw from this data is that the organization is a stuck community—by definition this is one that argues against building community, reinforces individualism, assigns fault and worships self-interest (Block, 2008). Although there is no direct argument against building community, the actions of the members of the organization actively engage in activity counter to the leader’s attempts to build community. In display of passive-aggressive behaviors, many enforce self-interest and individualism while openly pointing fingers at others who they feel are at fault.

Some explanations for this are that the organization was not always this way—that as change for the better occurs over time so does the diminishing of negative culture, conditions and competencies which have previously hindered progress. I think other explanations are that over time, the right questions were not asked by school leadership and by teachers in order to impose the needed changes to improve the culture, conditions, and competencies. As Block states,

Questions are more transforming than answers…questions open the door to the future and are more powerful than answers in that they demand engagement.

Engagement in the right questions is what creates accountability (2008, p. 180).
Administration can do a number of things in addition to asking the right questions to fulfill implementation of the change plan by putting elements in place to assess culture, value diversity, adapt to diversity, manage the dynamics of difference, and institutionalize cultural knowledge (Lindsey, Robins, & Terrell, 2009).

Implementation of the change plan would also call for addressing the diversity of viewpoints about culture, conditions, and competencies, as well as the multiplicity of demand among various stakeholders bring about. In order to meet the varying needs of the wide range of individuals involved in the education process, we must also embrace the differences among us as colleagues, as well as those among our students. As we do this, the thread we each bring to the transition tapestry helps to create a masterpiece, ultimately propelling us forward together, celebrating our differences, and creating future leaders who do the same. As educators, we must readily model this for our students and, Address the issues that arise in the midst of diversity and respond sensitively to the needs of students in ways that facilitate learning. Additionally, educators need to address diversity to provide mutual support to one another so that every educator feels understood and respected for who they are and the groups to which they belong (Lindsey, Robins, & Terrell, 2009).

Another conclusion I draw is by building teacher capacity and communicating clear expectations about preparing students for transition, a better consensus among staff about their needs and student needs will be realized. As well, I hope this leads to an improvement in the culture, conditions, and competencies at Redd Elementary School.
SECTION SIX: A VISION OF SUCCESS (TO BE)

The second of Stephen Covey’s seven habits is *Begin with the End in Mind*. Begin with the End in Mind means to begin each day, task, or project with a clear vision of your desired direction and destination, and then continue by flexing your proactive muscles to make things happen (Covey, 1989). Within this research, the "to be" portion of this project does just that by envisioning and articulating the micro-level arenas within the organization that would need to be changed in order for the change target to be met (Wagner et al., 2006). I again looked at the contexts, culture, conditions, and competencies of my organization through Wagner’s *Four C’s Change Leadership* framework with my end in mind as aiding students in the transition to middle school.

**Context**

The future contexts would include an increased focus on improving current practices to improve student readiness to transition to middle school. Within this, students would use established preparation strategies and activities during their fifth grade school and into their 6th grade year in middle school to help them transition with ease. If my change plan were realized, the achieved result would be as stated in Change Leadership by Wagner et al. in 2006, “a deeper sense of focus and purpose, more engagement among various stakeholders who felt a sense of genuine ownership of both the problem and the solution, and greater collaboration in the effort to transform the school.” (p. 121).

These outlined preparation strategies and activities would include weekly infusion of social skills training, introductory note-taking activities, effective communication techniques, and family communication. The social skills training would include basic etiquette, respecting personal space, and how to get along with others. Introductory note-
taking activities would include an introduction to the three most popular note-taking methods, with a more in-depth teaching of the most current method used at the feeder middle school. Effective communication techniques would include in-depth studying and replay of basic reading, writing, listening, speaking and non-verbal communication skills to help students relate appropriately to adults and peers. Family communication would occur monthly during after school activities to create two-way channels between home and school. The events would provide coordinated services for parents through workshops facilitated by district personnel and community groups in collaboration with the parent resource center to help parents better understand adolescent development. They will also provide for better understanding of educational requirements and advocate for better communication between parent and child through planned activities.

