

Title: Implementation of “Turning Points 2000” Recommendations: A Survey of Mid-Western Pennsylvania Middle Level Teachers’ Beliefs And Practice

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This study investigated middle school teacher perceptions toward, and practices in the implementation of, a comprehensive school reform called the *Turning Points 2000*. The second purpose of this study was to examine possible factors that influence middle school teachers’ attitudes and practices toward implementation of the *Turning Points 2000* Recommendations. The third intent was to measure if middle school teachers are using effective instructional methods that are directly related to the *Turning Points 2000* Recommendations. Lastly, another area of research that was explored is whether Comprehensive School Reform models have been inadequately implemented.

This research study surveyed middle level teaching of teachers in 14 Mid-Western Pennsylvania school districts. Middle level teachers were surveyed in Midwestern IU 4 Pennsylvania public schools in grades 5-8. A 39% return rate was reached so the IU 4 middle level teachers became the target audience for this study with 121 teachers responding. Data was collected through the use of a modified survey entitled the Middle Level Awareness and Practice Questionnaire (MLAPQ). Cronbach’s alpha was computed for 39 specific items in areas of both awareness and practice questions. The alpha in the pilot test of .93 for the awareness questions and .87 for the practice questions was statistically significant ($p < .01$).

The study found five major findings from the analysis of the data. First, based on the years of experience of teachers and their being more comfortable with traditional teaching strategies it was apparent that staffing of schools with experts of the middle level was a concern. Second, the data points out the lack of middle level course work being taken by a majority of the teachers surveyed. On-going professional development for teachers entering the middle level needs to occur to improve the subject area expertise and the pedagogical skills. Third, through the review of mean scores it became evident that teachers were aware and practiced *Turning Points* recommendations to an average level. Factors influenced teachers from fully implementing all recommendations to the highest level possible. Fourth, Teachers have changed to develop a good climate for the school through core recommendations but are not at the level for a cultural change to institute non-traditional reform strategies. Lastly, the data from this study points out the lack of on-going training in middle school philosophy and strategies which impedes the implementation of the *Turning Points 2000* recommendations.

In conclusion data shows the *Turning Points 2000* middle level recommendations were not being implemented fully in the Mid-Western I U 4. In addition, adequate on-going staff development centered on these recommendations was not occurring to a high quality level in the sample area either. Teachers were left to rely on their previous teaching strategies because on-going, embedded staff development is very inadequate and infrequently available to enhance learning.