

CHAPTER VI

GROWING PAINS: 1971-1978

The Setting

The turbulence of the 1960s in the world and the United States gave way to a renewed attempt on the part of Americans to return to a more conservative home front with the election of Richard Nixon in 1968. The United States' role as a world leader, however, continued in a period of anguish.

The World and the United States

A communist, Salvador Allende, was freely elected in Chile while Bangladesh became a free and independent country from Pakistan. President Nixon pulled American troops out of South Vietnam in 1973 and in 1975 North Vietnam took control of a United Vietnam. Civil wars broke out in Lebanon and Nicaragua and the Khmer Rouge came to power in Cambodia and turned the country into the "killing fields". The great communist leader of China, Mao Zedong died, and Israel repelled a major attack from the Arab world in the Yom Kippur War.

The internal return to conservatism did not help to solve the social problems of the United States nor the economic recession. The latter was further compounded by women and other minority groups demanding their portion of the economic American pie. The organization of such groups and their strength was evident in such events, as the first publication of Ms. magazine in 1972 or the Native American protest at Wounded Knee in 1973. The office of the American president saw itself limited by the passage of the War

Powers Act in 1973. The image of the presidency was further tarnished by the Watergate scandal from the 1972 president election and eventually resulted in President Nixon's resignation in 1974. The Nixon and Ford administrations were plagued with economic problems which included the start of the energy crisis and a recession lasting from 1974 to 1976. Inflation hovered around 11%, stock market prices fell, nationally housing starts were down and unemployment rose. The term stagflation meaning a stagnate economy with inflation was coined.¹

In 1976, President Carter was elected on an honesty and morality campaign. During the Carter administration the Energy and Education Departments were formed and made part of the presidential cabinet. The energy crisis remained a domestic problem. President Carter's answer to inflation was to cut social program spending, hurting those programs.²

Federal Court Decisions, Legislation, and Education

Major impacts on youth and education during this time resulted from Supreme Court decisions. The United States Supreme Court ruled in 1971 that school busing could be used for desegregation purposes in education. Parochial school aid was ruled unconstitutional in 1971, and in 1973 the reliance on property tax for education was not ruled unconstitutional, but the court did indicate the need to reform school financing systems. The Supreme Court also ruled in Lau v. Nichols that public schools must provide programs for students who did not speak English.

¹Andrew Cayton, Elisabeth Israels Perry, and Allan M. Winkler, America Pathways to the Present: Civil War to the Present (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1995), 776.

²*ibid.*, page 789.

The Supreme Court ruling on busing which had the greatest impact on urban and suburban education was the result of a practice sanctioned in 1896 in the Plessy v. Ferguson case that had stated that separate but equal facilities were legal for the segregation of races. This case had been reversed in Brown v. Board of Education, when separate was not found to be equal. The practice, however, continued particularly in northern cities. The 1971 Supreme Court decision in Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education stated that voluntary integration was not working and that court ordered busing for racial balance was an option for ending racial desegregation. Federal courts ordered busing resulted in violent protests or boycotts on the part of white students and their parents.

Federal legislation also had an impact on public education at this time. In 1975, Congress passed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act requiring states to provide free public education for any disabled child. Title IX of the Educational Amendments Act of 1972 prohibited discrimination on the basis of gender at universities and other schools receiving federal funds. Title IX's eventual impact on public education resulted in coeducational classes and a restructuring of sports teams.

Nebraska and Millard

Nebraska agriculture prospered in the 1970s bolstered by federal farm plans. High inflation and low interest rates, however, caused farmers to overextend themselves with heavy debt. Land prices became quite inflated. This increased valuation along with court decisions regarding property taxes for public education slowly began to take on importance at this time. Although Governor Norbert Tiemann and the state legislature had confronted school reorganization and introduced state aid to education in 1967, little more was

done until the mid-1970s. This lack of action resulted in "inequities and inadequacies that weakened the states's program of aid to local school districts."³ This problem is exemplified in a report to the Board prepared by Dr. Stroh in 1973 in which he made the following recommendation.

It is recommended that the Board work closely with our State Senator to bring about a school finance program in the state that will provide more funds from the state level. At the present level of 22-24%, our district will face a much greater burden on the local property tax. The state should be providing at least 40% of the general operating funds.⁴

Nebraska made national news in the 1970s over religious freedom. Reverend Everett Silivan opened a church-sponsored school in a Baptist church in Louisville, Nebraska. State laws at the time required that all schools be approved by the Nebraska State Department of Education. Reverend Everett Silivan contended that the separation of church and state in the constitution of the United States of America gave him the right to run a church school without state government intervention. This disagreement lasted well into the next decade.

Millard was officially annexed on April 20, 1971, ending the long struggle during the late 1960s to keep the City of Millard's political identity.⁵ From this time forward, the identity of Millard as a community has remained in the form of the school district. Of continued concern to the Millard community was the attempt to annex the school district into the Omaha Public Schools. The

³Frederick C. Luebke, Nebraska An Illustrated History (Lincoln, Nebraska ; University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 368.

⁴Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), January 7, 1974, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

⁵Millard Public Schools General History File, (Douglas County District 17), Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

southwest area of Omaha was experiencing rapid growth, and a group of leaders felt the area should be a part not only of the city, but of the school district as well. Ironically, the population growth factor of the area was both a positive and a negative. The population grew but not without political repercussions.

The growth which occurred in the southwest section of the city of Omaha was also aided by the location of the Union Pacific Railroad, which generally parallels Interstate 80 through the southern portion of the city. Ready access to the railroad tended to encourage considerable growth in the southwest section of Omaha. It is also significant that Omaha's largest private industrial employer, the Western Electric Company, which had 7,700 employees in 1970, is located in this section of the city.⁶

Research Sources

Sources of information to write the history of Millard Public Schools from 1971 to 1978 include typewritten board minutes which were kept by the Board's secretary with assistance from the superintendent's secretary. Detailed documentation, in the form of board packets, was microfilmed along with the official minutes of the Board. These board packets included monthly documentation on the financial status of the district, various reports generated by the school administration, reports from the Board's architectural firms regarding building progress, committee reports which then were formally made part of the Board reports, and educational updates from Superintendent Don Stroh.

In addition, documentation was found in the generic history file maintained by the district. The newspaper clipping file referred to in the last chapter served as a rich source for background information on various topics of

⁶ Frank A. Hoy, *A Study of the Relationship Between Declining Enrollment and Desegregative Litigation in the School District of Omaha, Nebraska* (Ed. D. diss., University of Nebraska at Lincoln, 1978), 55.

importance during this time. The clippings of articles of local, state, and national issues provided focus regarding what was of importance during this time.

Finally, personal interviews were held with Dr. Ike Pane, Dr. Margaret Corkle, Dr. Dennis Harding, Dr. Gary Barta, Dr. John A. Lammel, Dr. Thomas Nenneman, Nancy Holloran, and Glenn Irwin.

Personal Interviews

Dr. Ike Pane started his career in Millard teaching the block or English and history. Prior to that he had taught in both Council Bluffs, Iowa, and Westside. He was appointed the principal of Millard Junior High School in 1970. This building became Millard Central Junior High School in 1973. In the fall of 1977-1978 school year, Dr. Pane began planning for the new level I high school building which opened the following year. When the level I high school building became a 9-12 high school in 1981, Dr. Pane remained as the principal.

Margaret Corkle taught in rural Nebraska and Las Vegas, Nevada, before coming to Millard in 1964 as a junior high core teacher teaching both social studies and English. When the new Millard High School opened in 1970, she was one of the counselors. While on a leave of absence and pursuing her specialist's degree in educational administration, Dr. Stroh asked her to work on the year-round school study committee. This resulted in several years of work on that project as the director of year-round school and eventually a central office position working as an administrative assistant to the superintendent and the associate superintendent. Dr. Corkle ended her administrative career with Millard serving as the Director of Staff Development.

Dr. Dennis Harding served as the Director of Pupil Personnel Services from 1976 to 1977. His major areas of supervision included the guidance

program, school psychologists, and policy development regarding student rights and disciplinary issues.

One of the first team leaders for an interdisciplinary team at Millard Junior High School was Dr. Gary Barta. Dr. Barta began his teaching career in the Omaha Public Schools. He began his career in the Millard Public Schools in 1972. Since then he has served as a classroom teacher, team leader, assistant junior high school principal, curriculum supervisor, and junior high/middle school principal.

John A. Lammel came to Millard in 1967 as an assistant principal at the junior-senior high school. When the new high school opened in 1970, he was appointed to the principalship of that building. Rapid growth over the years resulted in a variety of instructional arrangements at Millard High School. This growth resulted in Millard High School eventually becoming Millard South High School. In 1993 Dr. Lammel left the district to take a leadership position with the National Association of Secondary School Principals.

Dr. Thomas Nenneman came to the Millard school district in 1972 as an assistant superintendent for instruction; later he was the assistant superintendent of instructional services. He was designated an associate superintendent for the 1996-1997 school year. Dr. Nenneman retired at the end of the 1996-1997 school year. Prior to employment by the Board, he had served as a classroom teacher, elementary principal, Nebraska State Department of Education administrator, and a professor at the University of Nebraska-Omaha. Upon his arrival in the Millard Public Schools, the

curriculum consisted of a book-driven curriculum based on a commonality of issues within the various subjects.⁷

Nancy Holloran's career with the district started as a substitute teacher for English and journalism in the late 1960s. Since the superintendent's office was located in the junior-senior high school, she quickly became acquainted with Superintendent Stroh. During the summer of 1970, the superintendent asked her if she would be interested in working on the school district's newsletters a few hours each week. Very quickly both Superintendent Stroh and Nancy Holloran realized that the public relations program was much more than a newsletter and thus began Ms. Holloran's tenure with the district as the coordinator of communications.

Glenn Irwin was an upper elementary teacher at Walt Disney Elementary School when the building opened in 1974. He participated in the Individually Guided Education program utilized at Disney when the building opened.

Growth

Although Millard as a community ceased to exist, the school district grew quite rapidly in the number of students attending school during this time. A Board report early in 1971 indicated that there were 242 living units under construction in the school district. Using the average of 1.5 students per living unit, the district could anticipate 363 new students for the next year.⁸ During that same year, 1971, the district was the ninth largest in the state with predictions

⁷Dr. Thomas Nenneman, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 29 July 1997.

⁸Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), March 4, 1967, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

that the district would be the third largest in the state by the end of the decade.⁹ The school district experienced both physical growth and loss in size. In 1972, the Board voted to transfer a quarter section to the Omaha Public Schools that was on the southeast corner of 132nd and Blondo. This was done to square off the district in the area. Additionally, the Omaha Public Schools anticipated building a new school in the area.¹⁰ The district grew minutely with the addition of 40 acres of land from what had once been Douglas County School District Number 12. This was done to straighten the boundary somewhat between the Millard and Gretna school districts.¹¹ In his letter approving of the land exchange, Douglas County Superintendent of Public Instruction, Carl Palmquist, suggested a meeting to attempt to simplify boundaries of the school districts in Douglas County; however, no Board action was taken to pursue such simplification after Board discussion.¹²

This rapid growth for the district was not without its pain and frustration. Indicators of this growth are found directly in the number of students, the size of the fiscal budget, the number of new buildings erected, and indirectly in the attempts through both the state legislature and the court system to annex the school district of Millard into the Omaha Public Schools.

⁹Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District 17), 1971-1972 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹⁰Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), May 1, 1972, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹¹Dr. Don Stroh, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 29 July 1997. (See Appendix I.)

¹²Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), December 1, 1975, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

School Population Growth

The school district total enrollment in the fall of 1970 had been 4613 students.¹³ This grew by 137.4 % to 10,955 students for the start of the 1978-1979 school year.¹⁴ The school administration devoted much time preparing monthly reports on the number of homes being built in subdivisions in order to be able to accommodate the rapidly growing number of students. In 1975, Superintendent Stroh had anticipated an enrollment of 10,200 by the fall of 1978.¹⁵ Thus, the actual 1978-1979 enrollment of 10,955 was close. Dr. Stroh was able to anticipate such growth due to the work of many people. Once or twice during each school year, principals literally went out into their neighborhoods and counted new homes under construction. Contacts with builders were maintained regarding the development of new subdivisions. Through experience and formulas developed over the years, the central office administration was able to predict fairly well future growth in student population. The goal was to not overbuild, but rather to use temporaries until an attendance area's school population leveled to the point that the school built could serve the area.¹⁶

The most dramatic growth was at the secondary level with an increase from 1462 students in 1970-1971 to 4492 in 1978-1979 resulting in a 207% increase. During the same time, the elementary population had grown from

¹³Ibid., September 8, 1970.

¹⁴Ibid., September 4, 1978.

¹⁵Ibid., October 20, 1975.

¹⁶Dr. Margaret Corkle, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 6 August 1997.

3151 to 6503 students for a 106% increase.¹⁷ The large growth of the number of elementary students of the previous decade now resulted in a major need for more secondary buildings. The one high school and one junior high school of 1970 had now grown to two junior high schools and a split high school campus consisting of level I (Grades 9-10) in a newly constructed facility, and level II (Grades 11-12) used the high school facility built in 1970. This rapid growth required the consideration of a variety of options on the part of the school administration and the Board which included year-round school, extended school day along with more temporary buildings, or split attendance sessions.¹⁸ Such growth necessitated another change in the athletic conference to which Millard Public Schools belonged. "Motion by Houghston Tetrick, seconded by Dr. Ackerman, to make application to join the Metro Conference, to be actively participating in the fall of 1977."¹⁹ The motion was passed unanimously.

Desegregation and Busing Impacts

Not all of the student growth during this period was due to suburban growth in west Omaha. Court ordered busing was first investigated in May, 1972, in the Omaha Public Schools.²⁰ This investigation continued during the 1972-1973 school year. In the late summer and early fall of 1973, 29.3% of the new 583 students moving into the Millard Public Schools were from Omaha

¹⁷Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), September 8, 1970 and September 4, 1978, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹⁸Ibid., August 2, 1976.

¹⁹Ibid., August 4, 1975.

²⁰Frank A.Hoy, A Study of the Relationship Between Declining Enrollment and Desegregative Litigation in the School District of Omaha, Nebraska" (Ed. D. diss., University of Nebraska at Lincoln, 1978), 4.

Public Schools.²¹ The majority of these students, 121 of the 171, were in the elementary grades, the grade levels very likely to be impacted first by desegregation. When desegregation was finally court mandated in the Omaha Public Schools, the highest levels of enrollment decline in that district were grades two, three and nine.²² The degree to which desegregation in the Omaha Public Schools was of concern to the Millard Board of Education was reflected in the following administrative report:

Newest Justice on U.S. Supreme Court, Lewis F. Powell Jr. (also former member of the Richmond, Va. board of education), may cast deciding vote on constitutionality of court-ordered mergers of city and surrounding school districts to achieve racial balance in enrollments. Then again, he may not. The high tribunal split four-to-four on long-contested Richmond case, with Justice Powell disqualifying himself because of previous membership on Richmond board, as well as on Va. state board of education. Immediate effect of tie vote has been to uphold Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals decision that reversed decision of Judge Robert R. Merhige Jr., who ordered merger of the Richmond school system with those of two nearby counties. Supreme Court tie decision also is binding--until the Supreme Court again addresses the issue.²³

After busing was implemented in the Omaha Public Schools, "an enrollment report showed that of the district's 838 new students, 37% or 310 students were transfers from the Omaha Public Schools."²⁴ "An examination of data concerning other factors which could have influenced the rate of migration and enrollment declines did not produce any other logical explanation for this

²¹Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), November 19, 1973, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

²²Frank A.Hoy, A Study of the Relationship Between Declining Enrollment and Desegregative Litigation in the School District of Omaha, Nebraska" (Ed. D. diss., University of Nebraska at Lincoln, 1978), 130.

²³Ibid., June 4, 1973.

²⁴Ibid., September 20, 1976.

unusually large enrollment decline²⁵ in the Omaha Public Schools and the increase in suburban Omaha school districts such as the Millard Public Schools.

Budget Growth

The budget from 1970-1971 of \$4,185,009.00 had grown to \$18,475,155.00 or 341% by 1978-1979.²⁶ The general fund had grown from \$3,309,231.00 to \$15,635,823.00 which reflects a 372% increase while the bond redemption budget increased 133% from \$875,778.00 to \$2,038,105.00. The remaining \$801,227.00 was monies set aside in a special building fund. As demonstrated in the foregoing figures, the special building fund represents almost the total bond redemption fund of 1970 only eight years earlier.

The growth of the budget can be attributed to a variety of issues. The following partial list from a budget increase report made available to the public at one of the 1974 budget hearings is indicative of the instructional needs of the time.

