DONALD WARREN
The Importance and Implementation of the Middle School Program Criteria in the State of Georgia as Perceived by Principals in Urban, Suburban, and Rural Middle Schools
(Under the Direction of DR. SALLY J. ZEPEDA)

The primary purpose of this study was to describe the perceived importance of the middle school program criteria and the extent to which the criteria are implemented in middle schools in the state of Georgia as reported by urban (inner city), suburban, and rural middle school principals. The middle school program criteria is the set of procedures, requirements, and guidelines developed by the Georgia Department of Education for the operation of a middle school in the state of Georgia (Georgia Department of Education, n.d.). The study also explored differences in perceptions about the importance of the middle school program criteria and their degree of implementation among middle school principals in urban, suburban, and rural school districts. Finally, the study evaluated the relationship between middle school principals' perceptions of the importance of the middle school program criteria and middle school principals' perceptions of their degree of implementation.

A descriptive research design was employed. The researcher-developed *Middle School Program Implementation Survey* was used to collect data. The target population for this study was all (N = 388) middle school principals in Georgia. Two hundred twenty four principals responded to the mailed survey for a return rate of 57.73%.

Major findings were as follows:

1. Middle school principals indicated a high degree of implementation of the middle school program criteria.

2. Middle school principals' perceptions reflected a very high degree of importance attached to key characteristics of the middle school.

3. Middle school principals in three school district types (urban, suburban, and rural) differed significantly in their perceptions regarding the degree of implementation of the middle school program criteria. The mean ratings of the degree of implementation of the middle school program for urban principals (M =3.58, SD =.21) were significantly higher than the mean ratings of the degree of implementation of the middle school program for rural principals (M = 3.45, SD = .25).

4. Middle school principals in three school district types (urban, suburban, and rural) did not differ significantly in their perceptions regarding the importance of the middle school program criteria.

5. There was a positive relationship between the perceived importance of the middle school program criteria and their degree of implementation in middle schools.

INDEX WORDS: Middle School Program Criteria, Middle School Concept, Administrator Perceptions, Principals' Perceptions

THE IMPORTANCE AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAM CRITERIA IN THE STATE OF GEORGIA AS PERCEIVED BY PRINCIPALS IN URBAN, SUBURBAN AND RURAL MIDDLE SCHOOLS

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DEDICATION

I want to dedicate this work in memory of my father, Nedum R. Warren. His words of encouragement gave me the confidence and faith to complete this program. May he rest in eternal peace.

Love always, your son, Donald.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The middle school concept, although not new, has experienced a resurgence in interest beginning in the 1980s with the publication of *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century* and continuing presently with its successor *Turning Points 2000: Educating Adolescents in the 21st Century.* Middle-level education is critical because the students who attend them make critical decisions such as whether to remain in school (Epstein & MacIver, 1990; Jackson & Davis, 2000). Physical, emotional, and intellectual changes occur in children during the middle school years (National Middle School Association, 1995a). Early adolescence is a period of both enormous opportunities and risks. The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989), in *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century,* described the dilemma of the early adolescent as follows:

> Depending on the family circumstances, household income, language, neighborhood, or the color of their skin, some of these young adolescents receive the education and support they need to develop self-respect, an active mind, and a healthy body. They will emerge from their teens as the promising youth who will become the scientists and entrepreneurs, the educators and the health care professionals, and the parents who will renew the nation. These are the thoughtful, responsible, caring, ethical

> and robust young people the Task Force envisions. To them, society can entrust the future of the country with confidence.
>
> Under current conditions, however, far too many young people will not make the passage through early adolescence successfully. Their basic human needs—caring relationships with adults, guidance in facing sometimes overwhelming biological and psychological changes, the security of belonging to constructive peer groups, and the perception of future opportunity—go unmet at this critical stage of life. Millions of these young adolescents will never reach full potential. Early adolescence for these youth is a turning point towards a diminished future. (p. 20)

Alexander and McEwin (1989) referred to the middle school as a bridge from the self-contained elementary school to the departmentalized high school. True middle schools are based on the need to focus on the student as an individual and the need to focus on the adolescent—ages 10-15—as a group in transition.

In the state of Georgia, the term middle school refers to a school or a portion of a school containing grade levels six, seven, and eight or grades seven and eight, with a full-time principal (State of Georgia Middle School Program Criteria, 2000). The Georgia Middle School Program Criteria is the set of procedures, requirements, and guidelines developed by the Georgia Department of Education for the operation of a middle school in the state of Georgia (Georgia Department of Education, n.d.). Alexander and George (1981) defined the middle school as follows:

> A school of some three to five years between elementary and high school focusing on the educational needs of students in these in-between years and designed to promote continuous educational progress for all concerned. (p. 3)

The mission of the middle school is to focus on the unique needs of 10 to 15-year-olds. In an effective middle school, building blocks are laid as preparation for a productive adult life. A middle school is intended to provide the young adolescent with the necessary tools to construct these building blocks (George & Shewey, 1994).

The program needs of the middle school have been identified by the National Middle School Association in their position paper "This We Believe." Six of the position paper's statements identify general characteristics that should exist in order to make the most appropriate decisions for middle school programs, and six statements target major program components that should be present in a middle school. The six characteristics and six components shape the vision of what a middle school should be (National Middle School Association, 1995a).

The National Middle School Association (1995a) described six conditions or characteristics that developmentally responsive middle-level schools should exhibit:

1. Educators committed to young adolescents;
2. a shared vision;
3. high expectations for all;
4. an adult advocate for every student;
5. family and community partnerships; and,
6. a positive school climate.

Following these foundational principles or conditions, the document identified six major programmatic areas:

1. curriculum that is challenging, integrative, and exploratory;
2. varied teaching and learning approaches;
3. assessment and evaluation that promote learning;
4. flexible organizational structures;
5. programs and policies that foster, health, wellness, and safety; and,
6. comprehensive guidance and support services (Swaim, 2001, pp. 21-22).

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study was to determine the perceived importance of the middle school program criteria and the extent to which the criteria were implemented in middle schools in the state of Georgia. It is important to document middle school program practices and to ascertain their current status in order to provide for the continued development of the middle school program. The study also analyzed the relationship between the perceived importance of the middle school program criteria and the extent to which the criteria were implemented as perceived by middle school principals.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of the study was to describe the perceived importance of the middle school program criteria and the extent to which the criteria are implemented in middle schools in the state of Georgia as reported by urban (inner city), suburban, and rural middle school principals. The study explored the differences in perceptions about the importance of the middle school program criteria and their degree of implementation among urban, suburban, and rural school districts. Finally, the study evaluated the relationship between middle school principals' perceptions of the importance of the middle school program criteria and middle school principals' perceptions of their degree of implementation.

Definition of Terms

This section includes definitions of the terms that were relevant to this study. These definitions are presented to help the reader understand and clarify key terms.

Academic classes - Instruction in English and language arts, reading, mathematics, science, and social studies. Instruction in foreign language may be included at the discretion of the local school system (State of Georgia Middle School Program Criteria, 2000).

Common planning time - Planning for instruction, student needs, and modifications of student groupings or schedules during the students' instructional day by academic teams for a common group of students. Such planning may include parent conferences and participation in professional development (State of Georgia Middle School Program Criteria, 2000).

Connections (exploratory) classes - Instruction beyond academic classes that is designed to integrate and apply the skills and concepts taught in the academic classes by reinforcing critical reading, writing, and thinking skills (State of Georgia Middle School Program Criteria, 2000).

Middle school - A school or portion of a school containing grade levels six, seven, and eight or grades seven and eight, with a full-time principal (State of Georgia Middle School Program Criteria, 2000).

Middle School Program Criteria - The set of procedures, requirements, and guidelines developed by the Georgia Department of Education for the operation of a middle school in the state of Georgia (Georgia Department of Education, n.d.).

Quality Core Curriculum (QCC) - The state of Georgia mandated minimum guidelines for the curriculum. Objectives are given at each grade level and must be taught; locally systems may add to QCC but they may not have less than is mandated (Georgia Department of Education, n.d.).

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Questions

The study sought answers to the following research questions:

1. What is the degree of implementation of the middle school program criteria in school districts?

2. How important are the middle school program criteria in school districts?

3. Do middle school principals in three school district types (urban, suburban, and rural) differ in their perceptions regarding the degree of implementation of the middle school program criteria?

4. Do middle school principals in three school district types (urban, suburban, and rural) differ in their perceptions regarding the importance of the middle school program criteria?

5. To what extent is there a relationship between the perceived importance of the middle school program criteria and their degree of implementation in middle schools?

Null Hypotheses

The first two questions in this study involved descriptive data and were not expressed by hypotheses. The following hypotheses stated in the null form were enumerated for testing:

$H_0$1: There is no significant difference in the perceptions of the importance of the middle school program criteria among middle school principals in urban school districts, middle school principals in suburban school districts, and middle school principals in rural school districts.

$H_0$2: There is no significant difference in the perceptions of the extent to which the middle school program criteria are implemented among middle school principals in urban school districts, middle school principals in suburban school districts, and middle school principals in rural school districts.

$H_0$3: There is no significant relationship between the importance of the middle school program criteria and the extent to which they are implemented as perceived by middle school principals.

Importance of the Study

It is important to document the current practices within the middle schools of Georgia as a guide for assisting middle schools to further develop or reorganize existing programs. It is important to document the practices to determine if there is a gap between the main tenets of the middle school proposed by leading authorities and the actual practices in most middle schools. Irvin and Hough (1997) asserted:

> We have the opportunity to create environments that respond to the needs of young adolescents and engage them actively in learning. We have the option of grouping students in ways that are fair to all. We have the understanding needed to develop a curriculum that is fully integrated and relevant to students. We have adequate reasons to seek legitimacy for education's middle level so that the proper education and certification of teachers for young adolescent students is ensured. We have the skills needed to establish a solid research base for this distinct level of education. Setting and implementing a research agenda for middle level education is imperative, and from all appearances it is an idea whose time has come. (p. 9)

The importance of this study focused on the implementation of requirements relating to the middle school program as it transitions from a categorical grant program to a Quality Basic Education (QBE) formula program in the state of Georgia. House Bill 1187 in Section 54 amended Code Section 20-2-290, and the statute imposed

requirements for middle schools in the state of Georgia (see Appendix A). House Bill 1187 addresses issues such as the creation of school improvement plans to certification requirements for teachers.

Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to public middle schools in the state of Georgia listed in the *2001 Georgia Public Education Directory.* The study was also limited to those characteristics and practices deemed key components of the middle school concept by authorities in the field of middle school education. The contents of the survey were derived from the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development's (1989) *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century,* the National Middle School Association's (1995a) publication entitled *This We Believe: Developmentally Responsive Middle Level Schools,* and Jackson and Davis' (2000) *Turning Points 2000: Educating Adolescents in the 21st Century.*

Organization of the Study

Chapter I provided the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, definition of terms, importance of the study, limitations of the study, and organization of the study. In Chapter II, the literature documenting the history and philosophy of the middle school concept, the defining features of schools, and adolescent development are examined in light of the purpose of this study.

The methodology was presented in Chapter III. This chapter included a description of the population surveyed, and the instrumentation and the procedures used in this study.

Chapter IV presented the findings of the study. Data were reported in narrative and tabular forms as well as interpreted. Chapter V presented the summary, conclusions, and recommendations based on the findings of the study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The primary purpose of the study was to describe the perceived importance of the middle school program criteria and the extent to which the criteria are implemented in middle schools in the state of Georgia as reported by urban (inner city), suburban, and rural middle school principals. The study also evaluated the relationship between middle school principals' perceptions of the importance of the middle school program criteria and middle school principals' perceptions of their degree of implementation among urban (inner city), suburban, and rural school districts. The focus and need for the study was supported by two significant areas of research: (a) effective middle schools and (b) adolescent development.

A review of literature on the historical development of the middle school is presented in the first section of the chapter. A review of the middle school philosophy is presented next. The third section of the literature review focuses on the development of the young adolescent, and the fourth section of the review describes the components of an exemplary middle school. The fifth section of the review focuses on evaluating the effectiveness of a middle school program, and the sixth section of the literature review describes the Project on High Performance Learning Communities. A summary of the reviews and implications for research are provided in the final section of the chapter.

Historical Development of the Middle School

According to Gruhn and Douglas (1956), the middle school was born from the junior high school. The junior high school movement came into being around 1910. Prior to its inception, the American educational system followed the 8–4 plan. This plan consisted of an eight-year elementary school and a four-year high school. Several conditions in the elementary and high schools led to the inception of the junior high school. First, the elementary schools only provided a general education in reading, writing, and arithmetic. Second, there was little or no articulation between the elementary school and the high school. Third, all students were educated in the elementary school, regardless of socioeconomic and intellectual background or educational goals. The high school also failed to matriculate many of these students with their diverse backgrounds.

Other criticisms of the 8–4 plan included the lack of accounting for individual differences, teaching with no repetition, and the use of ability grouping. Many educators maintained that students spent too many years in elementary school (Hansen & Hearn, 1971). According to Alexander (1969), the changing face of America from an agricultural and rural country to an industrialized and urban country resulted in the 6–3–3 grade plan. These conditions led to a movement from the 8–4 plan toward the brand new junior high school.

Several commissions were convened to reorganize the education system in America in the 1890s. In 1892, the National Council on Education formed the Committee of Ten on Secondary School Studies. This committee questioned the value of the 8–4 grade plan by suggesting that elementary and secondary education be split into

six years each. It also recommended the teaching of some high school subjects at an earlier age and grade. In 1895, the Committee on College Entrance Requirements made a proposal for a six-year high school. This was a crucial proposal because it considered the needs of adolescent youth. This new plan would facilitate education for maturing adolescents, enhance articulation between the elementary school and the secondary school, and lower the dropout rate (Van Til, Vars, & Lounsbury, 1961).

