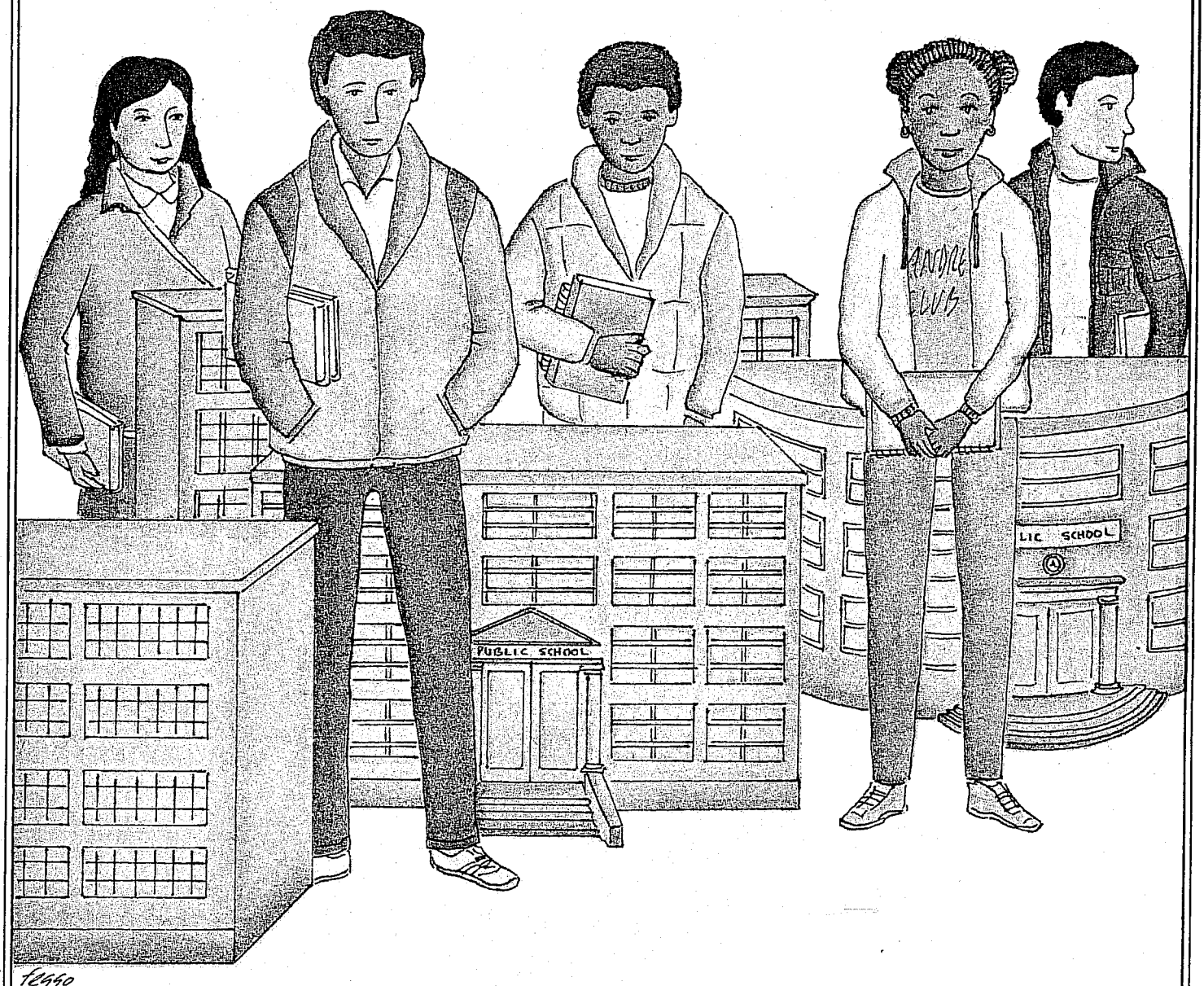
MEETING ADOLESCENT NEED:

FOUR EFFECTIVE MIDDLE SCHOOLS



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Foreword

The impetus for this study of effective middle schools came from Advocates for Children's experience with educational failure and the young people who are irreparably harmed. In our role as advocates for students in New York City we are all too aware of the tragic indicators of school failure -- suspensions, truancy, discipline problems, academic failure, dropouts, pushouts. At the same time, we also know that children do learn and that schools do succeed. This study was an effort to identify schools, particularly in poor minority communities, that do work under ordinary circumstances, without glamour programs or selective criteria for student admissions.

We chose to concentrate on middle schools because of our sense that this was a most difficult time for young people. As advocates, we have seen too many students fall apart educationally at this point in their school careers because of a range of problems, including impersonal departmental classes, disorderly buildings, truancy, and discouraged teachers. We wanted to find good middle schools which would demonstrate that these children and their schools are not inevitably destined for failure.

These four schools are not alike -- one emphasizes academic and extracurricular excellence, one academic improvement and collaborative staff and curriculum development; one emphasizes academic accomplishment in the context of cultural and racial self-pride and one is characterized by a participatory and flexible style which involves teachers and students. Their different stories are tremendously affecting because they show what can be done when administrators, teachers and students all believe in and respect each other. Using different methods and styles, each of these schools tells us that, despite the supposed odds, urban middle schools can provide a quality education.

This study was carried out for AFC by an extraordinary group of school people -- a former district superintendent, a former principal, a former special education supervisor and a former guidance counselor -- who participated in AFC's special program for retired professionals, Project ABLE. Their hands-on knowledge of schools is reflected in these pages, as well as their conviction that the test of schools is whether they work for young people.

AFC wishes to thank the four principal researchers, Andrea Abrams, Alfred Melov, Vincent Procida and Paul Rappaport; Ted Levine, the director of Project ABLE; and Milton Chaikin, the project's statistician. We are particularly grateful to the report's author, Norm Fruchter. We could not have accomplished this project without his knowledge of more effective schools research. No one else could have written this report with his clarity and eloquence.

We greatly appreciate the support of the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Greater New York Fund which made this project possible.

Jane R. Stern
Executive Director
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of New York, Inc.
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Summary of Findings

This study by Advocates for Children of New York (AFC) describes several middle schools which serve poor and minority students more effectively than most middle schools in the New York City public school system. Using methods based on what is often called effective schools research, AFC's study identified four middle schools--JHS 56 in District 1, IS 174 in District 8, IS 258 in District 13, and IS 391 in District 17--as successfully educating poor and minority students, and then set out to analyze how each school carried out its typical functions. The goals of AFC's study were very specific: to combat the increasing pessimism about middle schools by identifying several more effective middle schools, and to define a series of replicable practices which contributed to these schools' effectiveness. The study was funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, and was carried out by AFC's Project ABLE, a team of retired educational professionals who had been working on several pilot studies of middle schools.

The four schools which AFC's study identified serve predominantly minority students. All four schools receive Chapter I funds, and most of their students are eligible for free and reduced school meals. All four schools exceed the citywide average daily attendance for Chapter I middle schools. All four schools exceed their district-wide averages in reading and math test scores. Almost 75% of all the students in these schools are at or above grade level, or no more than one year below grade level in reading. Almost two-thirds of the students in these four schools are at or above grade level, or no more than one year below grade level in math. Compared to most New York City middle schools, these four schools seem to be serving their predominantly poor and minority students more effectively.

Though all four schools are characterized by strong instructional leadership, each school is a unique blend of administrative and staff talent, initiative, commitment and collaboration. JHS 56 is a melting-pot school in which a variety of student cultures contribute to the school's strong academic and extra-curricular achievement. JHS 56's music, dance and drama programs involve many of the school's students, and the schoolwide stress on recognition for academic achievement continues the school's tradition of building trust by encouraging each student's potential. IS 174's effort to involve teachers in a continuous process of improving curriculum and teaching has developed a highly collaborative staff focused on making teaching more effective. On-going staff development is built into the school's schedule, as are common prep periods for joint planning and a range of other measures which encourage staff cooperation on instructional improvement. IS 258 is a school based on pride and self-respect which

inculcates and maintains clear academic goals and standards. The four sub-schools into which IS 258 is divided each provide a firm "academic press" and comprehensive guidance, counseling and support for students. IS 391 is a highly participative school whose staff and students take major responsibility for maintaining the school's lively and supportive climate. An open and flexible administration stresses initiative and problem-solving, and has linked the school with a wide range of neighborhood and community organizations.

Each of these schools has developed specific practices which reinforce effectiveness, and which other middle schools might successfully adapt. JHS 56's schoolwide stress on honoring a wide range of achievement inculcates and sustains an expectation of success among the school's students, parents and surrounding neighborhoods. IS 174's ongoing curriculum development process, and its school-based staff development, encourage the constant attention to teaching practice which leads to consistent school improvement. IS 258's sub-school organization encourages the development of responsive relationships between teachers and students, and provides the focus on student needs often sorely limited in many middle schools. IS 391's flexible administrative policies encourage an ethos of shared responsibility and participation among teachers and students, which helps to sustain the school's cooperative teaching-learning climate.

