

Cluster 4 Middle Grades Project: Movement and Vision from the Principals' Perspectives

2008-2009 Preliminary Data Brief

January 9, 2009

Revised January 22, 2009

Prepared by the PRAIRIE Group, UIC College of Education
Carol Fendt, Mariam Mazboudi, Esther Mosak, Stacy Wenzel

Authors are listed alphabetically and produced this report collaboratively. They share responsibility for its contents equally. The conclusions drawn in this report reflect the viewpoints of the authors. While there are many potential viewpoints, these reflect a systematic analysis of data by the authors. The hope is that these findings can facilitate improvement of this and related programs through open discussion and consideration of data-driven understandings.

For further information, contact Carol Fendt at 312-413-9221 or crfendt@hotmail.com.

This report is based upon work supported by the Chicago Community Trust, James McDougal Foundation, and Chicago Public Schools Office of Math and Science and Department of Program Evaluation. It incorporates and builds on previous external evaluation studies by the PRAIRIE Group of both the Chicago Math and Science Initiative (CMSI) and the Cluster 4 Middle Grades Project (C4MGP).

Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Executive Summary	2
Overview	3
Methods	4
Findings	5
A. Middle grades Model	5
1. Personnel	6
2. Departmental structure, Schedule, and Time on subjects	7
3. Advisory	8
4. Use of CMSI-supported curricula	8
5. 8 th Grade Algebra I	8
6. Teacher meetings	9
B. Vision for middle grades	9
C. Supports and constraints	10
Appendix	12

Executive Summary

This report is the first for this school year in a series of external evaluation studies (2006-07, 2007-08, and 2008-09) completed by the PRAIRIE Group at UIC on the Cluster 4 Middle Grades Project (C4MGP). The 2008-09 evaluation is grounded in comparative case studies of 12 schools. The sample includes 8 C4MGP schools including Cohort and 1 and 2 (in their third and second year of implementation) and 4 Comparison schools using CMSI curricula.

The sample reflects schools deemed to be at a low, moderate, or high level of implementation of a middle school model, and their corresponding level of support from the C4MGP. Model features are departmentalization, endorsed teachers, 300 minutes of instruction per week in core subjects, Advisory periods, use of CMSI-supported curricula, 8th grade Algebra, and instruction-focused teacher meetings.

This report is based on interviews with principals or their designees; along with ISBE, and school data on teachers endorsed to teach middle grades math and science. It documents school administrators' visions for their middle grades as well as changes made in middle grades structure and instructional practices, particularly with regard to supports provided by the C4MGP and intended to facilitate implementation of the middle school model.

Both C4MGP cohorts, as well as Comparison schools, were found to be departmentalized in the middle grades.

C4MGP case schools differed from Comparison schools in:

- Movement toward offering Advisory periods (All but one C4MGP school has Advisory; no Comparison schools have Advisory)
- Movement toward offering approved 8th grade Algebra 1 (This year 59% of the C4MGP case schools offer the courses, as compared to 25% of Comparison schools and 30% of CPS schools overall.)

C4MGP case schools differed from each other in:

- Percentage of middle grades teachers with at least one endorsement, ranging from 50% to 100%.
- Percentage of middle grades teachers teaching in the subject for which they are endorsed, ranging from 0% to 100%
- Amount of common planning time for teachers, ranging from 30 minutes per week to an hour every day

Differences in percentage of endorsed teachers between C4MGP case schools and Comparison schools were:

- 84% for C4MGP case schools
- 55% for Comparison schools

and for endorsed teachers teaching in their subjects:

- 75% for C4MGP case schools
- 40% for Comparison schools

Ten of the 12 case schools had changes in middle grades staffing this year, including endorsed teachers teaching a different grade or subject. Teacher assignments were not necessarily related to endorsements. Eight of the 12 schools experienced middle grades teachers leaving the school. Four principals attributed school staffing changes to changing student enrollments.

While a number of C4MGP case schools introduced or added time for an Advisory period this year, several principals indicated they needed guidance as to appropriate content.

The C4MGP support cited as most helpful was the university math and science coaches. This will be described in detail in a subsequent report.

There seems to be no pattern to changes in C4MGP schools related to Area, Cohort, or implementation level.