- 2.2-1 Three additional elementary principals were hired for the new schools and Central Elementary. Increased (administrative) and additional salaries amount to \$78,391.
- 2.2-3 Thirty-eight additional teachers have been hired. This factor, plus salary raises, increase this portion of the budget by \$714,073.
- 2.2-4 The pay for substitute teachers has been raised from \$22.50 to \$26.00 per day.

²⁵Frank A.Hoy, A Study of the Relationship Between Declining Enrollment and Desegregative Litigation in the School District of Omaha, Nebraska" (Ed. D. diss., University of Nebraska at Lincoln, 1978), 132.

²⁶Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), June 13, 1970 and August 7, 1978, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

- 2.2-5 Salary increases for instructional materials center personnel, plus the hiring of one and one-half additional staff members, are reflected in this portion of the budget.
- 2.2-6 The increased cost of salaries for guidance personnel, and hiring three additional guidance counselors, account for the \$45,647 increase.
- 2.2-7 The increased cost of clerical assistance and hiring twelve and one-half additional clerical staff members amounts to \$113,125. Most of these new staff members will be at Walt Disney and J. Sterling Morton Elementary Schools.
- 2.2-9 Supplying libraries in the two new schools account for the major portion of this increase.
- 2.2-17 The per pupil cost of the Science Center was raised from \$1.00 to \$1.75.²⁷

In addition to instructional needs, increased enrollment required building needs not only in the form of new buildings but for temporary buildings to meet large enrollment increases. "Motion by Houghston Tetrick, seconded by Norman Quist, to accept the low bid proffered by Reeder of \$11,475.00 for the portable classroom to be placed at Norris Elementary school. Motion carried."²⁸ The foregoing cost was added to a few months later as Millard was "part of Omaha"²⁹ and the building codes were different adding to educational costs.

Buildings and Bonds

If the cost of temporary facilities added to administrative and Board concerns, so did the need for more buildings. From 1971 to 1978, the Millard

²⁷Ibid., July 15, 1974.

²⁸Ibid., April 19, 1971.

²⁹Ibid., July 6, 1971.

Public Schools completed six elementary schools and two secondary schools. Three elementary schools had additions constructed to handle growing student populations; two other buildings had air conditioning added; the high school stadium was updated; and, a physical education field was added to the high school program.

Elementary schools built and occupied during this time included Montclair in August, 1971; Holling Heights in August, 1973; Walt Disney Elementary School in October, 1974; J. Sterling Morton in November, 1974; John G. Neihardt in August, 1977; and, Cottonwood in August, 1978. The two secondary buildings were Millard North Junior High School which was occupied in August of 1973 while Millard High School Level I was occupied in August, 1978.³⁰ The building of J. Sterling Morton and Walt Disney Elementary Schools represented a special challenge in that the unavailability of construction materials caused the buildings to not be complete at the start of the 1974-1975 school year. Shopping malls with available space were used as temporary sites until the buildings were ready for students.³¹

The capital improvements to the district required bond issues in 1972 for Disney and Morton Elementary Schools and additional land sites at a cost of \$2,850,000.00. A 1976 bond issue of \$11,500,000.00 was used to build Cottonwood and Neihardt Elementary Schools, and Millard High School Level I. Additional funds from this bond issue were used in the ensuing years to build two other elementary school just as funds from the bond issue in 1968 had

³⁰Dedication Brochures File for Millard Public Schools (Montclair, Holling, Disney, Morton, Neihardt, and Cottonwood Elementary Schools, Millard North Junior High, and Millard High School Level I), (Douglas County District 17), Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

³¹Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1974-1975 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

been used to build Montclair, Holling Heights, North Junior High, and complete other building additions.³²

Compounding the problems of the need for new buildings for students was the growing need for storage of both instructional supplies and maintenance materials as well as where to house the growing central administration. The latter had been located at Millard Central Junior High School formerly Millard Junior High School, but a growing student population was requiring a need for that space to be used for classrooms.

Representatives from Kirkham-Michael and Associates presented preliminary designs of a master plan for a warehouse, central office, and maintenance building. The Board asked that the drawings be revised and reviewed by the Building and Site Committee.³³

By the following spring 3.2 acres of land was purchased for a school district warehouse.³⁴ The location of central administrative offices continued to be at Central Junior High School and various other sites such as the Omaha Bakery Supply Company where the curriculum and special education offices as well as warehouse facilities were rented for the 1977-1978 school year.³⁵ With the opening of the level I high school building in the fall of 1978, the need to move central offices was not as great as the ninth grade was now housed outside of Central Junior High School.

Annexation

The growing suburban school district of Millard in the southwestern

³²Millard Public Schools General History File, (Douglas County District 17), Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

³³Ibid., , November 1, 1976.

³⁴Ibid., May 16, 1977.

³⁵Ibid., July 5, 1977.

sector of what was now Omaha, also encountered a struggle politically for its survival. At the same time that Millard Public Schools was fighting annexation by the Omaha Public Schools, the Millard School District was involved in a court case to annex land from Boys Town in order to have a location to build the level I attendance center for high school students.

Millard Public School's struggle for its existence during the 1970s was twofold. First, there was a legislative attempt to unite all of the school districts of Douglas County into one school district to be known as the Omaha Public Schools. The second attempt was, in essence, designed to achieve the same goal through the judicial branch of the government. Both attempts for annexation and consolidation were led by David Stahmer, a state senator, and later a citizen residing within the boundaries of Omaha Public Schools.

Legislation to Annex

The legislative attempt to consolidate the Millard Public Schools with the Omaha Public Schools, as well as the Westside and Ralston Public Schools, was proposed by Senator David Stahmer of Omaha in Legislative Bill 300 during the spring of 1973.³⁶ An early opponent of the bill was Millard Public Schools Superintendent Don Stroh, who stated "If Stahmer can show me how a merger would benefit kids, I support his bill."³⁷ Senator Stahmer felt that the existence of four districts "results in inequality of educational opportunities which violates the U. S. and state constitutions."³⁸ The hearing for this bill, one of Senator Stahmer's priority bills, was heard on March 6, 1973, and drew large

³⁶Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District),1972-1973 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

³⁷Ibid and Dr. Thomas Nenneman, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 29 July 1997.

³⁸Ibid.

crowds from the Millard and Ralston Public Schools and District 66 (Westside), all of which would be consolidated into the Omaha Public Schools under the statute. The bill was opposed by then Governor Exon. After the hearing, the Education Committee of the legislature voted to kill the bill.³⁹

Hard feelings between Senator Stahmer and the three suburban school districts followed the outcome of the legislative hearing. Rumor was reported that a Westside administrator had a comic making fun of Senator Stahmer prominently displayed in his office.

“I believe it is beneath the dignity of the teaching profession of this state” Stahmer said in his letter, “to all persons held out to be a professional to display in his office or in his home so that he might join together with whomever he associates to laugh at my expense.”⁴⁰

The purported comic that was published in the Omaha World Herald showed Senator Stahmer with a baseball bat broken over his head as three unified suburban school districts represented by three men with joined hands. The caption read “You Can’t Say I Didn’t Bring Them Together.”⁴¹ Ultimately, Senator Stahmer along with an official of the State Professionals Practices Commission went to the District 66 Superintendent’s office to search his files. No incriminating evidence was found.

Litigation to Annex

In early 1976, when the Omaha Public Schools was in the throes of developing their desegregation plan, David Stahmer filed a lawsuit on behalf of his daughter and other Omaha Public School students to consolidate the school

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid.

districts of Douglas County. In response to the lawsuit, the Board's attorney, Malcolm Young, gave a presentation on the district's response to lawsuits filed by David Stahmer to the Board. Following this presentation and some discussion regarding the matter, a motion was made Houghston Tetrick, seconded by Donna Black, to adopt the following resolution:

WHEREAS, an action has been commenced in the Lancaster Country District Court seeking to abolish the Millard School District; and

WHEREAS, this Board is of the considered opinion that the lawsuit is an attempt to interfere with the organization of the school districts as those school districts have been duly established by the Legislature under the laws of the State of Nebraska, and

WHEREAS, the Millard School District has for many years been a dynamic, progressive school district serving the residents and children to whom it is responsible; and

WHEREAS, the Millard School District has always taken such action as may be necessary whether it be the development of curricula, building facilities, or development of staff, to meet its responsibilities and provide a higher quality of education to its students; and

WHEREAS, this Board feels it is its duty to its patrons and to its students to preserve its identity and the autonomy of the Millard School District and to continue to meet the needs of the District,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

That the lawsuit brought by Mr. David Stahmer, and others, in the Lancaster County District Court be vigorously opposed so as to protect the continued existence of our District as a critical and viable force in the life of the community and the educational programs of the state.⁴²

In 1979, the court case was denied on a technicality in that Mr. Stahmer's daughter was no longer a student in the Omaha Public Schools as she had already graduated from high school. Thus Mr. Stahmer was not a party of

⁴²Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), February 16, 1976, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

interest and thus could not bring suit on such a case in court.⁴³ Although early in the case, Mr. Stahmer had said his case had nothing to do with the desegregation suit in the Omaha Schools, as a result of the case being denied in court, he attempted to include the suburban school districts in the desegregation suit. Again, the intervention was not allowed on a technicality as the suit was brought by Mr. Stahmer at a lower court, while the desegregation suit was at the U.S. Circuit of Court of Appeals level.⁴⁴

Governance and Administration

The Board of Education

During the 1970s the Board continued to use its committee system to handle the growing district. A committee that took considerable work was the Building and Site Committee. Growth, increasing legislative constraints placed on public schools, and the lack of time also necessitated the creation of the Vice President of the Board.⁴⁵ In addition, in the mid-1970s the Board decided to adopt the philosophy of Peter Drucker developed in the 1950s regarding Management By Objectives.

As was the growing trend in public education, the Board was subject to a continuously developing set of state statutes, department of education rules, and court case precedents. One such state statute was Legislative Bill 325 (LB325).

In a discussion of legislation, Dr. Stroh explained LB 325, the open meetings bill. He stated that the bill provides that organizations

⁴³Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1976-1977 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

⁴⁴Ibid., 1977-1978.

⁴⁵Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), May 17, 1976, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

such as school boards may hold closed sessions only for consideration of collective bargaining, real estate purchases or litigation, discussion regarding deployment of security personnel or devices, and investigative proceedings regarding allegations of criminal misconduct, etc.⁴⁶

In an attempt to give the Board a better focus of what was happening and needed to happen in a time of growth, the Board and administration adopted a Management By Objectives approach to running the district. Yearly objectives were set; quarterly and end of the year reports were given to the Board to keep them abreast of what was taking place. An early list of District Objectives established by the Board for 1975-1976 listed ten objectives along with who was responsible for the objective being met. This list consisted of:

1. Completion of the K-12 curriculum objectives. Person responsible: Dr. Nenneman
2. Completion of year-round school plan and a revision of 7-12 curriculum by September 1, 1976. Person responsible: Margaret Corkle
3. A study of our teacher evaluation program. Person responsible: Dr. Witt
4. Development of Phase I of a district-wide management system. Person responsible: Dick Lewis
5. Activities for each school to observe the Bicentennial anniversary of our country. Person responsible: Nancy Holloran
6. Each school to develop a plan to reduce vandalism in respective buildings. Person responsible: Dr. Stroh
7. Develop a K-6 health curriculum by August 1, 1976. Person responsible: Dr. Nenneman

⁴⁶Ibid., April 7, 1975.

8. Make a study of the organization of the secondary schools (K-6-3-3 vs. K-6-2-2-2). Person responsible: Dr. Stroh
9. Make a study of facility needs, to be submitted to the voters of the district prior to December 1, 1975. Person responsible: Dr. Stroh
10. Communications. Person responsible: Nancy Holloran⁴⁷

By 1977, two years later the goals being set for the district were fewer in number but required subgoals. These general goals included:

1. To develop a comprehensive communications system reaching all levels in the District.
2. To provide a comprehensive instructional program with alternatives for growth and development.
3. To create an environment in which the student can develop to his fullest potential.
4. To effectively utilize available resources through systematic planning and evaluation.⁴⁸

Growing student populations and a highly inflationary economy were putting great strains on what the district could or could not achieve. A growing need for public input was needed to make the decisions and keep the Board moving towards achieving the yearly objectives. Ultimately this resulted in the following position statement regarding district priorities:

The central mission of the Millard Public Schools is the instruction of students. Priorities among all objectives of the school system will be established in terms of their relative importance to that central mission.

It is recognized that a number of auxiliary services, such as student transportation and food services, are an integral part of the school operation and that certain levels of these services are, in

⁴⁷ibid., June 16, 1975.

⁴⁸ibid., June 6, 1977

fact, mandated by legislative action. Nevertheless, it must also be recognized that the continuous expansion of the auxiliary services may be indefensible in terms of contribution to the central mission and may actually, because of economic constraints, prevent the fulfillment of the instruction mission.

It is the nature of services for children that the responsibility for providing them is frequently shared among the schools, the family, the church or other institutions and agencies. Thus, policy positions of the Board of Education should in each case describe the responsibility which the school system can legitimately assume.⁴⁹

Administration

The administrative structure of the Millard Public Schools changed almost yearly during the period of 1971-1978. This was due to a variety of reasons including growth, need, flexibility as the district changed its secondary school organization, movement in and out of the district of administrators with strengths in a variety of areas, and decisions at times dictated by budgetary constraints. The largest changes were at the secondary level and at what was quickly becoming a central office to provide services to the growing number of buildings in the school district.

Administrative Growth

The 1971-1972 Staff Directory listed the Superintendent of Schools, Don Stroh; the Assistant Superintendent, Ron Witt; the Business Manager, Richard Lewis; Director of Vocational Education, Adult Education and Federal Funds, Harlan McCoy; Director of Instructional Materials, Dick Corwine; Senior High Principal, John A. Lammel; Senior High Assistant Principal Stan Hale; Senior High Assistant Principal and Activities Director, Robert Kremke; Junior High

⁴⁹Ibid., October 16, 1978.

Principal, Ike Pane; Junior High Assistant Principal, Don Kraft; Elementary Principals Bill Bridges, Wayne Ellis, Jerry Denkinger, Clayton Dobbins, Gene Bentley, Ron Reichert, Ron Bernth, and Gerald Sinclair; and, Special Education Department Head Adeline Reis.⁵⁰

By 1978-79, the central office staff of five people had grown to twenty people and consisted of the superintendent, associate superintendent, assistant superintendent for instruction, assistant superintendent for finance, director of secondary education, director of elementary education, director of pupil personnel services, director of hot lunch and transportation, director of maintenance and operations, coordinator of special education, coordinator of media, coordinator of communications, administrative assistant to the superintendent, administrative assistant to the associate superintendent, supervisor of special education, coordinator of gifted, Title I coordinator, mathematics facilitator, supervisor of buildings, and supervisor of grounds. In the same year, the secondary administration had grown to two high school principals, one each at the level I and II buildings; three assistant high school principals each at the level I and II buildings; two junior high principals; and, three assistant junior high principals, two at Central Junior High and one at North Junior High. The number of elementary principals had grown from eight to thirteen. Of the latter, the principal at Central Elementary also was in charge of the Title I program, summer school, and the volunteers program. In addition, Montclair elementary had an assistant principal who was also in charge of the new math curriculum at the elementary level for the whole district.⁵¹

⁵⁰Ibid., November 1, 1971.

⁵¹Ibid., March 18, 1978.

Much of the growth in the number of administrators can be explained due to the simple fact that the number of buildings had increased. Five more elementary buildings necessitated five more elementary principals. The explanation for the growth at the secondary level was two-fold in nature. First, there was size. More students meant more teachers which in turn required more supervision. Second, with the growth in size came job specialization. For example, at the junior high level a team concept had been adopted and the administrators served as team leaders to the various grade levels.⁵² In addition, one of the assistants at each junior high building had to serve as the registrar of the building and work with the local educational service unit to maintain computer records and the master schedule. At the senior high level, each of the two levels had an assistant who was in charge of curriculum and instruction, student personnel (registrar),⁵³ or the vocational program.⁵⁴ In addition, all secondary administrators were responsible for general student discipline in their buildings.

The growth at the central office level of administration during the 1970s is much like the secondary level in that the need for positions was based on district size and job specialization. The major difference being that more job specialization took place at the central office level.

The 1978-1979 Associate Superintendent was Dr. Ron Witt. He was in charge of general administration and oversaw the personnel department as well as staff development. He was assisted by two administrative assistants and the Coordinator of Communications. Dr. Witt also supervised the Director

⁵²Ibid., March 20, 1972.

⁵³Ibid., April 15, 1974.