Popper (1967) discussed three other elements that occurred around the end of the 19th century which resulted in innovative changes in the American educational system. First, there was a renewed interest in the nation's founding fathers' humanistic-democratic values. Second, there was a new concern in the scientific study of man's behavior, both socially and psychologically. Third, the child study movement emphasized the study of child growth and development.

A committee established by the National Education Association in 1918 provided the rationale for forming the junior high school. According to Edmondson (1995), the committee classified junior high schools as distinct, independent units from high schools. The committee suggested that the junior high school include the seventh, eighth, and ninth grades, and that senior high include the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades. Moreover, this committee suggested that each school should be housed in separate buildings and that each school should have its own staff of teachers.

Berkeley, California and Columbus, Ohio were the homes of the first junior high schools in 1909 and 1910, respectively. Superintendent Frank Bunker of Berkeley opened the junior high school in an effort to lessen the number of dropouts and ease overcrowding. By 1920, there were in excess of 400 junior high schools, housing grades

seven, eight, and nine with their own building, teachers, and administration. There were approximately 6,500 junior high schools by the mid-1950s (Wiles & Bondi, 2001).

Gruhn and Douglas (1956) listed six basic functions of the junior high school:

1. *Integration:* to help students use previously learned knowledge, skills, and attitudes and integrate them into a productive behavior;

2. *Exploration:* to afford students the opportunities to explore particular interests in making better choices academically and vocationally and to assist students in cultivating a wide range of cultural, extracurricular, social, and civic interests;

3. *Guidance:* to assist students in making satisfactory decisions socially, emotionally, and academically toward mature personalities and in vocational and recreational activities;

4. *Differentiation:* to furnish educational opportunities and facilities with consideration for various backgrounds so that each student can reach the goals of education;

5. *Socialization:* to provide learning experiences that prepare students for productive and satisfying participation in a social order as well as for anticipated changes in the order; and

6. *Articulation:* to provide for a smooth transition from a pre-adolescent to an adolescent educational program.

Although the junior high school was created with admirable intentions, Wiles and Bondi (2001) listed several factors that hindered its progress. The fast growth of the high school pillaged the junior high school of teachers, leadership, and facilities. The Great Depression and World War II distracted America from developing educational programs.

The inclusion of the ninth grade was also a hindrance in developing a curriculum to serve the pre-adolescent with sincerity since the ninth graders were tied to graduation requirements. The junior high school unsuccessfully endeavored to meet the needs of children with two very different developmental stages. Accentuating the need for a middle school, Alexander (1971) stated:

> Undoubtedly, early in this century, the founders of the junior high school were seeking a bridging school. Clearly, there was concern for developing a program keyed to the unique nature of the pre-adolescent and early adolescent. Despite the unfortunate naming of the new school as a "junior high" institution and the subsequent tendency to imitate the organization and program of the high school, some schools were developed on more of an elementary school model and tended to become the prototype of the emergent middle school. (p. 9)

Alexander et al. (1968) stated, "Today's interest in the middle school stems in part from dissatisfaction with what the junior high school became, not with the original conception and function" (p. 4). According to Lounsbury (1996), Alexander made a recommendation for an appropriate middle school to rectify the problem and as another option to the junior high school. This school would be composed of grades five through eight or grades six through eight. According to Milgram (1994), expanded research on the maturation levels of adolescents and teachers' experiences and instincts warranted a call for the middle school. The recommended grade configuration would allow the middle school to teach only older children and pre-adolescents that were experiencing transescence. Eichhorn (1966) defined transescence as:

> The stage of development which begins prior to the onset of puberty and extends through the early stages of adolescence. Since puberty does not occur for all precisely at the same chronological age in human development, the transescent designation is based on the many physical, social, emotional, and intellectual changes in body chemistry that appear prior to the puberty cycle to the time in which the body gains a practical degree of stabilization over these complex pubescent changes. (p. 3)

Romano and Georgiady (1994) indicated the middle school movement has undergone rapid growth since its inception several decades ago. There were several hundred middle schools in the early 1960s. In 1968, 1,101 middle schools were counted. The 1970s saw a tally of 4,060 middle schools. There are more than 14,000 middle schools across the nation today (Jackson & Davis, 2000).

Despite the growth of the middle school, there were early signs of failure as cited by leading writers in the National Middle School Association's *The Middle School: A Look Ahead* in 1977. Alexander et al. (1968) asserted:

> Even if the middle schools do differ from their predecessor institutions, the standardized middle school can result from the same forces that produced the "standardized" junior high school differing relatively little from the school of a quarter of a century earlier. (p. 19).

The similarities of the middle school and the junior high school continued in the 1980s until the middle school reform movement emerged. Reports such as *A Nation at Risk* (1983) and *Turning Points* (1989) have shed new light on the import of adhering to the true middle school model (Hough, 1995).

The 10 essential elements of the middle school, as discussed in the National Middle School Association's (1995a) *This We Believe: Developmentally Responsive Middle Schools,* were:

1. Educators knowledgeable and committed to student needs.
2. A balanced curriculum based on students' needs.
3. A range of organizational arrangements.
4. Varied Instructional strategies.
5. A full exploratory program.

6. Comprehensive advising and counseling.

7. Continuous progress for students.

8. Evaluation procedures compatible with early adolescents' needs.

9. Cooperative planning.

10. Positive school climate. (pp. 10-15)

Lounsbury (1996) concluded:

> The middle school must guard against becoming a victim of its apparent success; pleased with its good press, its numerical status, and its firm position aboard the [education] bandwagon of the 1970s. The more it becomes institutionalized, the greater the danger of it becoming petrified. (p. 76)

Section Summary

This section of the review examined the history of the middle school. It was found that the middle school emerged to meet the unique needs of students who are 11 to 14 years of age. The National Middle School Association (1995a) set forth 10 essential elements of the middle school.

The Middle School Philosophy

The middle schools were originally conceived with the philosophy of meeting the developmental needs of its students. The National Middle School Association's (1982) *This We Believe* described the period of transformation between childhood and full-blown adolescence as the most unique period of human development. The physical changes are clearly evident, but the body is also undergoing less evident changes in the emotional, intellectual, and social composition of individuals. Middle schools were based in the realities of human development and the corollary principles of learning. The histories of the junior high school and the early middle school are evidence that the title

or grade levels of schools, minus a concentration on the needs of the learners to be served, will not result in an effective school. The theory that supports middle grades education is based on the belief that early adolescents' social, emotional, and academic needs are best served by an educational experience that is different from both the elementary and the high school formats (McKay, 1995).

In order to be developmentally responsive, middle schools should be based on the diverse characteristics and needs of early adolescence, the stage of life between age 10 and 15 (National Middle School Association, 1995a). It is the position of the National Middle School that middle schools should "promote the growth of young adolescents as scholars, democratic citizens, and increasingly competent, self-sufficient young people who are optimistic about their future" (p. 10).

Developmental psychologists advanced the research in understanding young adolescents, and four philosophical aspects emerged that encompassed the theory of the philosophy of middle-level education. Dougherty (1997) listed the philosophical aspects as (a) invitational education, (b) democratic schools, (c) constructivist teaching, and (d) reflective thinking. Dougherty further elaborated on these philosophical aspects as follows:

> *Invitational education* is a general framework for reflecting about and acting on what is believed to be worthwhile in democratic schools. It is based on an understanding of, and respect for, people's perceptual worlds. (p. 13)

> *Democratic schools* assert the school's major function is to perpetuate the values and traditions inherent in a democratic society that is composed of free people who have each other's interests in mind. (p. 21)
>
> *Constructivist teaching* occurs when individuals are seen as questioners, explorers, problem solvers, and concept creators. Knowledge does not exist without the knower. (p. 30)
>
> *Reflective thinking* requires teachers to be willing to think seriously about the origins and consequences of their actions and decisions and about the situations and constraints embedded in the instructional, curricular, school, and social contexts in which they work. (p. 35)

Section Summary

This section of the literature review examined the middle-school philosophy. The National Middle School Association (1995a) posited that the middle school emerged as a response to the needs and characteristics of early adolescents. The review of the literature illustrates the unique characteristics of the adolescent and the challenge of the middle school to fulfill these unique needs.

Development of the Young Adolescent

The beginning of adolescence is a time of much change. Some of these changes are biological changes introduced with puberty, the psychological and social changes introduced with rising sexuality, and the social and educational changes introduced in transitioning from elementary to secondary schools as described by the National Middle School Association's (1997) *What Current Research Says to the Middle-Level Practitioner*. Lounsbury asserted:

> Each age or developmental level has particular characteristics which might seem to warrant the label of unique, but no other age level has so clear and legitimate claim to the designation of unique as does this period of transition between childhood and full-blown adolescence, roughly the ages 10 to 14. (1982, p. 3)

According to Lounsbury (1982), these individuals experience marked physical changes that are quite obvious, but they are also faced with intense intellectual, emotional, and social changes. These changes are made even more intense to the adolescents when one considers the wide variation with which the changes occur between individuals. There is no other time in the lifespan at which differences between individuals of the same age are so great (Lounsbury, 1982).

Although most transescents negotiate adolescence successfully, there is an opportunity for both positive and negative outcomes. According to the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (1988), between 15% and 30% of transescents, dependent on ethnic groups, will become high school dropouts; they have the most arrests of any age group, and alcohol and drug use is increasing among them. Taking all of this into consideration, it is paramount for educators to comprehend what elements influence whether youngsters follow a healthy and productive track or move into a problematic and destructive track. The physical, intellectual, emotional and social, and school transitional changes will be explored in considering the development of the young adolescent.

Physical Changes

Romano and Georgiady (1994) described several physical changes. They maintained that the average height increase of young adolescents is from two to four inches per year, and the average weight increase is from 8 to 10 pounds per year. Also, adolescents have to adjust to having and using longer and larger arms and legs. Often

clumsiness and self-consciousness are traits of the adolescent. The stamina of the body is decreased due to the constant growth, and the adolescent will tire easily, eat more, and need more rest. Adolescents also experience apprehension due to the sudden body change. Studies have shown that the onset of puberty in today's middle school students occurs earlier than in previous generations. There are large variations as to when sexual changes start and how quickly they occur (Van Hoose & Strahan, 1988). It is important for the adolescent to have constructive health information during this period.

Intellectual Changes

Piaget (as cited in Romano & Georgiady, 1994) described the stages of reasoning:

1. sensorimotor – from birth to two years old;
2. pre-operational – from two to seven years old;
3. concrete operational – from 7 to 11 years old; and
4. formal operational – from 11 years old and up. (p. 19)

There are many rudimentary differences in the above levels, and the higher levels of reasoning only occur after the lower levels have been achieved. Several intellectual changes occur such as the ability to think abstractly, to deliberate on hypotheses and reality, to process information more analytically, to deliberate a problem in various dimensions simultaneously, and to reflect during transescence (Eccles & Midgley, 1997). This type of thinking in hypothetical terms and in the abstract is a mark of the formal operations stage described by Piaget, and this stage is presumed to begin in adolescence (Piaget & Inhelder, 1973). According to Eccles and Midgley (1997), adolescents cannot utilize the formal operations skills competently until they amass experience with skills.

Researchers such as Zimmerman (1989) asserted that cognitive changes can have an effect on how adolescents manage their behavior in school settings. As an adolescent's cognitive skills and experiences in school settings are enhanced, he or she should be able to manage his or her learning more effectively by being able to do complex academic work.

Emotional and Social Development

Cognitive changes can also impact an adolescent's self-concept. The adolescence period changes the self-concept since adolescents start to sort through their different options and to strive for a clearer understanding of themselves. Adolescents may also seek to understand the psychological traits of others, and they may base their friendships on perceived similarities in these traits (Eccles and Midgley, 1997).

Romano and Georgiady (1994) explained that during puberty, adolescents struggle to break away from parental influence and move toward more independence. Adolescents may refuse adult authority by being critical of adults' actions, suggestions, or opinions. The search for independence is often bumpy because adolescents do not have the proper judgment to manage their independence. As a result, they still need a home base to go to when stress arises. It is crucial for parents and the school staff to be aware of this change toward more independence. Friends of the adolescent become more influential in what he or she thinks, does, and says (Romano & Georgiady, 1994).

Peers will have a major impact on the hair, attire, and grooming styles during adolescence. Adolescents place great importance on cliques and feeling like "one of them" to gain social acceptance. The need for social acceptance may result in negative behavior such as showing cruelty to others or disrupting class.

Adolescents begin to consider their sexual roles during this period as well. Although the opposite sex is considered with increasing concern, the space between them will not lessen until the following years.

School Transition Changes

For some, the period of adolescence starts a cycle of school failure that culminates with dropping out of school (Eccles & Midgley, 1997). Simmons and Blythe (1987) found a decline in the grades of some adolescents as they entered junior high school and that this was an indicator dropping out of school. Similar declines were found for motivational constructs such as interest in school, self-concept, intrinsic motivation, and certainty in one's intellectual abilities, especially after failure. Eccles and Midgley (1997) and Wigfield, Eccles, and Pintrich (1997) suggested that adolescents experience increased negative emotional and behavioral characteristics such as helplessness, extreme negative responses to failure, test anxiety, a concentration on self-evaluation instead of task proficiency, and absenteeism.