**Culture**

If my organizational change plan were realized, the future culture would be transformed from its existing state. Teachers would begin by purposely creating means to establish sufficient rapport with students. This would immediately deal with the lack of trust. Class meetings would be held each morning during which time would be taken to help establish genuine relationships. Within this same context, the culture would be changed for teachers displaying ownership in the overall school, including their students’ learning and preparation for the next level. Consistency would be prevalent in following through with maintaining and enforcing established processes and procedures. Uniformity would be seen in the focus grade level, and throughout the school. As teachers would gain confidence in themselves, they would also be enthusiastic about preparing students for middle school and display high expectations for students in their
daily interaction. Students would be observed participating in critical thinking activities using collaboration in classes, showing off the social skills taught by their teachers, while teachers model for them and facilitate learning in a departmentalized scheduling model reflective of the feeder middle school. As Wagner et al. stated in 2006, “the culture shift would create the impetus to change the conditions of teaching and learning and sustainable development of educator competencies at every level” (p. 114).

**Conditions**

The main future conditions would be all students and teachers being aware of what to expect upon transitioning to middle school, as well as an increased understanding of the need to help students prepare for this transition. By changing the conditions of teaching and learning focused by beginning with the end in mind, there would be student-centered activities and repeated opportunities for grade 5 students to interact with middle school staff and students. An established and continual means of collaboration with feeder middle schools would be created. Finally, multiple exposures to hands-on activities for students collaborate and think critically with regard to academic and social curriculums—this would include opportunities for role-playing to simulate situations students may face in middle school.

**Competencies**

Future competencies if my change plan were realized would be teachers have an understanding of the student condition and doing what it takes to meet them where they are to prepare them for where they are going. Teachers would readily participate in professional learning opportunities, collaborate among themselves, accept constructive criticism, use research data to drive their decision-making and demonstrate general skills
to help students transition to middle school, despite the fact that they might not be certified to teach middle school. Teachers would take the initiative to learn and grow professional in order to do what is best for their students. In turn, the new found competence would allow teachers to make level connections, engage students in genuine activity to prepare for middle school, and perform effective professional development to practice.

If my goal is achieved, the new features of the organization that would also be realized are increased communication among all stakeholders, increased understanding of middle school protocols and policies, and the establishment of a student handbook to include the outline of strategies and activities for preparation to transition to middle school. Eventually, there would be an added component for 4th grade and then later an introductory 3rd grade allowance for transition preparation on a smaller scale. The vision of this “TO-BE” is outlined in Appendix B.

Stephen Covey sums it up in his explanation of Habit 2 by saying it is,

Based on imagination--the ability to envision in your mind what you cannot at present see with your eyes. It is based on the principle that all things are created twice. There is a mental (first) creation, and a physical (second) creation. The physical creation follows the mental, just as a building follows a blueprint (1989, p.8).
SECTION SEVEN: STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS FOR CHANGE

I paralleled the creation of the strategies and action chart with Stephen Covey’s notions that,

If you don’t make a conscious effort to visualize who you are and what you want in life, then you empower other people and circumstances to shape you and your life by default. It's about connecting again with your own uniqueness and then defining the personal, moral, and ethical guidelines within which you can most happily express and fulfill yourself (1989, p.10).

By this doing, one outlines strategies and actions for life, much the same concept what was done for my organization in the Strategies and Action Chart (see Appendix C). In bringing together the "as is" and the "to-be" leaders must be well aware that their work is ongoing in nature and that school transformation is necessarily adaptive…as revealed in 2006 by Wagner et al. in Change Leadership, “changing strategies need not indicate a weakness in planning, but a culture of inquiry, evidence, and reflection that acknowledges the ecological nature of change and the application of tools that promote progress and continuous improvement” (p. 163).

The strategies and actions, which I identified for my organization address issues, identified within each of the four arenas for change. By focusing on key general strategies that: focus on improving student readiness to transition, develop teachers capacity to provide transition assistance, extend the time for transition activities beyond the school day, reallocate resources, make data-based decisions, develop collaborative relationships, and revisit the plan, the actions to move the change process forward are:
• Get permission to pilot a transition program or to incorporate transition activities
• Allocate resources
• Provide professional development on middle school & transitioning
• Provide modeling of expectations
• Provide rap sessions
• Assign partner teacher at feeder middle school
• Establish summer and weekend opportunities for students to participate in transition activities
• Revise scheduling model for grade 5 departmentalization
• Partner with community stakeholders & district departments to provide additional finances
• Provide for a transition specialist among staff
• Analyze teacher and student for before/after processes implemented
• Develop scales to chart progress of the transition program elements among existing staff (for example, administration to teacher professional development, teacher to teacher collaboration, staff to students interaction and school to school activity with feeder school staff)
• Establish timelines with benchmarks for incremental improvement
• Tweak plan as needed, but allow time for results to unfold