Overview

The programmatic context for this report is the implementation of two district initiatives with overlapping areas of impact and overlapping goals: the 2006-initiated *Cluster 4 Middle Grades Project (C4MGP)*, which focuses on improving instruction in grades 6-8 and preparing students for high school, and the 2003-initiated *Chicago Math and Science Initiative (CMSI)*, which focuses on improving math and science education in grades K-8. This report incorporates and builds on previous external evaluation studies by the PRAIRIE Group of both the CMSI and the C4MGP.

While the C4MGP Management Team continues to work out the specific goals for each cohort or implementation level of C4MGP schools, the management team agrees that the goal of C4MGP is that its schools implement accepted middle school structures and practices so that in grades 6, 7, and 8 the school has the following:

- Teachers endorsed in math, science, language arts, and social studies (including an Algebra 1-qualified teacher if the school offers Algebra 1)
- Endorsed teachers teaching their subject area within a departmentalized structure
- 300 minutes a week minimum taught in all core subjects (language arts, math, science, social studies)
- Advisory periods supporting students' socio-emotional needs
- Math and science lessons taught with CMSI-supported curricula
- Algebra I taught by an Algebra-qualified teacher
- Grade-level and vertical teachers' meetings
- Teachers preparing students to use higher level thinking and organizational skills that will serve them in high school and beyond.

To help schools achieve this goal, in 2008-2009, C4MGP and the district provide the following "supports" to C4MGP schools.

- C4MGP Leadership Coaches consultation based on school needs in coordination with other C4MGP, OMS, and Area leaders
- C4MGP University Math Coaches and Science Coaches consultation based on schools' implementation classification in coordination with other C4MGP, OMS, and Area leaders
- Various means of getting substitute teachers so middle school teachers can attend professional development on CMSI curricula, as well as Cohort Subs for C4MGP so that teachers can meet with C4MGP coaches as needed
- Endorsement courses attended by
 - Middle-grade math teachers not yet endorsed whose tuition is fully paid when they sign a commitment form
 - Middle-grade science teachers not yet endorsed whose tuition is fully paid when they sign a commitment form
- Leadership training and planning meetings
 - Attended by school teams of principal and four teachers
 - Attended by AIOs and Area teams
 - Facilitated by C4MGP leaders; CPS leaders from OMS, Literacy, Social Studies and Libraries; and by non-CPS consultants in a way that supports a coherent message about appropriate middle grades focus and instruction

This preliminary data brief focuses on how principals in participating schools are making changes to structure and practice in their middle grades; how these changes fit with their vision for a middle school; and how these changes and views are similar or different among C4MGP cohorts, and between C4MGP schools and Comparison schools.

Methods

This preliminary data brief begins to address two of the questions outlined in the evaluation work scope for the 2008-2009 PRAIRIE external evaluation of C4MGP. It is based on rigorous data collection and analysis that aims to provide timely feedback about the impact of supports given to C4MGP schools, as they and the district continue to plan and implement these supports throughout the 2008-2009 school year.

The two work scope evaluation questions addressed here are:

Middle Grades Model and Vision

How are schools (low, moderate, and high support) envisioning strong middle grades for their school? What changes do low, moderate, and high support level schools make in their middle grades? What are the differences and similarities between the C4MGP schools and non-C4MGP schools utilizing CMSI curricula with regard to departmentalization, instruction by appropriately endorsed teachers, 8th-grade Algebra, and Advisory? What accounts for these differences and similarities? What reasons are given for the structures and practices utilized?

Supporting Middle Grades Programs

How do principals view the support they receive from the Central Office, Area, and University Coaches? What are principals' perceptions of the coherence of the messages they receive from these groups about middle grades structure and practices?

The 2008-2009 evaluation of the C4MGP is grounded in comparative case studies of 12 schools: 8 are C4MGP participants, with 5 of them in their 3rd year of participation (Cohort 1 schools) and 3 in their 2nd year (Cohort 2 schools). Four are Comparison schools. Levels of implementation and corresponding levels of support in selected C4MGP schools are outlined below. Our sample includes as evenly as possible a mix of C4MGP Coaching and Area support configurations. In addition to these supports, 3 of the 8 schools in the C4MGP sample also have access to a City-wide specialist for math and/or science.