Various reasons have been suggested for the negative changes that occur during adolescence. Eccles and Midgley (1997) presented the Person-Environment Fit Theory as a reason. The theory proposed that mental health, behavior, and motivation were impacted by the fit between the characteristics individuals bring to their social environments and the characteristics of these social environments. If the social environment of a middle school does not fit well with the psychological needs of an adolescent, the Person-Environment Fit Theory forecasts a decline in the adolescent's interest, behavior, performance, and motivation in this environment.

Section Summary

The review of the literature on the development of the young adolescent indicated that they face great changes physically, intellectually, emotionally, and socially while transitioning in school. Accommodating and addressing these changes and developmental needs were reflective of the true middle school. It is imperative that middle schools make adjustments to ensure a successful experience.

Components of an Exemplary Middle School

According to the National Middle School Association (1995b), there are five components of an exemplary middle school program. These five components are as follows:

1. interdisciplinary teaming;
2. advisory programs;
3. varied instruction;
4. exploratory [Connections] programs; and,
5. transition programs.

Interdisciplinary Teaming

Wiles and Bondi (2001) defined interdisciplinary teaming where:

> Combinations of teachers from different subject areas plan and conduct coordinated lessons in those areas for particular groups of pupils. Common planning time, flexible scheduling, and cooperation and communication among team teachers are essential to interdisciplinary teaming. (p. 370)

Wiles and Bondi listed three major functions of interdisciplinary teaming: (a) instruction, (b) organization, and (c) establishment of team identity and climate.

Instruction

When a team of teachers shares a common group of students and a common planning time, the team can offer various innovative instructional opportunities. Classroom teachers are in a position to assess students' academic needs (Wiles & Bondi, 2001). Moreover, grade-level team members are better able to place students in the most appropriate groupings for instruction. Common planning time gives teachers the opportunity to correlate subject matter into integrated lessons. Also, students' educational progress can be examined during common planning time.

Wiles and Bondi (2001) listed the following instructional responsibilities of a team member:

1. *Subject area.* This is the certified area in which the teacher is assigned to teach in accordance with a course description and state regulations. Most of this instruction is done independently of what the other members do.

2. *Interdisciplinary activities.* These activities coordinate and reinforce the skills and concepts that are taught in one subject area with the others.

3. *Thematic units.* Teachers prepare units of study that are planned around a central theme. Units should cultivate a comprehension of the interrelationship of all subjects.

Organization

Wiles and Bondi (2001) maintained that items such as team rules, grading, homework policies, and other aspects of organizational planning provide students with the guidelines and consistency needed in adolescent development. Also, teachers can work better to make maximum use of resources, and parent conferences can be more

productive when the team meets with parents to discuss a student's educational and social progress.

The organization of a team allows for flexible learning time (Clark & Clark, 1997). Weller et al. (1987) asserted, "Flexible scheduling is essential to the successful implementation of the middle school curriculum. Scheduling learning activities incorporating continuous progression in basic skills, interdisciplinary instruction, and across grade level grouping requires significant flexibility" (p. 5). Lounsbury (1996) suggested that flexible organizational structure is an indication of a school's effort to accommodate the diversity of students in fulfilling the need for adolescents in identifying with their peers, and in breaking from a lock-step schedule.

Establishment of Team Identity and Climate

Interdisciplinary teaming gives students a healthy sense of belonging, and it is generally agreed that academic performance is higher when students derive enjoyment from school (Wiles & Bondi, 2001). According to Jackson and Davis (2000), there were crucial components that were found in a healthy learning environment such as (a) a challenging curriculum that stresses learning for all students, (b) personal and close relationships between teachers and students, and (c) students' perceptions of being connected to the school.

Wiles and Bondi (2001) listed the following activities that could foster group identity:

1. Bring team members together.
2. Discuss team responsibilities.
3. Involve teams in the total school.
4. Acknowledge academic achievement.
5. Explore new worlds.
6. Expand community awareness.

7. Spread the word.
8. Celebrate birthdays.
9. Locate a team building bulletin board.
10. Choose a logo.
11. Design a t-shirt or team banner. (pp. 73-75)

Advisory Programs

Effective teams provide teachers and students with the opportunity to cultivate close relationships (Jackson & Davis, 2000). However, students still need individual attention. As expressed by the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1989):

> Every student should be well known by at least one adult. Students should be able to rely on that adult to help learn from their experiences, comprehend physical changes and changing relations with family and peers, act on their behalf to marshal every school and community resource needed for the student to succeed, and help fashion a promising vision of the future. (p. 40)

The National Middle School Association (1995c) listed the following as possible objectives of advisory programs:

1. to promote student-teacher relationships;
2. to address general self-esteem and competence beliefs;
3. to provide social exchange and peer recognition in a safe environment;
4. to link parents and schools; and,
5. to mediate between academic and social concerns.

The importance of an advisory program was placed in perspective when Galassi, Gulledge, and Cox (1997) reported from their research that students that do not perceive a connection to school personnel have more absenteeism and higher dropout rates than those that do not perceive a connection with school personnel.

Varied Instruction

The National Middle School Association (1995b) described varied instruction as having several components. There needs to be an integration of learning experiences which provides answers and addresses relevant real-life issues for students. Students at the middle level should be actively engaged in problem solving while accommodations are made for individual differences. Instruction should stress cooperation and the development of interpersonal skills while fostering moral sensitivity, a value for fairness, and empathy for others. Multiage groupings and the use of multimedia materials enhance instruction.

Multiage practices include students of different ages and ability levels grouped together without dividing them or the curriculum into lock-step patterns denoted by grade organization (Wiles & Bondi, 2001). The rationale for multiage groupings is the realization that children develop at various rates. Multiage grouping, as presented by Wiles and Bondi, would include provisions for:

1. developmentally appropriate practices;
2. continuous progress;
3. flexible grouping patterns for learning;
4. professional teamwork;
5. qualitative reporting; and,
6. parental involvement.

The multimedia approach allows opportunities for teachers to utilize the varied media such as hardware, software, and the textbook as a means to accomplish learning objectives (Romano & Georgiady, 1994). Jackson and Davis (2000) added that effective

middle-level instructional practices were enhanced through (a) a curriculum based on standards indicating what students should know and be able to do, adolescent concerns, and how students learn best, (b) assessments where students can show their knowledge and skills, and (c) students' needs, concerns, and fascinations would be incorporated into learning.

Exploratory (Connections) Program

Exploratory [Connections] programs are useful for utilizing the growing inquisitiveness of the transescent (Romano & Georgiady, 1994). Since middle school students feel a great urge to explore items that arouse their interests, the middle school must acknowledge this development stage by offering a curriculum that includes exploratory activities and opportunities for students (Jackson & Davis, 2000; Lounsbury, 1996; Wiles & Bondi, 2001). Wiles and Bondi (2001) defined exploratory courses as "regularly scheduled curriculum experiences designed to help students discover and examine learnings related to their changing needs, aptitudes, and interests" (p. 369). Romano and Georgiady suggested that opportunities for both hands-on and more verbal-oriented activities be given. Examples of different types of exploratory courses include art, industrial arts, home economics, music, drama, and physical education. The self-image of the student can be impacted positively due to successful interaction with the skills, techniques, and materials in the exploratory program (Romano & Georgiady, 1994).

Transition Programs

MacIver (1990) asserted that 88% of public school students transition to middle school in a new building, which may result in damaging effects on their psychological

adjustment, self-concept, and desire to learn. Transition programs concentrate on providing a seamless move for the adolescent as he or she moves from the elementary school building to the middle school building (National Middle School Association, 1995b). Wiles and Bondi (2001) defined transition, commonly referred to as articulation in the middle school research, as:

> The process by which the educational goals and curricular programs of a school system are coordinated among the various levels from preschool through high school. For example, a relationship with the elementary school is designed to make transition into the middle school easier; a relationship with the high school is designed to make transition there more comfortable and effective. Within a middle school, articulation is expected to facilitate movement between grade levels and learning levels and between continuous progress programs. (p. 369)

Mizelle (1999) asserted that educators can ease students' transition into middle school by providing challenging and supportive environments, by designing transition programs that address the needs of students and their parents. Mizelle suggested a number of activities that provide information to parents and students and include (a) "shadowing" students, (b) arranging presentations by a student or panel of students, and (c) visiting the middle school.

Evaluating the Effectiveness of Middle School Programs

Evaluation is a powerful tool for documenting school needs, identifying strengths and weaknesses in school programs, and discovering how to improve almost every aspect of school life (Sanders, 1992).

Romano and Georgiady (1994) identified 14 criteria for evaluating the middle school:

1. Providing for continuous progress.
2. Flexible class schedules.
3. Use of team teaching.

4. Use of multimedia materials approach.
5. Provide for basic skills repair and extension.
6. Provide for creative exploratory and enrichment studies.
7. Provision for independent study.
8. Full provision for evaluation for pupil growth.
9. Guidance for a program of planned gradualism.
10. An appropriate program of physical experiences and intramural experiences.
11. Appropriate social experiences.
12. Auxiliary staffing.
13. Student services.
14. Emphasize community relations. (pp. 11-14)

Georgiady and Romano (1992) indicated that a responsive middle school program should provide an evaluation of students' work that is personal, positive, non-threatening, and individualized. Assessment in the middle schools should focus on higher order thinking skills that challenge and encourage young adolescents to change, modify, innovate, learn, and grow (Crockett, 1995).

This We Believe (1995) explained assessment and evaluation that promotes learning like this:

> In addition to academic content and skills, assessment and evaluation of young adolescents should address other aspects of a students' growth such as critical thinking, curiosity, and other desired personal attributes. This requires a variety of assessment procedures, such as checklists and observation scales, in addition to tests. In developmentally responsive middle schools, assessment and evaluation procedures reflect the characteristics and uniqueness of young adolescents. (p. 27)

Assessment for curriculum should begin with study of the programs currently in place. According to Tchudi (1994), the "savvy" curriculum leader often uses present practices constructively when redesigning programs. Johnston (1991) introduced several ways of knowing what works at the middle level.

1. *Scientific ways of knowing.* They apply the scientific method (observing, hypothesizing, data gathering, concluding) to school-based problems and questions.
2. *Formal ways of knowing.* This mode of knowing focuses on process, not on outcome. It comes from the flawless execution of procedures.
3. *Interpersonal ways of knowing.* Interpersonal ways of knowing are those through which you get to know and understand someone either through experience or reputation.
4. *Intuitional ways of knowing.* Intuitional knowledge deals with the creation and remembering of images and feelings that are associated with those images. (pp. 49-53)

Kirkpatrick (1976) provided the following steps (now called levels) for evaluation:

Level 1. Determine what items need to be evaluated and write the evaluation around those items; design evaluation for the ease of tabulation and analysis; maintain anonymity; and encourage additional comments.

Level 2. Use quantitative and objective measures; administer pretests and posttests; when feasible, use a control group subjecting the results to statistical analysis.

Level 3. Include both before and after (three months or more) appraisal; appraisals by multiple appraisees, including participant, supervisor, subordinates, peers; statistical analysis of data, use of a control group.

Level 4. Evaluate impact of training on the organization, whether it be in terms of greater productivity, reduced costs, or improved quality.

Wiles and Bondi's (2001) consideration of factors of evaluation of middle school programs suggested:

> Evaluation in the middle schools should be comprehensive and balanced, addressing programs, products, processes, and personnel. Evaluation in a middle school is best perceived as a system with all parts interacting with other parts. The philosophy of the middle schools calls for flexibility in the design of student evaluation. (pp. 281-282)

Section Summary

This section of the review focused on the evaluation of middle school program effectiveness. Studies of effective middle schools have resulted in the identification of 14 characteristics of schools that can be useful in evaluating existing middle school programs or in establishing new programs.

The reviewed studies also indicated:

1. A responsive middle school program should provide an evaluation of students' work that is personal, positive, non-threatening, and individualized (Georgiady & Romano, 1992).

2. Assessment in the middle schools should focus on higher order thinking skills that challenge and encourage young adolescents to change, modify, innovate, learn, and grow (Crockett, 1995).

3. Assessment for curriculum should begin with study of the program currently in place (Tchudi, 1994).

Project on High Performance Learning Communities

The Project on High Performance Learning Communities (HPLC), in partnership with the Illinois Middle Grades Network, has been studying a network of 97 schools as

they undergo restructuring based on the Carnegie Council's (2000) report *Turning Points 2000: Preparing Youth for the 21st Century.* The HPLC premise is built on the premise that, despite the strongest appeal of the Carnegie Council's *Turning Points* visions, the degree to which implementation of these recommendations will produce results is not clear (Felner et al., 1997).

The study uses a "compressed longitudinal" design, which relies on obtaining observations of sets of schools that are at different phases in the transformation process and following them over time. Preliminary findings indicated that high-quality, well-implemented reforms can contribute profoundly to at-risk students' achievement, mental health, and social development (Felner et al., 1997), and these results have profound implications for middle school students and personnel.

Section Summary

This section of the review examined a longitudinal study (Felner et al., 1997) engaged in comprehensive school transformation based on *Turning Points 2000: Preparing Youth for the 21st Century* (2000). It was found that high-quality schooling, well-implemented can contribute to the achievement, mental health, and social/behavioral functioning of at-risk students.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented a review of the literature concentrating on the historical development of the middle school, the middle school philosophy, the developmental nature of the young adolescents, the components of exemplary middle schools, evaluating the effectiveness of middle school programs, and the High Performance Learning Communities project. Beginning in the early 1960s under the leadership of the late

William Alexander, the middle school movement has gone through much reform in order to align its curriculum program more closely to the characteristics of the adolescents served by the middle schools. A national group, the Committee of Ten, was formed in support of the middle school concept during this period.