⁵⁴Ibid., April 1, 1974.

of Pupil Support Personnel. The Director of Pupil Support Personnel, Dr. Dennis Harding, supervised the special education program, the school psychologists, school nurses, and the guidance counselors. The pupil personnel position was created in 1976 to oversee the special education program, counseling, and school psychology, and related areas such as discipline. Early work in this position focused resolving conflicts between special education and the school psychologists and to oversee the district's testing program.⁵⁵

During the same school year, the Assistant Superintendent for Finance, Dick Lewis, handled the finances of the school district and oversaw the new building projects. Mr. Lewis was assisted by a director who specialized in school lunch and transportation programs and one who focused on building maintenance and operations. The Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, Dr. Tom Nenneman, was assisted by two directors, one each for elementary and secondary education; three coordinators, one each for gifted education, media, and Title I Coordinator; and, one facilitator who assisted the new mathematics program.⁵⁶

Job Descriptions Developed

As the various administrative positions became more specialized, job descriptions were created and altered to fit the exact position as they were developing. Many examples of this existed at the elementary level where principals often served as curricular specialists.

⁵⁵Dr. Dennis Harding, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 29 July 1997.

⁵⁶Ibid., March 18, 1978 and Dr. Thomas Nenneman, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 29 July 1997

Motion by Ackerman, seconded by Bartels, to accept the recommended additional administrative appointments and/or assignments:

-Rich Pahls, principal at Hitchcock, will also serve as science facilitator and organizer of summer school; Marge Frederick, principal Disney, will be in charge of elementary Title I programs and co-chair the language arts committee; Charlene Lenz, assistant principal at Montclair, will become principal of Central Elementary, and will be in charge of the volunteer program and Title IV-C applications; Linda Kisler, Hitchcock teacher, will be assistant principal at Montclair Elementary School and serve as math facilitator half-time. Upon roll call vote, all members voted aye. Motion Carried.⁵⁷

Similar developing job positions were at the secondary level also. For example, a position for administrative support help was created to assist at the high school level as the district changed from a secondary program of 2-4 to 2-2-2, with the creation of two grades at each junior high (7-8), level I (9-10), and level II (11-12).⁵⁸ When the foregoing position was filled, the Board's minutes noted that following the internship, the candidate would "become a 9-10 grade assistant principal if his performance is satisfactory."⁵⁹ Similarly, in 1972 administrative interns were used to assist when Ike Pane and John A. Lammel respectively from the junior and senior high schools took sabbatical leaves two days a week to meet their doctoral residency requirements at the University of Nebraska.⁶⁰

⁵⁷Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), April 7, 1978, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

⁵⁸Ibid., April 5, 1976.

⁵⁹April 19, 1976.

⁶⁰Ibid., February 7, 1972.

Sometimes the positions created were K-12 in nature such as the Special Program Coordinator.

Administration

Special Programs Coordinator

Responsible to: Assistant Superintendent for Instruction
Performance responsibilities:

1. Is responsible to the Assistant Superintendent for:
 - a. organizing, implementing and evaluating the K-12 Challenge Program.
 - b. Organizing, implementing and evaluating an early childhood program with emphasis on pre-kindergarten assessment and consequent revision of the primary curriculum.
 - c. organization and supervision aspects of the K-12 reading development project.
2. Assists in the selection of the testing program for the school district.
3. Assists in planning, conducting and evaluating in-service programs in assigned curricular areas.
4. Assists in planning the summer school program.
5. Keeps informed of new instructional materials and teaching techniques in assigned areas.
6. Assists in the organization, supervision and utilization procedures for the District Curriculum Library.
7. Assumes other responsibilities as assigned by the Assistant Superintendent.⁶¹

⁶¹Ibid., May 5, 1975.

Three years later, this position was not listed as one of the central office positions, however, by 1978 there was a gifted coordinator.

As the need for more administrators and teachers grew one of the major changes was in what ultimately became the Associate Superintendent's role recruiting and staffing. Two major changes in personnel administration took place during the 1970s. First was the creation of a point system for building staffing. The system was based on each full-time student being worth one point and kindergarten students being worth a half-point. Points were assigned to various staff positions such as a classroom teacher being twenty points or one point per hour for a paraprofessional.⁶² Although this system was originally designed for both elementary and secondary schools, it remains the system of staffing elementary buildings today in a modified format.

The second change was in staff recruitment. Millard Public Schools was becoming large enough that for personnel recruiting trips to nearby universities and colleges the district developed a slide and tape presentation.⁶³ The school district was evolving from a training ground for other districts to a district that was looking for teaching staff that would become an integral part of the community at large. About the same time the recruitment presentation was being developed, the decision was made to use a more formalized procedure for personnel interviews.

Motion by Houghston Tetrick, seconded by Dr. Ackerman, that we use Selection Research for 1972-73 for Montclair, Hitchcock, Junior High Principal and Curriculum Director as recommended by the administration. Motion carried.⁶⁴

⁶²Ibid., December 17, 1973.

⁶³ Ibid., October 16, 1972.

⁶⁴Ibid., January 17, 1972.

The administrative staff was growing in its use of consultative options available for use. In 1977, administrators adopted the use of Project Empathy to interview teaching applicants. The project required a taped interview of forty questions. Such a technique was felt to give more information in helping to select final candidates.⁶⁵

Federal and State Legislative Constraints

As indicated above, the inflation of the 1970s was having a direct impact on the Millard Public Schools. Increased monies were being provided to local schools by the state and federal governments although not enough to account for inflation. Such monies did not come without controls over local boards of education. Millard Public Schools was not different from other schools in this sense. The Board needed and supported increased state aid, but that aid came with ramifications for the district. The same was true of federal monies channeled to the district.

State Imposed Constraints

The reforms of the state legislature and Governor Norbert Tiemann in the late 1960s were not enough to handle the burgeoning growth of the district in a time of high inflation. Increased state funding for public education was sought in 1974 in the form of Legislative Bill 772 (LB772). This legislation would serve to lower property taxes by raising state aid to education to 156 million dollars. This would be a major influx of funding from the then 55 million dollars. The legislation appeared on the 1974 state ballot in the form of a measure numbered 300. This legislation was strongly supported by the Nebraska State

⁶⁵Ibid., April 18, 1977.

School Board Association (NSSBA)⁶⁶ of which the Board was a member. Board's commitment to this measure was demonstrated in a resolution regarding this legislation.

BE IT RESOLVED that in support of Measure 300-(for), to be on the November 5 ballot, the Board of Education for the Millard School District has reviewed the scope of LB772 and analyzed the eventual impact and long-range objectives most apt to result from the implementation of LB 772 and after due consideration has resolved that Measure (300-for) should be supported in the interest of the over-all state-wide common welfare as well as the benefits that may accrue to the Millard School District. In adopting this resolution the Board is mindful of the tax consequences of the bill that may be more beneficial to some taxpayers than others and the possibility that the bill may or may not offer ultimate relief for some taxpayers but is of an earnest belief that education throughout Nebraska shall benefit as a result of the bill.⁶⁷

Legislative Bill 772 was defeated as Measure Number 300 on the ballot. The vote had been 59% against and 41% for the law. There was major confusion regarding the wording and the petition drive had been led by a former state senator, David Stahmer, who was not reelected in the same election.⁶⁸

What state funding that did exist was in part based on school accreditation. The latter had been a driving force in the early 1960s for the Board. The increased number of students pursuing teaching degrees in the late 1960s and early 1970s had allowed the state to mandate more stringent rules regarding teacher certification. The monitoring of teachers assigned to teach outside their endorsed subject areas was critical to the amount of state aid a school district would receive.

⁶⁶Ibid., October 7, 1974.

⁶⁷Ibid., October 21, 1974.

⁶⁸Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1974-1975 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

Dr. Witt presented a personnel report which included a breakdown of teachers by age, educational preparation, marital status and sex. He also presented a report on staff members who are teaching in unendorsed areas, as required by law. Regarding this report, Motion was by Charles Haskins, seconded by Donna Black, that the Board go on record as receiving and approving the names of teachers assigned to teach at a level or subject area for which he or she does not hold an endorsement as required by law. Upon roll call vote, all members voted aye. Motion carried. -also regarding this matter, the Board recommend that this become a declining list, and that staff members be encouraged to get in their endorsed areas.⁶⁹

State requirements were not limited to teacher accreditation, such requirements were also part of curriculum taught and assessments used. During the 1976-1977 school year the Board directed the curriculum division to bring the Millard Public Schools into compliance with a State Board of Education regulation requiring that school districts test students on certain basic skills. After piloting the Nebraska State Department of Education test developed for this purpose, the Millard Public Schools through its curriculum division decided to develop their own set of tests know as the MAP or Millard Assessment Program to meet this requirement.⁷⁰ The curriculum division was beginning to move towards developing programs for the school district versus adopting pre-existing commercially developed programs.

Federal Imposed Constraints

Federal requirements were also of concern to the Board. Participation in the federal hot lunch program placed certain stipulations on the types of meals served and government subsidies changed during the late 1970s in response

⁶⁹Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), November 3, 1975, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

⁷⁰Ibid., August 5, 1978 and Dr. Thomas Nenneman, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 29 July 1997

to the economy.⁷¹ This often necessitated increased costs being passed on to the students as did the loss of hamburger in 1978. Federal funding for Elementary and Secondary Education Act programs also placed regulations on the Board. One such regulation was the need for the Board to serve as the fiscal agent for federal funds to be used by Boys Town in their Title I program. "According to Federal law, the Millard School District is required to administer Title I funds to Boys Town, since they are considered part of the school district."⁷² Finally, the energy crisis of the 1970s added to the need for the Board to be fiscally conservative in terms of energy expenditures and in a variety of federal regulations regarding heat settings, use of vehicles for district transportation, and reduced use of lighting.⁷³

Board Policies

The Board policies developed in the late 1968 by Dr. Hayes remained intact for the most part into the early 1970s. As a result of a study that was conducted for the school district in 1972 regarding "student personnel relationships and student decorum,"⁷⁴ major revisions of Board policies were made. In addition, key new policy development centered around issues that reflected a changing society that resulted in needs for policies for both staff and students, as well as policies required by state statutes.

⁷¹Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1978-1979 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

⁷²Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), October 16, 1978, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

⁷³Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1973-1974 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

⁷⁴ Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), January 15, 1973, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

In anticipation of the findings of the student decorum report, "President Bartels appointed the Building and Sites Committee to work with administrators in reviewing, revising, and/or updating all present Board Policies"⁷⁵ From this committee, it was recommended in February, 1973 to hire Dr. Dale Hayes as a consultant in rewriting the Board Policies at a cost not to exceed \$2700.00.⁷⁶ Revisions for unspecified Board policies were tentatively approved four months later in June, 1973 with final reading to take place in August, 1973.⁷⁷ Policies, rules, and regulations in sections 2000, 5000, 7000, 8000, and 9000 dealing with administration, students, construction, internal board policies, and bylaws of the board were approved in February, 1974.⁷⁸ Other revisions to policies, rules, and regulations occurred on an as-needed-basis for the remainder of the 1970s.

Dr. Gary Barta was a graduate student working for Dr. Hayes during the policy revision. From a set of possible policies that Dr. Hayes provided, Dr. Barta would review them with a committee of board members, teachers, administrators, and district patrons. Necessary policies were selected based on perceived district needs. All policies were based on Nebraska statutes. Minor revisions were made in wording based on district needs at the time.⁷⁹

Societal Changes

One changing societal view of the time was in regards to pregnant women working with young students. A new maternity leave procedure was

⁷⁵Ibid., November 20, 1972.

⁷⁶Ibid., February 19, 1973.

⁷⁷Ibid., June 4, 1973.

⁷⁸Ibid., February 4, 1974.

⁷⁹Dr. Gary Barta, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 30 July 1997.

placed into the staff handbook for the 1973-1974 school year, reflecting not only societal point of view changes but within less than a year resulting legal changes being forced on the Board and other Nebraska school districts.

Maternity Leave

Employees who become pregnant shall be eligible for maternity leave. Any employee who is pregnant is required to notify, in writing, her immediate supervisor and the Personnel Office. This notice shall be accompanied by the Maternity Leave Report Form, completed by her personal physician, verifying the physical condition of the employed and the expected date of delivery. This notice will serve as a request for maternity leave.

In no event will the employee be permitted to continue her assigned duties when, in the judgment of the Superintendent, she becomes physically or mentally incapable of performing her regular assignments and duties.

In determining the date when the employee becomes physically or mentally incapable of satisfactory performance, the Superintendent will consider the written opinion of her personal physician, the opinion of her immediate supervisor, her expected delivery date, her work assignment and duties, and the welfare of the students.

The Superintendent shall recommend to the Board of Education the date for the beginning of maternity leave. If the employee disagrees with the date established, she may turn to the established grievance procedure.

After the employee's baby has been born and she wishes to return to her duties, she shall give the Superintendent one (1) week's written notice that she intends to terminate her maternity leave. This notice shall be accompanied by a written statement from her personal physician stating that she is physically and mentally able to resume her regular duties.

In determining when the employee may return to her duties, the Superintendent will consider the written statement of her physician, the opinion of her immediate supervisor, her work assignment and duties, and the welfare of the students. If the

employee disagrees with the date established, she may turn to the established grievance procedure.

Maternity leave may be granted for up to a full year and shall be, in all instances, without pay.⁸⁰

The new procedure was not without its problems. Dr. Witt, who was the Superintendent's designee to whom the procedure was assigned to implement, requested input from the Board in how to set the date of leave with the teacher.⁸¹ The issue was further complicated later that spring as the Nebraska Equal Opportunity commission ordered sick pay for pregnant teachers and no forced leave.⁸²

Another changing societal view was in regards to mandatory retirement ages.

Motion by Faythe Harrison, seconded by Donna Black, that Wilma Upchurch, second-grade teacher at Norris, and Laura Miller, sixth-grade teacher at Cather, both of whom will be 65 by next fall, be allowed to teach one more year. Upon roll call vote, all members voted aye. Motion. Carried.⁸³

As noted by Wilma Upchurch, the biggest changes were taking place in schools was society. For example, she noted that the male dominated society of the 1940s and 1950s was giving way as more females remained at work after the birth of their children. When Miss Upchurch first started working for the Millard Public Schools in 1947, the district had been very male dominated. Ultimately,

⁸⁰Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), August, 6, 1973, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

⁸¹Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1973-1974 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), February 4, 1974, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

Miss Upchurch was allowed to teach until the spring of 1977. For a couple of more years she served as a reading tutor at Holling Heights Elementary School.⁸⁴

Student Policies

Additional Board policies were necessary for the changing role that public schools needed to play in the lives of students. Two examples of such changing roles dealt with by the Board in the 1970s were child neglect and administering medication to students.

“Three representatives from the Douglas County Social Services were present to discuss with the Board, the policy regarding child neglect or abuse.”⁸⁵ Although no formal action was taken at this Board meeting, the policy was eventually passed by the Board. This policy represents the increasing role of the school in family life.

A similar policy during this time was one dealing with the growing number of students requiring medication at school. This policy was not as easy to develop due to the legal liability.

Motion by Faythe Harrison, seconded by Donna Black, to adopt the following Board Policy regarding the administering of medication in the Millard Public Schools:

The staff of the Millard Schools will not assume responsibility for administering any medication to students, except in case of an emergency. Motion carried.

Motion by Faythe Harrison, seconded by Donna Black, to approve the following rules and regulations relevant to the above policy on administering drugs:

⁸⁴Wilma Upchurch, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 25 October 1995.

⁸⁵Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), October 18, 1971, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

When a student must take medication which has been prescribed by a duly licensed physician, during the hours he is in school, it is the responsibility of the parent or legal guardian to make necessary arrangements.

- A. If the student is to be allowed to administer his own medication, he should bring to school only one day's supply at a time. The principal and school nurse should be notified, in writing, when a child will be taking medication during school hours. Forms for this purpose are available in the principal's offices.
- B. Parents who come to school to administer medication to a student must go to the principal's office and ask that the student be called to the office area.
- C. In the case of emergency medication, parents must bring to the school, with the medication, a doctor's order stating the name of the medication, a statement of the circumstances in which the medication should be administered, and the manner in which the medication should be administered. The medication should be administered by the school nurse. The school nurse shall determine what situations constitute an emergency. - Motion carried.⁸⁶

State statutes required that policies be developed for both students and staff. One such example was the passage of Legislative Bill 370 in 1973 that required that students, parents and staff have access to school files on the students. In addition, personnel files on the teachers were to be made available to them individually as to protect their rights. Confidentiality in the viewing of these records needed to be guaranteed.⁸⁷ Continued refinement of state statutes and State Department of Education rules and regulations caused this policy to be updated five years later.⁸⁸

⁸⁶Ibid., March 19, 1973.

⁸⁷Ibid., September 17, 1973.