Table 1: Characteristics of the C4MGP case schools

Number of Schools	Level of Support	Level of Implementation	Cohort
2	High	Low	2
1	Moderate	Moderate	1
2	Low	High	1
2	High	Low	1
1	Moderate	Moderate	2

The 4 Comparison schools come from four different Areas outside of the Cluster 4 and have populations that mirror that of CPS in terms of demographic characteristics. These schools do not receive the supports of C4MGP but have been implementing CMSI-supported curricula for five to six years, and have previously been studied as case schools for PRAIRIE's evaluation of the CMSI. One school is a small school (less than 350 students) and the other 3 schools are medium-size schools (351-700 students). Two of these Comparison schools have the support of a City-wide math specialist.

In all 12 case study schools, evaluators interviewed principals or their designee for approximately 45-60 minutes (See Appendix for the Principal Interview Protocol). While all of these schools have taken part in some aspect of PRAIRIE's past evaluation data collection activities for various spans of time over the last six years, this preliminary data brief is based on the principal interview as one new data point for each school for this year. With regard to teacher endorsements, we also looked at information available on CPS' Cluster 4 Middle Grades Project Teacher Database, the Illinois State Board of Education website, and school rosters and schedules collected this year.

Findings

Below are our findings on the 12 case study schools' movement towards implementation of a middle grades model, interviewees' vision of a middle school, and the supports and constraints C4MGP schools are experiencing as they make changes to their middle grades.

A. Middle grades model

1. Personnel

The following table describes the staffing in middle grades for each school in our study and how changes have occurred over the past year related to endorsement status of these personnel or changes in teaching assignment. We rely on data collected via principal self-reports, school rosters, teacher observation/interview data, and the ISBE website on teacher endorsements. Because these data sometimes contradicted each other, we used our best judgment to present what we believe are the most accurate numbers.

Table 2: Middle grades teachers' endorsement status and change over one year, 2008-2009

C4MGP Schools	Of teachers in grades 6, 7, & 8 in 2008-2009,			Of teachers in grades 6, 7, & 8 in 2007-2008,	
	number with at least one middle grade endorsement (language arts, math, science, social science)	number teaching their endorsement subject	number who taught different grade and/or subject in 2007-2008	number endorsed teachers who moved out of 6, 7, & 8 to lower grade	number endorsed teachers who left the school
School A	7 of 7	7 of 7	2 of 7	0	2
School B	13 of 14	13 of 14	0	0	0
School C	9 of 10	9 of 10	6 of 10	0	2
School D	9 of 10	9 of 10	2 of 10	1	1
School E	4 of 6	4 of 6	0	0	0
School F	2 of 4	1 of 4	4 of 4	3	1
School G	4 of 4	3 of 4	3 of 4	0	3
School H	3 of 6	0 of 6	6 of 6	0	3
Totals	51 of 61 (84%)	46 of 61 (75%)	23 of 61 (38%)	4	12
Comparison Schools					
School I	2 of 3	2 of 3	0	0	0
School J	6 of 7	5 of 7	2 of 7	0	0 *
School K	3 of 7	1 of 7	4 of 6	1	0
School L	0 of 3	0 of 3	1 of 3	N/A	1
Totals	11 of 20 (55%)	8 of 20 (40%)	7 of 20 (35%)	1	1
Totals	62 of 81 (77%)	54 of 81 (67%)	30 of 81 (37%)	5	13

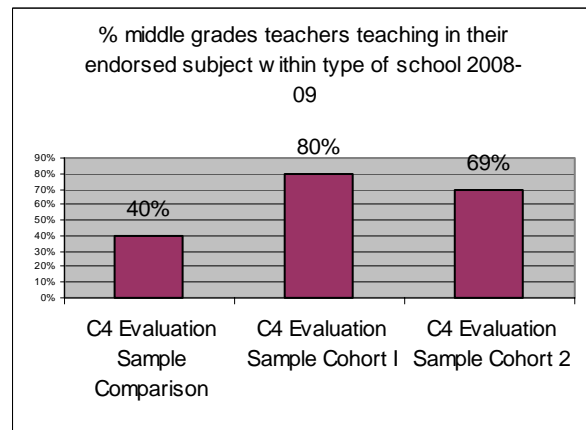
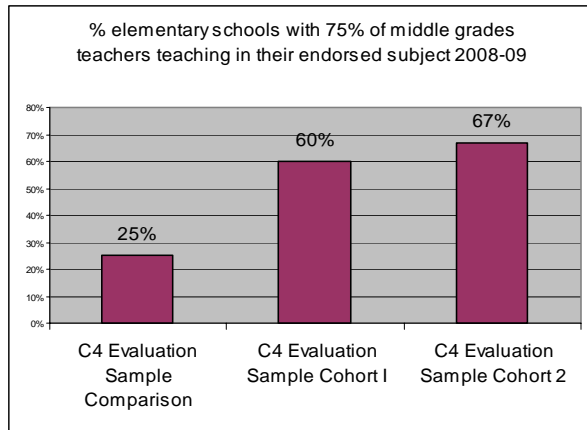
* Zero between years but 2 of these teachers have left this year