**Conclusion**

This research contributed to the school district by providing vital information to help in the implementation of transition activities and ultimately transition programs in
similar elementary schools throughout the county. Additionally, this project assisted in
promoting the vision of the new superintendent to focus on bridge activities for students
moving from elementary to middle school, including expanding new developments such
as the Superintendent’s Academy. This research contributed to the school district by
providing foundational information/baseline data to aid in the creation of an elementary
to middle school transition program that can be duplicated in similar school situations. It
aided in the establishment of preparation strategies and activities for Grade 5 students to
transition to middle school.

This research related to the district’s current priorities, as defined in the District
Strategic Plan for academics, by working to improve student achievement and increase
the graduation rate; and for management, by helping to ensure students realize their
highest potential through the use of all available resource and establish learning
environments that ensure academic and personal success of all students (Polk County
Schools, 2013). This research contributed to the field of education by providing evidence
to support the need for transition activities to aid 5th grade students in their transition to
middle school by focusing on relevant issues they face and concerns their school leaders
have.

As Block states, “we begin by shifting our attention from the problems of the
community to the possibility of the community” (2008, p.18) and then, we set in motion a
plan. This is change in action. Finally, as Wagner et al. (2006) revealed we must realize
that the main goal of our schools is to help our children grow as each learns new skills at
new levels—with this, we all change and we all succeed.
REFERENCES


School Board of Polk County. (2013). *Polk County Schools strategic plan 2013-14 through 2016-2017*. Bartow, FL: School Board of Polk County.

School Board of Polk County. (2012). *School Board of Polk County district budget 2013-14*. Bartow, FL: School Board of Polk County.


APPENDIX A

“As Is” 4 C’s Analysis

LaSabra Warner Patterson
February 15-16, 2013

Context
Focusing on improving current practices to improve student readiness to transition to middle school

Culture
- Inconsistency prevalent
- Teachers have low expectations of students
- Teachers have low confidence in themselves and each other to prepare students for transition
- Lack of ownership
- Expectation to teach does not include a switch to departmentalization as students near their 5th grade year
- Teachers distrust students
- Insufficient rapport with students

Conditions
- Too many students unaware of what to expect after ES
- Not enough student-focused activity to prepare them for MS
- Not enough exposure to/telling/hands-on opportunities for students
- Students not given the opportunity to interact with MS students/staff before transition
- Insufficient collaboration with feeder MS

Lack of preparation of Grade 5 students to transition to middle school with ease
- Lack of communication
- We have never done anything to prepare students for transition
- Lack of understanding MS protocol & policies

Competencies
- Teachers do not students in activity to prepare for MS transition
- Teachers do not want to collaborate, accept constructive criticism, or research/use data to drive their decision-making
- General lack of understanding the student condition/baggage/need to prepare for MS transition...ex. Low SES
- Teachers do not demonstrate skills to help students prepare for MS transition

APPENDIX A

“As Is” 4 C’s Analysis

LaSabra Warner Patterson
February 15-16, 2013
APPENDIX B

“To Be” 4 C’s Analysis—Vision of Success
LaSabra Warner Patterson February 15-16, 2013

Context
Focusing on improving current practices to improve student readiness to transition to middle school

Culture
- Consistency prevalent
  - Teachers have high expectations of students
- Teachers have confidence in themselves and each other to prepare students for transition
- Adequate ownership
- Expectation to teach to include a switch to departmentalization as students near their 5th grade year
- Teachers trust students
- Sufficient rapport with students

Conditions
- Consistent communication
  - Incorporate consistent system to prepare students for transition
  - Preparation
- All students aware of what to expect after ES
- Student-focused activity to prepare them for MS
- Repeated exposure to/telling/hands-on opportunities for students
- Students given the opportunity to interact with MS students/staff before transition
- Sufficient collaboration with feeder MS
- Understanding the need to prepare students for transition