The National Middle School Association lists five components of an exemplary middle school as: interdisciplinary teaming; advisory programs; varied instruction; exploratory [connections] programs; and transition programs. The major functions of interdisciplinary teaming are instruction, organization, and the establishment of a team identity and climate. Advisory programs provide teachers and students with the opportunity to cultivate close relationships through individual student attention. Varied instruction provides for the integration of learning experiences, stresses cooperation and interpersonal skills, and utilizes multimedia materials to enhance instruction. The exploratory [connections] program enables students to discover and examine learnings that satisfy their special interests. Transition programs are crucial to ensure a seamless move for students as they move from elementary school to middle school.

Studies of effective middle schools resulted in the identification of 14 characteristics of that can be useful in evaluating existing middle school programs or in establishing new programs. A responsive middle school should evaluate student work in an individualized and positive manner. Assessment in middle schools should focus on the higher order thinking skills, and an assessment of the curriculum should begin with study of the existing program. One study found that high-quality schooling, well-implemented can contribute to the achievement, mental health, and social/behavioral functioning of at-risk students.

Limited is the research examining implementation of the principles of *Turning Points* (Felner et al., 1997). The current study assessed middle school principals' perceptions of the importance and degree of implementation of the middle school program criteria in the state of Georgia. The literature review suggested that middle schools have not realized the full extent of structural changes that would fulfill the visions and promises of *Turning Points* (see Epstein & MacIver, 1990).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The primary purpose of this study was to determine the perceived importance of the middle school program criteria and the extent to which the criteria are implemented in middle schools in the state of Georgia. The study also explored differences in perceptions about the importance of the middle school program criteria and the degree of implementation among middle school principals in urban, suburban, and rural school districts in Georgia. Finally, the study evaluated the relationship between middle school principals' perceptions of the importance of the middle school program criteria and middle school principals' perceptions of the degree of implementation. This chapter reports the methodology of the study including a description of the research design, the population and sample examined, the instrument used for collecting data, and the procedures followed to collect data. The chapter concludes with a discussion of data analysis procedures.

Research Design

The research study was descriptive in nature (Borg & Gall, 1989). While the study was descriptive in nature, relationships were explored. For the purposes of this study, a descriptive, non-experimental approach was selected to provide an extensive database of principals' perceptions of the importance of and the degree of implementation of the middle school program criteria. The general intent of this descriptive study was

twofold. One, the study was to document the importance and extent of implementation of the middle school program criteria as perceived by middle school principals in the state of Georgia. Two, personal characteristics (e.g., prior experience as a principal, total number of years of experience, and highest degree) that might influence middle school principals' perceptions were considered.

The study design relied on a survey to generate data for analysis (Borg & Gall, 1989). Isaac and Mitchell (1990) stated, "Surveys are the most widely used technique in education and the behavioral sciences for the collection of data" (p.128).

The descriptive component of the study consisted of two parts: The first part provided demographic characteristics of the respondents. The second part determined perceptions of the group surveyed regarding the importance of the middle school program criteria and the extent to which the criteria are being implemented in middle schools in Georgia. In this study, the importance of the middle school program criteria and the degree of implementation of the middle school criteria were treated as the dependent variables, while demographic characteristics of the principals served as the independent variables.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the direction of the study:

1. What is the degree of implementation of the middle school program criteria in school districts?

2. How important are the middle school program criteria in school districts?

3. Do middle school principals in three school district types (urban, suburban, and rural) differ in their perceptions regarding the degree of implementation of the middle school program criteria?

4. Do middle school principals in three school district types (urban, suburban, and rural) differ in their perceptions regarding the importance of the middle school program criteria?

5. To what extent is there a relationship between the perceived importance of the middle school program criteria and their degree of implementation in middle schools?

Population and Sample

The population for this study consisted of all pubic middle school principals in the state of Georgia (N = 388), and the sample included all public middle school principals in the state of Georgia (n = 388). A return rate of 50% plus one was sought to strengthen the results of the study and the generalization of the findings (Kerlinger, 1986).

Instrumentation

The instrument which used to collect data for the study was the researcher-developed *Middle School Program Implementation Survey* (MSPIS). In designing this instrument, the researcher was guided by Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996). The research guidelines included:

1. defining the research objective;
2. designing the questionnaire format;
3. field-testing the questionnaire;
4. writing a cover letter;

5. distributing the questionnaire; and,

6. analyzing the questionnaire data.

The MSPIS consisted of two parts (see Appendix B). The demographic section of the survey included data on number of years in administration, highest degree, undergraduate major, gender, and school district type (urban, suburban, rural). The demographic information was collected to ascertain characteristics of the respondents. The second part of the instrument lists 15 middle school program criteria and 20 middle school characteristics as determined by the literature on middle schools. Participants were asked to rate degree of implementation of each middle school program criteria on a four-point Likert scale of 4 = Fully Implemented to 1 = Not Implemented. Participants were asked to rate the importance of each middle school characteristic on a four-point Likert scale of 4 = Very Important to 1 = Not Important.

Validity and Reliability of the Middle School Program Implementation Survey

The content of the survey was derived from a review of literature on effective middle school programs and adolescent development and through a panel of judges. According to Litwin (1995), face validity can be addressed by a cursory review of the items by untrained judges, but content validity requires a set of reviewers who have knowledge of the subject matter.

The survey was presented to a jury of experts. The jury of experts consisted of a panel of 10 educators with graduate degrees and experience with middle school programs and 3 experts in research design, which included 3 professors who represented 2 universities in Georgia. One of the university professors was affiliated with the National Middle School Association. The expert panel rated, on a scale of 1-5, the relevance of

each item to what the survey intended to measure. This served to indicate content validity by determining if statements captured the essence of what was expressed by the literature. Five of the items required revaluation in terms of content; one item was added. The suggestions were incorporated into the final version of the instrument. A draft of the instrument was also given for review to the researcher's dissertation committee, consisting of trained professionals who understood the purpose of the study.

A pilot study was conducted on a sample similar to the study sample. The pilot version of the instrument was administered to 13 middle school principals and assistant principals in a neighboring county in which the researcher was employed.

The researcher calculated internal consistency and reliability estimates (Gay, 1992). Coefficient alpha was calculated to determine the reliability of the instrument using results from the pilot study and results from the completed surveys. From the pilot study, Cronbach's alpha for the *Middle School Program Implementation Survey* was .67. From the completed surveys, Cronbach's alpha for the *Middle School Program Implementation Survey* was .77 (see Appendix C). Alpha coefficients and correlations between items and scales were computed using version 10.1 of the *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSS).

Data Collection Procedures

Once the dissertation committee accepted the proposal, the researcher secured permission to conduct the study from The University of Georgia's Institutional Review Board (see Appendix D). All surveys were mailed to the participating schools in early October with the latest return date of October 30, 2001. Included in the packet with the survey was a cover letter explaining the purpose, intent, and use of the survey (see

Appendix E). For convenience of respondents, pre-addressed, stamped envelopes were used for returning the completed surveys. Anonymity of responses was assured. Numbers were assigned to participant surveys for identification purposes and color coded for determination of response. Appropriate follow-up procedures (to include second mailing after 14 days) were employed.

Research with Human Subjects

In order to assure that the study was conducted in an ethical manner, the researcher submitted the proposal to The University of Georgia's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects for review and approval prior to conducting the research. Once the IRB granted written permission to conduct the study, the researcher began by mailing the surveys.

Of the 388 middle school principals invited to participate, 224 agreed to participate, equaling a 57.73% return rate.

Data Analysis Procedures

Descriptive analyses, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to organize and summarize the data. A reliability coefficient was computed for the *Middle School Program Implementation Survey*. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) procedures were utilized to determine differences among comparison groups. Post hoc analyses were conducted as necessary. Linear regression was used to determine the relationship, if any, between the perceived importance of the middle school program criteria and the degree of implementation of the middle school program criteria. An alpha level of .05 was used in determining statistical significance. The *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSS) was used to analyze the data.

Findings of the study, including supporting narratives, are presented in Chapter IV. A summary of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations are presented in Chapter V.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The primary purpose of the study was to determine the perceived importance of the middle school program criteria and the extent to which the criteria are implemented in middle schools in the state of Georgia as reported by urban (inner city), suburban, and rural middle school principals. The study also explored the differences in perceptions about the importance of the middle school program criteria and the degree of implementation among urban, suburban, and rural school districts. Finally, the study analyzed the relationship between the perceived importance of the middle school program criteria and the extent to which the criteria are implemented as perceived by middle school principals. The major findings of the study are presented in this chapter. The survey response rate of the sample is presented in the first section. A demographic profile (personal and school characteristics) of respondents is presented in the second section. Research findings are presented in the third section.

Response Analysis

Three hundred eighty-eight surveys (N = 388) were mailed to middle school principals in the state of Georgia. After all follow-up communications, 224 usable surveys were completed and returned, equaling a 57.73% return rate.

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic information was collected for the following: (a) school location, (b) gender, (c) highest degree, (d) number of years of experience as a principal, (e) total number of years of experience as an educator, (f) prior experience as a principal, (g)

immediate past administrative experience as an assistant principal, (h) immediate past administrative experience as a lead teacher or instructional coordinator, (i) immediate past administrative experience at district level, (j) immediate past administrative experience as a teacher, (k) middle school's grade configuration, and (l) school population. The information was collected in order to obtain a profile of the principals.

The first item addressed in the demographic section of the survey was school location. Of those middle school principals responding, 39 (17.41%) identified their school location as urban. Eighty-four (37.50%) middle school principals identified their school location as suburban and 101 (45.09%) identified their school location as rural. The data are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Frequency Distribution by School Location

School Location	Frequency	Percent
Urban	39	17.41
Suburban	84	37.50
Rural	101	45.09

The second demographic item addressed on the survey was gender. Of the 224 respondents to the survey, 99 (44.2%) were females and 125 (55.8%) were males. The data are presented in Table 2.

The third question in the demographic section of the survey inquired about degree level. In terms of highest degree, 1 (0.45%) middle school principal held only a bachelor's degree. Thirty-three (14.73%) middle school principals held master's degrees

and 146 (65.18%) held specialist degrees. Forty-four out of 224 (19.64%) middle school principals surveyed held doctorate degrees. The data are shown in Table 3.

Table 2

Frequency Distribution by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Female	99	44.20
Male	125	55.80
Total	224	100.00

Table 3

Frequency Distribution by Degree Level

Highest Degree	Frequency	Percent
Bachelor's	1	0.45
Master's	33	14.73
Specialist	146	65.18
Doctorate	44	19.64
Total	224	100.00

The fourth demographic item asked for the total number of years of experience as a principal (exclusive of other administrative jobs). The mean number of years of experience as a principal was 6.96 (SD = 6.30). Data pertaining to total number of years experience as a principal were collected as a continuous variable.

The fifth demographic item asked for the total number of years of experience as an educator in public education. The mean number of years of experience as an educator in public education was 23.08 (SD = 7.58). Data pertaining to total number of years of experience as an educator in public education were collected as a continuous variable.

The sixth demographic item in the survey asked about immediate past administrative experience as a principal at varied levels. Ninety-six (42.9%) middle school principals reported immediate past administrative experience as a principal at the middle school level. Thirty-nine (17.4%) middle school principals reported immediate past administrative experience as a principal at the elementary level, and 16 (7.1%) reported immediate past administrative experience as a principal at the secondary school level. Almost one third (32.6% or 73 out of 224) of the middle school principals reported no past administrative experience as a principal. The data are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Immediate Past Administrative Experience as a Principal at Varied Levels

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Elementary	39	17.4
Middle	96	42.9
Secondary	16	7.1
No immediate past experience	73	32.6
Total	224	100.0

The seventh demographic item in the survey asked about immediate past administrative experience as an assistant principal or vice principal at varied levels. Almost one half (47.3% or 106 out of 224) of the middle school principals reported immediate past experience as an assistant principal or vice principal at the middle school level.

Approximately one fourth (24.1% or 54 out of 224) of the middle school principals reported immediate past experience as an assistant principal or vice principal at the secondary level. Twenty-five (11.2%) middle school principals reported immediate past experience as an assistant principal or vice principal at the elementary level; 39 (17.4%) reported no immediate past experience as an assistant principal or vice principal. The data are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Immediate Past Experience as Assistant or Vice Principal at Varied Levels

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Elementary	25	11.2
Middle	106	47.3
Secondary	54	24.1
No immediate past experience	39	17.4
Total	224	100.0

The eighth demographic item inquired about immediate past administrative experience as a lead teacher or instructional coordinator. Twenty-eight (12.5%) of the responding principals reported immediate past experience as a lead teacher or instructional coordinator at the middle school level; 11 (4.9%) middle school principals reported immediate past experience as a lead teacher or instructional coordinator at the secondary level. Eight (3.6%) middle school principals reported immediate past administrative experience as a lead teacher or instructional coordinator at the elementary level; 47 (21.0%) reported no immediate past administrative experience as a lead teacher or instructional coordinator. The data are shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Immediate Past Experience as Lead Teacher or Instructional Coordinator at Varied Levels

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Elementary	8	3.6
Middle	28	12.5
Secondary	11	4.9
No immediate past experience	177	79.0
Total	224	100.0

The ninth demographic item asked about immediate past administrative experience at the district level. Only a small percentage (7.6% or 17 out of 224) of the middle school principals reported immediate past administrative experience at the district

level. Position titles varied from instructional specialist to curriculum coordinator, and from alternative program coordinator to parent liaison.