⁸⁸Ibid., June 5, 1978.

Teacher Policies

Similarly, in 1978, the Policy Committee recommended that the Board develop a reduction in force policy by January 1, 1979, as required by state law. "It was the consensus of the Board that district's evaluation program be more rigid."⁸⁹ The latter was included in the policy development as it was one of the parameters given to boards of education in the state law requiring reduction in force policies.

At times, in anticipation of new state laws, the Board developed policies before they were required by statute. An example of this is found in the Professional Growth Policy developed during the Board's policy revisions carried out under the direction of Dr. Hayes.

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POLICY - PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

In order that each certified staff member may have both the opportunity and the incentive to improve his teacher performance, the board authorized the superintendent and the staff to develop, implement and evaluate a professional growth and development program.

Each certified staff member is expected to be involved continuously in a program of professional growth, so that the benefits obtained may have a lasting effect upon his students.⁹⁰

Such policy was not required by state law until 1982. The professional growth that was required included college credit courses, non-college credits for workshops or audit courses, and educational travel. For teachers with masters' degrees the use of non-graduate course professional growth experiences could be partially used for advancement on the salary schedule. Non-college credit

⁸⁹Ibid., October 2, 1978.

⁹⁰Ibid., July 21, 1973.

and educational travel requests were reviewed by the Professional Growth Committee.⁹¹

Salary Negotiations

The development of salary negotiation procedures of the late 1960s continued in the 1970s. High inflation juxtaposed against a desire on the part of the Board to keep taxes from rising too much in a growing school district caused the Board and the Millard Education Association (MEA) to go to fact finding three times in the 1970s. As it had in 1970-1971, the Board accepted the results of the fact finding committee for the 1971-1972 school year.⁹² The salary issue was further complicated during the 1971-1972 school year in that President Nixon imposed a ninety-day freeze on wages, prices and rents. Eventually, pressure from business and labor forced him to lift this freeze.⁹³ Until lifted, the Board acted in accordance with the freeze as per legal counsel advice. "Mr. Young was present and recommended to the Board of Education that the 1971-1972 salaries be based in accordance with the communique received from the office of Emergency Preparedness."⁹⁴ Once the freeze was lifted, the teachers, administration, and other staff were paid according to the agreed upon salary schedules retroactively.⁹⁵

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²Ibid., July 6, 1971.

⁹³Andrew Cayton, Elisabeth Israels Perry, and Allan M. Winkler, America Pathways to the Present: Civil War to the Present (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1995), 754.

⁹⁴Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), September 7, 1971, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

⁹⁵Ibid., January 3, 1972.

In 1973, the Board voted to "reject the Fact Finding Boards recommendations and to stay with our final offer of \$7,150 base, plus additional insurance, etc."⁹⁶ The difference in the Board's last offer and what the fact finders recommended had been \$35.00 on the base salary. The MEA "voted with reservation to accept the Millard Board of Education's last offer."⁹⁷ The latter happened again in 1976 when the MEA declared impasse in salary negotiations.⁹⁸ Ultimately this time the MEA and the Board went to the Commission of Industrial Relations (CIR) to settle their differences regarding salary. The end result was a budget adjustment after the school year started to cover the added cost of teacher salaries.⁹⁹

The base salary for the 1970-1971 school year had been \$6,700.00. By 1978-1979 the base salary was set at \$9,500.00.¹⁰⁰ Impasse and fact finding was discussed again during the negotiations for the 1978-1979 school year but the Board decided to go back to the negotiating table one more time.¹⁰¹ The end result was a 41.8% increase in the base salary during the period of 1970 to 1978.

Related Employment Polices

Two other items regarding the Board's relationship with MEA during the 1970s are of importance. First, the growing size of the district required the

⁹⁶Ibid., June 4, 1973.

⁹⁷Ibid., July 2, 1973.

⁹⁸Ibid., June 7, 1976.

⁹⁹Ibid., November 15, 1976.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., June 5, 1978.

¹⁰¹Ibid., May 22, 1978.

hiring of part-time teachers. In response to this need, the board passed a policy.

That all certified part-time employees whose employment commences with the 1974-75 school year be compensated on the salary schedule according to the proportion of time they are assigned, with no fringe benefits provided for certified part-time employees except as provided by law.¹⁰²

This policy was further defined by administrative rules and regulations as follows:

1. Part-time certified employees beginning employment with the Millard Public Schools may be granted credit for up to four years of prior experience.
2. Part-time certified employees will be placed on the horizontal step commensurate with the degree or number of hours they have earned.
3. Part-time certified employees will advance on the salary schedule one step for every two years of service.
4. Part-time certified employees will not be allowed to advance beyond the sixth step on the salary schedule.¹⁰³

In addition to needing part-time staff members, teachers with specialized endorsements, such as in special education or vocational education, were often difficult to find. Thus the Board passed a policy regarding the conditions of employment for teachers not certified in their assigned teaching areas.¹⁰⁴ Such teachers were employed for one year in which they had to meet all the requirements for the proper endorsement or their contract was terminated. At times special pay had to be worked out in order to fill such

¹⁰²Ibid., July 15, 1974.

¹⁰³Ibid., August 19, 1974.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., April 15, 1974.

positions. For example, one year administrators were unable to hire an electronics teacher. They hired an electrician with a provisional trade certificate at \$5.75 an hour for a forty-hour work week to teach the electronics classes.¹⁰⁵

Legal Issues

The social upheaval of the 1960s gave way to major changes in American society that were often decided in judicial chambers. The litigation of the 1960s had seldom required the Board or its representatives to go to court. This was not the case for the 1970s. Legal issues during this time centered around unions, building litigation, special education cases, school district liability in a growing number of student cases, and religious schools.

The growing size of the district required that the Board deal with a wide variety of personnel issues. Over time, various groups, such as the custodians, decided to unionize. Ultimately such unionization did take place, but it was not achieved without litigation.

Motion by Faythe Harrison, seconded by Donna Black, that a letter be written to Robert L. Costello, President, Building Service Employees, Local No. 226, advising that after consideration of all factors under the law and the circumstances, his request for recognition is respectfully declined. This action was recommended by the school attorney. Motion carried.¹⁰⁶

Within two months the Board was directing their attorney to represent them in the Commission of Industrial Relations regarding the unionization of the custodial staff.¹⁰⁷ The end result being a vote on the part of the custodians to unionize and therefore receive union representation at the negotiations table.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., August 22, 1977.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., February 19, 1973.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., April 16, 1973.

A carry over piece of litigation from the 1960s was a suit regarding the faulty drainage system at the high school stadium against the Millard Public Schools by Wiebe Construction. Also, a counter suit on the Board's part had been filed. Both the suit and the counter suit were denied at the Douglas County Court level. The Wiebe Construction Company appealed to the Nebraska Supreme Court and the school district was ordered to pay the remaining \$57,000.00 plus interest to the construction company.¹⁰⁸

As the city of Millard was annexed by the city of Omaha, new building codes, rules, and regulations were imposed on the school district. The construction of Millard North Junior High resulted in differences with the city of Omaha over the location of an access road.¹⁰⁹ Although the building of the road was eventually compromised upon by the subdivision developer, the city of Omaha, and the school district, the construction of a pedestrian overpass over Center Street, so that students could safely pass over the street continued to be an item of contention between the school district and the city of Omaha. North Junior High School was opened in the fall of 1973. Three years later the overpass was still not built.

Jim Cramer reported no progress on when the City of Omaha will begin building the pedestrian overpass at 138th and West Center Road. The city has requested that Millard pay one-half of the City's obligation to expedite construction. Mr. Young advised that the school district funds cannot be used for this purpose. The Board will write letters to local civic organizations, city councilmen and state senators encouraging them to ask Omaha to make this a high priority.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸Ibid., August 2, 1976.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., September 18, 1972.

¹¹⁰Ibid., June 21, 1976.

Ultimately the overpass was completed at city expense in 1977. The completion of this project was accomplished through the work of community members participating in a letter writing campaign to city officials.¹¹¹

Zoning was another concern that came under the careful scrutiny of the Board. The Board's opposition to the building of trailer courts, due to a high number of students coming from such housing units and the low tax revenue generated by such property, from the 1960s continued. The Board passed a resolution to this effect upon a request to the Omaha Planning Board for Casa Villa. In its resolution it also recommended that "all zoning applications for the creation of mobile parks similar to Casa Villa be denied."¹¹²

Such watchfulness on the part of the Board and its legal counsel was not limited to trailer courts. As the Board and administrators studied the growth trends of the school district, the Board purchased land in locations where future schools might be located. One such location was in the Piedmont subdivision north of Pacific Street. The location of other growing public entities such as power companies often interfered with the school district's plans.

Motion by Houghston Tetrick, seconded by Faythe Harrison, that Superintendent Don Stroh, the school attorney and a representative from Gollehon and Schemmer attend the City Council Meeting on July 17 at 2 p.m. for the purpose of trying to defeat the location on the northwest corner of 156th and Pacific Streets to being zoned industrial for use by Omaha Public Power District. Upon roll call vote, all members voted aye. Motion carried.¹¹³

¹¹¹Nancy Holloran, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 4 August 1997.

¹¹²Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), May 6, 1974, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹¹³Ibid., July 12, 1973.

The attempt on the part of the Board was successful in this case and the power transmitting station was relocated. This was important to the school district in terms of safety, as within a few blocks of the proposed industrial site was the location of what eventually would become Cottonwood Elementary School.

Boys Town

The litigation over the high school stadium, the trailer courts, and the location of power transmitting stations was small in comparison to the major land litigation of the 1970s involving Boys Town. Anticipated growth in the school district caused the Board to acquire a piece of property that would be suitable for the location of a second high school campus on the north side of the school district. Within the boundaries of the school district was the world famous orphanage, Boys Town.

Late in 1973, the Board directed their attorney to contact Boys Town regarding forty acres located at the northwest corner of 144th and Pacific Street.¹¹⁴ A meeting between the school district and representation from Boys Town documented by the school district's attorney, was as follows:

...the meeting was opened by me in which I stated the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the possibility of arriving at an agreeable price for the purchase of the 40 acres lying on the Northwest corner of 144th and Pacific Street.

Mr. Grodinsky's reply was that they not willing to sell the property and that they feel the Board of Education is not giving due consideration to the effect that the acquisition would have on the Boy's Town plant and the Boy's Town plans, and that furthermore more consideration should be given by the School Board to the acquisition of the property adjacent to the DeMarco property. I told the Boy's Town representatives that the site committee had made

¹¹⁴Ibid., December 17, 1973.

its determination as the most feasible site and that all of the things they talked about had been taken into consideration.¹¹⁵

Continued discussion on the part of the board of the Father Flanagan Trust resulted in their decision not to sell the property to the Millard Public Schools. Since Millard Public Schools is a branch of local government established by the state government, the Board decided to use the right of eminent domain to obtain the property for the new high school campus. During the next two years the Board repeatedly condemned the land and obtained bids for a fair price. The Board was thwarted by Boys Town through legal technicalities of the proceedings. In late 1975, Boys Town obtained a temporary injunction and then sought a permanent injunction to prevent eminent domain action on the part of the Board.¹¹⁶ In late December, Judge Burke ruled that the right of eminent domain did not pertain to this case in that the Millard Public Schools had demonstrated a need for the land but not a lack of an alternative site.¹¹⁷ The Board decided "unanimously"¹¹⁸ to appeal to the Nebraska State Supreme Court. In August, 1976, the Nebraska Supreme Court removed the stay of the lower court and said that the Millard Public Schools did have the right of eminent domain. Within two days of reporting this to the Board, plans were made to appraise the land once again.¹¹⁹ Boys Town appealed to the United States Supreme Court and lost the appeal. The result for the Board and the

¹¹⁵Ibid., January 7, 1974.

¹¹⁶Ibid., December 1, 1975.

¹¹⁷Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1975-1976 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹¹⁸Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), January 5, 1976, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹¹⁹Ibid., August 16, 1976.

Millard Public Schools was that they would be able to build the much needed second high school campus, but that the facility would not be complete until the fall of 1978.¹²⁰ Ironically, throughout the period of all of this litigation the Millard Public Schools and several other metropolitan districts were contracting with the Boys Town for vocational education services and Boys Town was having Title I programs administered to its students through administrators of the Millard Public Schools.

Special Education

A major piece of special education litigation that the school district became involved in during the 1970s concerned reimbursement for special education services as found in Legislative Bill 403.¹²¹ A law suit had been initiated in the Lancaster County Court against the Nebraska State Department of Education regarding the reimbursement of services for special education in regards to the cost of testing, outside agency payments, and the total cost of establishment of such programs.¹²² The 1973 law requiring such programs was not funded at the level to include 90% reimbursement for all services performed by school districts causing short falls in the budget for both the Millard Public Schools and Westside. The lost funding for the Millard Public Schools had been \$100,00.00.¹²³ The two districts lost the case in the Lancaster County Court. During the summer of 1978, the two districts were working again to

¹²⁰Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1976-1977 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹²¹Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), March 17, 1975, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹²²Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1975-1976 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹²³Ibid., 1975-1976.

appeal the case to the Nebraska State Supreme Court.¹²⁴ The case was finally determined against the two school districts.¹²⁵

The similar situations of the Millard and Westside districts often caused them to work together in legal situations, as the Board did by entering into a case regarding a special education student.¹²⁶ This case involved parents attempting to turn over guardianship to an aunt residing in the Millard School District of a child who required level III special education placement in residential care. The parents resided in New Jersey. Since Westside were involved in a similar case, Millard enjoined in their case as an interested party.¹²⁷

Student Cases

The youth culture of the 1960s had resulted in increased student rights through litigation in the court systems throughout the United States. This increased awareness of students rights resulted in many legal questions on the part of the Board. One such question concerned the issue of a closed or open meeting on the part of the Board when considering an expulsion hearing. The district's legal counsel reported that

...any official action taken by the Board shall be during the open session. Therefore, the Board could hear the evidence in executive session if the student so wished and come back to the public part of the meeting to announce their decision or even to vote.¹²⁸

¹²⁴Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), July 13, 1978, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹²⁵Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1982-1983 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹²⁶Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), September 19, 1977, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹²⁷Ibid., September 19, 1977.

¹²⁸Ibid., March 19, 1973.

Increased need on the part of administrators caused the Board to develop a "policy for the purpose of providing legal counsel for school administrators in special situations."¹²⁹

The foregoing was the result of liability situations that had occurred during the 1973-1974 school year in the Millard Public Schools. On October 4, 1973 at approximately 3:45 p.m. a school bus ran over a student.¹³⁰

As near as could be determined, the youngster, Johnny Doe, in getting off the bus had somehow dropped his lunch pail under the bus and crawled under the bus to retrieve it. As he was crawling out, the bus started forward and the accident occurred.¹³¹

The investigation and resulting liability was turned over to and handled by the school district's insurance company; the parents did eventually file a suit in the death of their son.¹³² The school district put together a special committee to study bus safety, and the committee recommended more student training regarding safety and the communication of bus rules to parents.

In the spring following the most unfortunate foregoing situation, a student was killed at Millard Central Junior High School in a physical education class. On April 3, 1974, a student was being helped by another student with his golf swing. The assisted student was struck by another student's golf club behind his ear. The student never regained consciousness.¹³³ At a June Board meeting

¹²⁹Ibid., May 20, 1974.

¹³⁰Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1973-1974 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹³¹Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), October 15, 1973, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska. (Student name changed to insure privacy for the family.)

¹³²Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1974-1975 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹³³Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1973-1974 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

of that year, a letter was received requesting disclosure of the facts surrounding the student's death.¹³⁴ The resulting litigation centered around the issue of whether the school district was negligent in the supervision of students. On the date of the student's death, one teacher was absent from class and a student teacher was assisting with the instruction. The instruction took place under conditions contrary to the procedures outlined in the district's curriculum guide.

The burden of proof rested with the deceased student's family to show that the district was negligent. In the trial court ruling, the school district was found negligent. On appeal to the District Court the lower court's ruling was upheld.¹³⁵

Religious Cases

A final topic of litigation in the 1970s concerned religious freedoms. At the center of the issue was whether the Nebraska Department of Education had the right to regulate schools affiliated with churches. State law required such regulation. As stated earlier, Nebraska received national attention regarding this issue. The reporting of any illegal schools operating within a public school district was obligatory.¹³⁶ This issue was coupled with a local issue of concern in the Millard Public Schools regarding the showing of a film called the "The Lottery."¹³⁷ As reported to the Board by Dr. Stroh, the issue was complicated in that Pastor Eichenauer, the leader of the Marshall Drive Baptist Church and its corresponding school, had been in opposition to the showing of the film in

¹³⁴Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), June 17, 1974, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹³⁵Brahatecek v. Millard School District, 71 SCJ 101 (2d District, 1979).