These four schools are educating poor and minority students more successfully than most New York City middle schools. Yet these schools are not so unique that other middle schools cannot learn from their successes, and re-organize themselves to become more effective. This study examines the day-to-day administration of four middle schools not only to demonstrate that urban middle schools can successfully serve their students, but also to suggest some of the specifics structuring that success. Parents, students, teachers, administrators and citizens committed to providing better schools for all our children can use both the examples of these schools' effectiveness and the details of their practices to begin to improve middle schools throughout the city.

Introduction

In November, 1984, Advocates for Children (AFC) received a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, to identify and study those middle schools in the New York City public school system which seem to be more effectively educating poor and minority students. AFC's study was patterned on the methods of what is often called effective schools research. The work of Michael Rutter, Ronald Edmonds, Wilbur Brookover and Larry Lezotte, among others, has attemped to repudiate the conventional wisdom that student background inevitably determines academic achievement. These researchers have identified schools that educate poor and minority students as effectively as more advantaged students. Having identified such successful schools, researchers subsequently studied them to define the characteristics associated with academic effectiveness.

Though different researchers have identified differing combinations of variables, there is now broad agreement among practitioners about what characterizes an effective school: active, committed and influential instructional leadership at the school level; clear goals and high expectations for all students, with a school-wide focus on academic success as the critical objective; a staff committed to collaborative planning, collegial relationships and school-wide staff development; parental and community support; clear curriculum articulation and organization, with testing used primarily for feedback and revision of curriculum and teaching; a schoolwide climate of order, discipline and security; respect and support for local school autonomy and initiative from district-level management. (See Bibliography for a sample of effective schools research studies.)

These effective schools studies have spurred a growing number of school improvement efforts throughout the country, using a variety of strategies to stimulate the characteristics of success in less effective schools. But since effective schools research initially focused on elementary schools, and more recently has begun to study high schools, most school improvement campaigns have targeted either elementary schools or high schools. Middle schools are currently the poor relations of both effective schools research and improvement efforts based on that research, except for the exemplary efforts of Joan Lipsitz and Gayle Dorman at the Center for Early Adolescence, whose work has helped to shape this study. (This report uses middle schools to mean all institutions which receive students from elementary schools and send them on to high schools after a discrete number of years. As we use the term, middle schools includes junior high schools, intermediate schools and traditional middle schools.)

From a national perspective, the middle school years are often the locus of an escalating series of young adolescent problems. Studies by the Alan Guttmacher Institute estimate an 18% increase in pregnancy, between 1973 and 1981, among women fourteen and younger, the age-range of middle school students. Other studies by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism and the National Institute of Education indicate that young adolescents are among the major victims of substance abuse and crime. The suicide rate for 10-to 14-year-olds has increased dramatically during the past two decades. These indicators suggest that the middle school years are often a period of rapid and troubling physical and emotional change for many young adolescents. Yet far too many middle schools are ill-equipped to meet the developmental needs of their students.

In spite of these troubling indicators, the national reform movement in education has tended to ignore the problems of middle schools. Several of the national studies focus specifically on high schools, and even the more comprehensive reports rarely mention middle schools, let alone make specific recommendations for their improvement. Two recent exceptions to this pervasive inattention to middle schools are therefore welcome. Investing in Our Children, from the Committee for Economic Development, identifies early adolescence as a particularly problematic age for schooling, and urges that junior highs and middle schools become a major focus of reform. The National Association of Secondary School Principals' An Agenda for Excellence at the Middle School Level recommends several major changes in middle schools. These new reports may help to focus the growing perception, among urban educators, that middle schools are increasingly the sites of student disengagement and eventual withdrawal from schooling. In New York City, for example, the Board of Education has implemented Project Re-entry to reach out to teen-agers who graduate from middle schools but never enroll at their assigned high schools. A new citywide Dropout Prevention Program has targeted twenty-nine middle schools for special services to students at-risk of dropping out. Given this increasing perception of middle schools as problematic institutions, the relative inattention to middle schools in the current reform literature, and the absence of studies of middle schools within effective schools research, AFC decided to identify and study effective middle schools in the New York City public system.

AFC's effort differs from most effective schools research; our goal was not to define a set of organizational or behavioral characteristics associated with successful middle schools. We believe that the effective schools research movement has established the school variables associated with effectiveness. Therefore our study set out to identify a number of more effective middle schools and to analyze how each school carried out its typical functions--

organization, administration, instruction, guidance. This study has very specific and practical goals:

> --to combat the pessimism about middle school effectiveness by identifying successful middle schools for poor and minority students;
>
> --to identify a series of administrative and educational practices which contribute to these successful schools' achievements, which other middle schools might adapt and use.

AFC's Project ABLE, a team of retired educational professionals who had already conducted a pilot study of three New York City middle schools, was selected to carry out this project. The Project ABLE team included a former community school district superintendent, a former field supervisor in Special Education, a former high school principal and a former guidance counselor, all with long and distinguished careers in urban education. The Project ABLE team carried out this study with the cooperation of the Chancellor of the New York City school system, the superintendents of several community school districts, and the principals and staffs of the schools examined. Though everyone involved was deeply interested in the results, administrators and staff at every level insured the study's complete independence.

The team began its work by identifying all the middle schools in the New York City system which had achieved above the average score for their district on the citywide reading test--approximately 40% of the city's 180 middle schools. The team then developed the following criteria for selecting those schools which seemed particularly effective for poor and minority students:

1. Since the school should serve a predominantly low-income student population, it should have Chapter I status and maintain free-lunch eligibility for more than half its student body.

2. The school's student body should be at least 70% minority, in order to reflect the citywide school population's ethnic-racial mix (currently more than three-quarters minority) and to preclude the possibility that the school's test score achievement was bimodal or otherwise skewed by the achievement of its white students.

3. The school's attendance should be above the citywide average for middle schools.

4. The school should be primarily a zoned school, serving mostly children from its immediate neighborhood, and not primarily a magnet school selecting pupils district-wide, on the basis of particular academic achievement, talent or interest.

Using these criteria, 38 schools were eliminated. The remaining 38 schools' citywide reading and math test scores were examined across a three-year period, to determine consistency of achievement. Several schools were excluded because their patterns seemed erratic. When previous years' attendance patterns were examined, more schools were eliminated. A telephone survey of community district superintendents elicited additional information which excluded still more schools. Some superintendents indicated that too large a percentage of students in identified schools were non-neighborhood students enrolled in magnets or special programs. Other superintendents felt that test score achievement reflected past rather than current performance in schools we identified. Some otherwise eligible schools were eliminated because school administrators were not receptive to the study. Eventually the number of eligible schools was winnowed down to 16, and those 16 schools were scheduled for one-day visits by the entire team.

These assessment visits followed procedures developed by the Project ABLE team in its pilot study. After an initial interview with the principal, team members toured the building, visited classrooms, and talked with teachers, students and parents. Individual team members held meetings with the Special Education unit, the UFT Chapter Chairperson, the guidance counselors and the staff of other specific school functions. The gym, lunchroom, schoolyard and other large-group settings were observed. The visit concluded with an exit conference with the principal, during which the team summarized and discussed its observations.

After these visits were completed, the Project ABLE team developed an additional set of criteria to assess these sixteen schools, in order to select, for follow-up study, those schools which seemed more effective. The following criteria were based on school effectiveness research, the growing literature on the developmental needs of young adolescents, and the team's own experience of successful schools.

1. Strong instructional leadership;

2. Broad educational outlook--concern for the range of adolescent needs beyond academic competence;

3. Specific, clearly articulated instructional goals shared by staff;

4. Staff involvement in school policy and decision-making;

5. Concern, caring and high expectations for students imbedded in school administration, organization and instruction;

6. Positive and supportive school climate;

7. Variety of programmatic approaches responsive to adolescent developmental needs;

8. Parent/community support for and involvement with the school's goals, policies and programs;

9. Safe, secure, clean and comfortable physical environment.

The 16 schools were assessed according to these criteria, and the following four schools were selected for intensive study:

JHS	56	District 1, Manhattan
IS	174	District 8, Bronx
IS	258	District 13, Brooklyn
IS	391	District 17, Brooklyn

This listing does not imply rank order. The four schools are listed here, and discussed throughout the report, in numerical order only. Moreover this study makes no claim that the schools selected are the four "best" middle schools in the New York City system. Through the methods described above, a sample of more effective middle schools was selected. Undoubtedly others could have been included.

The Project ABLE team visited the four schools for three day visits during March-May, 1985. Site visits followed procedures developed during the pilot project, but were far more detailed, given the 12 individual workdays involved. Team members developed their own interview schedules and observation procedures and conducted an extensive review and discussion, summarizing each schools' strengths and weaknesses. This report presents the team's findings.

One of these four schools, JHS 56 in District 1, Manhattan, was listed on the New York State Education Department's 1985 Comprehensive Assessment Report (CAR). The CAR is part of the Regents Action Plan, New York State's current educational reform effort intended to upgrade curriculum and improve the quality of education throughout the state.