The tenth demographic item addressed immediate past administrative as a teacher. Almost one fourth (22.3% or 50 out of 224) of the middle school principals reported immediate past administrative experience as a teacher at the middle school level. Forty (17.9%) middle school principals reported immediate past experience as a teacher at the elementary level; 39 (17.4%) reported immediate past experience as a teacher at the secondary level. Ninety-five (42.4%) middle school principals reported no past administrative experience as a teacher. The data are presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Immediate Past Administrative Experience as a Teacher at Varied Levels

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Elementary	40	17.9
Middle	50	22.3
Secondary	39	17.4
No immediate past experience	95	42.4
Total	224	100.0

The eleventh demographic item inquired about the grade configuration. In Georgia, a middle school is defined as a school or a portion of a school containing grades six, seven, and eight, or grades seven and eight. These data are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

Frequency Distribution by Grade Configuration

Grade Configuration	Frequency	Percent
Grades 6-8	214	95.54
Grades 7-8	10	4.46

The final item in the demographic section of the survey asked about school enrollment. Eight (3.57%) responding principals reported enrollments of 300 or fewer students and 45 (20.09%) reported enrollments from 301 to 600 students. Eighty-eight (39.29%) responding principals reported enrollments from 601 to 900 and 57 (25.45%) reported enrollments from 901 to 1,200. Thirteen (5.80%) responding principals reported enrollments from 1,201 to 1,499 and 13 (5.80%) reported enrollments of 1,500 or more. The data are presented in Table 9.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asked, "What is the degree of implementation of the middle school program criteria in school districts?" A descriptive approach was used because it provided because it provided information which was relevant to the research question but also required the construction of a scale that corresponded to the 21 perceptual items in the *Middle School Program Implementation Survey* (MPSIS) that indicated a high (or low) degree of implementation of middle school program criteria.

Table 9

Frequency Distribution by Enrollment

Variable	Frequency	Percent
151-300	8	3.6
301-600	45	20.1
601-900	88	39.3
901-1,200	57	25.4
1,201-1,499	13	5.8
1,500+	13	5.8
Total	224	100.0

In order to answer Research Question 1, means and standard deviations were calculated for all 21 items in Part I of the MSPIS. As shown in Table 10, the highest mean was for items 5, "The middle school provides each academic team a minimum of 55 consecutive minutes for common planning time," at 3.96 (*SD* = .31). The lowest mean was for item 15a, "Foreign language instruction is included as an additional academic class," at 1.89 (*SD* = 1.36).

As can be seen from an examination of Table 10, the Total Score on Part I of the *Middle School Program Implementation Survey* was 73.50 (*SD* = 5.06), indicating a high level of implementation of the middle school program criteria. The criterion used to classify Total Scores was the quartile distribution of the respondents' total score and is sample based as opposed to absolute. Based on this criterion, Total Scores were classified by the researcher as 77+, *Very High*; 74-76, *High*; 71-73, *Low*; 71-, *Very Low*.

Table 10

Descriptive Analysis of the Middle School Program Implementation Survey, Part I

Item	Mean	Standard deviation	Sample size
I. Degree of Implementation of Middle School Program Criteria			
1b) I serve as the instructional leader.	3.72	.56	224
1b) I oversee the implementation of the middle school program criteria.	3.83	.44	224
2) The middle school program has academic teams.	3.95	.32	224
3) The academic team provides its common group of students a minimum of five hours of instruction in academic classes.	3.95	.33	224
4a) Each academic team has control over the instructional time of its common group of students.	3.53	.78	224
4b) Each academic team has control over the schedules of its common group of students.	3.33	.84	224
5) The middle school provides each academic team a minimum of 55 consecutive minutes for common planning time.	3.96	.31	224
6) Instruction provided during the academic classes includes remediation for students not performing on grade level.	3.76	.51	224
7a) Remediation is designed to support the students' access to the grade level curriculum.	3.71	.47	224

(*table continues*)

Table 10 (*continued*)

Item	Mean	Standard deviation	Sample size
7b) Remediation is designed to support the students' mastery of the grade level curriculum.	3.59	.58	224
8) The academic team considers the student's performance on criterion-referenced assessments in making decisions about the student's need for remediation.	3.75	.47	224
9a) Priority for remediation is placed on reading unless otherwise determined by the academic team.	3.93	.26	224
9b) Priority for remediation is placed on mathematics unless otherwise determined by the academic team.	3.73	.57	224
10) Certified staff assigned to the middle school have earned the equivalent of three semester hours or five staff development units training in the teaching and evaluation of reading and writing in the middle grades.	3.06	.84	224
11) The certified staff hold middle grades (4-8) certification with a concentration in one or more content areas or secondary grades (7-12) certification.	3.65	.51	224
12) Certified staff are assigned to teach in their primary content areas.	3.72	.46	224
13a) Pass/fail grades are not employed in academic classes.	3.72	.88	224

(*table continues*)

Table 10 (*continued*)

Item	Mean	Standard deviation	Sample size
13b) Pass/fail grades are not employed in Connections (exploratory) classes.	3.72	.88	224
14) Any student is allowed to take an additional academic class instead of Connections (exploratory) class at the request of the parent or guardian, subject to availability.	2.37	1.20	224
15a) Foreign language instruction is included as an additional academic class.	1.89	1.36	224
15b) Foreign language instruction is included as a Connections (exploratory) class.	2.63	1.48	224
Total Score	73.50	5.06	224

Percentage frequencies for respondents' perceived level of implementation are shown in Table 11. Respondents used the following scale to respond: 4 (Fully Implemented), 3 (Moderately Implemented), 2 (Minimally Implemented); and 1 (Not Implemented).

Slightly more than one third (76.3%) of the principals indicated that the criterion was fully implemented when asked about "serving as the instructional leader." More than 8 out of every 10 (84.8%) indicated that the criterion was fully implemented when asked about "overseeing the implementation of the middle school program criteria." When asked if "the middle school had academic teams," 96.9% of principals indicated that the criterion was fully implemented.

Virtually all (97.3%) of responding principals indicated fully implemented for the criterion, "The academic team provides its common group of students a minimum of five hours of instruction in academic classes." Slightly more than two thirds (67.4%) indicated fully implemented when asked if "each academic team has control over the instructional time of its common group of students." When asked if "each academic team has control over the schedules of its common group of students," more than one half (53.1%) of the principals reported the criterion fully implemented.

Virtually all (97.3%) of middle school principals reported fully implemented for the criterion, "The middle school provides each academic team a minimum of 55 consecutive minutes for common planning time." Eight out of every 10 (79.9%) principals indicated that the criterion, "Instruction provided during the academic classes includes remediation for students not performing on grade level," was fully implemented.

Almost three fourths (72.3%) of the middle school principals indicated that the criterion, "Remediation is designed to support the students' access to the grade level curriculum," was fully implemented. Almost two thirds (64.3%) of the middle school principals indicated that the criterion, "Remediation is designed to support the students' mastery of the grade level curriculum," was fully implemented.

Slightly more than three fourths (76.8%) of the middle school principals reported fully implemented for the criterion, "The academic team considers the student's performance on criterion-referenced assessments in making decisions about the student's need for remediation." A vast majority (92.9%) of principals reported fully implemented for the criterion, "Priority for remediation is placed on reading unless otherwise determined by the academic team." Almost 8 out of every 10 (79.0%) principals

indicated that the criterion, “Priority for remediation is placed on mathematics unless otherwise determined by the academic team.”

Only about one third (33.5%) of principals reported fully implemented for the criterion, “Certified staff assigned to the middle school have earned the equivalent of three semester hours or five staff development units training in the teaching and evaluation of reading and writing in the middle grades.” Approximately two thirds (66.1%) of principals reported fully implemented for the criterion, “The certified staff hold middle grades (4-8) certification with a concentration in one or more content areas or secondary grades (7-12) certification.”

About 9 out of every 10 (90.6%) indicated fully implemented when asked about the criterion, “Pass/fail grades are not employed in academic classes.” The same percentage (90.6%) reported fully implemented for the criterion, “Pass/fail grades are not employed in Connections (exploratory) classes.”

Only slightly more than one fourth (26.8%) of middle school principals reported fully implemented for the criterion, “Any student is allowed to take an additional academic class instead of Connections (exploratory) class at the request of the parent or guardian, subject to availability.”

Slightly more than one fourth (28.6%) of the middle schools principals reported fully implemented for the criterion, “Foreign language instruction is included as an additional academic class.” Slightly more than one half (53.1%) of the middle school principals reported fully implemented for the criterion, “Foreign language instruction is included as a Connections (exploratory) class.” See Table 11 for a complete summary of these findings.

Table 11

Percentage of Principals' Responses to Middle School Program Criteria Implementation Items

Items		% Fully implemented	% Moderately implemented	% Minimally implemented	% Not implemented
1a)	I serve as the instructional leader.	76.3	20.1	2.7	0.9
1b)	I oversee the implementation of the middle school program criteria.	84.8	12.9	2.2	0.0
2)	The middle school program has academic teams.	96.9	2.2	0.0	0.9
3)	The academic team provides its common group of students a minimum of five hours of instruction in academic classes.	97.3	1.3	0.4	0.9
4a)	Each academic team has control over the instructional time of its common group of students.	67.4	21.9	7.1	3.6
4b)	Each academic team has control over the schedules of its common group of students.	53.1	29.9	13.4	3.6

(*table continues*)

Table 11 *(Continued)*

Items		% Fully implemented	% Moderately implemented	% Minimally implemented	% Not implemented
5)	The middle school provides each academic team a minimum of 55 consecutive minutes for common planning time.	97.3	1.8	0.0	0.9
6)	Instruction provided during the academic classes includes remediation for students not performing on grade level.	79.9	17.0	2.7	0.4
7a)	Remediation is designed to support the students' access to the grade level curriculum.	72.3	26.8	0.9	0.0
7b)	Remediation is designed to support the students' mastery of the grade level curriculum.	64.3	30.8	4.9	0.0

(*table continues*)

Table11 (*continued*)

Items		% Fully implemented	% Moderately implemented	% Minimally implemented	% Not implemented
8)	The academic team considers the student's performance on criterion-referenced assessments in making decisions about the student's need for remediation.	76.8	21.4	1.8	0.0
9a)	Priority for remediation is placed on reading unless otherwise determined by the academic team.	92.9	7.1	0.0	0.0
9b)	Priority for remediation is placed on mathematics unless otherwise determined by the academic team.	79.0	17.0	2.7	1.3
10)	Certified staff assigned to the middle school have earned the equivalent of three semester hours or five staff development units training in the teaching and evaluation of reading and writing in the middle grades.	33.5	44.2	17.4	4.9

(table continues)

Table 11 (*continued*)

Items	% Fully implemented	% Moderately implemented	% Minimally implemented	% Not implemented
11) The certified staff hold middle grades (4-8) certification with a concentration in one or more content areas or secondary grades (7-12) certification.	66.1	32.6	1.3	0.0
12) Certified staff are assigned to teach in their primary content areas.	72.8	26.8	0.4	0.0
13a) Pass/fail grades are not employed in academic classes.	90.6	0.0	0.0	9.4
13b) Pass/fail grades are not employed in Connections (exploratory) classes.	90.6	0.0	0.0	9.4
14) Any student is allowed to take an additional academic class instead of Connections (exploratory) class at the request of the parent or guardian, subject to availability.	26.8	16.5	23.3	33.5

(table continues)

Table 11 (*continued*)

Items	% Fully implemented	% Moderately implemented	% Minimally implemented	% Not implemented
15a) Foreign language instruction is included as an additional academic class.	28.6	1.3	0.9	69.2
15b) Foreign language instruction is included as a Connections (exploratory) class.	53.1	1.3	0.9	44.6

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asked, "How important are the middle school program criteria in school districts?" Answering this question required a descriptive rather than an inferential approach.

Respondents in the survey were asked to rate the degree of importance of selected middle school characteristics using the following scale: 1 (Not Important); 2 (Minimally Important); 3 (Moderately Important); 4 (Very Important).

In order to answer Research Question 2 means and standard deviations were calculated for all 23 items in Part II of the MSPIS. As shown in Table 12, the highest mean was for item 26, "Positive school climate," at 3.97 (*SD* = .22). The lowest mean was for item 21, "Comprehensive advisement programs," at 3.23 (*SD* = .73).

Table 12

Descriptive Analysis of the Middle School Program Implementation Survey, Part II

Item		Mean	Standard deviation	Sample size
	II. Degree of Importance of Selected Middle School Characteristics			
16)	Educators knowledgeable about and committed to young adolescents.	3.96	.19	224
17)	A balanced curriculum based on student needs.	3.92	.29	224
18)	Flexible organizational structures.	3.68	.55	224
19)	Varied instructional strategies.	3.93	.25	224
20)	Full Connections (exploratory) program.	3.70	.56	224
21)	Comprehensive advising programs.	3.23	.73	224
22)	Comprehensive counseling programs.	3.74	.53	224
23)	Continuous progress for students.	3.84	.42	224
24)	Evaluation procedures compatible with the nature of young adolescents.	3.79	.46	224
25)	Cooperative planning.	3.83	.42	224
26)	Positive school climate.	3.97	.22	224
27)	Family partnerships.	3.76	.49	224
28)	Community partnerships.	3.56	.58	224
29)	A shared vision.	3.91	.29	224
30)	High expectations for all.	3.96	.19	224
31)	An adult advocate for every student.	3.40	.73	224

(table continues)

Table 12 *(continued)*

Item	Mean	Standard deviation	Sample size
32a) Programs and policies that foster health.	3.79	.43	224
32b) Programs and policies that foster wellness.	3.76	.48	224
32c) Programs and policies that foster safety.	3.84	.36	224
33) Small communities for learning.	3.63	.58	224
34) Engage families in the education of young adolescents.	3.75	.44	224
35a) Empowerment of teachers.	3.83	.38	224
35b) Empowerment of administrators.	3.90	.30	224
Total Score	86.72	5.22	224

As can be seen from an examination of Table 12, the Total Score on Part II of the *Middle School Program Implementation Survey* was 86.72 (*SD* = 5.22), indicating a very high level of importance of the middle school program criteria. The criterion used to classify Total Scores was the quartile distribution of the respondents' total score and is sample based as opposed to absolute. Based on this criterion, Total Scores were classified by the researcher as 77+, *Very High*; 74-76, *High*; 71-73, *Low*; 71-, *Very Low*.