¹³⁶ Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1976-1977 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹³⁷Ibid.

question. Administrators worked diligently to make sure the two issues were kept separate.

Dr. Stroh explained that a private school is operating in the Millard district that has not received state approval, and that according to Law 70-201 and 79-211, it is his legal responsibility to notify the parents of the students attending that school that they are in violation of the Compulsory Education Law.¹³⁸

The school had been in operation for almost a full year and had only recently been discovered when a student had transferred to Millard High School, and a review of his transcript revealed the school he had come from was not state approved. The issue was further complicated by the fact that some of the students were believed to be from the closed school in Louisville, Nebraska, which was receiving national attention.¹³⁹

A review of how to handle complaints regarding curriculum was immediately begun even though the present policies were passed only two years earlier in February, 1975.¹⁴⁰ Under the threat of a penalty of fine, the Douglas County Superintendent was informed of the school and proper state officials contacted.

Public Relations

Public relations during the 1970s focused on a variety of topics. Major concentration was placed on plans to sell bond issues to the public, the use of volunteers in the school district, a policy to work with local religious

¹³⁸Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), April 18, 1977, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹³⁹Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1976-1977 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹⁴⁰Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), April 18, 1977, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska. (A further discussion of this issue will be found in the curriculum section of this chapter.)

organizations and churches to provide social time for families, a concerted effort to collect information from district patrons regarding their feelings and concerns regarding the Millard School District, and the need to educate the public of the needs of the district.

Coordinator of Communications

A key component in the public relations program from the early 1970s on was the coordinator of communications, Nancy Holloran. What began as a few hours a week assisting with the school district's newsletter, quickly became a full time position developing recruitment brochures, board meeting brochures, and school dedications along with special events such as fall workshops. The latter entailed arranging for speakers, writing skits, or preparing the coffee for the breaks during the workshops. Eventually, news media relations became a huge part of the position. Working to make all staff part of the public relations program for the district was identified as a key to good public relations. This became a career goal for Nancy Holloran.¹⁴¹

Public relations from the onset was plagued by rapid growth of the district. Often new students to the school district could not attend their neighborhood school due to overcrowding. Dependence on the real estate community to communicate the attendance areas for students often resulted in upset patrons who were new to the school district.¹⁴²

School Facilities Made Available for Patron Use

A continuing component of the public relations program on the part of the Board and administrators was to make school facilities available to civic

¹⁴¹Nancy Holloran, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 4 August 1997.

¹⁴²Nancy Holloran, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 4 August 1997.

groups. Such use provided ample proponents of bond issues when the growing numbers of students dictated such fiscal needs. The bond issues of this time, however, took on a more serious tone as a larger number of students also meant a larger number of voters who needed to be informed of the need to vote to raise their own taxes. Specific plans were in the Board packets from this time. These plans outlined the public relations program to be used to promote a bond issue. The 1972 bond issue which passed with a 62%¹⁴³ majority in inflationary times had four components. The four components were coordinated by the office of Superintendent Stroh. General Publicity was handled by Nancy Holloran, the school district's public relations coordinator, a Speakers Bureau was coordinated by Associate Superintendent Ron Witt, Small Group Meetings were handled by principal Wayne Ellis, and the district was divided into Area Units which represented elementary attendance centers. The functions for each component were as follows:

1. Publicity
Helps to develop information brochures, schedules and prepares newspaper releases, aids in the development of materials for the speakers, aids principals in publicity for their area unit.
2. Speakers Bureau:
Schedules speaking engagements, aids in the development of visual aids, and obtains endorsements.
3. Small Group Meetings:
Devises plans for block meetings, door-to-door campaigns and telephone canvass.
4. Area Unit:
Elementary principals and PTA presidents serve as co-chairmen. Duties will be to organize area into small units,

¹⁴³Ibid.

recruit workers to carry out the door-to-door campaign and telephone canvass.¹⁴⁴

Similar organization helped to pass the bond issue in 1976 with a 79% voter approval rate.¹⁴⁵

Committees and Questionnaires

Another key component in the Board and the administration's public relations plan was to include the public whenever possible on committees. One such committee was the Ministerial Advisory Council which met with Superintendent Stroh on a regular basis to discuss issues and concerns of common interest such as drug and alcohol education, curriculum dealing with human sexuality, and church night. The strong involvement of parents and the religious community is reflected in a Board policy of the time that dealt with social events for students and Wednesday night being designated as family night.

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Students

Social Events - Meetings

All school social events will be restricted to members of the student body, the class or club concerned and their guests. Parents are always welcome at school functions.

All social events are to be chaperoned properly at the direction of the school principal.

Permission to have social events is to be cleared with the building principal and placed on the calendar. The principal will expect the

¹⁴⁴Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), August 21, 1972, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹⁴⁵Millard Public Schools General History File, (Douglas County District 17), Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

group and their sponsor to work out details in preparation and clean-up.

All events held on school nights should end by eleven o'clock unless changed by the principal.

There are to be no parties at the end of the school year.

No school parties are to be held during the school day unless the activity represents a meaningful part of the educational program. The school principal shall determine the number of parties to be held each year.

Family Night

Wednesday night is designated for students to participate in family activities. School-sponsored activities are not scheduled on this night, and teachers do not schedule examinations for Thursday except during exam week.¹⁴⁶

This policy actually reflected a change in that the Wednesday night had originally been designated as church night. Such policy changes were common in the 1970s due to a series of court rulings more clearly defining the separation of church and state.

The need for public input is also found in the use of public opinion surveys used by the Board and administrators. Many issues were being discussed during the 1970s and with a downturn in the economy, the Board had to prioritize in what direction the school district needed to move. Such issues included class size, teaching staff, vocational programs, facilities, etc.

Public Opinion Survey

Dear Parent:

The Board of Education would like to have your opinion on our overall school operation. Will you please take a few minutes to answer the following questions? No signature is necessary. If you

¹⁴⁶Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), December 1, 1975, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

have more than one child in the elementary school you need only complete one questionnaire. If you have one student in elementary, one in junior high, and one in senior high, you should complete one on each student. Please return this opinionnaire to your child's school by May 14, 1971.

Please check: ___Elementary
 ___Junior High
 ___Senior High

1. What is important to you in assessing the quality of schools?
 Rank in order of importance: 1-highest - 8-lowest.

___instruction
 ___class size
 ___programs for various skill levels
 ___up-to-date revisions in curriculum
 ___special services such as psychological, speech, guidance, etc.
 ___a full and varied extra curricular program
 ___condition of the physical school plant
 ___other (list)

2. What do you consider to be an ideal class size for each of the following grades?

___Kindergarten
 ___1-3
 ___4-6
 ___Junior High (academic courses)
 ___Senior High (academic courses)

Comments:

3. In your contacts with the members of our teaching staff, would you rank their professional competence: ___excellent, ___good, ___fair, ___poor.

4. How would you rate the discipline in the Millard Schools?
 ___excellent, ___good, ___fair, ___poor.
 If poor, what recommendations do you have?

5. What is your appraisal of the strength of our curriculum in the following subject areas? Please check each area.

English	excellent ___	acceptable ___	poor ___
Social Studies/History	excellent ___	acceptable ___	poor ___
Mathematics	excellent ___	acceptable ___	poor ___
Science	excellent ___	acceptable ___	poor ___
Foreign Language	excellent ___	acceptable ___	poor ___
Music	excellent ___	acceptable ___	poor ___
Art	excellent ___	acceptable ___	poor ___
Reading	excellent ___	acceptable ___	poor ___
Physical Education	excellent ___	acceptable ___	poor ___
Business Education	excellent ___	acceptable ___	poor ___
Home Economics	excellent ___	acceptable ___	poor ___
Industrial Arts	excellent ___	acceptable ___	poor ___

6. Should the vocational curriculum for non-college students be expanded and strengthened? ___ yes ___ no ___ no opinion
7. Do you feel that the salaries of the Millard professional staff are:
___ too high ___ about right ___ too low
8. Do the communications from your school adequately give you the information which you need? ___ yes ___ no
If your answer to #8 is no, how can communications be improved?
9. Do the communications from the central office give you adequate information concerning the entire district? ___ yes ___ no
10. If you had the opportunity to change one thing in our school system what would it be?
11. In terms of the quality of your child's educational do you feel your taxes are: ___ too high ___ about right ___ too low
12. Do you feel that the buildings which the Millard Schools have constructed to date are: ___ too elaborate ___ adequate in terms of modern day education ___ not adequate in terms of modern day education
13. How would you evaluate the quality of the Millard Public Schools? ___ excellent ___ good ___ fair ___ poor

Any other comments?¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁷Ibid., April 5, 1971.

Both Dr. Harding and Nancy Holloran discussed these early surveys. As a result of these early surveys, the administration continues to survey yearly the citizens of the district regarding their perceptions of the educational program. This includes a grade rating of the district. With the advent of Dr. Harding and other administrators trained in formal survey development and analysis, the use of such data increased.¹⁴⁸

Volunteers and Professional Staff

Another key public relations component during the 1970s was the use of volunteers in the schools. Designated teachers were assigned the task of coordinating volunteers in the schools. During the 1976-77 school year 180 teachers utilized 894 volunteers (not including room mothers).¹⁴⁹ Interestingly, this number of volunteers represented a 59% increase in the number of volunteers helping in the schools and a doubling of the number of hours. These volunteers in the schools served as good public relations agents for the schools when the need arose for bond issues. In addition, the use of volunteers was key in the bond issues over the years.¹⁵⁰

One of the issues facing the standing Public Relations Committee in 1977, beyond needing to name two more elementary schools, was how to honor the growing number of staff members who had been employed by the district for extended periods. Millard Public Schools was changing from the

¹⁴⁸Dr. Dennis Harding and Nancy Holloran, interview by author, Tape recordings, Omaha, Nebraska, 29 July 1997 and 4 August 1997.

¹⁴⁹Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), July 5, 1977, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹⁵⁰Nancy Holloran, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 4 August 1997.

training ground of the 1950s to a district that staff members wanted to remain a part of for the duration of their professional careers.

Following a discussion of methods for honoring employees who have been with the Millard Schools for ten years or longer, the committee agreed that an engraved plaque would be the most suitable type of award. Initial cost of this project would be between \$1,000 and \$2,000 because approximately 75 employees would be involved the first time.

The awards would probably be presented at a dinner to be held at Millard High School during American Education Week in November. Each employee being honored would be entitled to bring one guest; the cost of the dinner for additional guests would be paid by the employee. It was also suggested that former Board members be invited.¹⁵¹

The foregoing awarding of plaques and hosting a dinner became a Board policy and a school district tradition that remains until this time.

The growing needs of the school district made it imperative that the Board and administrators worked to educate the public in terms of the fiscal needs of the district. The close of 1978 saw an attempt made in the state of Nebraska to place a 5% lid on budgetary growth for local governments. Superintendent Stroh indicated that such a lid would "kill growing school districts like ours."¹⁵² The 5% lid would have limited the school district to a \$984,025.00 growth in its budget when the original budget called for a \$2,270,109.00 increase.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), July 18, 1977, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹⁵²May 18, 1978.

¹⁵³Ibid.

Business Practices

Business transactions for the district had been centralized under Richard (Dick) Lewis with the start of the 1970-1971 school year. The business department's work under his direction during the 1970s focused on six themes including the district's building program, computerization of business services, contracted custodial services, energy consumption, transportation, and the centralization of certain services. The first of these themes, the rapid building of new schools and school site acquisitions has already been discussed. The large amount of work being done regarding the district's building program at times interfered with the rest of the business department. This problem was reported to the Board by Dick Lewis as he discussed the difficulty of implementing both a new data processing program and supervising a remodeling project at Central Elementary school during the summer of 1974.¹⁵⁴ The net result of this problem was a redefining of business department responsibilities in terms of job descriptions and yearly timelines to assist in completing tasks in a timely fashion.

Computerization of the business services had started in the late 1960s with the computerization of the payroll.¹⁵⁵ This service was enlarged when all bills payable were added to a computer service through Automated Inc. with the start of the 1971-1972 school year.¹⁵⁶ Within two years, the school district, in cooperation with ESU #3, was developing a plan to contract computer services through a firm in Waco, Texas, to handle school district's data processing.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴Ibid., December 2, 1974.

¹⁵⁵Ibid., November 15, 1965.

¹⁵⁶Ibid., April 5, 1971.

¹⁵⁷Ibid., January 5, 1973.

This plan became a reality with the start of the 1974-1975 school year although it was a hectic change from the other systems that had previously been used. The cost of this service was split with the ESU#3 on a sixty-forty basis with the Millard schools paying the latter portion.¹⁵⁸ The business department's use of computerized systems of data processing was of great help when in 1976 the district decided to contract with the Douglas County Systems and Data Processing Center for a computerized census.¹⁵⁹ As in the case of the business department, the census data processing was eventually contracted through the data services of ESU#3.

Inflation and increased costs of custodial services after the unionization of the custodians caused the Board and the business department to pursue alternative ways of obtaining cleaning services with the opening of the level I high school building in the fall of 1978. The Board weighed the advantages of staff control and consistent cleaning materials and work schedules with the use of district employees and the cost savings provided through contracted cleaning.¹⁶⁰ District costs through the hiring of their own custodians was estimated at \$59,525.00. Company bids were received for \$48,000.00, \$57,000.00, and \$72,000.00. Partial custodial services were contracted on September 5, 1978.¹⁶¹ Within two weeks, the selected service was requesting a release from its contract. At that time, the next lowest bidder was awarded the contract.¹⁶² The use of such custodial services was critical at this time, in that

¹⁵⁸Ibid., August 19, 1974.

¹⁵⁹Ibid., March 15, 1976.

¹⁶⁰Ibid., July 17, 1978.

¹⁶¹Ibid., September 5, 1978.

¹⁶²Ibid.

contracting "would avoid any problems with the union or layoff of personnel at a future date."¹⁶³ In addition, the district established a precedent for using their own custodial staff during the day and using contracted services at night with minimal use of district employees in the evening.

The energy crisis affected the Millard Public Schools much like any other business or home during the 1970s. Strong attempts were made to make buildings energy efficient. The level I high school building was designed with energy conservation in mind. Building temperatures were set at sixty-eight degrees in the evening as night control thermostats were installed. Testing kits were ordered to maintain the efficiency of burners in school boilers. When lights were not needed, they were turned off. Additional planning was done regarding maintenance needs so that unnecessary driving was eliminated. Communication was maintained with fuel suppliers regarding possible shortages in delivery.¹⁶⁴

Transportation and Transfers

Providing transportation in the district was a concern for the business department in two forms. First, state law required that only students living more than four miles from schools needed to be provided bus services. For the 1973-1974 school year, the school district was transporting all students who lived over one mile from school.¹⁶⁵ The establishment of this policy had not been easily reached as the district had been considering following the four mile state

¹⁶³Ibid., July 17, 1978.

¹⁶⁴Ibid., January 5, 1973.

¹⁶⁵Ibid., August 7, 1973.

statute regarding secondary students. School consolidation commitments made to rural families during the late 1950s resulted in the one mile policy.¹⁶⁶

Compounding the issue was a large number of parents requesting school transfers for their students within the district. Such students were excluded from bus transportation early on in administrative transfer regulations.¹⁶⁷ Transportation regulations became an issue again with the opening of the level I high school building. In anticipation of possible problems, the Board decided to set the transportation limit for 7-10 grade students at two miles or more.¹⁶⁸ The issue was revisited several times during the next two years but was reaffirmed by the Board just prior to the opening of the level I high school building.¹⁶⁹ Full parent-pay bus programs were provided for those students wishing to participate in such programs.¹⁷⁰

The experimentation with the use of contracted bus services of the 1960s was continued in the 1970s due to the rising costs of energy. For the 1975-1976 school year, the district used a combination of both contracted services and the use of their own buses.¹⁷¹ On June 16, 1975, the Board accepted a bid from Keystone Bus Company. The Board's determination to contract school transportation business was demonstrated two months later, when the school district listed two buses for sale.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁶Ibid., June 18, 1973.

¹⁶⁷Ibid., October 16, 1972.

¹⁶⁸Ibid., February 16, 1976.

¹⁶⁹Ibid., August 7, 1978.

¹⁷⁰Dr. Ike Pane, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 29 July 1997.

¹⁷¹Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), March 3, 1975, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹⁷²Ibid., August 18, 1975.