The CAR's purpose is to identify poorly performing schools in order to stimulate school improvement efforts. To accomplish this, the CAR establishes a rank-order listing of all the state's schools, according to school performance on a range of indicators, primarily standardized tests in reading and math. Middle schools are ranked according to their results on the state's Pupil Evaluation Program (PEP) Reading and Math tests in Grade 6, the state's Preliminary Competency Test (PCT) in Reading in Grade 8, and the Regents Competency Test (RCT) in Math in Grade 9. The 1985 CAR actually listed what it defined as the 600 lowest performing schools in the state, by rank-ordering all schools according to performance, selecting the lowest 8% of all schools on each performance indicator, and then combining the lists.

Although a statewide attempt to increase educational accountability by identifying schools in difficulty is clearly useful, the CAR has several problems. The state's listings do not differentiate according to school district resources or other socio-economic criteria. Therefore very different schools, in terms of staffing, resources, support, student population and surrounding community are being compared. Moreover, since state testing policies permit considerable local discretion about who is tested or excused from testing, school results are often not comparable because differing populations are being compared.

JHS 56 was identified as a CAR school because 29.5% of its 9th graders scored below the State Reference Point (SRP) on the Regents Competency Test (RCT) in Math in 1983-84, and because 29% of its 8th graders scored below the SRP on the Preliminary Competency Test (PCT) in Reading in 1983-84. (The state selected 1983-84 scores although more recent and presumably more accurate test scores were available. If the state had used 1984-85 test score results, JHS 56 would have passed the cut-off for the RCTs, and would have met the cut-off for the PCTs.) Neither the RCTs nor the PCTs are administered uniformly throughout the city or the state. The Regents Competency Test (RCT) in math, for instance, is not a mandated test which must be given in 9th grade, but an optional test which junior high schools may, or may not, offer. Since students must pass the RCT to graduate from high school, some middle schools, such as JHS 56, choose to offer their 9th graders a first crack at the test before they reach high school. Many other middle schools do not.

Therefore middle schools' RCT results will vary according to school and district testing policy. (Middle schools which don't include a 9th grade cannot give the RCTs and so cannot fail in this category.) Some middle schools may offer the RCTs to so small a percentage of 9th graders that even if every student taking the test fails, those schools will still escape a listing on the CAR. But

because JHS 56 chose to make the RCTs available all to its 9th graders, and sustained a failure rate above the state's cut-off in 1983-84 (though not in 1984-85), the school has been listed on the CAR.

JHS 56 was also listed on the CAR because 29% of its 8th graders failed the state's mandatory Preliminary Competency Test (PCT) in Reading in 1983-84. Yet JHS 56 had approximately 300 limited English proficient students in 1983-84. Since the State Education Department allows schools to exclude from state testing all limited English proficient students who have received less than two years of English-language instruction, approximately 10% of JHS 56's 8th grade could have been exempted from the PCT. But as district policy, JHS 56 tests all its students on all citywide and state testing programs. Such a policy provides uniform results for diagnostic and program evaluation and allows comparability across all testing. But since the CAR does not differentiate testing results according to school policy regarding exclusion of limited English proficient students, JHS 56 may have been listed because of its broadly inclusive testing policy rather than because of any comparative failure to educate its student body.

Though it is critically important to hold schools accountable for their academic performance, the state's CAR listing is not a wholly useful beginning. Schools were not differentiated by the socio-economic characteristics of their students, nor by the widely varying funding formulas which provided markedly different staffing ratios, supplies, special programs and other critical assistance. The test score performances of schools across the state were arbitrarily compared, thereby disregarding substantial differences in test implementation which the state allows. This report attempts to demonstrate that JHS 56 is a more effective middle school in spite of its listing on the state's 1985 CAR.

One other caution is necessary. This study was carried out during the 1984-85 school year, and written during the current (1985-86) school year. But schools change. Sometimes they change very quickly--a dynamic principal is promoted, staff composition is altered, or some other transformation shifts the balance of factors among administration, staff, students and parents. Sometimes major changes are imposed from above, as the New York State Regents' Action Plan has imposed new academic requirements, new courses and new scheduling on the state's middle schools. This study cannot guarantee that the schools we identify as successful during the 1984-85 school year, and for several years preceding, will continue to perform as effectively.

I School Demographics and Test Score Results

Table 1: Student Characteristics

School	# of Students	% White	% Black	% Hispanic	% Asian	% Free Lunch*	% Mobility*
56	1300	3.3	14	52	30.7	84.4	39.2
174	1350	1.0	47	52	--	66.6	60.4
258	1050	.1	99.5	.4	--	66.8	61.7
391	1400	.7	90	9.3	--	71.6	61.8
CITYWIDE AVERAGE*	1087	25.5	38.3	31.4	4.7	65.9	55.0

(Note: All data are for the 1984-85 school year except for those marked by asterisk [*], which are from the 1982-83 School Profiles.

As the table indicates, these schools' successes do not reflect the rewards of serving small student bodies. Three of these four schools are considerably larger than the average New York City middle school.

The mix of student populations reflects the different neighborhoods these schools serve. JHS 56, in Community School District 1 on the southern edge of the lower East Side, serves an established neighborhood of high-density housing which includes public housing projects, publicly-subsidized housing and private high-rise cooperatives. The relatively low mobility rate reflects long-term, stable Hispanic and Chinese communities, augmented by a steady flow of Chinese immigration and a smaller rate of Hispanic migration. (JHS 56 currently has 5 Chinese and 2 Spanish bilingual classes.)

I.S. 174, in District 8 in the Sound View section of the southeast Bronx, serves a mixed neighborhood of public housing projects and single and multiple-family housing. The school's relatively high

mobility rate indicates transition within the neighborhood, rather than a pattern of immigration or migration. The overall neighborhood income level is roughly equivalent to JHS 56's neighborhood, according to comparisons using indices of school zone AFDC-eligible families. The variation in free-lunch figures is probably due to the difficulty in getting parents to submit school lunch forms, given current federal requirements for detailed parental income information and the inclusion of all relevant social security numbers. Still, all four schools have more free-lunch eligible students than the citywide average, a clear indication that their student populations are predominantly low-income.

IS 258, in District 13, serves the Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration neighborhood in north-central Brooklyn. Once an area of grinding poverty, recent housing and small business development has increased both neighborhood income level and overall stability. Still, many of the families whose students IS 258 serves are among the poorest in the city. Again, the relatively high mobility rate indicates neighborhood transition, rather than considerable immigration.

IS 391 is located in District 17, in the East Flatbush-Crown Heights corridor of central Brooklyn, and serves a predominantly Black student population which includes significant numbers of West Indians and Haitians. (Approximately 30 students are classified as limited English proficient.) Though the surrounding neighborhood is also a center for Hasidic Jewish residents and institutions, the neighborhood's Hasidic children attend religious schools. Therefore IS 391's high percentage of free-lunch eligible students may somewhat overstate the neighborhood's low-income status. The high mobility rate reflects both neighborhood transition and Caribbean immigration.

All four schools have a much lower white student population, a higher percentage of free-lunch eligible students and, with the exception of JHS 56, a higher mobility rate than the citywide average for all middle schools. These four schools are clearly serving a predominantly poor and minority student population.

Table 2: School Characteristics

School	Grade Pattern	% Attendance	Student-Teacher Ratio	Total Staff-Student Ratio	% Minority Staff
56	7-9	87.5	18.6/1	11.4/1	15
174	5-8	82.8	20.4/1	14.4/1	20
258	7-8	84.6	22.0/1	14.0/1	45
391	6-8*	86.6	17.0/1	11.4/1	30

* IS 391 has two 9th grade Special Progress (SP) classes.

(Note: All data for 1984-85 school year.)

These schools present a wide range of grade configurations. JHS 56 follows the traditional junior high school pattern, as do almost half the city's middle schools. IS 391 follows the intermediate school pattern; 29% of the city's middle schools are similarly organized. IS 258's 7-8 grade pattern is shared by 18% of the city's middle schools. Only 12% of the city's middle schools share IS 174's 5-8 grade pattern.

Three of these schools maintain student attendance rates which exceed the 82.8% citywide average for all Chapter I middle schools. The variance in student/teacher ratios and total staff/student ratios indicates creative programming strategies employed by the principals, in accordance with allocations from their district offices. Project ABLE site visits indicate that all four schools were accorded strong support by their district superintendents. JHS 56, for example, maintains a large complement of administrators, while IS 391 has a number of additional teachers. But neither teacher/student ratios nor total staff/student ratios in these four schools vary significantly from citywide averages.

The variance in percentage of minority staff also has multiple causes. District hiring patterns are often constrained by the terms of the Office of Civil Rights Consent Agreement, which sets limits

within which district percentage of minority staff can vary from the citywide average. Moreover, districts vary in their hiring philosophies. District 13's affirmative action policy, for example, is vigorously implemented by a superintendent committed to improving the achievement of minority students. This policy is clearly reflected in the high percentage of minority staff at IS 258.