Teachers' endorsed and teaching the endorsed subject

Within the C4MGP schools, the percentage of middle grades teachers holding at least one endorsement ranged from 50 to 100%. In total, the figure for C4MGP schools was 84%, while for Comparison schools it was 55%.

In some of our C4MGP case schools we found, in addition to middle-grades classes being taught by teachers without endorsements, endorsed teachers teaching subjects in which they were not endorsed, such as a middle-grades teacher with a language arts endorsement teaching math.

One of the 8 C4MGP schools has 100% of its middle grade teachers endorsed and teaching the endorsed subject. The total figure for C4MGP middle grades teachers teaching in their subject is 75%. The corresponding figure of Comparison schools is 40%.



Teacher mobility within and across schools

Only 3 of our 12 sample schools did not have changes in personnel in the middle grades. The others had from 20-100% changes in middle grades staffing.

Between 2007-08 and 2008-09, 7 of the 8 C4MGP schools had changes in personnel and/or positions of middle grades teachers, as did 3 of the 4 Comparison schools. These changes included teachers being assigned to different grade levels or subjects within the school.

In some instances principals reporting changing classroom assignments for reasons other than placing appropriately endorsed teachers in the middle grades. For example, at one school a non-endorsed teacher replaced an endorsed upper-grade teacher. The principal described moving this teacher to a primary grade because she was not a “team player.” Another principal moved an endorsed upper-grade teacher whose students’ tests scores were not improving to a primary grade and replaced the teacher with a non-endorsed teacher.

Eight of our 12 sample schools experienced teachers in the middle grades leaving the school. For 6 of the 15 teachers who left, the reasons are unclear. The reasons given for the other 9 were fairly evenly distributed among: asked to leave, chose to leave, retired, or passed away.

Four principals attributed school staffing changes to changing student enrollments.

Questions for Reflection

- How are the C4MGP, Area, and CPS policies shaping principals’ decision-making about staffing?
- What supports do principals currently have access to in terms of staffing their schools?
- With all of these changes in school personnel, how might C4MGP support schools in these transitions?

2. Departmental structure, Schedule, and Time on subjects

All 12 schools had some form of departmentalization in the middle grades at the start of the 2008-09 school year. At least 4 of the 8 C4MGP schools had one or more of the following changes in their departmental structure.

- Introduction of or additional time for Advisory
- Greater inclusion of ELL or Special Needs students into departmentalized (rather than self-contained) classes
- Increase in class time for each content area, i.e. from 45 to 60 minutes

One Comparison school reverted to self-contained classrooms at the start of the 2nd quarter. One had only 45-minute classes; it is unclear how many minutes per class in each content area are provided in the other schools. In one Comparison school the teachers, not the students, moved from class to class.

There seems to be no pattern to changes in structure, schedule, and time on subject related to Area, Cohort, or implementation or support level among the C4MGP schools.

3. Advisory

In 2006-07 PRAIRIE found that none of the 24 C4MGP schools had an Advisory period. In 2007-08, we found 4 of our 5 Year 2 schools had an Advisory period, ranging from 10 to 150 minutes per week; and 1 of our 4 Year 1 schools had an Advisory with a 40-minute per week that utilized a socio-emotional program. None of our 4 Comparison schools had an Advisory program.

In fall 2008, our data show that 7 of the 8 C4MGP schools in our sample have adopted some type of Advisory period. Both the amount of time for this and the time of the day varied. For example, Advisory Periods ranged from 10-40 minutes per day. Some were the first few minutes or last few minutes of the day. Others were scheduled as a regular period within the school day. Principals described the activities taking place in these periods as addressing character traits, drug education, high school planning, socio-emotional needs; teaching AVID strategies; or reading *Chicken Soup for the Soul* books for kids. Some principals indicated that they and their teachers need direction as to what should be done during this time.