Finally, with the decision to build a centralized school district warehouse, the business department developed a more centralized purchasing program. This had been the procedure during the past few years but from a variety of rented sites throughout the district. In a proposal to the Board the following instructional gains were noted by administrators:

1. Reduction or elimination of unnecessary duplication in purchasing.
2. Greater administrative control of inventories.
3. Ability to monitor quantities used or consumed by which programs or departments.
4. Better accounting control of purchase orders, invoices, and merchandise.
5. Better follow-up facilitated on merchandise returns and purchase problems.
6. Ability to take cost advantages in purchasing.
7. A more effective and efficient used of materials and resources.
8. Facilitates observation of fire codes relative to storage of flammables and liquids.
9. Delivery system to facilitate logistical needs of instructional programs.
10. A primary focal point referral of instructional material needs.¹⁷³

Services to be centralized in the proposal included centralized purchasing, receiving, and processing of materials and equipment; storing, scheduling, and distributing unique instructional materials; stocking of consumable materials for science; processing library/media and curriculum materials; monitoring preview

¹⁷³Ibid., June 5, 1978.

and selection of instructional materials; purchasing, and maintaining audio-visual materials; and, coordinating in-district mail service. The distribution center was to be under the direction of the Coordinator of Media Services. A part-time media specialist would also be employed to “implement and supervise a comprehensive program of technical services.”¹⁷⁴ When the distribution center opened in September, 1978, the plan utilized was the one listed above written by Dr. Corwine, the Coordinator of Media Services.¹⁷⁵

Curriculum and Instruction

The problems due to rapid growth faced by the Board and administrators during the 1960s were also experienced in curriculum and instruction. Curriculum development and challenges continued to be an issue during this period. The addition of Dr. Nenneman as the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction in 1972, gave undivided leadership to this division. By 1978, not only did curriculum have its own leadership, but the growth of the district had necessitated sub-leadership for elementary and secondary curriculum.

Special education continued its growth during this time. A new addition to the curriculum was what Millard Public Schools termed as challenge, or gifted education programs. Finally, instruction began to come under more focus as the personnel department explored options in assessing and evaluating instruction in the classroom.

¹⁷⁴Ibid.

¹⁷⁵Dr. Richard Corwine, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 7 October 1996.

Curriculum Development

The curriculum issues of the 1970s were varied and often times controversial. Many of the concerns that developed during this period can be divided into elementary or secondary issues. Other issues were generic in nature such as the formal needs assessment, state evaluation of the whole district, curriculum writing, the change in the film library, adult education, testing, and policy development.

Generic Curriculum Issues

Upon his arrival in 1972, Dr. Nenneman persuaded the Board to conduct a needs assessment to provide direction for the district in instruction and curriculum. The study was done by Battelle Center for Improved Education at a cost of \$5,000.00.¹⁷⁶ The survey focused on curriculum and programming but also included budgeting, facilities, board policy, school-community communications, innovation, school-student relationships, and guidance and counseling services.¹⁷⁷ The resulting study indicated that parents above everything wanted their children to receive individualized instruction. In addition, the survey revealed that parents wanted more community input, a systematic approach to how money and staff talents were used, alternatives for their students, and better home/school communication.¹⁷⁸ The data collected were used to develop a set of district beliefs.

It is the belief of the Millard Public Schools that education is not restricted to the study of books and/or programs, but is an

¹⁷⁶Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), November 6, 1972, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹⁷⁷Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1972-1973 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹⁷⁸ibid., 1973-1974 School Year.

everyday experience in all facets of life. Thus, all individuals have a responsibility for what happens in education in our schools.

We accept the fact that every person is unique in his needs, talents, and personality. Therefore, the educational process should be centered around the student with a concern for, and a commitment to, the individual. With a belief in the learning potential of all it serves, and a commitment to the development of such potential to its fullest, the Millard Public Schools shall endeavor to provide the environment essential for the above to flourish.¹⁷⁹

The data collected from the foregoing survey along with the state accreditation and North Central Evaluation during the 1973-1974 school year served as guideposts for the development of educational programs.¹⁸⁰ In response to this data collected in the early 1970s, the late 1970s saw the work of eighteen curriculum committees developing subject philosophies, program goals, and program objectives. The subjects included art, business, foreign language, gifted (challenge), guidance, health education, home economics, industrial education, kindergarten, language arts, mathematics, media, music outdoor education, reading, science, social studies, and special services. During that year 50% of the teaching staff were involved in some type of curriculum writing.¹⁸¹ The end result was a written curriculum in all of the subjects offered by the school district.

Other programs such as the film library and adult education experienced changes that were often caused by outside forces. For example, during the 1970s there was the development and establishment of a community college in

¹⁷⁹Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), August 6, 1973, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹⁸⁰Ibid., May 20.

¹⁸¹Ibid., March 1, 1976.

the greater Omaha area. Through contracting with the Metropolitan Technical Community College, the adult education program increased 452% as the number of adult participants rose from 255 to 1409 during the 1974-1975 school year.¹⁸² The Omaha Suburban Area Council of Schools (OSACS) decided to sell their film library to the local education service unit (ESU#3).¹⁸³ In turn, new services provided by ESU#3 allowed the Millard school district to pilot the use of video tape reproductions of educational films in five elementary schools during the 1978-1979 school year.¹⁸⁴ If the plan proved successful, which it did, then all Millard schools would be able to receive video reproductions of educational films changing the curricular use of films to video format.

Not only were curricular materials changing, so was when curriculum was written. In 1971, summer curriculum writing came into existence. This allowed staff to develop curriculum projects during the summer months that could not be developed during the school year due to a lack of time. The staff were paid 80% of the summer writing contract when the writing was completed. The other 20% was paid a year later after the projected had been implemented and evaluated. Projects were selected by a screening committee and had to include a background to the proposal, objectives, teaching methods to be used, a plan for evaluation and implementation, and a proposed budget.¹⁸⁵ Today summer curriculum writing remains one of the main forms of curriculum development used by the school district.

¹⁸² Ibid., June 25, 1975.

¹⁸³ Ibid., June 19, 1978.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., August 21, 1978.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., February 15, 1971.

The development by the Millard Public Schools of their own set of criterion-referenced tests to measure various skill levels resulted in the school district not using the Metropolitan Achievement Test during the 1973-1974 school year.¹⁸⁶ The criterion-referenced tests used, however, did not provide information which compared the Millard school district to other similar school districts. In addition, the district had a great deal of difficulty obtaining services to have the tests scored and correlated. In addition, some of the results were misplaced.¹⁸⁷ Subsequently, the Board directed that norm-referenced achievement tests be adopted again with the start of the 1974-1975 school year.

Upon the arrival of Dr. Harding as Director of Pupil Services in 1976, the testing program was already under review. A decision was made to administer the Metropolitan Achievement Test and to continue to report to parents the results of this test. In addition, the Board decided to be part of the California Achievement Test norming process during the 1976-1977 school year.¹⁸⁸ Subsequent review of the California Achievement Test determined that this battery of tests more directly corresponded with the Millard Public Schools curriculum as it was being developed. Thus a decision was made to adopt the California Achievement Test at the start of the 1978-1979 school year.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶Dr. Thomas Nenneman, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 29 July 1997.

¹⁸⁷Ibid., December 17, 1973.

¹⁸⁸Ibid., June 21, 1976.

¹⁸⁹Ibid., December 5, 1977.

Curriculum Challenges

The greatest topic of concern in the 1970s in the curriculum division was the number of challenges made to curriculum materials. This problem was not just a problem of the Millard Public Schools as a letter sent to the superintendent by the State Commissioner of Education, Anne Campbell, in April, 1976 indicated.

During recent months new controversies have erupted across the nation. Various individuals and groups have questioned the public schools over the use of instructional materials or the teaching of issues they regard as controversial.¹⁹⁰

As much as possible, the Board and administrators tried to be proactive in their approach to issues of controversy in curriculum development. For example, Dr. Nenneman reported that he was to meet with area ministers to review new social studies material to be used in a pilot program at Sandoz Elementary for the 1974-1975 school year.¹⁹¹ Similarly, a committee of clergymen was consulted when policies regarding religious issues in school were formulated.¹⁹² A controversial issues instructional policy had been adopted in June, 1975, with the following introduction:

6146

Instruction

Controversial Issues

In preparing for effective citizenship, pupils must learn the techniques and skills of democratic dissent. They must have opportunities to hear, discuss, and study issues that are controversial. Teachers must be free to conduct such discussions

¹⁹⁰Ibid., April 19, 1976.

¹⁹¹Ibid., June 17, 1974.

¹⁹²Ibid., October 6, 1975.

without fear or reprisal so long as they maintain a high level of professional impartiality.¹⁹³

In addition, related Board policy had been written in February, 1975, regarding community/parent complaints concerning school personnel and instructional materials. This policy provided a process for complaints about materials.

The policy was tested in the late 1970s, as indicated in Board minutes on questions from the public.

Don Williams, president of the newly formed Millard chapter of National Congress for Educational Excellence, presented the Board 26 complaint forms regarding the philosophy course. In addition he presented the following requests from his organization: That the Board of Education reconsider and re-evaluate their decision to implement the program, that a public hearing be held on the program, and that the NCEE (National Congress for Educational Excellence) review committee be allowed to examine the district's new health education curriculum.¹⁹⁴

The latter included what have traditionally been called the Sensitive Units which deal with basic human reproduction in the fifth and sixth grades. Board Policies were revised during this time, and pilots of both programs were completed.

Within a year, the NCEE was questioning a secondary curriculum issue, the showing of a film entitled "The Lottery." At this time the Board was asked to let the NCEE form a citizens' curriculum review committee to be elected by a special public meeting. The Board denied this request.¹⁹⁵ In response to this

¹⁹³Ibid., June 16, 1975.

¹⁹⁴Ibid., December 6, 1976.

¹⁹⁵Ibid., February 20, 1978.

request, however, the Board received the following letter signed by eight area ministers.

February 15, 1978

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE MILLARD SCHOOLS COMMUNITY:

As ministers of various churches in the Millard community, we, the undersigned, would like to encourage the continued educational excellence of our school system by discouraging the proposed authorized seven-persons committee called for in the proposed recommendation.

This is our unified conviction that none of the three areas of the specified function of this committee would be in the best interest of real educational excellence.

The first specific task of this committee to "formulate a simplified complaint procedure" is amiss since real complaints tend to be complex and are seldom "procedural." We feel the school board meeting open to the entire school community is still the most efficient way to handle educational grievances of any sort.

The second proposed area of responsibility for the committee would be to "review all complaints concerning curriculum matters." We oppose such a review committee on the basis that we understand this to be the function of the school board, duly elected by the people of Millard for advice and counsel in these areas, and that the recommended committee represents a duplication of this responsibility. Further, such a function seems to us to move the dangerous direction of curriculum control by citizens whose competence in curriculum evaluation may not be the best obtainable.

The third area of the prepossessed committee's work would be to "examine all proposed curriculum material." This function of the committee could amount to censorship and place the whole issue of curriculum into the hands of partisan pressure groups.

The proposed committee to be elected in a "democratic election" seems to us to be a duplication of the function of the school board, which is already elected in that manner. For those who feel that

the issue of curriculum or any of the other issues of education in Millard are deficient, we recommend the normal channels of electing school board members who are concerned about all the alleged deficiencies and are dealing with them through the democratic system already active and concerned.¹⁹⁶

Following the Board's denial of such an independent review committee, the controversy of the non-accredited Baptist school occurred further compounding the issue. The minister of that church was in support of the NCEE. In addition, a neighboring school district, Bellevue Public Schools, was using a text called "Perspectives in United States History" by Field Educational Publications. The text was perceived to give a negative perspective of American history by NCEE.¹⁹⁷ Millard Senior High School used the text in one of its classes, but it was one of several resources used and no complaint was received.¹⁹⁸ Finally, the Board, based on a curriculum review committee's recommendation, also kept the film "The Lottery" as an optional resource for use in the secondary schools.¹⁹⁹ In addition, parents were to be notified when the resource was to be used.²⁰⁰ Such strong support on the part of the public was due to a good public relations. In addition, although the policies regarding the review of curricular

¹⁹⁶Ibid., February 16, 1978.

¹⁹⁷ Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1976-1977 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹⁹⁸ Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), November 1, 1976, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹⁹⁹Ibid., February 20, 1978.

²⁰⁰ Dr. Thomas Nenneman, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 29 July 1997.

materials were partially revised in August, 1977, the benefits of written Board policy were proven.²⁰¹

Elementary Curriculum

Two major components of elementary curriculum took place during this period. One was the elementary philosophy program and the other was the development of the health education curriculum that contained human reproduction units at the elementary level.

Harry Stottlemeier curriculum causes problems

The philosophy program for elementary students, commonly referred to as the Harry Stottlemeier curriculum, received its name from the fictional character of a book used in the program that was adopted as a pilot by the Board in September, 1976.²⁰² The program was to develop critical reasoning skills in math, language arts, and social studies. The program was to be piloted at two elementary schools, Cather and Holling Heights, and other suburban schools in the metropolitan area in conjunction with the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Included in the program was an eleven week intensive training program for participating staff members. Parent pamphlets were devised and orientation nights were planned. In addition, follow-up phone calls were to be made to parents who could not attend the orientation. Involvement in the program was by parental choice, however, the Board received a petition signed by forty parents stating, "I have read numerous pages of "Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery" and the teachers' manual. I believe much more study should be

²⁰¹Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), August 15, 1977, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

²⁰²Ibid., September 7, 1976.

done before this is piloted in our schools.”²⁰³ Formalized complaint forms as per Board policy were also received at this time.

Based on the foregoing complaint, the Americanism and Instruction Committee reviewed the materials and decided to continue with the pilot project for students with parental permission.²⁰⁴ The premise of the Harry Stottlemeier, by Matthew Lippman, curriculum, or philosophy for kids, was to get students to think about ethical, political and religious questions for the purpose of employing critical-thinking skills.²⁰⁵ For example, one scenario had students guessing about who stole a student’s purse. This was to be followed with a discussion of how they arrived at their answer. The issue for many people was that no moral value of stealing being wrong was imposed on the class by the teacher.²⁰⁶

Although some suburban schools decided not to participate in the project, the Board continued with the project for one and one-half years.

Dr. Jack Langan, University of Nebraska at Omaha, presented a review to the Board on The Philosophy for Kids Pilot Program (Harry Stottlemeier). After discussion, the Board agreed to accept the following recommendations:

1. Based on the data from the Pilot, the “Harry Stottlemeier” program not be included in future Millard programming.
2. That, in addition to the continued development of critical thinking skills in the regular programming (science, mathematics, reading, social studies, etc.), the District continue

²⁰³Ibid., December 6, 1976.

²⁰⁴Ibid., January 17, 1977.

²⁰⁶Dr. Thomas Nenneman, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 29 July 1997.

²⁰⁶Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1975-1976 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

to search for programs which have as their primary focus - critical thinking skills.²⁰⁷

The national issue being discussed during the time was secular humanism. Many people thought it was too prevalent in the public schools. A Mrs. McAuley, the president and founder of National Congress for Educational Excellence, when in Omaha, was asked why she did not ask to talk to school administrators regarding her concerns, she responded with "I don't ever go to what I call the devil for salvation."²⁰⁸

Elementary health education

Another major concern regarding curriculum development in the 1970s was in health education. Since sex education had been a controversial issue in the 1960s at the secondary level, plans were made purposefully to gain public support for the program. This included having a cross section of the community involved in the planning process and having the curriculum reviewed by the superintendent's ministerial council. The decision to proceed with the curriculum in 1977 was done so with the "stipulation that the procedural steps be carried out by appropriate staff/personnel."²⁰⁹ These procedural steps included:

1. Program orientation sessions will be held in each of our elementary schools in March, prior to any use of materials.
2. Materials will be available to local elementary schools for preview.

²⁰⁷Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), July 3, 1978, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

²⁰⁸Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1975-1976 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

²⁰⁹Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), February 7, 1977, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

3. Parents will maintain the right to request that their child be excused from the unit.
4. Parents may sit in on the units as they are taught.
5. A listing of the resources used will be provided to parents should they wish to order copies for themselves.²¹⁰

Follow-up letters were sent to parents who did not attend meetings explaining the program and that the materials were available for review. The program was implemented in the month of April, 1977, with no major concerns.²¹¹

Secondary Curriculum

Since the 1970s was the period in which the secondary enrollment grew so dramatically, a great number of changes were made in secondary curriculum. These included the development of the junior high/middle school program; major changes in the delivery of the vocational education program; the development of a 2-2-2 organizational model for secondary education; continued change in curriculum leadership at the building levels; and, general changes in school curriculum.

The junior high program developed

The development of the junior high program in the 1970s was led by Ike Pane, the principal of Central Junior High School, and a committee formed by the Board to develop a junior high program.²¹² Principal Ike Pane felt the junior high school program was more like a mini-high school than it was a junior high program. The work to change to a more child-centered junior high program was

²¹⁰Ibid.

²¹¹Ibid., April 4, 1977.