Table 3: Academic Achievement

	Reading Scores*				Math Scores*			
School	'82	'83	'84	'85	'82	'83	'84	'85
56	46.1	51.8	51.2	48.7	46.6	41.4	53.0	51.5
174	34.8	42.6	47.8	53.6	37.9	37.9	49.5	46.8
258	43.7	59.2	52.3	57.5	34.0	42.3	48.6	45.9
391	48.7	54.3	48.7	57.5	40.0	44.0	44.1	46.1

* Reading and Math scores are the percentage of students in each school at or above grade level on the citywide tests.

All four schools have improved their results in reading and math since the 1982 citywide tests. Both IS 258 and IS 391 achieved a considerable increase from 1982 to 1983 on the reading test, regressed in 1984, and increased again in 1985. This pattern of results echoes the overall citywide pattern. Reading scores rose by 4.5% across the city from 1982 to 1983, then fell 2.7% in 1984, and rose by 4.0% in 1985. (Two alternate forms of the same test have been given every year since 1978. Most experts believe that the more difficult version is given in even-numbered years, thereby causing the pattern of rise and fall in test scores.) Both JHS 56 and IS 174 have been exceptions to this pattern. JHS 56's scores may reflect the relative fluctuations in its population of limited English proficient students. IS 174's performance is particularly impressive. The school has managed to increase its scores across all four years.

Citywide math tests have been administered since 1981, and citywide math scores have been consistently higher than reading scores. All four schools have shown a general pattern of improvement in math scores, with clear gains in 1984 and some slippage in 1985. All four schools exceeded the citywide gains from 1982 to 1983 and from 1983 to 1984, though only IS 391 exceeded the small citywide gain from 1984 to 1985. The achievements of both IS 174 and IS 258 are particularly noteworthy; both schools gained approximately 10 percentage points in math between 1982 and 1985.

But consider one caveat. All four schools have exceeded their district-wide average in both reading and math test results for the past four years. In the 1984 and 1985 reading tests, all four schools were ranked in the top 55% of all the city's middle schools. Yet none of these schools has significantly more than half its students at or above grade level in reading. Put more negatively, more than 40% of all the students in these schools are still below grade level in reading. (In 1985, more than half the students in JHS 56 were below grade level in reading.) Moreover, only one school managed to get more than half its students at or above grade level in math in 1984 and 1985. Is this pattern of achievement sufficient to justify a judgement of school effectiveness?

Most New York City middle schools serving poor and minority students have large numbers of students whose test score results are several years below grade level. A reasonable assumption is that students scoring within six months to a year below grade level in middle school can perform successfully in high school. Those students who score far below grade in middle schools are probably most at risk of becoming discouraged about their lack of academic progress, and eventually dropping out of high school. Therefore another way to analyze the extent of these four schools' achievement is to examine the percentage of students at or close to grade level on standardized tests, as opposed to those students performing well below grade level.

Table 4: Schoolwide Results of 1984 and 1985 Citywide Tests

School		READING		MATH	
		Above Grade to 1 Year Below	More than 1 Year Below	Above Grade to 1 Year Below	More than 1 Year Below
56					
	1984	69.5	30.5	74.6	25.4
	1985	67.0	33.0	74.5	25.5
174					
	1984	75.7	24.3	68.7	31.3
	1985	79.0	21.0	69.8	30.3
258					
	1984	78.3	21.7	67.0	33.0
	1985	80.8	19.2	60.2	39.9
391					
	1984	70.0	27.9*	60.7	36.3*
	1985	75.3	22.0*	62.8	34.7*

* Approximately 2% of IS 391's students are classified as limited English proficient (LEP) and excused from testing.

Three of these schools did considerably better in reading than in math in 1984 and 1985. JHS 56's strong math results may reflect the strengths of its significant segment of Asian-American students. Still, more than two-thirds of JHS 56's students, and more than three-fourths of the students in the other three schools, were no more than one year below grade level in reading in 1985. Almost three-quarters of JHS 56's students, and almost two-thirds of all the students in the other three schools were no more than one year below grade level in math in 1985. Several years ago a New York City Board of Education High School Division survey discovered that only a third of all 9th graders entering high school were at or above grade level in reading, and most of the other two-thirds were far below grade level. In these four schools, those results are reversed. Clearly these schools are preparing their students more effectively than most New York City middle schools, and particularly those serving a predominantly poor and minority student population.

Table 5: Administrative Style and School Climate

School	Administrative Style	School Climate
56	Principal as guarantor of continued tradition	Tradition of pride/excellence
	Visible, flexible, fair	"Melting-pot" school; students mix easily
	Strong communicator	Very secure school
	Strong delegator, APs critical in chain of command	Strong student participation and control
	Cabinet structure of authority	Stress on activities: music, shops, clubs, G.O.
	Strong community support	Academic achievement vital
	High expectations	Stress on honors & rewards
	Good publicist	Frequent public events
	Stress on performance	
174	Principal as instructional leader	Academic achievement vital
	Strong chain of command; APs trained by principal	Supportive and relaxed atmosphere
	Use of test scores for feedback and improvement	Collaborative staff, high degree of collegiality
	Provides teacher trainers	Strong staff development
	Gives teachers responsibility for developing curriculum	Strong loyalty to principal
	Promotion from within	Teacher-buddy system
	Strong community support	Minimal student segregation by ability
	Tough, fair, high standards	Poorly maintained building
258	Principal as role model	Parents/community involved and supportive
	Inculcates respect, dignity, pride	Strong student self-respect
	Insists on high standards	Internalized standards; discipline by example
	Leadership by example; visible, professional, firm, fair	All staff involved in guidance and counseling
	Authority and discipline firmly established	Students feel supported and cared for
	Adults exercise responsibility in many areas of students' lives	Expectations internalized
	Clear goals established	Hierarchical sub-schools
	Stress on academic achievement	
391	Omnipresent principal	Relaxed, spontaneous aura
	Stress on resolution of tensions	No rigorous rules
	Strong emphasis on order and security	Peer culture establishes and maintains order
	Fair, resilient and flexible	High degree of student autonomy and trust
	Innovator; prepared to risk	High degree of teacher autonomy and commitment
	Responsive to teachers' ideas	Responsibility stressed in all relationships
	Consistently delegates authority	Community volunteers
	Open cabinet meeting; stress on accessibility	
	Strong community support	

One way to assess these schools' accomplishments is to consider how student trust is established and maintained. At each school, the necessary levels of order and discipline, preconditions for effective teaching and learning, are established through student internalization of academic and behavioral standards. This internalization is accomplished voluntarily, rather than through coercion; at some of these schools, students reprove and even discipline peers who step out of line. This high degree of student acceptance and maintainance of necessary school order can be defined as trust, once taken for granted in most schools but increasingly problematic in many inner-city schools. Though each of these schools establishes student trust differently, the processes they have developed are critical factors in each school's effectiveness.

JHS 56

JHS 56 invites each student to participate in a continuing affirmation of the school's tradition of excellence, in order to further students' academic and career goals. Different forms of achievement are stressed throughout the school, through honor assemblies, awards, prizes, recitals, concerts, newspapers, magazines and yearbooks. The city's major media consistently feature the school and celebrate its achievements. Moreover, JHS 56 has always been the district's flagship middle school, and the district superintendent was the school's previous principal. The current principal not only was the school's Music teacher for many years, but actually attended the school as a student.

Thus JHS 56 inculcates a commitment to excellence, and continues a long tradition of helping the children of immigrants achieve academic success. Parents of the school's different ethnic constituencies stress their high expectations and their confidence that JHS 56 will help their children achieve their goals. The school's atmosphere reflects what Michael Rutter and his colleagues, in 15,000 Hours, define as "academic press," a stress on academic achievement which is reinforced throughout the school.

But JHS 56 is not solely preoccupied with academics. The school's strong Music program, championed by the principal, recruits large numbers of students into a variety of activities including a 7th, 8th and 9th grade band. (The 9th grade band is the Concert Band which performs throughout the city.) Many outstanding student dance and drama productions are staged throughout the year. The principal has also sustained a large, well-maintained shop program, and a strong computer training program with an impressive variety of equipment. The school supports a range of lunchtime clubs and an active student government organization.

The principal is a skilled, flexible administrator whose community involvement and commitment exemplify the school's tradition. (He is also the only one of these four principals who inherited a successful school. Two of the other principals started new schools; the third inherited a dysfunctional school and turned it around.) He has trained his large complement of assistant principals so that authority, and responsibility, are widely shared but clearly delegated. All the administrators, including the principal, cover classes of absent teachers when substitutes are unavailable. The principal's daily newsletter, composed on his office computer, exemplifies his insistence on effective communication and his stress on assimilating new technology.

This collaborative leadership produces an impressive range of achievement. The Arista Honors Award Assembly attended by our sight visitors, for example, celebrated the academic achievements of large numbers of successful students before an audience of proud parents. Such celebrations generate strong parent and community support, and that support creates a mutually reinforcing cycle of appreciation. This cycle becomes self-validating as new students internalize the school's expectations. For several years now, this cycle has operated so effectively that the school seems suffused with an aura of success.