Grade 5 students prepared to transition to middle school with ease

Grade 5 students prepared to transition to middle school with ease

Competencies
- Teachers make level connections: ES/MS
  - Teachers engage in PD to help them prepare students for transition to MS
  - Teachers engage students in activity to prepare for MS transition
  - Teachers collaborate, accept constructive criticism, and research/use data to drive their decision-making
  - General understanding of the student condition/baggage/need to prepare for MS transition...ex. Low SES
  - Teachers demonstrate skills to help students prepare for MS transition

Adequate communication
- Begin to prepare students for transition
- Understanding of MS protocol & policies

Adequate communication
- Begin to prepare students for transition
- Understanding of MS protocol & policies
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Strategy</strong></th>
<th><strong>Action</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Focus on improving student readiness to transition | Get permission to pilot a transition program or to incorporate transition activities  
*Allocate resources  
*Provide professional development on middle school & transitioning |
| Develop teachers capacity to provide transition assistance | Provide modeling of expectations  
*Provide raps sessions  
*Assign partner teacher at feeder middle school |
| Extend the time for transition activities beyond the school day | Establish summer and weekend opportunities for students to participate in transition activities |
| Reallocate resources | *Revise scheduling model for grade 5 departmentalization  
*Partner with community stakeholders & district departments to provide additional finances  
*Provide for a transition specialist among staff |
| Make data-based decision | Analyze teacher and student for before/after processes implemented  
*Develop scales to chart progress |
| Develop collaborative relationships | *Among existing staff; administration to teacher, teacher to teacher  
*With students & staff  
*School to school; with feeder school staff |
| Revisit plan | *Establish timelines with benchmarks for incremental improvement  
*Tweak plan as needed, but allow time for results to unfold |
APPENDIX D
Staff Survey: School Climate & Transition

Dear Staff Members:

I am currently a doctoral student at National-Louis University, completing my dissertation, “Paradigm Transformation: Preparing Students for the Transition to Middle.” As part of my research, I would like to survey your responses to the following statements, in order to assess perceptions regarding the current school culture, conditions and competencies related to preparing 5th grade students to transition into 6th grade and the overall process of transition from elementary to middle school. Your participation is voluntary, and I thank you in advance for your consideration.

What is your title/position? _____________________________________

What grade levels have you taught? ___________________________ Age_____

What grades do you currently work with? PK K 1 2 3 4 5

What grade levels have you taught?

How many years of experience in education do you have? ______ Primary _____Secondary _____Post-secondary

I. Culture: For Section I, read each statement, then respond (X) whether you agree or disagree that each currently exists within the culture of your school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Culture...</th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There is sufficient rapport with students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistency is prevalent for all processes and procedures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers have high expectations of students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers have confidence in themselves and each other to prepare students for transition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate ownership exists among all stakeholders</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a need to incorporate instruction through departmentalization before student complete their 5th grade school year</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers trust students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students trust teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is effective collaboration with families</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

II. Conditions: For Section II, read each statement, then respond (X) whether you agree or disagree that each currently exists among the conditions of your school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conditions...</th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There is repeated exposure/opportunities for students to demonstrate learning (ex. show, tell, prove reasoning)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All students are unaware of what to expect after elementary school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student-focused activities are provided to prepare them for middle school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are given the opportunity to interact with middle school students before transition to middle school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are provided opportunities to interact with middle school staff before they transition to middle school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>There is sufficient collaboration with feeder middle schools</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>There is a need to increase understanding of the need to prepare students for transition to middle school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective communication takes place regarding student transition to middle school among stakeholders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies that to prepare students for transition are enacted</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A system is in place to prepare students for transition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### III. Competencies:

For Section II, read each statement, then respond (X) whether you agree or disagree that each currently exists regarding competencies at your school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competencies...</th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff members feel prepared to teach strategies for transition to middle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students are provided social skills training to prepare to cope with middle school issues</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers are able to make level connections between elementary and middle school</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>There is general understanding of the need to prepare for middle school transition</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>There is basic understanding of the student condition... ex. Low SES/living in poverty</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers demonstrate skills to be able to help students prepare for middle school transition</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Adequate activities are provided for grade 5 students to aid in transitioning to middle school with ease</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers engage in professional learning to help them prepare students for transition to MS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staffing is sufficient for departmentalization</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers engage students in activities to prepare for middle school transition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers collaborate, accept constructive criticism, and use research/data to drive their decision-making</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff members are aware of middle school protocols/procedures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff members make students aware of middle school protocols/procedures</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### IV. Read each phrase, then place an X in the appropriate column for each item.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students have legitimate concerns that will facilitate transition to middle school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students transition easily from elementary to middle school.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Student orientation is a key element to transition</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student emotional needs need to be addressed during transition</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Students will benefit from weekly mentoring to assist in their transition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional development for grade 6 teachers is important to aid in transition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Having a faculty advisor in addition to a guidance counselor is important for grade 6 students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students need help navigating the path to middle school</td>
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<tr>
<td>Addressing students’ concerns is a priority</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prior to transition, vertical teaming is needed</td>
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<tr>
<td>A student survey would help to create a handbook of typical first-year concerns and coping skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Administrators and counselors should visit elementary schools during the spring</td>
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<tr>
<td>Providing a separate setting and easing 6th graders in to the regular population is needed</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student social needs should be addressed during transition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>A sound transition program can directly influence formation of identity for an adolescent</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Figure 1 Student Concerns Survey in Koppang, A. (2004). A transition program based on identified student and parent concerns. Middle School Journal, 36(1), 32-36.
Dear Administrator:

I am currently a doctoral student at National-Louis University, completing my dissertation, “Paradigm Transformation: Preparing Students for the Transition to Middle.” As part of my research, I would like to survey your responses to the following statements, in order to assess perceptions of transition from elementary to middle school. Your participation is voluntary, and I thank you in advance for your consideration. If you are willing to also participate in an interview, please make indication below.

What is your title? ___________________________ Years of experience in education? _____ Grades previously taught? ______

Read each phrase, then place an X in the appropriate column for each item.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students transition easily from elementary to middle school.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>Student orientation is a key element to transition</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Students will benefit from weekly mentoring to assist in their transition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional development for grade 6 teachers is important to aid in transition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Having a faculty advisor in addition to a guidance counselor is important for grade 6 students</td>
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<td>Addressing students' concerns is a priority</td>
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<td>Prior to transition, vertical teaming is needed</td>
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<td>Administrators and counselors should visit elementary schools during the spring</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A sound transition program can directly influence formation of identity for an adolescent</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Yes, I am willing to participate in an interview (30 mins.) and will email my contact information to mzpatterson@aol.com with WILLING TO INTERVIEW in subject line.

Adapted from Figure 1 Student Concerns Survey in Koppang, A. (2004). A transition program based on identified student and parent concerns. Middle School Journal, 36(1), 32-36.
For the next section, read each statement, then respond (X) whether you agree or disagree that each is a student concern upon entering middle school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students are concerned about...</th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How they look</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing classes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joining clubs/activities</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Being sent to the principal’s office</td>
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<tr>
<td>Being picked on/made fun of</td>
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<tr>
<td>Changing in front of others in PE</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Taking showers in PE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Going out for athletics</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Being offered drugs/alcohol</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Failing grades</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Getting along with older students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Getting lost</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Finding the restrooms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Getting to class on time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Giving a presentation in class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Work being too hard</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Homework assignments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping up with assignments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowing what is expected of them</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lockers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunchroom seating</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Making friends/fitting in</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being organized</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New rules and routines</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rumors heard about middle school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size of the school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Taking tests</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Peer pressure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing classes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Having many teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Being embarrassed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riding a bike to school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Being on free or reduced lunch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family issue(s) affecting them at school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Optional: Attach a list of what you think are additional student concerns upon entering middle school.

Adapted from Figure 1 Student Concerns Survey in Koppang, A. (2004). A transition program based on identified student and parent concerns. Middle School Journal, 36(1), 32-36.
Dear Teacher:

I am currently a doctoral student at National-Louis University, completing my dissertation, “Paradigm Transformation: Preparing Students to Transition to Middle School.” As part of my research, I would like to survey your responses to the following statements, in order to assess perceptions of transition from elementary to middle school. Your participation is voluntary, and I thank you in advance for your consideration. If you are willing to also participate in an interview, please make indication below.