²¹²February 15, 1971.

funded by a grant obtained through ESU#3.²¹³ Much of what was implemented at the time would today be called middle school programs and philosophy. The program developed was based on the needs of the early adolescent. The program was outlined as follows:

OBJECTIVES FOR THE JUNIOR HIGH

The major objective of a junior high school program should be the development of a curriculum designed specifically to meet the needs, interests, and problems of pre- and early adolescents. The junior high program should be designed so that students are able to achieve the highest degree of responsibility, productivity, creativity, and self-respect in settings which allow students to experience the fabric of life. To implement these basic concepts for benefit of our students, we shall endeavor to:

1. Be knowledgeable as teachers of the needs and motivations of students.
2. Provide a sensitivity to learning styles which take into account each child's personality and his reactions to people and situations.
3. Provide for continued program of skill development begun in the elementary grades and initiate programs which will be extended in high school.
4. Provide firsthand experiences which will create curiosity and inspire the student to seek further knowledge.
5. Provide instructional experiences and materials at the level of each student and encourage each to look upon education as a continuing process.
6. Provide for the vocational and avocational interests through laboratory and workshop facilities.
7. Help students develop a sense of responsibility for their own progress and safety, and for the progress and safety of others.

²¹³Dr. Ike Pane, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 29 July 1997.

8. Provide students an opportunity to be participating citizens in their school and community, which increasing orientation to adult citizenship.
9. Provide to each student information about his own abilities and development in order to help him understand his own problems and solve them. The goal will be that of helping individuals make wiser decisions regarding interpersonal relationships, educational pursuits, pre-vocational planning, leisure time activities, and esthetic interests.
10. Provide for all students, constructive experiences in group activity. Programs will be planned to provide for both leadership and cooperation. An important goal will be that of assisting each student to increase his capacity to adjust to different types of people and to various situations.
11. Provide a program to improve the physical and mental fitness of the individual.
12. Teach the basic American ideals.
13. Provide an individualized, exploratory program which emphasizes the pleasure of learning rather than competitive performance.
14. Provide a strong intramural program for grades seven and eight if there are sufficient numbers and an interscholastic program beginning no sooner than grade nine.
15. Provide a program to allow the student to acquire a positive self concept.²¹⁴

The junior high plan called for a strong guidance program, team teaching on a team with 100 to 150 students, and curriculum designed to meet the needs of the students.²¹⁵

²¹⁴Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), September 7, 1971, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

²¹⁵Ibid.

Over the next several years various components of the junior high program were implemented. During the second semester of 1971-1972, exploratory programs were established at Millard Junior High School in floating periods "to expose students to many different experiences and topics not available during the regular class sessions."²¹⁶ During the 1972-1973 school year teaming was piloted at Millard Junior High School and plans were made to use it at Millard North Junior High School when it opened in the fall of 1973 as noted in the following benefits.²¹⁷

The schedule isn't right, it can be changed easily. The students have the same teacher all year which leads to better student-teacher relationships. The schedule releases a student from a monotonous daily schedule. The program is activity-oriented. This allows for speakers, special projects, movies, etc. The teachers also are to plan together as a team to allow an interdisciplinary approach to teaching.²¹⁸

Team leadership for the interdisciplinary teams was provided the first year by Gary Barta and Sandra Bagley, both of whom were working on administrative endorsements.²¹⁹ The philosophy of the junior program was to be child-centered. The program was to put the child ahead of the curriculum. Investigation of student's entry level skills were to be studied and individualization of the curriculum was to take place. To better understand students quickly, interdisciplinary teams were formed. This allowed teachers to collaborate regarding individual students. Prior to this time administrators

²¹⁶Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1971-1972 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

²¹⁷Ibid, 1972-1973.

²¹⁸Ibid.

²¹⁹Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), March 20, 1972, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

seldom discussed students and their instructional needs with teachers. These administrators were now made team leaders. As team leaders, administrators played a more active role in the lives of students.²²⁰

Like much of the rest of the educational program, adjustments had to be made for growth as in 1971-1972 when ninth graders attended the high school due to over crowding at Millard Junior High School.²²¹ They were moved back in 1973-1974 when Millard North Junior High School opened and Millard Junior High School became Millard Central Junior High School. In 1978-1979, the ninth graders became a permanent part of the high school program. Various other components were added to the junior high program over the years. For example, a strong peer counseling program was added in 1976.²²² During the 1976-1977 school year, the district began exploring the possibility of adding computer-assisted instruction to the junior high schools.²²³ Eventually, this program would become a strong part of the middle school exploratory block.

Vocational education

The vocational program which had been one of the major themes of focus with the opening of Millard High School in 1970 changed significantly in the 1970s. In 1973, the vocational director, Mr. McCoy, resigned to administer the Eastern Nebraska Technical Community College.²²⁴ Ironically, the Board had been in strong support of the concept two years earlier.²²⁵ Fortunately, at

²²⁰Dr. Gary Barta, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 30 July 1997.

²²¹Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), April 15, 1971, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

²²²Ibid., May , 1976.

²²³Ibid., July 20, 1976.

²²⁴Ibid., November 5, 1973.

²²⁵Ibid., October 4, 1971.

the end of the 1972-1973 school year, a new vocational educational program had been started with Larry LaMay as the senior high vocational curriculum chairman for industrial arts, business education, and home economics.²²⁶ In the spring of 1974, the Board considered a report calling for an area vocational-technical center to be shared by the Omaha Suburban Area Council of Schools (OSACS). By late 1974, OSACS was working with Boys Town to study the idea of an exchange program between the member schools of OSACS and Boys Town.²²⁷ A formal agreement was reached with Boys Town within a few months that added agriculture, agribusiness, auto body repair, auto mechanics, bakery, barber and hair styling, construction, culinary arts, electricity, electronics, heating and air conditioning, machine shop, and welding to the vocational opportunities available to Millard high school students.²²⁸ This program known as the Metro Suburban Vocational Educational Association Joint Venture was approved by the Nebraska State Department of Education in late 1977.²²⁹

A new secondary structure explored

As the Board considered year-round school, the ever increasing high school population made the need for a second high school building evident. In late 1975, the Board and administrators began studying the concept of changing from a 3-3 concept--three junior high grades and 3 high school grades, to a 2-2-2 plan with two grades each at a junior high school, level I high school, and a level II high school. Such a concept would handle the district's growth and not require additional junior high schools for quite some time.

²²⁶Ibid., May 21, 1974.

²²⁷Ibid., December 16, 1974.

²²⁸Ibid., March 30, 1977.

²²⁹Ibid., October 3, 1977.

Quality curricular programs could specialize at the two developmental levels of early and late high school and extra curricular programs would be saved. In addition, future additions at both level I and II high school buildings could easily turn both buildings back into four grade high schools.²³⁰ The Board voted to accept such a plan after the concept was presented to the Board including a strong evaluation component for such a program.²³¹ Overcrowding continued to be a problem for another four years at the secondary level due to the controversy with Boys Town over obtaining a building site. In the fall of 1978 the 2-2-2 plan was put into operation.

Curricular leadership expanded

In 1972, when Dr. Nenneman was employed to oversee the curriculum of the district, the Board realized that one person would not be able to oversee directly all of the curriculum. Even as they searched for the assistant superintendent, a plan was being studied to add to the curricular leadership at the high school levels.

The development of curriculum and instructional methods in both the cognitive and affective domain is of greater need in educational programs today than at any previous time. A student who pursues either vocational or college preparation programs needs and deserves proper educational articulation, both vertically and horizontally. Continually and rapidly changing curriculums, instructional and learning techniques and student needs are reasons for continuing research and the need for allowance of adequate time to develop learning objectives. Curriculum area chairmen will be given the responsibility to initiate change which may involve new courses, instructional patterns, reorganization of present courses and the articulation of all curriculum objectives in their present areas.²³²

²³⁰Ibid., November 12, 1975.

²³¹Ibid.

²³²Ibid., March 6, 1972.

Two department chairmen were hired, Don West for science and math and Rick Kolowski for English and social studies. At the same time, a K-12 chairman was being considered in the future for physical education, health education, and outdoor education and adult recreation.²³³ This position was tabled until the new assistant superintendent for curriculum was hired.

Another change to take place in the curriculum leadership structure was the development of department heads for specific subjects in the 2-2-2 plan. The money and approval by the Board for such a plan passed in 1977 so that the new department heads would be able to plan for the new programs the following year.²³⁴ The following job description was used when hiring for these positions.

DEPARTMENT HEAD

QUALIFICATIONS:

1. Masters degree or evidence of satisfactory progress toward its attainment.
2. Teaching experience.

REPORTS TO: Building Principal and Director of Secondary Education.

LENGTH OF CONTRACT: (Not Specified Yet)

SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Curriculum
 - a. Assists in the development and evaluation of building and district curriculum
 - b. Promotes the coordination and articulation of the curriculum within and among buildings

²³³Ibid., April 24, 1972.

²³⁴Ibid., September 19, 1977.

- c. Assists in the interpretation of the district goals and subject area objectives to teachers
- d. Assists in the selection of appropriate materials, supplies and facilities

2. Administration

- a. Assists in the preparation of the budget
- b. Coordinates the use of department supplies and facilities
- c. Assists the building principal in communicating program information to the community²³⁵

This curricular leadership plan was modified later in the year when additional costs and released time were approved to plan for the new 2-2-2 buildings.²³⁶

In the interim between the development of department chairmen over broad curricular areas in 1972 and department heads in 1977, the elementary and secondary curriculum directors of education had been created. These directorships had been created in 1977 out of what had been a K-12 curriculum supervisor position from 1975 to 1977.²³⁷

Another change of importance was the development of a class called Relationships in Family Living. The materials for this class included information on human sexuality and thus was reviewed by a committee consisting of a school nurse, central office administrator, a member of the superintendent's ministerial council, a physician, and a secondary administrator. The course was to be an elective and required parental permission. The teacher, Mrs. Dorothy Betts, had the appropriate credentials to teach such a course.²³⁸ A similar

²³⁵Ibid.

²³⁶Ibid., December 19, 1977.

²³⁷Dr. Gary Barta, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 30 July 1997.

²³⁸Ibid., April 2, 1973.

course from the 1960s had at first been dropped and then was offered only at night. The Board approved the class as long as it was optional. At the same time the Board and administrators realized the importance of the course as part of a comprehensive K-12 health curriculum.²³⁹

Year-Round School

Probably the most important, and most certainly the most lengthy, project in curriculum and instruction undertaken in the 1970s was the study of year-round school. With an ever growing school population the Board had to consider the alternatives to more bond issues for more schools. In late 1971, the Board and administrators began a study of the district's patrons' views on year-round school. Out of 1154 surveys returned, 437 indicated such an option should be investigated, 257 thought no such study should be done, and 460 felt that they needed more information.²⁴⁰ With the majority being in the "undecided" category and the next highest being in the "seek further investigation" category, more information was sought. Dr. Stroh visited a year-round school in Rockport, Illinois, early in 1972.²⁴¹ By January, 1973, the following public relations announcement was disseminated.

Year-round school is perhaps the most complex and far reaching program a school system can implement. No other change affects so many people.

Because of our rapidly-increasing enrollment and the rising costs of building new schools, our Board of Education has requested that we make an initial exploration of year-round school in the Millard School District. I want to stress that this will be strictly a preliminary look at all sides of the issue, pro and con. No attempt

²³⁹Ibid., February 5, 1973.

²⁴⁰Ibid., November 1, 1971.

²⁴¹Ibid., March 6, 1972.

will be made to convince anyone that year-round school should be adopted in Millard.

In order to compete this initial study, a number of citizens will be asked to serve on a committee to examine the matter. We hope to have input from a cross-section of the community to help us determine the answer to such broad questions as:

1. Is there a need to change the school calendar?
2. What will it cost in human and monetary resources to explore the feasibility of a year-round plan?
3. What type of year-round plan, of the main varieties available, might be implemented in this school district?
4. Where would we get the additional revenue to start the plan?

It is hoped that the committee can begin its work in February, and we will have periodic reports for you as this study progress.

Don Stroh
Superintendent of Schools²⁴²

In March, 1973, Dr. Stroh requested that the Board approve a year-round feasibility. The Board felt "that careful study and analysis of the various year-round school organization plans should be made,"²⁴³ but that no feasibility study should be done at that time.

Year-Round School Study Begins

The following year, as part of the district's building needs assessment, year-round school was presented as an option to building more schools. At that time the Board decided to pursue a feasibility study.²⁴⁴ Title III funds were sought for a study and obtained.²⁴⁵ In anticipation of the approval of this funding, Margaret Corkle was appointed the project director of the year-round feasibility

²⁴²Ibid., January 15, 1973.

²⁴³Ibid., March 5, 1973.

²⁴⁴Ibid., January 7, 1974.

²⁴⁵Ibid., October 21, 1974.

study. She was assisted by an advisory committee.²⁴⁶ Dr. Corkle felt that the key to the year-round study project was community involvement. The committee represented teachers, parents, staff, clergy, and students. At the same time, the greatest difficulty for the committee was to study but "not to sell the program."²⁴⁷ Both sides of the issue had to be given in all public presentations made to the public.

During the 1974-1975 school year, the feasibility study was conducted. In May, 1975, administrators recommended that the district start a year-round school at the senior high school for the 1976-1977 school year. The recommendation was denied and the Board requested further study. A second Title III grant was sought.²⁴⁸ The Title III grant was received for a second year of funding along with an extension of funds for the first year.²⁴⁹ During the 1975-1976 school year, baseline data were collected from students regarding their attitudes towards school under the present system. The steering committee recommended that a year-round plan should be implemented for only juniors and seniors and that a quinmester plan should be used, the latter being five terms instead of the four traditional quarters. The students would be assigned which four quarters they were to attend based on housing subdivisions. Requests could be made to change assigned quarters but would be honored based on space available. The advantages of such a program included (1) better utilization of the buildings; (2) less learning lost during longer summer

²⁴⁶Ibid., June 17, 1974.

²⁴⁷Dr. Margaret Corkle, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 6 August 1997.

²⁴⁸Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), June 16, 1975, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

²⁴⁹Ibid., July 7, 1975.

vacations; (3) enrichment and reteaching opportunities for students; (4) teachers could work year-round or create with other teachers shared jobs; (5) well trained substitute teachers in that regular teachers not working on a quinmester could be called upon to teach curriculum they already knew; and, (6) early graduation for students.²⁵⁰

Year-Round School Put to a Vote

The following year the study was continued under the direction of Margaret Corkle with continued Title III funds. Formal request for approval of a quinmester plan for grades eleven and twelve was sought and obtained from the Nebraska State Department of Education.²⁵¹ At the start of the 1978-1979 school year, the Board set a voting date to obtain the state-required-approval from the citizens of the district to alter the school calendar.²⁵² From September 12 to October 30, 17 year-round public presentations were made; public service interviews were done on both radio and television; door-to-door brochures were distributed; articles placed in schools' and superintendent's newsletters; and, newspaper coverage obtained.²⁵³ True to the Board's directive, all sides of the issue were presented. On November 1, 1977, the proposal was defeated by the voters of Millard Public Schools. "Official results for the year-round school vote were reported to the Board of Education."²⁵⁴ The vote had been 1503 against and 1150 for the such a program. This vote was significantly less than the

²⁵⁰Dr. Margaret Corkle, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 6 August 1997.

²⁵¹Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), June 6, 1977, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

²⁵²Ibid., September 7, 1977 and Dr. Gary Barta, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 30 July 1997.

²⁵³Ibid., November 7, 1977.

²⁵⁴Ibid.

14,000 that could have voted, however, the vote was held on an election day by itself, as a separate issue as 1977 was not a general election year. Board members predicted a similar vote would need to be held in another six or seven years if the district's growth continued at the present pace.²⁵⁵ This was the only vote taken to the people from 1946 to 1989, that was defeated.

Dr. Corkle, in reflecting on the year-round study and vote, felt that a variety of issues defeated the vote but that perhaps the most important element was the students. The students were "the most apprehensive because of friends."²⁵⁶ The parents and the community, from the presentations regarding the year-round proposal, realized that the defeat of the program would mean another bond issue. Yet, that is how the community voted.

Special Education

Many of the developments in special education at this time came as a result of the passage of Legislative Bill 403. This law required that school districts provide educational services for all children in the school district. This statute required that school districts submit a five year plan to the Nebraska State Department of Education by February 1, 1974.²⁵⁷ The complete program that the district was to provide included:

1. An approved organizational and financial structure
2. Systematic procedures for identifying and evaluating the need of Special Education programs and services

²⁵⁵Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District),1977-1977 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

²⁵⁶Dr. Margaret Corkle, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 6 August 1997.