We found that none of the four 2008-09 Comparison schools has implemented Advisory.

4. Use of CMSI-supported curricula

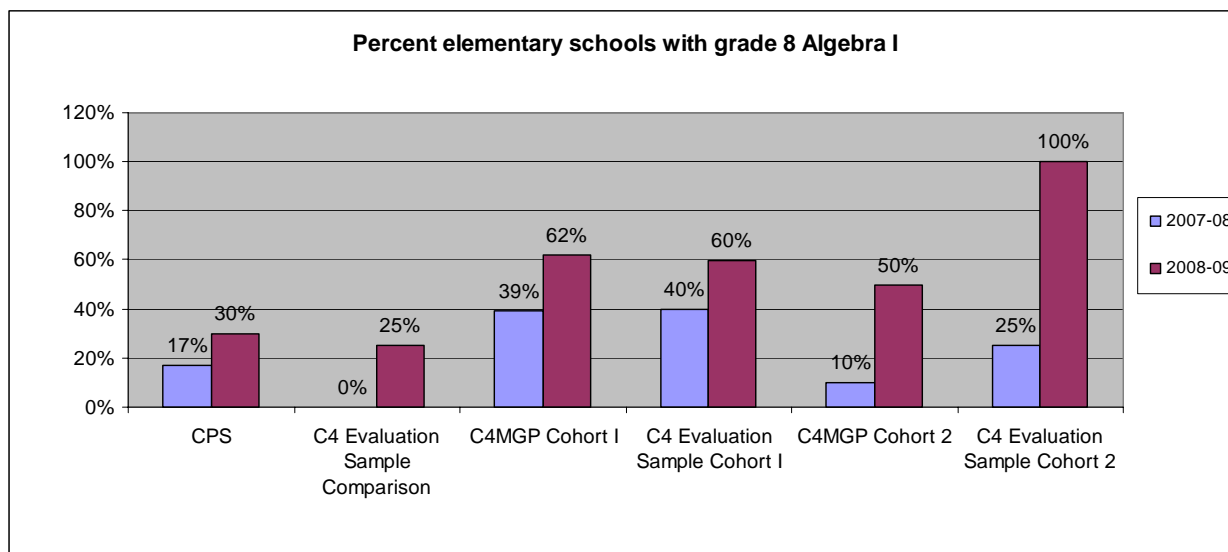
All interviewees in fall 2008 stated that CMSI-supported math curricula are being used for middle grades instruction. Two of the four Comparison schools are not using CMSI science curricula; however, the ones they are utilizing correspond to other CPS programs at these schools.

5. 8th Grade Algebra I

In 2007-08, the percentage of C4MGP Cohort 1 schools offering CPS-approved 8th grade Algebra 1 taught by an Algebra-qualified teacher was more than double that of the percentage for all CPS elementary schools. Nine of the 23 (39%) C4MGP Cohort 1 schools offered Algebra

1, while 17% (81 of 483) of all CPS elementary schools did. Only one of our Cohort 2 schools offered Algebra 1 last year.

This year C4MGP Cohort 1 schools continue to offer Algebra 1 at more than twice the rate for all CPS elementary schools. CPS records for fall 2008-09 indicate that 30% of schools (146 of 483) are offering 8th grade Algebra 1. In contrast, 62% (13 of 21) Cohort 1 schools offer the class. The percentage of Cohort 2 schools has risen from 10% in 2007-08 to 50% in 2008-09. The total for C4MGP schools is 59% (17 of 29). In our case schools, all 3 Cohort 2 schools, 3 of 5 of our Cohort 1 schools, and 1¹ of our 4 Comparison schools offer grade 8 Algebra. The graph below illustrates these changes.



6. Teacher meetings

Principals both within and outside of the C4MGP spoke of having scheduled time for teachers to meet both in grade levels and as vertical teams. The amount of time reported to allow for common planning among grade-level teachers ranged from 30 minutes per week to an hour every day. If they take place, vertical team meetings usually occur on professional development days.

Questions for Reflection

- Our data suggest C4MGP schools need direction for appropriate Advisory content and scheduling. What kind of support can C4MGP provide in this area?
- What kind of support might C4MGP provide for “teaming” so that teachers’ shared planning time is used effectively?
- What message is the district giving to non-C4MGP regarding departmentalization, advisory, and Algebra 1 for 8th grade?