Percentage frequencies for respondents' perceived level of importance are shown in Table 13. Respondents used the following scale: 1 (Not Important); 2 (Minimally Important); 3 (Moderately Important); 4 (Very Important).

A vast majority (96.4%) of middle school principals rated the item, "Educators knowledgeable about and committed to young adolescents," very important. When asked

about “a balanced curriculum based on student needs,” 92.0% of respondents indicated that the middle school characteristic was very important. Seventy one percent of middle school principals indicated that “flexible organizational structures” was a very important middle school characteristic.

Slightly more than 9 out of every 10 (93.3%) principals rated the “varied instructional strategies” item very important. Almost three fourths (74.6%) of respondents rated a “full Connections program” as a very important characteristic. Only 39.3% of principals rated “a comprehensive advising program” as very important middle school program characteristic.

Slightly more than three fourths (77.7%) of the principals indicated that “a comprehensive counseling program” was a very important middle school characteristic. Almost 9 out of every 10 (86.6%) principals indicated very important when asked about “continuous progress for students.” Approximately 8 out of every 10 (80.8%) principals viewed “evaluation procedures compatible with adolescents” as very important.

“Cooperative planning” was deemed very important by 85.3% of the respondents. Virtually all (97.8%) middle school principals felt that “a positive school climate” was very important. Almost 9 out of every 10 (78.6%) principals rated “family partnerships” as very important. Sixty percent of principals indicated “community partnerships” were very important.

Slightly more than 9 out of every 10 (92.0%) principals viewed “a shared vision” as very important. A vast majority (96.4%) of principals rated “high expectations for all” as a very important middle school characteristic. About one half (53.1%) of the responding principals felt that “an adult advocate for every student” was an important

middle school characteristic. Approximately 8 out of every 10 (80.4%) middle school principals rated "programs and policies that foster health as a very important middle school characteristic. A similar percentage (78.6%) rated "programs and policies that foster wellness" as very important. Slightly more than 8 out of every 10 (84.8%) middle school principals viewed "programs and policies that foster safety" as very important. See Table 13 for a complete summary of these findings.

Table 13

Percentage of Principals' Responses to Middle School Program Criteria Importance Items

Item	% Very important	% Moderately important	% Minimally important	% Not important
16) Educators knowledgeable about and committed to young adolescents.	96.4	3.6	0.0	0.0
17) Balanced curriculum based on student needs.	92.0	7.6	0.4	0.0
18) Flexible organizational structures.	71.9	24.1	4.0	0.0
19) Varied instructional strategies.	93.3	6.7	0.0	0.0
20) Full Connections program.	74.6	21.4	3.6	0.4
21) Comprehensive advising program.	39.3	45.5	13.8	1.3
22) Comprehensive counseling program.	77.7	18.8	3.1	0.4

(*table continues*)

Table 13 (*continued*)

Item	% Very important	% Moderately important	% Minimally important	% Not important
23) Continuous progress for students.	86.6	11.2	2.2	0.0
24) Evaluation procedures compatible with adolescents.	80.8	17.9	0.9	0.4
25) Cooperative planning.	85.3	12.9	1.8	0.0
26) Positive school climate.	97.8	1.3	0.9	0.0
27) Family partnerships.	78.6	19.6	1.3	0.4
28) Community partnerships.	60.3	36.2	3.1	0.4
29) Shared vision.	92.0	7.6	0.4	0.0
30) High expectations for all.	96.4	3.6	0.0	0.0
31) An adult advocate for every student.	53.1	34.8	10.7	1.3
32a) Programs and policies that foster health.	80.4	18.8	0.9	0.0
32b) Programs and policies that foster wellness.	78.6	19.2	2.2	0.0
32c) Programs and policies that foster safety.	84.8	15.2	0.0	0.0
33) Small learning communities.	68.3	27.2	4.0	0.4
34) Engage families in the education of young adolescents.	75.4	24.1	0.4	0.0

(*table continues*)

Table 13 (*continued*)

Item	% Very important	% Moderately important	% Minimally important	% Not important
35a) Empowerment of teachers.	83.9	15.6	0.4	0.0
35b) Empowerment of administrators.	89.7	10.3	0.0	0.0

Comparative Findings

Research Questions 1 and 2 posed by the study resulted in the descriptive analyses performed in the previous section. The results of the analyses to answer Research Questions 3, 4, and 5 and test their associated hypotheses are presented in this section. All decisions on the statistical significance of the findings were made at an alpha level of .05.

Research Question 3

Research Question 3 asks, "Do middle school principals in three school district types (urban, suburban, and rural) differ in their perceptions regarding the importance of the middle school program criteria?" Research Question 3 was addressed by testing the following hypothesis:

H_0:1 There is no significant difference in the perceptions of the importance of the middle school program criteria among middle school principals in urban school districts, middle school principals in suburban school districts, and middle school principals in rural school districts.

The one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) procedure was utilized to test this hypothesis. Because the number of respondents in the comparison groups was unequal,

homogeneity of variance factors were evaluated with Levene's test of homogeneity of variance. Levene's test for homogeneity of variance was not statistically significant at alpha = .10 (p = .394); therefore, there is insufficient evidence to indicate that the assumption of equal variances is violated. Means and standard deviations are shown in Table 14.

Table 14

Means and Standard Deviations for Principals' Perceived Level of the Importance of the Middle School Program Criteria by School Location

Variable	Mean importance scores	Standard deviations	Sample size
Urban	3.78	.30	39
Suburban	3.78	.21	84
Rural	3.75	.21	101
Total	3.77	.23	224

The one-way ANOVA yielded an F ratio of .492 (p = .612) which was not statistically significant at the .05 level (see Table 15). Based on these results, H_0:1 was accepted.

Research Question 4

Research Question 4 asked, "Do middle school principals in three school district types (urban, suburban, and rural) differ in their perceptions regarding the degree of implementation of the middle school program criteria?" Research Question 4 was addressed by testing the following hypothesis:

Table 15

Analysis of Variance for Urban, Suburban, and Rural Middle School Principals' Perceptions of the Importance of the Middle School Program Criteria

Source of Variation	Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean square	*F*-ratio	Sig. of *F*
Between Groups	.051	2	.025	.492	.612
Within Groups	11.422	221	.052		
Total	11.473	223			

H_0:2 There is no significant difference in the perceptions of the extent to which the middle school program criteria are implemented among middle school principals in urban school districts, middle school principals in suburban school districts, and middle school principals in rural school districts.

The one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) procedure and Tukey's honestly significant difference (HSD) post hoc test were employed to analyze data for this hypothesis. Because the number of respondents in the comparison groups was unequal, homogeneity of variance factors were evaluated with Levene's test of homogeneity of variance. Levene's test for homogeneity of variance was not statistically significant at alpha = .10 (p = .937); therefore, there is insufficient evidence to indicate that the assumption of equal variances is violated. Means and standard deviations are shown in Table 16.

Table 16

Means and Standard Deviations for Principals' Perceived Degree of Implementation of Middle School Program Criteria by School Location

Variable	Mean implementation scores	Standard deviations	Sample size
Urban	3.58	.21	39
Suburban	3.52	.23	84
Rural	3.45	.25	101
Total	3.50	.24	224

The one-way ANOVA procedure determined a statistically significant difference at the .05 level, $F(2, 221) = 4.393$, $p = .013$, among the means of the three groups (see Table 17).

Table 17

Analysis of Variance for Urban, Suburban, and Rural Principals' Perceptions of the Degree of Implementation of the Middle School Program Criteria

Source of Variation	Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Mean square	*F*-ratio	Sig. of *F*
Between Groups	.495	2	.247	4.393	.013*
Within Groups	12.448	221	.056		
Total	12.943				

*$p < .05$

Further analysis on the levels of the independent variables was conducted using the Tukey HSD. The Tukey HSD post hoc test (see Table 18) revealed that the mean for urban middle school principals (M = 3.58, SD = .21) was significantly higher than the mean for rural middle school principals (M = 3.45, SD = .25). Although the mean for suburban middle school principals (M = 3.52, SD = .23) was lower than the mean for urban middle school principals, the difference was not significant at the .05 level. Based on the overall results of this analysis, H_0:2 was rejected.

Table 18

Tukey HSD Multiple Comparison on Middle School Program Criteria Implementation on School Location Variable

School location	School location	Mean difference	Std. error
Urban	Suburban	.0542	.04599
	Rural	.1237*	.04474
Suburban	Urban	-.0542	.04599
	Rural	.0695	.03505
Rural	Urban	-.1237*	.04474
	Suburban	-.0695	.03505

*The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Research Question 5

A linear regression analysis technique was used to address Research Question 5. A linear regression is the best way of describing the relationship between the dependent

variable and the independent variable using a regression line (Pavkov & Pierce, 1997). In regression analysis, the impact of the independent variable upon the dependent variable is assessed using the coefficient of each variable. The larger the coefficient, the larger the effect upon the dependent variable.

Research Question 5 asks, "To what extent is there a relationship between the perceived importance of the middle school program criteria and their degree of implementation in middle schools?" Research Question 5 was addressed by testing the following hypothesis:

> $H_0$3: There is no significant relationship between the importance of the middle school program criteria and the extent to which they are implemented as perceived by middle school principals.

This null hypothesis was tested by analyzing middle school principals' perceptions of the importance of the middle school program criteria, identified as the independent variable, with the dependent variable, middle school principals' perceived degree of implementation of the middle school program criteria. As shown in Table 19, there was a statistically significant relationship between middle school principals' perceptions of the importance of the middle school program criteria and middle school principals' perceived degree of implementation of the middle school program criteria. In this analysis, a positive Beta score of .283 signifies that as middle school principals' perceptions of the importance of the middle school program criteria increased, the perceived degree of implementation of the middle school program criteria also increased. Based on the results of this analysis, H_0:3 was rejected.

Table 19

Relationship of Perceived Level of Importance of the Middle School Program Criteria to Perceived Degree of Implementation of the Middle School Program Criteria

Variable	*B*	*SE B*	â
Middle School Program Criteria Implementation	.283	.069	.267*

Note. R = .267; R squared = .071.
*Statistical significance at the .05 level.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter V presents the summary, conclusions, and recommendations of the study. The chapter will is divided into the seven sections including (a) summary of purpose, (b) summary of procedures, (c) summary of descriptive data, (d) summary of findings, (e) conclusions, (f) recommendations, and (g) implications.

Summary of Purpose

The primary purpose of the study was to determine the perceived importance of the middle school program criteria and the extent to which the criteria are implemented in middle schools in the state of Georgia as reported by urban (inner city), suburban, and rural middle school principals. The study also explored the differences in perceptions about the importance of the middle school program criteria and the degree of implementation among urban, suburban, and rural school districts. Finally, the study evaluated the relationship between middle school principals' perceptions of the degree of importance of the middle school program criteria and the degree of implementation.

Summary of Procedures

The population for this study was composed of all public middle school principals in the state of Georgia (N = 388). Of the 388 middle school principals invited to participate, 224 completed and returned useable survey, equaling a 57.73% return rate. This was descriptive in nature and relied on a survey to generate data for analysis.

The three-part instrument developed for use in this study was the *Middle School Program Implementation Survey* (MSPIS). Part I of the MSPIS consisted of 21 items

designed to elicit the perceptions of middle school principals regarding the level of implementation of the middle school program criteria in their schools. Part II of the MSPIS consisted of 23 items designed to elicit the perceptions of middle school principals regarding the degree of importance of selected middle school program characteristics. Part III of the MSPIS contained 11 demographic questions designed to provide a professional profile of the respondents. The MSPIS uses a four-point Likert-type scale to determine the implementation level of the middle school program criteria and the degree of importance of selected middle school program characteristics.

The MSPIS, along with a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study, was mailed in November 2001 to all public middle school principals in the state of Georgia. The first mailing and a follow-up mailing yielded a response rate (57.7%) which exceeds the validation percentage required of 50% + 1 (Kerlinger, 1986).

The data collected were assigned numerical code and analyzed using the *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSS). An alpha level of $p < .05$ was used to determine statistical significance.

Summary of Descriptive Data

The following responses were collected in the demographic section of the survey: (a) school location, (b) gender, (c) highest degree, (d) number of years of experience as a principal, (d) total number of years of experience as an educator, (e) prior experience as a principal, (f) immediate past administrative experience as an assistant principal, (g) immediate past administrative experience as a lead teacher or instructional coordinator, (h) immediate past administrative experience at district level, (i) immediate past administrative experience as a teacher, (j) middle school's grade configuration, and (k)

school population. Face validity and content validity of the instrument were established by a committee of experts. Internal consistency estimates were calculated using coefficient alpha. Slightly more than one half (55.8%) of the respondents were male. At least 85% of the principals held the specialist degree. The mean number of years of experience as a principal was 6.96 (*SD* = 6.30). The mean number of years of experience as an educator in public education was 23.08 (*SD* = 7.58). Almost one half (47.3%) had immediate past experience as an assistant or vice principal. The predominate (95.4%) grade figuration was grades 6 though 8. When analyzing school locations, 45.1% indicated rural; 37.5% indicated suburban; and 17.4% indicated urban.