Internally, JHS 56 is somewhat hierarchically tracked by ability, and has a relatively large percentage of students reading more than one year below grade level. (This test score performance may be due to the relatively large number of limited English proficient students.) Yet almost all students participate in the wide range of enrichment programs. Since only the students most in need of remediation must concentrate on the basics to the exclusion of Music, Drama and Shop, the many school performances involve a wide range of students. The school's computer capacity is utilized to give all 9th grade students, for example, an intensive exposure to computers. While most students learn programming, the students who most need basic skills reinforcement learn and practice word processing.

Thus student trust is established and maintained through a variety of interlocking dynamics: a tradition of excellence which invites students to participate; a strong academic press inculcated throughout the school; a talented teaching staff; a performance-oriented enrichment program; a comprehensive reward system; a high-profile public relations effort; strong support from the superintendent and the surrounding community; and a principal who understands how to balance and maintain all these mutually reinforcing components. This school builds trust by promising to tap the potentials in each student and, for most students, makes good on that promise.

IS 174

IS 174 has achieved similar success with a younger student body. The school, opened and organized fourteen years ago by the current principal, reflects his commitment to academic improvement and his considerable administrative skills. Through initial selection of teachers and consistent staff training and development, the principal has inculcated high levels of expectation for student achievement throughout the school. He has established school-wide responsibility for monitoring academic performance, by using periodic analysis of test results to improve curriculum and teaching. The principal's expectations are reflected in the clarity, consistency and rigor of the school's goals, administrative procedures and daily organization. The assistant principals act as his surrogates within their areas of responsibility, and a strong sense of loyalty to the principal, combined with respect for his authority and high standards, exists throughout the school.

This climate of high standards and expectations was partially established through a series of curriculum development grants which the principal secured. Each department (and eventually each teacher) was encouraged to develop specific curriculum for their subject areas. This process took several years. But as a result, IS 174 staff feel ownership of the curriculum they teach, and are committed to revising and strengthening it.

This stress on teacher-developed curriculum has encouraged a focus on teacher-led staff development. The school's programming gives teachers on the same grade level common preparation periods for joint planning. Moreover, IS 174 has two teacher-trainers on staff to improve the quality of instruction. Teacher observation, teacher assistance and the provision of classroom resources are the key components of IS 174's commitment to on-going staff development.

This combination of clear instructional goals, rigorous school organization, commitment to staff development and support for innovation has established a high level of trust among the staff. The school offers the promise of good working conditions for effective teaching, and delivers on that promise. The principal developed a teacher buddy system, for example, which helps introduce, orient and support new teachers. Staff in each sub-school are programmed not only for common preps, but also for common lunch periods. Therefore much necessary sub-school planning occurs organically each day, without the need to schedule special meetings.

What results is an inter-active staff focused on teaching. Site visit reports indicate that teacher conversation throughout the school day, even in the teachers' cafeteria, is dominated by discussions of

instructional strategies and curriculum design. The Decade Club, an organization of staff members who've served at the school for at least ten years, is currently thriving. Perhaps the best example of the school's commitment to collaboration is the early-morning breakfast club. The staff includes many teachers who commute considerable distances. When lateness reached problematic levels several years ago, the principal discussed the issue at a staff meeting. A small group of teachers decided to organize an early-morning breakfast club for commuting staff. The principal initially made arrangements for breakfast in the teachers' lunchroom, but the club has become so popular that it now meets in the main cafeteria. Lateness is no longer a problem.

IS 174's organization is very responsive to young adolescent need. Since the school incorporates a small 5th grade, many of the newer students are significantly younger, and smaller, than students in the upper grades. Each assistant principal is assigned to supervise a grade, but the principal takes responsibility for the school's 5th grade. The 5th grade classrooms are grouped around the principal's office, and he introduces 5th graders to the school, takes them under his wing and socializes them in the school's expectations. The school's responsiveness to the needs of its youngest students is complemented by the principal's expressed preference for Common Branch-licensed teachers, trained for the flexibility and broad curriculum patterns of elementary schools, rather than for more subject-oriented teachers with junior high school licenses.

If the school's organization establishes student security and confidence, the school's discipline policy encourages student legitimacy and trust. Our site visitors reported a lively level of student camaraderie throughout the school, especially during the changing of classes and in the lunchroom. Discipline seems both firm and flexible. There are no rigid rules or prohibitions limiting student expression, and yet the necessary levels of order and security are maintained. The school's handling of a surge of wearing hats in the building, for example, demonstrates the school's disciplinary stance. The principal and his cabinet decided to indicate their disapproval, but not to formally prohibit the wearing of hats. It soon became apparent that hat-wearing was confined to a very limited segment of the student body, and that an all-school fad was not about to materialize.

The level of student trust at IS 174 may also depend on the climate of academic concern and high expectations for all students which the school has established. The principal has developed a rigorous focus on instructional improvement, which has resulted in an impressive rise in test scores. (See Table 3 on page 11.) Moreover,

IS 174 has achieved this increase without rigidly separating students for instruction. There seems relatively little obvious segregation by ability levels or test score results at IS 174. Our site visitors could not easily identify the advanced, average and slow tracks often painfully visible at many schools. If varieties of student academic need are met, at IS 174, without obvious differentiation, perhaps the school's students thrive within a teaching environment which challenges them to learn without unduly separating and labelling them.

If student trust is established through a responsive, flexible discipline policy and a relatively benign, non-stigmatizing grouping policy, the staff increases that policy's effectiveness by its high degree of commitment and collaboration. IS 174 seems a very assured, self-confident school, structured by an administration and staff convinced they have the tools and skills to produce effective teaching and learning. In a "well-operating machine," as the Project ABLE team defined IS 174, achieving student trust seems almost automatic.

IS 258

IS 258 is a school committed to academic accomplishment within an overall climate of pride, dignity and self-respect. IS 258's principal is a strong, highly competent and extremely visible administrator and former district Science supervisor, who is also a respected church member in the local community. Her insistence on clear goals, tough standards and firm but fair implementation, combined with her ability to supervise not only the school but also its surrounding neighborhood, have imbedded her expectations for high achievement throughout the school and its community. Aided by her staff, the principal has established an aura of control, challenge, respect and caring. Her personality imposes and maintains a school climate in which a traditional and yet wholly contemporary blend of pride and self-respect inspires students and teachers alike to contribute their best efforts.

Respect is critical at IS 258; not only respect from students for teachers, but mutual respect among students. Within a 99% Black student body, the principal and the staff consistently address students as "Young lady" or "Young man." Principal and staff insist on what "we" do or don't do in school, not simply to maintain order, but to reinforce students' sense of dignity and self-respect as young adults. This stress on proper behavior and conduct permeates the school (which is spotlessly clean and beautifully maintained), as an insistence on the standards which students must internalize in order to function effectively as adults in a difficult world, rather than as control mechanisms.

The principal's own competence, dignity and authority serve as examples of what can be accomplished once discipline is achieved; she is a superb role-model for her students. Her firmness, high expectations and rigor are projected, and perceived, as the means through which students can internalize the standards they need. Trust, in IS 258, depends on student perception that the principal (and through her leadership and example, the school staff) want what's best for students, and know what students must do to achieve their potential. Through her command of the entire school, the principal reaffirms, daily, both her commitment and the relevance and justness of her standards.

Some examples. A site visitor accompanies the principal on her rounds of the neighborhood's candy stores before and after school, "because my students shouldn't be eating junk food; it's no good for them." Local merchants are dissuaded from selling non-nutritious food to students, students are persuaded to renegotiate their purchases, and Nutrition units in Health Ed classes attempt to develop sound nutritional habits. The principal conducts group meetings, separately by sex, with students throughout the school, reaching the entire student body each year. These meetings explore a wide range of adolescent dilemmas and problems, including sexuality, the pressures of local crime, the difficulties in maintaining school participation, and the potential futures available to each student.

IS 258's principal knows her students by name, and her roots in the neighborhood have made her familiar with many students' families. Her tenure at IS 258 began with strong district office support; her success has generated strong community support. Entrance to the building is controlled by an elderly woman students address as Grandma; she seems to know everyone--students, staff and neighborhood residents--by name. Her warmth, concern, and clearly communicated expectations for proper behavior echo and reinforce the principal's standards. Thus the principal's leadership has produced a mutually reinforcing process. Trust, at IS 258, depends on the shared belief that the academic achievement critical to the advancement of Black youth depends on the constant exercise of pride, dignity and self-respect.

The school's organization reflects the school's commitment to achievement. Each sub-school is structured by academic ability, assessed primarily through test scores. Sub-school membership is a critical identity factor for students at IS 258, and initial sub-school assignment often combines with subsequent academic performance to determine the quality of the high school to which students subsequently gain admission. Students are expected to spend most of their school career within their assigned sub-school, and to maintain their sub-school's academic requirements. Overwhelmingly they do; IS

258 has a relatively small percentage of students more than one year below grade in reading. (See Table 4 on page 13.)