What grade level do you currently teach?
How many years of teaching experience do you have? _____Primary _____Secondary _____Post-secondary

Read each phrase, then place an X in the appropriate column for each item.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students transition easily from elementary to middle school.

Students have legitimate concerns that will facilitate transition to middle school.

Student orientation is a key element to transition.

Student emotional needs need to be addressed during transition.

Students will benefit from weekly mentoring to assist in their transition.

Professional development for grade 6 teachers is important to aid in transition.

Having a faculty advisor in addition to a guidance counselor is important for grade 6 students.

Students need help navigating the path to middle school.

Addressing students’ concerns is a priority.

Prior to transition, vertical teaming is needed.

Providing a separate setting and easing 6th graders in to the regular population is needed.

Administrators and counselors should visit elementary schools during the spring.

A student survey would help to create a handbook of typical first-year concerns and coping skills.

Student social needs should be addressed during transition.

A sound transition program can directly influence formation of identity for an adolescent.

_____ Yes, I am willing to participate in an interview (30 mins.) and will email my contact information to mzpatterson@aol.com with WILLING TO INTERVIEW in subject line.

Adapted from Figure 1 Student Concerns Survey in Koppang, A. (2004). A transition program based on identified student and parent concerns. Middle School Journal, 36(1), 32-36.
For the next section, read each statement, then respond (X) whether you agree or disagree that each is a student concern upon entering middle school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students are concerned about...</th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How they look</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing classes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joining clubs/activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Being sent to principal’s office</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Being picked on/made fun of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing in front of others in PE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking showers in PE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Going out for athletics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Being offered drugs/alcohol</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Failing grades</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Getting along with older students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting lost</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding the restrooms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Getting to class on time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Giving a presentation in class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Work will be too hard</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Homework assignments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping up with assignments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowing what is expected of them</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lockers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lunchroom seating</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making friends/fitting in</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Being organized</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New rules and routines</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rumors heard about middle school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Size of the school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Taking tests</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Peer pressure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Changing classes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Having many teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Being embarrassed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Riding a bike to school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Being on free or reduced lunch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family issue(s) affecting them at school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Optional: Write below what you think are additional student concerns upon entering middle school.

Adapted from Figure 1 Student Concerns Survey in Koppang, A. (2004). A transition program based on identified student and parent concerns. *Middle School Journal*, 36(1), 32-36.
APPENDIX G
INFORMED CONSENT: Principal Permission to Conduct Research at School

My name is LaSabra Warner Patterson and I am a doctoral student at National Louis University, Tampa, Florida. I am asking for your voluntary participation in my research study. The study is entitled Paradigm Transformation: Preparing Students for the Transition to Middle School. The purpose of the study is to address increased focus on improving current practices to improve student readiness to transition to middle school. The envisioned consequences of the research are not only students being primed for academic success at the middle school level, but also competent social preparation provided for the conditions and culture of middle school as spearheaded by classroom teachers. After gathering data, a proposed change leadership plan will endeavor to help teachers to fully understand that educating students involves preparing them for the next level academically and socially as a primary measure to prepare students for transition. Current practice will be addressed as needing to be changed, beginning with helping teachers to make a paradigm shift of their competency in preparing students for middle school.

Participation at your school includes up to 2 administrators, up to 75 staff members, and up to 10 teachers to be surveyed online or by receiving a survey packet, including a printed survey to be completed and returned using specific instructions as included. All information collected in the surveys reflects the opinions and experiences with students of the stakeholders listed. Permission to do so requires an informed consent form to be signed and returned indicating your willingness to allow research to be conducted at your school.

With your consent, up to 2 administrators and up to 10 teachers from your school will also be interviewed for about 30 minutes with a possible second, follow-up interview lasting 30 minutes. Interviews will be voice recorded, and upon request, each will receive a copy of his/her transcribed interview at which time information may be clarified. Interviews will not interfere with instructional time.

Participation is voluntary and you may be discontinued at any time without penalty. All identities, including that of the school, will be kept confidential by the researcher and will not be attached to the data. Only the researcher will have access to all surveys, transcripts, taped recordings, and field notes from the interviews, which I will keep in a locked cabinet in my home. Participation in this study does not involve any physical or emotional risk to participants beyond that of everyday life. While each person is likely to not have any direct benefit from being in this research study, taking part in this study may contribute to our better understanding of student needs and how to provide systematic support/interventions to aid grade 5 students in their transition from elementary to middle school.