Summary of Findings

The following five research questions provided the focus for the study:

1. What is the degree of implementation of the middle school program criteria in school districts?
2. How important are the middle school program criteria in school districts?
3. Do middle school principals in three school district types (urban, suburban, and rural) differ in their perceptions regarding the degree of implementation of the middle school program criteria?
4. Do middle school principals in three school district types (urban, suburban, and rural) differ in their perceptions regarding the importance of the middle school program criteria?
5. To what extent is there a relationship between perceived importance of the middle school program criteria and their degree of implementation in middle schools?

Research Question 1

1. What is the degree of implementation of the middle school program criteria in school districts?

In summary, middle school principals had a high level of implementation of the middle school program criteria. A mean implementation score of 3.5 (*SD* = .24) was obtained by respondents on a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 represents not implemented and 4 represents fully implemented. A mean total score of 73.50 (*SD* = 5.06) was obtained by respondents. Total scores were classified as 77+, *Very High*; 74-76, *High*; 71-73, *Low*; 71-, *Very Low*. The highest possible score was 84. The classification criterion (quartile distribution) was sample based rather than absolute.

The highest mean was for item 5, "The middle school provides each academic team a minimum of 55 consecutive minutes for common planning time," at 3.96 (*SD* = .31). The lowest mean was for item 15a, "Foreign language instruction is included as an additional academic class," at 1.89 (*SD* = 1.36).

Research Question 2

2. How important are the middle school program criteria in school districts?

In summary, middle school principals placed a very high level of importance to the characteristics of middle schools. A mean importance score of 3.77 (*SD* = .23) was obtained by respondents on a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 represent not important and 4 represents very important. A mean total score of 86.72 (*SD* = 5.22) was obtained by respondents. Total scores were classified as 77+, *Very High*; 74-76, *High*; 71-73, *Low*; 71-, *Very Low*. The highest possible score was 92. The classification criterion (quartile distribution) was sample based rather than absolute.

The highest mean was for item 26, "Positive school climate," at 3.97 (*SD* = .22). The lowest mean was for item 21, "Comprehensive advisement programs," at 3.23 (*SD* = .73).

Research Question 3

3. Do middle school principals in three school district types (urban, suburban, and rural) differ in their perceptions regarding the importance of the middle school program criteria?

One hypothesis was formulated to address Research Question 3.

$H_0$1: There is no significant difference in the perceptions of the importance of the middle school program criteria among middle school principals in urban school districts, middle school principals in suburban school districts, and middle school principals in rural school districts.

Using ANOVA procedures to analyze the data, no statistically significant differences were found in the perceptions of the importance of the middle school program criteria among middle school principals in urban, suburban, and rural school districts.

Research Question 4

4. Do middle school principals in three school district types (urban, suburban, and rural) differ in their perceptions regarding the degree of implementation of the middle school program criteria?

One hypothesis was formulated to address Research Question 4.

$H_0$2: There is no significant difference in the perceptions of the extent to which the middle school program criteria are implemented among middle school

principals in urban school districts, middle school principals in suburban school districts, and middle school principals in rural school districts.

Using ANOVA procedures, significant differences were found in the perceptions of the extent to which the middle school program criteria are implemented among middle school principals in urban, suburban, and rural middle schools. Post hoc analysis revealed significant differences between the groups urban and rural. Middle school principals in urban school districts had significantly higher degree of implementation scores than principals in rural school districts. It is also noted that there is a disparity in the number of respondents from urban districts (n = 39) and the number of respondents from rural districts (n = 101).

Research Question 5

5. To what extent is there a relationship between perceived importance of the middle school program criteria and their degree of implementation in middle schools?

One hypothesis was formulated to address Research Question 5.

$H_0$3: There is no significant relationship between the importance of the middle school program criteria and the extent to which they are implemented as perceived by middle school principals.

Using linear regression procedures, it was determined that there was a significant relationship between the importance of the middle school program criteria and the degree of implementation of the middle school program criteria. In this analysis, a positive Beta score of .283 indicates that as middle school principals' perceptions of the importance of the middle school program criteria increased, the perceived degree of implementation of the middle school program criteria also increased.

Conclusions

After analyzing the data obtained from the study, the following conclusions were drawn.

1. Middle school principals indicated a high level of implementation of the middle school program criteria.
2. Middle school principals' perceptions reflected a very high degree of importance attached to key characteristics of the middle school.
3. Middle school principals in three school district types (urban, suburban, and rural) do not differ significantly in their perceptions regarding the importance of the middle school program criteria.
4. Middle school principals in three school district types (urban, suburban, and rural) differed significantly in their perceptions regarding the degree of implementation of the middle school program criteria.
5. There was a positive relationship between perceived importance of the middle school program criteria and their degree of implementation in middle schools.

The high ratings of the importance of middle school program characteristics suggests that the Carnegie Council's *Turning Points* vision appeals to middle school principals in urban, suburban, and rural middle schools. The lower ratings of the degree of implementation of the middle school program criteria, compared to ratings of the importance of middle school characteristics, suggest there is some a gap or discrepancy between importance and implementation.

Research literature on educational change and effective schools (see Cawelti, 1982; Edmonds, 1979; Louis, 1996; Northhouse, 1997; Purkey & Smith, 1993) has

indicated that the principal holds the critical role at the school level in determining the success of an implementation. Northhouse (1997) stated that the principal gives the school direction, and a program will not be successful unless it is supported by the principal. Yet, only 76% of the responding principals indicated "fully implemented" when asked if they served as the instructional leader, and 85% indicated fully implemented when asked if they oversaw the implementation of the middle school program.

Schools with commitment to middle school reform are likely to incorporate recognition of the distinct developmental needs of young adolescents (see Lounsbury, 1982; Romano & Georgiady, 1994; National Middle School Association, 1995b and 1997; Felner et al.; Jackson & Davis, 2000). In this study, descriptive analysis reveals that 96% of the middle school principals viewed "educators knowledgeable about and committed to young adolescents" as very important. Educating young adolescents should be an urgent priority in all middle schools.

Recommendations

It is recommended that a future study examine school staff size to see if the number of employees a middle school principal has to supervise has a significant effect on middle school program criteria implementation. The size of the schools in this study varied from as little as 300 to more than 1,000. It may be beneficial to look at the effect of school size on the implementation of the middle school program criteria. Variables such as school configuration need to be studied further.

Since only 76% of the principals indicated fully implemented when asked if they served as instructional leaders, a study of the barriers to fulfilling the role of instructional leader may provide some valuable information.

Principals' responses to items relating to implementation of interdisciplinary teams and control over instructional time and schedules of common groups of students suggest that some middle schools may be using an outdated, factory-model approach in which students do not develop a sense of allegiance and belonging. A comparison of team autonomy and student achievement may be worth investigating.

Remediation is a vital component of increasing student achievement as outlined in the Georgia Middle School Criteria. However, provisions for remediation varied greatly between moderately and fully implemented. Variables involving remediation should be studied further.

Certification issues as outlined in the Georgia Middle School Criteria should be addressed and resolved. About one third (33.5%) of the principals indicated moderately implemented and less than one half (46%) indicated fully implemented for the criterion "having certified staff with middle grades/secondary certification and assigned to teach in the primary content area." An investigation of the teacher certification requirement issues may result in full implementation.

The foreign language criterion should be examined to determine and resolve barriers to full implementation. Less than one third (28.6%) of principals indicated fully implemented for this criterion, and 69.2% indicated not implemented.

A replication of the study in other states that require middle school program criteria implementation may prove beneficial. This would provide data that could be

compared with data generated from this study. As the study examined the perceptions of middle school principals in Georgia, it is recommended that the perceptions of Georgia middle school teachers be examined (see Middleton, 1982) regarding the implementation of the Georgia Middle School Criteria.

Implications

The findings of the study may assist the Georgia Department of Education and other educators in developing further directions that would enhance middle school program criteria implementation in the state of Georgia. As McClure (1998) suggests, states should support and encourage the fundamental restructuring of the education of young adolescents in middle grades. These findings indicate that all middle schools have not fully implemented the middle school program criteria as specified by the State Board of Education and the legislature in Georgia. Professors at institutions of higher education could find the results of this study useful in training their students to become middle school administrators. Full implementation of the middle school program criteria in Georgia holds great promise for meeting the increasingly diverse needs of middle school students as opposed to providing a warmed-over elementary education or pseudo-high school education.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAM CRITERIA

160-4-2-.05 MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAM CRITERIA

(1) **DEFINITIONS.**

(a) **Academic classes** – instruction in English and language arts, reading, mathematics, science and social studies. Instruction in foreign language may be included at the discretion of the local school system.

(b) **Academic team** – an interdisciplinary team of teachers of academic classes with common planning time who share a common group of students.

(c) **Common group of students** – a group of students assigned to an academic team.

(d) **Common planning** – planning for instruction, student needs, and modifications of student groupings or schedules during the students' instructional day by academic teams for a common group of students. Such planning may include parent conferences and participation in professional development.

(e) **Connections (exploratory) classes** – instruction beyond the academic classes that is designed to integrate and apply the skills and concepts taught in the academic classes by reinforcing critical reading, writing and thinking skills.

(f) **Middle school** – a school or portion of a school containing grades six, seven and eight, or grades seven and eight, with a full-time principal.

(g) **Remediation** – academic instruction designed to bring students not performing on grade level, as defined by the Office of Educational Accountability, to grade level performance.

(2) **REQUIREMENTS FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAM FUNDING**

(a) Each middle school shall have a full-time principal who serves as the instructional leader and oversees the implementation of the middle school program criteria.

(b) The middle school program shall have academic teams.

(c) The middle school shall provide each academic team a minimum of 55 consecutive minutes for common planning time.

(d) The academic team shall provide its common group of students a minimum of five hours of instruction in academic classes. Each academic team shall have control over the instructional time and schedules of its common group of students.

1. Instruction provided during the academic classes shall include remediation for students not performing on grade level. Remediation shall be designed to support the students' access to and mastery of the grade level curriculum.

2. The academic team shall consider the student's performance on criterion-referenced assessments in making decisions about the student's need for remediation.

3. Priority for remediation shall be placed on reading and mathematics unless otherwise determined by the academic team.

(e) A local school system may include foreign language instruction as an additional academic class or as a Connections class. If foreign language is included as an academic class, class sizes for academic classes must be followed. Foreign language taught as an academic class must be taught by a teacher certified in the language.

(f) Beyond the minimum of five hours of academic instruction, the local board of education shall have the authority to schedule academic classes or Connections classes for the remainder of the day.

(g) Except as provided below, each middle school student shall complete at least one Connections class each grading period or term.

1. Any student shall be allowed to take an additional academic class instead of a Connections class at the request of the parent or guardian, subject to availability.

2. Any student performing below grade level may receive additional academic remediation instead of taking a Connections class.

3. The local board shall determine the number of instructional contact hours for each Connections class.

(h) All Connections class offerings shall be made from the list of state-funded courses in Rule 160-4-2-.03 List of State Funded K-8 Subjects and 9-12 Courses in the following areas and follow Quality Core Curriculum content standards for the course:

1. Agricultural/Environmental/Technical Education. Courses in agricultural and environmental education are designed to develop awareness of the scope and importance of agriculture, ecology and conservation, agribusiness, and the basic use of equipment and technologies related to agricultural and environmental preservation. Courses in technology education are designed to develop awareness

of and gain practical experience with a variety of technologies essential to modern society, such as robotics, electronics, aeronautics, computer-aided design, and computer numerical control which are used in areas such as aviation, construction, communications, engineering, and manufacturing.

2. Business and Information Technology Education. Courses in business and information technology are designed to develop awareness of the importance and scope of business in areas such as entrepreneurship, finance, international business, management, and marketing. Students develop awareness of the rapidly evolving fields of information technology and e-commerce, and develop or enhance knowledge and computer skills necessary for living, learning, and working in the modern era of electronic communication and ready access to information.

3. Communication/Performing/Visual Arts Education. Courses in fine arts and exploratory foreign language are designed to enable students to learn the basics of other languages and build an understanding of the cultures of other countries. Courses in performing and visual arts develop student knowledge and skill in drama, art, instrumental music, and vocal music.

4. Home/Careers/Community Education Courses. Courses in family and consumer sciences and career connections courses are designed to develop knowledge and skills in areas such as nutrition, household safety, consumer decision making, family responsibilities, and awareness of broad career fields, learn interests and aptitudes related to educational and career alternatives, and build understanding of the academic prerequisites for postsecondary education and future careers.

5. Physical/Health Education. Courses in physical and health education are designed to provide students with the opportunity to learn the information and skills necessary to be active and healthy now and for their entire lives. Students also learn cooperation and teamwork skills that can be applied in family, school, work, and community situations.

(i) Connections classes shall count toward promotion requirements.

(j) Pass/fail grades are prohibited in academic classes and Connections classes.

(k) The certified staff shall hold middle grades (4-8) certification with a concentration in one or more content areas or secondary grades (7-12) certification and be assigned to teach in their primary teaching content areas. Beginning with the 2003-2004 school year, the certified staff with any combination of K-8 certification fields shall teach in one or both of the declared concentration areas; certified staff with 7-12 certification fields shall teach in the primary area or declared concentration area.

(l) The certified middle school staff and the principal shall have earned the equivalent of three semester hours or five staff development units in the Nature and Curriculum Needs of the Middle Grades Learner.