IS 258 is primarily an "academic press" school, concentrating on improving students' performance in basic skills. The school's enrichment programs, shops and extra-curricular activities are somewhat limited by the school's relatively small student body, which reduces the number of support staff available. Last year, for instance, the principal herself undertook the direction of the school's newspaper and yearbook, because she felt those activities were critical for student enrichment. Through collaboration with a neighborhood community development organization, IS 258 does provide an extensive after-school program. But the school's major accomplishments reflect the principal's commitment to academic achievement as a critical contributor to improving the life-chances of Black students. This stress on high expectations and high achievement also reflects the goals and direction of the district's superintendent, who has provided strong and consistent support to IS 258.

IS 391

Trust is established at IS 391 through the development of an open, responsive and flexible administrative style which stresses problem-solving and student involvement. Although it has few formal decision-making mechanisms, IS 391 is a highly participative school. Staff collaboration and a supportive peer culture help make the school work. IS 391's achievement is all the more remarkable since the school is part of a district which has experienced considerable administrative instability during the past decade.

The school's principal is so peripatetic he seems everywhere at once; his energy and responsiveness encourage a climate of openness and concern. He tours the school every morning and afternoon and visits each class daily. He maintains an open door office policy and chairs an early-morning cabinet meeting, attended by his assistant principals and chief of security, to which all staff, students, parents and neighborhood residents are invited to discuss issues and raise questions. Responding to a problem presented by staff or students, the principal is direct, concerned and fair. His open and spontaneous administrative style, shared by his assistant principals, combines responsibility and caring. Moreover, his accessibility projects a sense of accountability to the entire school.

What results is a school with few formal rules of conduct. There are no Up and Down staircases, no prohibitions on student movement

through the halls, few strictures on what the principal defines as the "natural flow" of youthful participation. Yet site visits report an active peer culture maintaining necessary order. Older students were observed breaking up fights, for instance, and telling younger students "we don't do that here." Students quieted other occasionally noisy students in class, in order to continue the lesson. Site visitors observed students engaged in group discussions and problem-solving sessions; these groups often took their problems and solutions to teachers and administrators. In response to a principal committed to an open decision-making process, IS 391 seems to have developed a schoolwide mode which assumes that problems can be confronted, and solved, through participative processes.

IS 391's teaching staff also reflects this aura of free-wheeling participation. The principal's accessibility is complemented by his responsiveness to staff ideas and suggestions. Teachers are encouraged to innovate, are rewarded for their projects, and consequently value their autonomy. Formal programming also encourages collaboration. Therefore a significant degree of staff cooperation, especially among teachers in the same modules, occurs at IS 391.

The school's participative ethos encourages effective staff-student relationships. Site visits observed many teachers working with students during teachers' lunch-periods. Teachers come in early, or stay late, to tutor students. The principal has developed a program with a neighboring senior citizen center which brings retired volunteers into the school to tutor Special Education students. The principal has also worked with local merchants to establish a safe-refuge policy in stores throughout the neighborhood, so students can seek help if they feel menaced on their way to and from school. The school's security guards and many of the teachers accompany students home from school, when they are fearful of harassment from older youth in the neighborhood. The trust which results from this structured concern seems evident among students throughout the school.

IS 391's population includes significant numbers of students from immigrant families negotiating the language and culture of the city. Strong support from these parents new to the city, but committed to their children's education, helps maintain the school's high academic expectations. Like JHS 56, IS 391 is something of a melting-pot school, enrolling many children of recent Caribbean immigrants. These families often work several jobs to ensure that their children can complete their education, and value IS 391's atmosphere and success. Again, mutually reinforcing parent and community support help the school maintain its achievement.

One important element which site visitors noted in all these schools was a close, cooperative relationship between the

administration and the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) chapter chairperson. Principals, chapter chairpersons and teachers indicated that collaborative relationships between administration and staff contributed to the high staff morale which reinforced the trust and responsiveness each school developed among students.

Trust is only one of the lenses through which the accomplishments of these schools can be analyzed. Whatever lens is chosen, observers are likely to find similar mutually reinforcing cycles of interaction. Though each school is clearly a unique blend of staff and students, the work of dedicated, talented administrators and staff has produced institutions which provide a more effective educational experience for their students.

Table 6: School Organization and Curriculum

School	Organization	Curriculum
56 7-9 grade pattern Building: 22 yrs. old trad. design	Conventional JHS No sub-school divisions SP classes on each grade Parallel programming Block programming Traditional movement from class to class 7 Bilingual classes Smaller classes for slower students	All students take four basic subjects Strong Music component Computer for all 9th grade Foreign Language for more advanced students Strong Shop program Slower students get more math & reading, lose enrichment
174 5-8 grade pattern Building: 13 yrs. old, modular design	Three subdivisions on on each grade (A,B & C) Students assigned by reading score Homogenuous classes SP classes on each grade Block programming; movement within bands except for Shop No bilingual classes Smaller classes/slower students	A Band gets 4 basics, F.L., Cmptrs & Music B Band gets basics plus more math & reading C Band gets extra math & reading; no enrichment Self-contained classes for slowest students
258 7-8 grade pattern Building: 30 yrs. old; trad. design	4 Subschools Assignment by reading & math scores Movement only within sub-schools Block programming Strong sub-school identity No bilingual classes Smaller class size for slower students	SAMM = Basics plus enrichment in Science, Art, Math and Music Micro-satellite = basics plus computers Mainstream = basics with more math & reading Remedial = heavy math & reading; no enrichment Limited Shop program
391 6-8 grade pattern Building: 9 yrs. old, modular design	Modules (4-5) on each grade Assignment by reading score Homogenuous grouping Block programming Movement basically within modules SP classes on each grade Several bilingual classes Smaller classes for slower students	Basics within each module Foreign Language for most students Music & Art enrichment Strong Shop program Extra Reading & Math for slower students Use of adult tutors

Overall School Organization

As Table 6 on the preceding page indicates, only JHS 56 is organized according to the traditional junior high (and high school) pattern, in which curriculum is departmentalized and students move from class to class throughout the day. The other three schools use some form of division into sub-schools, with student assignment based primarily on test scores. IS 258's organization is the most developed; students leave their sub-school only for gym and shop, and sub-school identity is as important as school identity. Students rarely leave their modules in IS 391, but the sub-school divisions are primarily administrative, a basis for teacher collaboration rather than a strong support for student identity. IS 174's organization allows students to move from class to class on the same floor, except for shop. Since each grade is assigned to a different floor, each floor becomes each grade's sub-school.

School organization is not determined by building design. Both IS 391 and IS 174 occupy open-plan buildings designed for modular, sub-school organization. IS 391's modular divisions use the school as designed; IS 174's organization essentially does not. IS 258 administers a completely segmented sub-school program in a traditionally designed building, while JHS 56 utilizes a similarly traditional building for a traditional junior high program.

Three of these four schools significantly limit student movement--IS 174 to one floor, IS 258 and IS 391 to one small block of classrooms. Administrators have long advocated limiting student movement (especially in modular-design buildings with many hidden corridors) in inner-city schools in which establishing control and maintaining order are the critical first steps toward effective schooling. But in these four schools, the problems of establishing an orderly and supportive environment have been succcessfully resolved. Sub-schools have not been implemented to insure control, but to encourage more differentiated academic grouping and course programming and closer, more responsive teacher-student relationships.

All four schools employ some form of academic tracking, using reading test results as the basic measure of achievement. All four schools seem somewhat hierarchical, though JHS 56 and IS 258 are more rigorously structured by ability than either IS 174 or IS 391. All four schools offer their more advanced students some mix of Foreign Language, Music, Art, Computers and Shop. Students with lesser ability lose enrichment courses and gain a heavier dose of reading and math. Through Remedial Gates Program funding, all four schools provide smaller classes, with intensive remedial help, for their slowest students.

Guidance

Guidance in middle schools has several responsibilities: to resolve particular problems presented by students; to administer the high school application process for all graduating students; to develop successful articulation of students from feeder elementary schools. But in middle schools where counselor-student ratios often exceed 500-1, guidance can become so bureaucratized that students are treated perfunctorily. The high school applications process often monopolizes scarce counseling time and energy, further frustrating students' needs. Guidance in these four schools, however, is organized to insure that students receive the support they need.

JHS 56 has three guidance counselors, one of whom is assigned to Special Education. One of the two regular counselors, on staff for thirty years, handles the entire high school applications process through a system which helps students negotiate the process efficiently and effectively. The school sends significant proportions of its students to the city's specialized, selective and vocational high schools each year. The other regular counselor is responsible for the articulation of students from JHS 56's feeder elementary schools. Despite the pressures of both high school and elementary school articulation, JHS 56's guidance counselors allocate a majority of their time to meeting the needs of individual students.

Articulation with IS 174's elementary feeder schools is supervised by the assistant principal assigned to the incoming class. The school's computer facilities are used to program placements and schedules for all incoming students. The two guidance counselors and the deans assigned to each grade orient each class about the high school applications process, but the initial work is carried out by the homeroom teachers of each graduating class. Since about two-thirds of the school's graduates go on to Stevenson High School, IS 174's neighborhood zoned school, the joint efforts of both schools' supervisory and guidance staffs have developed a smooth, supportive articulation. Other IS 174 graduates are accepted at a wide range of specialized, educational options and vocational-technical high schools.