B. Vision for middle grades

¹ This school does not appear on the CPS provided list.

There does not seem to be a pattern among C4MGP principals' visions for their middle students and their Cohort year, Area, or Level of Support. However, there were some commonalities.

- Three C4MGP principals spoke of focusing their attention this year on instruction—trying to improve the rigor of classroom teaching. It is not clear from these first interviews how they intend to monitor or change instruction in their schools. PRAIRIE intends to follow up on this via further data collection, and monitoring how C4MGP schools are using 10-week plans to focus on instruction.
- Four of the C4MGP principals described their vision of middle grades as a transition to high school. Each of these mentioned doing some kind of partnering with high schools. Two spoke of getting their students ID badges to get them comfortable with these before high school.
- There was little reference to the concept of “exploratories” or ways these periods (traditionally for art, music, gym, etc.) might be incorporated into an integrated model of instruction. One principal explained how his school had incorporated the model that these “specials” would run like a course, meeting every day for a set period of weeks. In this way, students rotate throughout the year through each special as if it were an elective course.

Two of the 4 Comparison school principals spoke of the challenges of working with middle school students: should they be provided more support in terms of their socio-emotional needs, or should the emphasis be on giving them more responsibilities for their own behavior and work to prepare them for high school? Neither offered concrete plans to support students under either model.

Questions for Reflection

- Are the visions expressed here in line with that of the C4MGP?
- What connections or transition to high school does C4MGP want?
- How does C4MGP envision “exploratories” or “specials” integration into the middle grades schedule?
- How are C4MGP visions being communicated to schools?

C. Supports and constraints

Supports

All the principals from C4MGP schools spoke favorably about supports received from C4MGP, the Area, and OMS. These include one or more of the following: coaches working with teachers, professional development for individual teachers and middle grades teams, and the use of the 10-week action plan to help focus on instruction. Half mentioned sending teams of teachers to the Middle Grades Conference in Colorado as a support, but did not articulate how this translated into changes in structure or instruction. One school spoke of the benefit of sending teachers to visit another C4MGP school, saying teachers came back with ideas for their own implementation.

Half the principals in the 12 case schools spoke about the AIO as a support, in various ways, for improving instruction; specifically: providing coaches, setting up professional development sessions, having staff modeling instruction, visiting schools, obtaining materials, and giving advice. Also mentioned were the AIO's listening to grievances and working with principals on action plans. With regard to Area math and science coaches, sample comments from 10 interviewees were that they are "great," and they respond to schools' needs by modeling instruction and providing PD.

With regard to the university math and science coaches available to the 8 C4MGP schools, 5 principals noted these as a support and a few offered details of this. For example, one said, "They're very good, supportive of teachers, modeling; they're here on a continual basis. They check teaching, pacing, and materials." Another described how teachers looked forward to and wished the coach was with them more often.

Constraints

Principals described situations that were constraining their middle grades work. These constraints are as follows:

- Declining enrollments and the loss of teachers due to positions being cut and/or then later added—in either case, endorsed teachers had been lost
- Overcrowded classrooms (e.g., 35 or more students per class)
- Lack of technology
- Lack of time in the school day for all that they want to accomplish
- Lack of clear direction for Advisory
- Lack of money to purchase all necessary materials
- Difficulty finding subs for PD days even with the new access to C4MGP cohort subs.

Questions for Reflection

- Are you surprised by what principals say support or constrain their middle grades?
- What additional details do C4MGP Management Team members need to better understand how the C4MGP activities support middle grades?
- What additional details do C4MGP Management Team members need to better understand what constrains development of a middle school model?

Appendix: Principal Interview Protocol

Please ask for the following documents:

Documents to collect: Ask for these in your introductory letter and/or your phone call:

- **A copy of the school plan for Cluster 4**
- **Roster** of teachers (2 years if available to note any changes in staff positions)
- **Teachers' schedules and meeting times**
- **Schedule for 8th grade algebra**
- **Schedule noting Advisory time**

Before beginning interview with Principal, remind Principal about what we are trying to learn:

The Chicago Community Trust and the Office of Math and Science have charged us with the task of better understanding how they can help schools develop instruction in the middle grades. They want to understand the following:

- What middle grades models are schools using and what are the strengths and weaknesses of these models and what assistance do schools need regarding these configurations.
- How do schools make use of the various supports to middle school teachers: professional development, AVID Coach, University Coach, grade level meetings, etc.