While the results of this study may be published or otherwise reported to scientific bodies, identities of participants will in no way be revealed. You may request a copy of the completed study by contacting me at: lpatterson9@my.nl.edu.

In the event you have questions or require additional information you may contact the researcher: LaSabra Warner Patterson, National-Louis doctoral student, phone: 863-712-1030; email: lpatterson9@my.nl.edu; 5110 Eisenhower Blvd., #102, Tampa, FL 33634. If you have any concerns or questions before or during participation that you feel have not been addressed by the researcher, you may contact Dr. Carol Burg, email: cburg@nl.edu, phone: 813-397-2109, 5110 Eisenhower Blvd., #102, Tampa, FL 33634 or the NLU’s Institutional Research Review Board: Dr. Generosa Lopez-Molina, Vice Provost for Academic Programs and Faculty Development, National Louis University, 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60603; phone: 312-261-3149; email: glopezmolina@nl.edu.
APPENDIX H
INFORMED CONSENT: Individual Participant-Survey

My name is LaSabra Warner Patterson and I am a doctoral student at National Louis University, Tampa, Florida. I am asking for your voluntary participation in my research study. The study is entitled Paradigm Transformation: Preparing Students for the Transition to Middle School. The purpose of the study is to address increased focus on improving current practices to improve student readiness to transition to middle school. The envisioned consequences of the research are not only students being primed for academic success at the middle school level, but also competent social preparation provided for the conditions and culture of middle school as spearheaded by classroom teachers. After gathering data, a proposed change leadership plan will endeavor to help teachers to fully understand that educating students involves preparing them for the next level academically and socially as a primary measure to prepare students for transition. Current practice will be addressed as needing to be changed, beginning with helping teachers to make a paradigm shift of their competency in preparing students for middle school.

Participants should expect to complete the survey electronically or receive a survey packet, including a printed survey to be completed and returned using specific instructions as included, as well as an informed consent form to be signed and returned indicating your willingness to participate and the opportunity to note a willingness to be interviewed. All information collected therein reflects your opinion and experience with students.

With your consent, you will complete a two-page written survey, noting at the end if you agree to be interviewed. If you agree to the interview portion, then later, upon your consent, you will be interviewed noting at the end if you agree to be interviewed for about 30 minutes with a possible second, follow-up interview lasting 30 minutes. Interviews will be voice recorded, and upon request, you will receive a copy of your transcribed interview at which time you may clarify information.

Your participation is voluntary and you may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty. Your identity will be kept confidential by the researcher and will not be attached to the data. Only the researcher will have access to all transcripts, taped recordings, and field notes from the interview(s) which I will keep in a locked cabinet in my home. Your participation in this study does not involve any physical or emotional risk to you beyond that of everyday life.

While you are likely to not have any direct benefit from being in this research study, your taking part in this study may contribute to our better understanding of student needs and how to provide systematic support/interventions to aid grade 5 students in their transition from elementary to middle school.

While the results of this study may be published or otherwise reported to scientific bodies, your identity will in no way be revealed. You may request a copy of the completed study by contacting me at: lpatterson9@my.nl.edu

In the event you have questions or require additional information you may contact the researcher: LaSabra Warner Patterson, National-Louis doctoral student, phone: 863-712-1030; email: lpatterson9@my.nl.edu; 5110 Eisenhower Blvd., #102, Tampa, FL 33634. If you have any concerns or questions before or during participation that you feel have not been addressed by the researcher, you may contact Dr. Carol Burg, email: cburg@nl.edu, phone: 813-397-2109, 5110 Eisenhower Blvd., #102, Tampa, FL 33634 or the NLU’s Institutional Research Review Board: Dr. Generosa Lopez-Molina, Vice Provost for Academic Programs and Faculty Development, National Louis University, 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60603; phone: 312-261-3149; email: glopezmolina@nl.edu.

________________________________________
Participant Name (Print)

________________________________________
Participant Signature

_________LaSabra Warner Patterson_________
Researcher Name (Print)

________________________________________
Researcher Signature

Date

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