Though IS 258's guidance counselor supervises the high school applications process, the details are administered by teacher-coordinators in charge of each sub-school, working with other teachers, school aides and family workers. The guidance counselor works closely with the principal in articulating IS 258's elementary feeder schools. He supervises the placement of students, in cooperation with the assistant principals and the sub-school coordinators. He also does individual and group counseling and conducts parent workshops. The principal is intimately involved with

the school's guidance program, and works closely with students who present serious behavior problems, using student contracts, designed to modify and improve behavior, as one of her many interventions.

IS 391's two guidance counselors are involved in all phases of the guidance program, but much of the high school applications process is carried out within each module. Teachers are given compensatory time to work on applications. The modules have a high degree of guidance autonomy, and the guidance counselors meet regularly with each module's teachers to get their imput and suggestions. Approximately one-third of IS 391's graduates enroll in their local zoned high school, and many students are accepted by the city's specialized, educational options and vocational-technical high schools. Feeder school articulation is handled by the assistant principal and the guidance counselor assigned to the incoming grade. The principal plays a significant role in this process; he visits each elementary school, speaks to all graduating students and insists that they visit IS 391 before they enroll. He greets each incoming student personally at the beginning of the school term.

Each of these schools, like schools throughout the city, has a guidance team (often called a Pupil Personnel Team) which involves supervisors, counselors, deans, drug and attendance coordinators, the School-Based Support Team and other support personnel. But while such guidance teams exist primarily on paper in some schools, teams in these schools meet frequently to respond to student need. These schools' teams also involve the family workers, school aides and security personnel who are often very knowledgable about students' strengths and problems. Moreover, accountability for resolving student need is not limited to the guidance team. In IS 258 and IS 391, sub-school organization allows teachers the opportunity to meet student need quickly and directly. In all four schools, classroom teachers, supported by responsive referral systems, have developed direct, non-bureaucratized ways of meeting student needs and resolving student problems.

Enrichment

There is a variety of enrichment programs in these four schools. JHS 56 has strong music and computer programs. The school also provides a full shop program which includes Graphics, Metal-working, Electricity, Clothing and Ceramics. IS 174 also has a strong Music program, and offers Ceramics, Woodworking, Home Careers and Cooking shops to all its students. IS 258 has several shops including Industrial Arts and Home Economics, and provides a strong Computer program. IS 391 offers a wide range of shops, including Woodworking, Metal-working, Electricity, Ceramics, Graphic Arts, two Food shops and an Aerospace Education shop.

All four schools also offer a limited range of extra-curricular activities, unfortunately restricted by scheduling, travel and time-pressures on students, and the legacy of the city's fiscal crisis, which decimated extra-curricular programming. JHS 56 offers a wide variety of after-school participation in its various music and drama programs, and also collaborates in programs with the nearby Henry Street Settlement. IS 174's volunteer offerings include an early-morning band program and afternoon cheerleading and basketball. The school has consistently been a winner in district-wide extra-curricular activities such as Spelling Bees, Olympics, Story-Telling Contests and Science Fairs.

Many of IS 258's students participate in basketball leagues and other team sports organized in the school during afternoons, evenings and Saturdays by a neighborhood community development association. IS 391 provides a district-sponsored after-school program in Reading Improvement, and several voluntary after-school programs including basketball, drama, and a program which prepares students for the entrance examinations for New York City's specialized high schools. All four schools produce a range of literary magazines, newspapers, shows and concerts. Several have active student government organizations.

Lunch Scheduling and Organization

Lunch scheduling, and the resulting lunchtime experience, directly affect school climate. An enjoyable lunch-break creates positive expectations for students and teachers, while crowded, disorderly lunchrooms often drain staff energy and depress student spirits. These four schools provide varying lunch experiences. JHS 56 programs one 58-minute lunch-period for the entire school. But the lunch is not captive; approximately half the students leave the building for lunch at home or for purchases at nearby stores. JHS 56's administrators report that the very few of those students who leave the school fail to return after lunch.

Students who choose to eat in school can use a large, attractively decorated cafeteria which features a salad bar and an innovative buffet arrangement. Though the two deans supervise line-up in the hallways, students staff the cafeteria, take tickets, oversee seating and maintain order. Our site visitors noted a relaxed, pleasant atmosphere, without the crowding or commotion which characterizes lunch at too many middle schools. Since the lunch-period is almost an hour, students have sufficient time to combine lunch with other activities; they can go outside to the large yard or upstairs to a range of after-lunch clubs.

IS 174 has a captive lunch program. Since the school has neither a yard nor a playground, and no stores or restaurants nearby, all students are required to eat in school. Four lunch periods, one for each grade, provide a relatively uncrowded and non-stressful lunch period, at the cost of considerable supervisory energy expended by staff and assistant principals.

IS 391 also maintains a captive lunch policy, though students are allowed into the yard after they finish eating. The school schedules three lunch periods by grade, with the small 6th grade amalgamated into the 7th, and features an "Energy Factory" menu of popular, heated frozen foods. Our site visitors noted teachers using their lunch period to tutor students in their modular classrooms.

IS 258 has one captive lunch for the entire school, in a cafeteria too small to make such arrangements comfortable. Only about 60% of the students eat lunch; the rest buy snack foods or wait till after school to eat. Only 2/3 of the free-lunch eligible students actually take the lunch available to them.

Table 7: Special Education

SCHOOL	56	174	258	391
# OF SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS	80	250	80	85
SELF-CONTAINED CLASSES	7	16	8	7
RESOURCE ROOMS*	5	5	2	2
STAFF:				
Unit Teacher/ CIT**	1/FT	1/FT	1/half-time	1/FT
Classroom & Resource Room Teachers	12	23	10	10
Para-professionals	2	2	8	5
Guidance Counselor	2/5 Time	1	2/5 Time	2/5 Time
School-Based Support Team	1 Team 2/5 Time	2 Teams FT	1 Team FT	1 Team 2/5 Time
IN-SCHOOL REFERRALS	0	15	2	3
STUDENTS ACADEMICALLY MAINSTREAMED	24	6	12	9
STUDENTS DECERTIFIED	2	5	5	9

* Resource Rooms provide part-time services for children in the mainstream.

** CIT = Crisis Intervention Teacher

(All data are for the 1984-85 school year.)

The effectiveness of Special Education depends on the relationship between the Special Education unit and the rest of the school. In these schools, each administration has developed a supportive collaboration with its Special Education staff. At JHS 56, the assistant principal and the dean assigned to Special Education are involved on a daily basis with the unit teacher and the classroom teachers. A mutually consultative process is used to resolve whatever issues arise. At IS 174, the Crisis Intervention Teacher (CIT) heading the Special Education unit is part of the principal's kitchen cabinet, and is included in all the school's administrative meetings. The CIT is granted considerable autonomy in administering the unit. At IS 258, where the principal is closely involved with Special Education, the CIT and the Special Education supervisor have major responsibilities for administering the program. At IS 391, the assistant principal supervising Special Education participates in daily consultative sessions and is very supportive of the unit's work. The CIT at IS 391 has considerable responsibility and autonomy in administering the unit.

At all four schools, Special Education personnel are included in all staff meetings and other school functions. Special Education teachers indicated that access to resources and materials, information about student progress, and consultation with mainstream teachers posed few problems. Special Education staff in all four schools felt supported by their administrations and particularly by their principals. All staff indicated that their efforts were respected throughout the school.

Beyond the quality of instruction provided by individual teachers, the effectiveness of Special Education units often depends on the following factors:

--the unit's ability to provide support to the mainstream and prevent, or at least reduce, referrals;

--the unit's ability to mainstream as many students as possible;

--the unit's ability to provide alternative forms of instruction to meet the needs of its students;

--the level of collaboration, sharing and inter-dependence within the unit.

Ideally, the School-Based Support Team (SBST) assigned to each school should be able to provide the support the mainstream needs to avoid unnecessary referrals. SBSTs are composed of psychologists, social workers and educational evaluators appointed by each district's Committee on the Handicapped (COH). The tasks of the SBST include

testing, determining the educational placement of each student referred to the COH, reviewing and re-evaluating student placements, and where time permits, providing support, guidance and resources to classroom teachers experiencing difficulty with particular students.

Though each of these Special Education units has SBST teams assigned to their schools, the SBSTs seemed primarily absorbed in testing activities, with little time available to provide support to classroom teachers. Sometimes even the teams' administration of testing seemed problematic. In spite of the existence of two SBST teams at IS 174, for example, both the principal and the CIT were concerned about the length of time required to re-evaluate students for possible decertification. These four schools' Special Education units seemed unable to provide significant support for prevention or reduction of referrals, primarily because their SBSTs were rarely available for activities other than testing and re-evaluation.