1. Staff members assigned to the middle school for the first time who are enrolled in and/or have completed the Nature and Curriculum Needs of the Middle Grades Learner courses by the end of the first year of service shall be considered as having met this criterion.

(m) Beginning with the 2003-2004 school year, all certified middle school staff members shall have earned the equivalent of three semester hours or five staff development units training in the teaching and evaluation of reading and writing in the middle grades.

1. Staff members assigned to a middle school for the first time shall have earned the equivalent of three semester hours or five staff development units training in the teaching and evaluation of reading and writing in the middle grades by the end of the second year of service in a middle school.

Authority O.C.G.A. § 20-2-240; 20-2-290

Adopted: July 20, 2001 **Effective: August 12, 2001**

SYNOPSIS OF PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO RULE 160-4-2-.05
MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAM CRITERIA

Paragraphs (2)(k), (2)(l)(1), 2)(m) and (2)(m)1 are being removed from the rule because they contain requirements regarding certification of teachers of the middle grades.

~~(k) The certified staff shall hold middle grades (4-8) certification with a concentration in one or more content areas or secondary grades (7-12) certification and be assigned to teach in their primary teaching content areas. Beginning with the 2003-2004 school year, the certified staff with any combination of K-8 certification fields shall teach in one or both of the declared concentration areas; certified staff with 7-12 certification fields shall teach in the primary content area or declared concentration area.~~

~~1. The certified middle school staff and the principal shall have earned the equivalent of three semester hours or five staff development units in the Nature and Curriculum Needs of the Middle Grades Learner.~~

~~(l) Staff members assigned to the middle school for the first time who are enrolled in and/or have completed the Nature and Curriculum Needs of the Middle Grades Learner course by the end of the first year of service shall be considered as having met this criterion.~~

~~1. Staff members assigned to a middle school for the first time shall have earned the equivalent of three semester hours or five staff development units training in the teaching and evaluation of reading and writing in the middle grades by the end of the second year of service in a middle school.~~

Authority O.C.G.A. § 20-2-240; 20-2-290.

APPENDIX B

MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION SURVEY

Directions:

I. From your personal perspective, respond to the following statements while reflecting on your school or district. Indicate the level of implementation by filling in one response in the 4-point scale.

4 = Fully Implemented
3 = Moderately Implemented
2 = Minimally Implemented
1 = Not Implemented

1a. As a full-time middle school principal, I serve as the instructional leader	4	3	2	1
1b. As a full-time middle school principal, I oversee the implementation of the middle school program criteria.	4	3	2	1
2. The middle school program has academic teams.	4	3	2	1
3. The academic team provides its common group of students a minimum of five hours of instruction in academic classes.	4	3	2	1
4a. Each academic team has control over the academic instructional time of its common group of students.	4	3	2	1
4b. Each academic team has control over the schedules of its common group of students.	4	3	2	1
5. Each academic team has a minimum of 55 consecutive minutes for common planning.	4	3	2	1
6. Instruction provided during the academic classes includes remediation for students not performing on grade level.	4	3	2	1
7a. Remediation is designed to support the students' access to the grade level curriculum.	4	3	2	1

4 = Fully Implemented
3 = Moderately Implemented
2 = Minimally Implemented
1 = Not Implemented

7b.	Remediation is designed to support the students' mastery of the grade level curriculum.	4	3	2	1
8.	The academic team considers the student's performance on criterion-referenced assessments in making decisions about the student's need for remediation.	4	3	2	1
9a.	Priority for remediation is placed on reading.	4	3	2	1
9b.	Priority for remediation is placed on mathematics.	4	3	2	1
10.	Instructional staff assigned to the middle school have earned the equivalent of three semester hours or five staff development units training in the teaching and evaluation of reading and writing in the middle grades.	4	3	2	1
11.	Certified staff hold middle grades (4-8) certification with a concentration in one or more content areas or secondary grades (7-12) certification.	4	3	2	1
12.	Certified staff are assigned to teach in their primary teaching content areas.	4	3	2	1
13a.	Pass/fail grades are *not* employed in academic classes.	4	3	2	1
13b.	Pass/fail grades are *not* employed in Connections (exploratory) classes.	4	3	2	1
14.	Any student is allowed to take an additional academic class instead of taking a Connections (exploratory) class.	4	3	2	1
15a.	Foreign language instruction is included as an additional academic class.	4	3	2	1
15b.	Foreign language instruction is included as a Connections (exploratory) class.	4	3	2	1

II. How important do you perceive the following characteristics of middle schools? Please use the code numbers 4, 3, 2, 1 of the scale below to indicate the degree of importance.

4 = Very Important
3 = Moderately Important
2 = Minimally Important
1 = Not Important

16.	Educators knowledgeable about and committed to young adolescents.	4	3	2	1
17.	A balanced curriculum based on student needs.	4	3	2	1
18.	Flexible organizational structures.	4	3	2	1
19.	Varied instructional strategies.	4	3	2	1
20.	A full Connections (exploratory) program.	4	3	2	1
21.	Comprehensive advising programs.	4	3	2	1
22.	Comprehensive counseling programs.	4	3	2	1
23.	Continuous progress for students.	4	3	2	1
24.	Evaluation procedures compatible with the nature of young adolescents.	4	3	2	1
25.	Cooperative planning.	4	3	2	1
26.	Positive school climate.	4	3	2	1
27.	Family partnerships.	4	3	2	1
28.	Community partnerships.	4	3	2	1
29.	A shared vision.	4	3	2	1
30.	High expectations for all.	4	3	2	1
31.	An adult advocate for every student.	4	3	2	1

4 = Fully Implemented
3 = Moderately Implemented
2 = Minimally Implemented
1 = Not Implemented

32a. Programs and policies that foster health.	4	3	2	1
32b. Programs and policies that foster wellness.	4	3	2	1
32c. Programs and policies that foster safety.	4	3	2	1
33. Small communities for learning.	4	3	2	1
34. Engage families in the education of young adolescents.	4	3	2	1
35a. Empowerment of teachers.	4	3	2	1
35b. Empowerment of teachers and administrators.	4	3	2	1

III. Please compete the following questions regarding demographic information.

36. The location of my school may be characterized as:
_____ Urban
_____ Suburban
_____ Rural

37. My gender: _____ Female _____ Male

38. My degree level:
_____ Bachelor's Degree
_____ Master's Degree
_____ Specialist Degree
_____ Doctorate Degree

39. Exclusive of other administrative jobs (i.e., assistant principal, supervisor), my total number of years of experience as a <u>principal</u> is _____ years.

40. My total number of years of experience as an <u>educator</u> in public education is _____.

41. Prior experience as a principal

Identify if you have any experience as a principal at these grade levels:

_____ Elementary _____ Middle School _____ High School

42. Identify if your immediate past administrative experience and level was:

Assistant Principal

_____ Elementary _____ Middle _____ High School

Lead Teacher and/or Instructional Coordinator

_____ Elementary _____ Middle _____ High School

District Level: _____

Or

Teacher

_____ Elementary _____ Middle _____ High

43. Identify the grade level of your middle school:

_____ Grades 6-8 _____ Grades 7-8 Other: Grades _____

44. Indicate the student population of your school:

_____ 75-150 _____ 151-300

_____ 301-600 _____ 601-900

_____ 901-1200 _____ 1201-1499

_____ 1500 and over

This survey was developed utilizing the Georgia Middle School Program Criteria and with recommendations from the National Middle School Association and the Carnegie Council's *Turning Points.*

APPENDIX C

RELIABILITY ANALYSIS: MSPIS

1.	Q1a	Instructional leader
2.	Q1b	Supervisor: Implementing middle school program criteria
3.	Q2	Academic deans
4.	Q3	Provision of five hours of instruction
5.	Q4a	Academic teams control instructional time
6.	Q4b	Academic teams control students' schedules
7.	Q5	Academic team has 55 minutes of common planning time
8.	Q6	Remediation provided for low performing students
9.	Q7a	Remediation supports access to grade level curriculum
10.	Q7b	Remediation supports mastery of grade level curriculum
11.	Q8	CRCT considered in remediation decisions
12.	Q9a	Priority for remediation placed on reading
13.	Q9b	Priority for remediation placed on mathematics
14.	Q10	Teachers certified in teaching and evaluating of reading
15.	Q11	Teachers certified in field
16.	Q12	Certified staff assigned to teach in primary content area
17.	Q13a	Pass/fail grades not employed in academic classes
18.	Q13b	Pass/fail grades not employed in Connections classes
19.	Q14	Students are allowed to take an additional course
20.	Q15a	Foreign language instruction included as an academic class
21.	Q15b	Foreign language instruction included as a Connections class
22.	Q16	Educators knowledgeable about and committed to adolescents
23.	Q17	Balanced curriculum based on students' needs
24.	Q18	Flexible organizational structures
25.	Q19	Varied instructional strategies
26.	Q20	Full Connections program
27.	Q21	Comprehensive advisement program
28.	Q22	Comprehensive counseling program
29.	Q23	Continuous progress for students
30.	Q24	Evaluation procedures compatible with adolescents
31.	Q25	Cooperative planning
32.	Q26	Positive school climate
33.	Q27	Family partnerships
34.	Q28	Community partnerships
35.	Q29	Shared vision
36.	Q30	High expectations for all
37.	Q31	Adult advocate for every student
38.	Q32a	Programs and policies that foster health
39.	Q32b	Programs and policies that foster wellness
40.	Q32c	Programs and policies that foster safety
41.	Q33	Small learning communities
42.	Q34	Engage families in education of young adolescents

43. Q35a Empowerment of teachers
44. Q35b Empowerment of administrators

Item-total Statistics

	Scale Mean If Item Deleted	Scale Variance If Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Alpha If Item Deleted
Q1a	156.5045	64.8968	.1865	.7679
Q1b	156.3973	64.5365	.3086	.7646
Q2	156.2723	65.8224	.1863	.7682
Q3	156.2723	65.6789	.2308	.7678
Q4a	156.6920	62.4024	.3140	.7626
Q4b	156.8973	62.3257	.2906	.7638
Q5	156.2769	65.7844	.1986	.7680
Q6	156.4598	64.5006	.2578	.7656
Q7a	156.5089	64.7084	.2569	.7658
Q7b	156.6295	62.9966	.3825	.7607
Q8	156.4732	64.2952	.3112	.7641
Q9a	156.2946	65.4464	.3280	.7662
Q9b	156.4866	65.1209	.1546	.7691
Q10	157.1607	65.5974	.0427	.7768
Q11	156.5759	64.9449	.2061	.7672
Q12	156.5000	65.7937	.1182	.7698
Q13a	156.5045	62.6278	.2514	.7661
Q13b	156.5045	62.6278	.2514	.7661
Q14	157.8571	62.3113	.1649	.7759
Q15a	158.3304	66.8410	-.0812	.7989
Q15b	157.5938	61.7759	.1248	.7863
Q16	156.2589	66.0851	.2523	.7682
Q17	156.3080	65.2096	.3331	.7656
Q18	156.5446	63.2895	.3780	.7612
Q19	156.2902	65.4177	.3460	.7661
Q20	156.5223	63.1026	.3929	.7606
Q21	156.9955	61.9327	.3833	.7594
Q22	156.4866	63.5065	.3626	.7619
Q23	156.3795	64.5415	.3199	.7644
Q24	156.4330	63.7354	.3999	.7616
Q25	156.3884	63.5570	.4733	.7603
Q26	156.2545	65.6794	.3241	.7669
Q27	156.4598	63.2181	.4446	.7599
Q28	156.6607	62.6467	.4244	.7591

Q29	156.3080	65.2365	.3274	.7657
Q30	156.2589	66.2735	.1898	.7690
Q31	156.8259	61.5974	.4130	.7580
Q32a	156.4286	63.9052	.4100	.7619
Q32b	156.4598	63.1912	.4582	.7596
Q32c	156.3750	64.3610	.4146	.7629
Q33	156.5893	62.9696	.3856	.7606
Q34	156.4732	64.3132	.3330	.7638
Q35a	156.3884	65.3148	.2288	.7670
Q35b	156.3259	65.4852	.2650	.7668

Reliability Coefficients

N of Cases = 224.0 N of Items = 44

Alphas = .7703

APPENDIX D

LETTER TO PRINCIPALS

Perry Middle School
495 Perry Parkway
Perry, Georgia 31069
xxx.xxx.xxxx

October 18, 2001

Dear Middle School Principal:

I am a doctoral candidate enrolled at The University of Georgia conducting dissertation research as the final requirement for the doctor of education degree in educational leadership, under the direction of Dr. Sally J. Zepeda (xxx.xxx.xxxx).

The study focuses on the importance and degree of implementation of the middle school program criteria as perceived by middle school principals. The selected participants are all middle school principals in the State of Georgia.

Your participation in this study is extremely important. Please fill out and return the survey to me in the postage-paid, self-addressed envelope within 14 days. It is estimated that survey completion takes approximately 20 minutes. Neither the principal, school, nor the school district will be identified.

Findings from such a study might contribute to the body of knowledge available in the field of educational leadership which pertains to effective middle schools and adolescent development. Schools and school districts may benefit since an awareness of the main tenets of the middle school proposed by leading authorities provides the basis for the development and reorganization of middle school programs and the creation of environments that respond to the needs of adolescents and engage them in learning.

If additional information is needed to facilitate this request, please call me, at your convenience, at work (xxx.xxx.xxxx), or at home (xxx.xxx.xxx). You may also contact me by email at: XXXXX. If you would like a summary of the results, please complete and mail the enclosed postcard. I thank you in advance for your participation in this study.

Respectfully yours,

Donald Warren, Assistant Principal
Doctoral Candidate