Tell the Principal that we would like to use his/her school as a case school for our understanding these questions and that we'd like his/her permission to do the following things at the school throughout the course of the school year: 1) interview the Principal or Specialist, 2) observe a couple grade level meetings or middle grades management meetings, 3) observe a coach in a class, 4) interview or have a focus group with teachers, coach or specialist.

Interview Questions to be asked after Principal understands and consents to participation.

Middle Grades Model and Vision:

1. Tell me what you hope to accomplish in your middle grades this year. (ie: what kinds of things have you talked about with middle grades teachers, AIO/Area Coaches, University Coaches, or what have you learned from your C4 workshops that you are hoping to implement in your school this year?)
2. How do you plan to accomplish your goals for middle grades students? (ie: how are you using C4 resources or other resources to leverage change in the way you want it? What other supports do you need to make the changes you want to make?)
3. As you think about how we might tell your story of continuing to develop a middle grades model this year, what key things do you we should try to document? Ie: Would observing your planning meeting with Area and University Coaches help us to see how you are planning and working together? (when is your next meeting and would you mind my attending?), Would observing your middle grades team meetings help? etc.

1. We'd like to learn about **your school's approach to middle grade instruction**. Tell us about this and what your role is within this set up?

- How are your middle grades currently configured? Is this different than what you did last year? How so? How many minutes do classes go for? (prompts: changes in scheduling, in PD, in new hires, in shifting faculty around) How do you envision strong middle grades to look this year? Which classes switch (grades and subjects)? Who does the switching (teachers/students)? [Note who is teaching what subjects to which grades on the Roster.] Which classes do all teachers teach (ie: do all teach reading, language arts, social studies?)?

- Does your school offer Algebra to students in 8th grade? How is this scheduled? If not, are you planning to do this down the road? If so, how? If not, why not?
- What curricula are being used for math and science in the middle grades? Do all classes use the curriculum? To what extent?
- Does your middle grades schedule include an advisory period? If so, when and for how long is advisory? If so, is there a curriculum being used for this period? Or what takes place during this time (study hall, activities meetings, AVID instruction, health and hygiene program, etc.)?
- When you think of middle grades students is there anything you do to address their needs as opposed to the needs of primary students?
- Do you have exploratory classes? What classes do you have?
- When do your teachers meet and how often? How are these meetings organized—grade level, subject, vertical teaming, more than one of these?
- Which of your middle grades teachers are endorsed? In what subjects? Are any other teachers working on their endorsement? (Who and which subject?) Are any working on their 8th grade Algebra endorsement? How many?
- What kind of communication goes on between your school and the feeder high schools?

Support for change

2. About the credentialing program:

- What types of supports for improving teaching practice do teachers receive throughout the credentialing program? Which ones have they taken advantage of? Which ones haven't they used? Why or why not?
- To what extent are your teachers involved in this credentialing and departmentalization program? What are their thoughts about it?
- What constraints hinder teachers' teaching practices throughout the credentialing and departmentalization program?

3. About the supports:

- Some supports provided by CPS are university math and science coaches, specialists, and PD. What are the supports provided to your teachers? If PD, who goes? If coach: what are the roles of the coaches? How do the teachers feel about the support they receive? [prompts such as: pleased/satisfied, apathetic/disinterested, do they ask for specific things/state specific needs-'I need some PD on classroom management.'] Are there any supports they need that they're not getting? (What are they?)
- How do you view the support YOU receive from central office, area and university coaches in assisting you in the development and implementation of the middle grades program?
- Which supports do you find effective? Are there any supports you need that you're not getting? (What are they?) How do you communicate the need for support to staff? To whom? When? (such as at the beginning of the year, the next term, and then wait? Or are they on their AIO all the time until they get what they're asking for?)
- Have you made any changes in curriculum, instruction and/or personnel due to support the school has received? (If so, what are these changes?) How effective was the support?

4. Have any **challenges** emerged this year regarding middle grades instruction in your school?

- If so, what are those challenges?
- Have you received support to address those challenges?
- How are the challenges different than last year?

5. Do you have any burning issues regarding middle schools that you would like us to know about or try to find out about?