All the school's administrative and Special Education staffs were committed to the principle of mainstreaming. JHS 56 mainstreamed 30% of its Special Education students in basic skills subjects; there was less mainstreaming in the other three schools. In spite of this limited success at mainstreaming, each school has developed methods for integrating Special Education students into the life of the school. At JHS 56, Special Education students share responsibility for managing the cafeteria, and are involved in the school's many Music activities. The Special Education unit shares regular classroom space at IS 174, and much of the unit is departmentalized, so that students circulate for classes as mainstream students do. At IS 258, both regular and Special Education students participate in the after-school basketball leagues and other sports activities. Special Education students are similarly involved in a range of after-school activities at IS 391. All four schools integrate Special Education students for lunch, gym and a variety of other all-school activities.

Developing alternative forms of instruction to meet the variety of learning styles of Special Education students presents another difficult problem. Aside from a Goal Fair at JHS 56, in which students were involved in generating individual and group research projects, there seems little development of alternative instruction for Special Education students in these four schools. Though some individualization was observed, our site visitor reported essentially traditional teaching methods. Although much smaller class size in Special Education encourages the introduction of a variety of different forms of instruction, this step has yet to be taken in these four schools. Perhaps as one consequence, absenteeism in Special Education classes seemed high, to our site visitor, at each school.

Some of the factors which limit innovation in these units are beyond the control of the Special Education staffs. During the past decade, federal and state mandates requiring special education services for children with handicapping conditions have created broad new Special Education systems which generate increasing demands for staff. Therefore most Special Education units have high proportions of new, inexperienced teachers. IS 174's staff, for example, is predominantly composed of teachers with temporary per diem licenses or teachers on probation. Of 23 staff members, only 6 are tenured. JHS 56's staff is also very new; only 2 of the 10 staff members are tenured. Even some of the unit teachers and CITs who serve as supervisors in these four schools do not have many years of experience. Moreover, given the problems of maintaining order and continuity in Special Education units, there is often not enough time for the staff development which might provide the impetus for alternative instruction. Several district supervisors from the Division of Special Education were attempting to provide training to these schools, and particularly to the units at IS 258 and IS 391. Still, our site visitor reported little effective staff development.

Yet the Special Education staffs of all four of these schools have begun to develop the collaborative relationships necessary to generate effective teaching and learning. AT JHS 56, the staff meets daily at lunchtime, to discuss common problems and carry out the planning required to sustain the unit's work. At IS 174, an experienced CIT directs a comprehensive evaluation and review process which helps insure appropriate placement for students. IS 391's unit has also developed an informal review and re-evaluation process, and is characterized by close staff cooperation and effective leadership from a knowledgable CIT. Given the commitment and collaboration demonstrated by the Special Education staffs in these four schools, a few years of staff stability and additional experience may well result in the forging of cohesive units which provide the mainstreaming, support to regular classrooms and alternative instruction required to make Special Education both genuinely special and effective.

IV Successful Practices

Each of these schools has developed specific practices which reinforce and sustain their overall effectiveness, and which other middle schools might successfully adapt. JHS 56, for example, has developed a comprehensive stress on rewarding achievement and an innovative lunch program.

Schools have always understood the value of rewarding achievement; JHS 56 is distinguished by the consistency and scope of its effort. The school rewards a wide range of academic performance, through Honor Rolls, honor assemblies, ARISTA Societies and award celebrations, and also through a variety of subject area certificates and awards. The school also honors a wide range of achievement in non-academic areas. This climate of celebration suggests, to each student, that participation and perseverance are important, acknowledged and rewarded. Since opportunities for honoring achievement also involve parents, neighborhood and civic activists and print and broadcast media, the school extends its reputation for excellence throughout its wider community.

JHS 56 schedules one 58-minute lunch, instead of the pattern of several shorter lunch periods which most New York City middle schools utilize. One longer lunch requires the assignment of fewer supervisory teachers and administrators, and allows those students who leave school for lunch at home or in the neighborhood a decent amount of time to reach and return from their destinations. For schools which are forced, by their surroundings, to have captive lunch programs, such an extended lunch period is probably not very useful. But JHS 56's surrounding neighborhood of dense housing, combined with many available grocery stores and luncheonettes, makes an open lunch program a viable alternative which the school capitalizes on by providing an attractive buffet-style cafeteria and a range of after-lunch clubs.

IS 174's ability to generate comprehensive curriculum development and on-going staff development are critical to the school's achievements. Through a series of small grants, the principal provided stipends to teachers to encourage them to prepare curriculum guides which specified the content of their courses. These guides were subject to review but not to criticism by the principal, who found something to commend in each effort. The principal was committed to challenging teachers to delineate what they taught, in order to encourage a process of critical thinking about curriculum and teaching. The school's experience has validated the principal's commitment. IS 174's teachers not only indicate ownership of the curriculum they developed and teach; they also periodically revise and improve that curriculum to make their teaching more effective.

IS 174's principal has also used his district staff allocation to assign full-time staff development responsibilities to two staff members. These teachers seem analagous to the master teachers in a variety of schemes currently being proposed across the country to upgrade teaching and create career ladders in education. At IS 174, the teachers responsible for staff development organize workshops and seminars in response to staff concerns and problems. They observe other staff members, either at the request of individual teachers or the principal. After the observation, the staff developers meet with the teacher and discuss the class, reviewing and sharing perceptions and suggestions. Since the staff developers' competence and experience are respected throughout the school, the observation process has become a valuable resource for improving teaching. For younger, more inexperienced teachers, access to such an observation process has proved particularly supportive.

IS 258's sub-school organization divides the school into a series of smaller, more intimate administrative units, so that sub-school assignment becomes a significant identity factor. IS 258's sub-schools are effectively four mini-schools, since students circulate primarily within them, leaving their classroom areas only for lunch, gym and shops. The necessity for classroom change and movement in the halls is significantly reduced, saving valuable time for teaching and learning. Since students stay in their sub-schools for their entire career at IS 258, friendships and associations tend to be formed primarily within them (though students must maintain satisfactory academic performance to remain in SAMM or Micro-Satellite). Moreover, since all teachers are permanently assigned to one of the four sub-schools, student-teacher relationships can be developed and maintained throughout each students' career at the school.

This sub-school organization reduces the anomie and fragmentation students often feel when moving from the single classroom of most elementary schools to the departmentalized, segmented organization of most middle schools. IS 258's organization encourages the coordinators, family workers and teachers assigned to each sub-school to spot potential trouble signs like increased absenteeism, falling grades, disruptive behavior or lack of interest. Sub-school organization also encourages closer relationships between school staff and parents. Because coordinators, teachers and family workers can develop sustained relationships with students in their sub-schools, staff-parent dialogue can become specific about students' potentials and shortcomings. IS 258's sub-school organization seems to encourage a coherent focus on student identity which helps provide the intervention and support all students need to realize their potential.

IS 391's daily early morning open cabinet meeting generates, through a simple structural mechanism, the aura of an open, responsive

school administration. The principal, the assistant principals and the chief of security are always in attendance. Depending on the morning's agenda, the guidance counselors, the CIT or other school personnel may also be present. The principal's agenda can always be displaced by complaints, questions or suggestions from anyone interested enough to attend. Our site visitors reported several students, staff, parents and community members raising issues in the cabinet meetings they observed. These meetings also provide a fact-finding and intelligence function for the administration, quickly surfacing problems and frustrations which might fester if left unattended. This daily forum helps reinforce the school's overall climate of flexibility and caring, and encourages participation in other areas of school affairs.

Another factor which contributes to IS 391's effectiveness is the principal's success in involving sectors of the community in the life of the school. The involvement of local merchants who provide safe havens for home-bound students, and the collaboration with a local senior citizen housing project to provide tutors for Special Education students, are particularly innovative interventions. The merchants are not being asked to make excessive efforts, yet their cooperation contributes significantly to student safety and the reduction of anxiety among parents. Similarly, the senior citizens are not overtaxed, yet the time they spend with students often helps improve student academic achievement and overall attitude. Through these programs, community participants are afforded specific opportunities to contribute to student well-being and academic growth. By initiating these programs, IS 391 not only fosters student security and academic achievement; it also expands its reputation as a concerned and innovative school.

These specific practices are not innovations unique to these four schools; each has probably been implemented in schools throughout the country. Nor are these practices a recipe for school success; in these four schools they are embedded within an overall environment which has proved consistently rewarding for teachers and students. Building that environment required several years of dedicated and commited work by skilled administrators and teachers. Therefore this report does not suggest that any linear attempt to replicate these practices will improve achievement in our city's less effective middle schools. Schools are complex interpersonal networks in which any change, and particularly the scale of change leading to schoolwide improvement, is a difficult and layered undertaking.

Yet the ultimate importance of these four schools is that they are working, for students and staff, in disadvantaged urban settings in which most middle schools are perceived as failures. These schools are neither idiosyncratic nor miraculous instituitions; instead,

principals and staffs in these schools have shaped the everyday processes of administration, curriculum and teaching, guidance and discipline into an overall school environment which encourages effectiveness. These schools' successes indicate that an improved quality of education is possible in our city's middle schools, if we mobilize efforts similar to the will, commitment and dedication these more effective schools have demonstrated. To parents, educators, advocates, political leaders and community activists throughout the city, we recommend a consideration of these schools ' successes as a first step toward building a citywide middle schools improvement campaign, to help all our students reach higher levels of achievement.

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