²⁵⁷Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), October 15, 1973, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

3. A continuum of program options which incorporate appropriate instructional programs and supportive services
4. An adequate number of qualified personnel who can provide:
 - (a) Administration of the program
 - (b) Supervisory services
 - (c) Instructional services
 - (d) Supportive Services
5. Appropriate and adequate facilities, equipment and materials
6. Operational relationships with those public and private agencies which can supplement the Special Education programs for the public schools'
7. Interaction with parents and with other concerned persons which facilitates the educational develop of handicapped children
8. Procedures for internal evaluation of the Special Education programs and services
9. Continuous planning program growth and improvement based on the success of the handicapped children²⁵⁸

One of the major impacts of Legislative Bill 403 was to be funding which would move from about 48% to 90% of the excess costs in educating the students in such programs. This law also added the learning disabled student to the list of students qualified to receive special help in addition to the moderately handicapped and residential care students. A final problem raised in the new law was the need to provide physical and occupational therapy services. Such personnel did not carry teaching credentials and thus would not be subject to state reimbursement policies under the new law.²⁵⁹ The latter was

²⁵⁸Ibid.

²⁵⁹Ibid.

resolved with the State Department of Education, and within a year the Board hired the schools district's first physical therapist.²⁶⁰

All of the new requirements regarding special education were easily met as in many cases the programs developed for special education by the district in the late 1960s and early 1970s were already close to those required by the new law. This compliance with the new statute was evident in a mid-year report to the Board during the 1974-1975 school year. A total of 850 students were being served in level I, II, and III programs. In addition, the district provided services to seven students from neighboring districts who did not have such programs.²⁶¹ Due to the fact that the district was a leader in special education, the Board authorized a three-year lease of a building at 136th and Cottner to be used for the profoundly handicapped students being served by the district.²⁶² Growing student populations around the district did not allow for space for such a program in any of the existing buildings.

Special Education Administrator Appointed

The other item of significance during the 1970s in special education was the appointment of Adeline Reis as an administrator at the central office. "Motion by Dr. Ackerman, seconded by Faythe Harrison, that Adeline Reis be named K-12 Coordinator of Programs for Exceptional Children. Motion carried."²⁶³ Not only did Ms. Reis serve in her special education leadership

²⁶⁰ Ibid., October 7, 1974.

²⁶¹ Ibid., January 20, 1975.

²⁶² Ibid., April 19, 1976.

²⁶³ Ibid., August 20, 1973.

capacity, but she also was one of the first women working in a central office capacity.²⁶⁴

Gifted Education

Gifted education, or “challenge”²⁶⁵ as the name given to the program by the curriculum division, was first formally implemented during the 1974-1975 school year. The following description of the program was part of an end-of-the-year report given on the topic.

The Millard Public Schools acknowledges that the able and talented students require stimulation that is unique from that received by their age mates. It is also the belief of this school district that these students cannot be totally isolated from their peers. Thus, while the Millard Public Schools have always extended and enriched our academic programming in various ways, we are now in the first year of developing a more formalized “Challenge Program.” At this time, we are focusing on the academically talented youngster.

Beginning with the fifth and sixth graders, who qualify according to state criteria, we are working to provide a program within each of the elementary buildings. This is an “in-house” program structured according to the staffing arrangements and framework of each individual building’s organizational pattern. One teacher in each building has been designated as the Building Program Manager, in charge of coordinating building efforts and the necessary recording keeping. Individualization, independent study, and cross-age groupings are utilized in various ways. In addition, these students are introduced to the Productive-Thinking Program by Merrill; the Renzulli materials; Making It Strange by Harper and Row; independent studies; and selected materials provided by our Nebraska State Department of Education. We incorporate this program into our language arts/reading time block.

²⁶⁴Adeline Reis, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 21 October 1996.

²⁶⁵Hereafter referred to as challenge by the author, but Challenge in district records cited.

District-wide, we have a K-12 curriculum committee on the "Gifted," developing our long-range program planning. During the 1975-76 school year, this program shall be expanded to include grades four through seven. The format for the coming year will be very similar to what we are currently developing, focusing on language arts and reading. In the junior highs, we will begin moving into the additional area of mathematics.²⁶⁶

The criteria used to qualify students that year had been teacher referrals based on ability or achievement test scores. Following referral, parents were contacted for permission to test the student by a psychologist. Individual intelligence tests were administered and parents were able to discuss the results in person or by phone with the psychologist.²⁶⁷

Within two years the district had a written challenge program philosophy with two major goals:

- (1) to enrich the learning experiences of the students, thus developing their talent to the fullest potential, and
- (2) to assist gifted and talented students in gaining a realistic and healthy concept of their strengths, weaknesses and potentialities.²⁶⁸

In addition, a job description for the building-level facilitator of challenge was developed. The role of these facilitators was outlined as follows:

1. Coordinate the Challenge Program within the building by working with the principal and others involved in the program.
2. Coordinate the record-keeping for the building to insure that adequate records are maintained for each student in the program.

²⁶⁶Ibid., May 19, 1975.

²⁶⁷Ibid.

²⁶⁸Ibid., June 6, 1977.

3. Be available to attend building facilitator meetings, building staffings and other meetings related to the Challenge Program on a needs basis.
4. Effectively share information from building facilitator meetings and other meetings with staff members in their building.
5. Help plan staff development activities within their building as they relate to the Challenge Program within the building.
6. Provide an on-going assistance in the proper utilization of Challenge materials.
7. Develop further knowledge and understanding of gifted education through such self-improvement techniques as reading, conferences, seminars and course work.
8. Submit progress reports when requested.²⁶⁹

At the start of the 1978-1979 school year, the curriculum division had added an administrator who had been hired with the expressed purpose of coordinating the challenge program for the district. In her first report to the Board, Penny Rehberg had assessed the program in existence at the time and felt that the continued use of the facilitator concept at the K-6 level was appropriate, however, Ms. Rehberg saw a distinct need for training the facilitators otherwise "the program can turn into a program with no special direction or continuity."²⁷⁰ The Board decided to implement the training plan outlined by Ms. Rehberg. This was an extensive undertaking for the district in that each facilitator was to receive six days of training and twenty half-days of in-the-classroom work with students over a twenty-week period. Future training would take place in August, so as not to disrupt regular instruction as most of the facilitators served in other capacities in their respective buildings. The

²⁶⁹Ibid.

²⁷⁰Ibid., October 16, 1978.

program outlined was elementary only in that the curriculum division felt that a firm foundation needed to be in place. Secondary programs were in the planning stages of development.²⁷¹ In addition, some secondary gifted programs were already in the beginning stages such as the Gifted Foreign Language Program that was being implemented for the first time in eighth grade for the 1978-1979 school year. These first year courses in Spanish, French, and German were more intense than normal first year courses being offered at the high school with the movement of ninth grade to the level I high school attendance center.²⁷²

Instruction

With the arrival of Dr. Nenneman in 1972, Dr. Witt, who was now in charge of personnel and general administration, was able to turn his attention to teacher evaluation. Indirectly, this had an impact on instruction. In addition, a study of the new schools built in the 1970s reveals a great deal about the instruction used during this time. Finally, instruction in the 1970s was still being tempered by the youth culture of the 1960s and corresponding legal cases determining student rights.

Teacher Expectations Developed

In 1974, as part of a personnel report to the Board, job expectations of the teaching profession were presented. These included:

1. Teaching Performance: provides learning opportunities for all students through planning, stimulating activities, frequent and varied evaluation. He develops flexible methodology that is based on sound learning theory and prevailing conditions. He creates and maintains appropriate intellectual and emotional climates for learning.

²⁷¹Ibid.

²⁷²Ibid., August 5, 1978.

2. Public Relations: understands and demonstrates sound principles of pupil growth and development. He respects individual differences. He is responsible and impartial. He creates and maintains a democratic atmosphere within his classroom, meriting pupil respect.
3. Management Activities: makes efficient use of time and facilities. He organized classroom activities and materials to maintain student interest.
4. Contribution To Total School Programs: understands the objectives of the entire school program and contributes to its success by assuming responsibilities both in and out of the classroom. He is positive influence toward building the school into an increasingly effective educational unit.
5. Parent-Community Relations: strives to interpret the school's objectives program, and policies to parents and community.
6. Staff Relations: relates and organizes his responsibilities in cooperation with those of others. He is a positive influence on the morals and well-being of the staff.
7. Personal Characteristics: is concerned with the effect of his total person and his pupils and the staff.
8. Scholarship: maintains scholarly attitudes by reading, studying, and keeping informed.
9. Professional Responsibility: seeks to improve his performance through study and experimentation.²⁷³

At this time, the Board expressed its concern over that fact that teachers were evaluated only once a year. Administrators were asked to pursue programs that would assure a better teacher evaluation program.²⁷⁴ Dr. John A. Lammel

²⁷³Ibid., March 4, 1974.

²⁷⁴Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1973-1974 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

indicated that teacher evaluation in the late 1960s and early 1970s was a checklist that consisted of very traditional items such as "class started on time."²⁷⁵

In June, 1975 a proposal was presented to the Board by the administrators to adopt a two-phase plan to introduce the Instrument for the Observation of Teaching Activities (IOTA). IOTA was used by trained teachers to assist with instructional improvement.²⁷⁶ Phase I of the plan consisted the development of an instructional improvement policy for the Millard Public Schools. In addition, in phase I, IOTA would be piloted in three schools during the 1976-1977 school year, the schools being Norris and Montclair Elementary Schools and the Millard Senior High School. Phase II of the proposal consisted of training the rest of the teachers in the district about the use of IOTA. The IOTA program was to be implemented with the assistance of professors from the Educational Administration Department at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.²⁷⁷ The Board approved the phase I plan for the three schools recommended.²⁷⁸ This program continued into the 1980s.²⁷⁹ Dr. Jim Carpenter from the University of Arizona was also employed to assist with this program in the Millard schools. The most receptive teachers were trained first.²⁸⁰ Eventually, with the development of other instructional models within the district, the program was eliminated.

²⁷⁵Dr. John A. Lammel, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 7 August 1997.

²⁷⁶Ibid.

²⁷⁷Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), June 2, 1975, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

²⁷⁸Ibid., July 19, 1976.

²⁷⁹Ibid., July 21, 1980.

²⁸⁰Dr. Thomas Nenneman, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 29 July 1997.

Buildings Reflect Instructional Trends

Instructionally, the new schools built during the 1970s were designed to maximize on both large and small group instruction. Most of the elementary schools built in the 1970s had similar features to those built in the 1960s. At Neihardt Elementary School, classroom “areas have movable partitions, allowing teachers to combine classes, or to work more easily with different-sized groups of students.”²⁸¹ Additionally, grade levels were located in various pods with each pod also containing “a glass-enclosed art and science room and a teachers’ planning center.”²⁸² Finally, most of the elementary schools, like Disney, had a forum area. “Its wide, carpeted tiers eliminate the need for chairs, so students can move easily into the forum for films, programs, and large-group presentations.”²⁸³

Disney Elementary School was opened with the expressed purpose of having highly individualized instruction. The Disney Staff used a program called Individually Guided Education. This program was part of an international program that focused on highly individualized instruction. The principal who opened the building, Marge Frederick, had traveled to England and observed the program. Textbooks were not the focus of the learning, rather teacher created learning centers which allowed students to progress at their own rate. The program in its pure form only lasted two years.²⁸⁴ In addition, grading was also different at Disney Elementary School when it first opened. Students were

²⁸¹Dedication Brochures File for Millard Public Schools (Neihardt Elementary School), (Douglas County District 17), Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

²⁸²Ibid.

²⁸³Ibid (Disney Elementary School).

²⁸⁴Glenn Irwin, interview by author, Written notes, Omaha, Nebraska, 19 August 1997.

assessed not in terms of grades but through narrative documentation of what they could or could not do.²⁸⁵ A similar program was piloted at Millard North Junior High when it opened. Positive feedback was received with 92% of the parents returning the evaluation form liking the narrative report card.²⁸⁶ The system was based on narrative comments that "would reflect students' efforts and initiative via teacher comments."²⁸⁷ The narrative system of reporting was dropped as parents still wanted a grade to be able to compare their children. When provided with options, the parents selected the traditional option over the narrative report card. Thus, the latter was terminated at the secondary level.²⁸⁸ Narrative report cards remained a seldom used option at the elementary level.

Not only were the elementary schools built for both large and small group instruction, so were the secondary schools.

Millard North Junior High School is a unique building, adaptable to many different kinds of instructional programs.

Basic academic areas for seventh, eighth and ninth grades are located in three open-space "houses," which provide flexibility for programs designed to meet the needs of individual students. Each house consists of large open areas which may be divided by movable walls or furniture, smaller self-contained rooms, a teacher planning area, offices for an assistant principal and guidance counselor, and a resource center, containing reference materials and audio-visual equipment. The houses also facilitate cooperative planning and teaching for instructors.

The school features an open space science laboratory, which can accommodate six classes at one time. A central equipment

²⁸⁵Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), March 18, 1974, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

²⁸⁶Ibid., April 15, 1974.

²⁸⁷Ibid., June 4, 1973.

²⁸⁸Dr. Gary Barta, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 30 July 1997.

storage and check-out areas allows students easy access to the supplies needed for any experiment.²⁸⁹

The new level I high school was constructed around similar organizational patterns. The middle of the school contained the library, the cafeteria, guidance and administrative offices, and a teachers' planning center. The seven classroom wings were divided into curricular subjects and each had a large area "divided by sliding partitions and movable storage units to provide the necessary flexibility for instruction in both large-and-small group situations."²⁹⁰

Alternative Forms of Instruction Studied

The open space classroom concept being used by the Millard Public Schools was not without its criticism. In 1973, to increase understanding of the use of this concept, the Board had Selection Research Incorporated complete an evaluation study of the open concept used in the schools at that time. The study found no significant difference between traditional and open concept classrooms. Study results did indicate that the open space classrooms were more flexible and thus could be more readily adapted to changing curriculum.²⁹¹ Although the concern that generated the evaluation was allayed for a time, the concern resurfaced in 1975. Parents wanted basic skills emphasized and traditional ways of teaching skills.²⁹² During the 1978-1979 school year, the

²⁸⁹Dedication Brochures File for Millard Public Schools (Millard North Junior High), (Douglas County District 17), Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

²⁹⁰Ibid.

²⁹¹Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1973-1974 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

²⁹²Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1974-1975 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

district conducted more studies in an attempt to offer instructional choices to parents.

Motion by Ackerman, seconded by Haberstick, that the Board of Education accept the recommendations and proposed plan of action for the Alternative School Study:

1978-79

- 1) Study and development of a plan to initiate the "alternatives within the school" concept, with direct involvement of administration and staff prior to formal action.
- 2) The Millard Administrators should continue to disseminate to its patrons a descriptive analysis of those alternatives presently provided with our schools, and provide information on open attendance and transportation policies.
- 3) The Millard Board of Education should officially recognize the contribution of the advisory committee. It should especially note the contribution and generous assistance of Dr. Dale Blyth.

1979-80

- 1) A pilot project initiated in one or more elementary schools, which provides parents different choices in how their children are to be educated.
- 2) Conduct a formal evaluation of the above pilot; based on evidence and perceived need, design those necessary plans for future organizational development.

Upon roll call vote, all members voted aye. Motion carried.²⁹³

The curriculum problems were a result of a more liberal period that followed the youth culture of the 1960s. As the generations and various political players continued to develop what public education would be, direct changes in instruction occurred as a result of student rights gained through court decisions

²⁹³Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), August 21, 1978, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

and legislation. The following policy is a good example of this impact from the period under present study.

6147

Instruction

Student Freedom of Expression

The primary liberties in a student's life have to do with the process of inquiry and learning, of acquiring and imparting knowledge, and of exchanging ideas. This process requires that students have the right to express opinions, to take stands, and to support causes, publicly and privately. There should be no interferences in the school with these liberties, or with the student's access to or expression of controversial points of view, except in those instances as outlined in Rule No. 6147.1.²⁹⁴

The limitations outlined in the corresponding rule included the use of bulletin boards for school announcements only; limited distribution of materials and petitions to student free time; and, the wearing of button and badges was allowed unless the message was limited by other rules such as profanity. In addition, the rule provided a process for appealing a student's concerns regarding freedom of expression.²⁹⁵ In addition, general student freedom at times had to be limited in other ways. An example being in 1974, when the Board needed to hire a day-security guard for the senior high school parking lot.²⁹⁶

The foregoing policy is also a good example of the use of program studies by the Board during the 1970s. During the 1971-1972 school year, a major internal study had been performed at the secondary level concerning

²⁹⁴Ibid., July 21, 1975.

²⁹⁵Ibid.

²⁹⁶Ibid. March 4, 1974.

discipline and decorum. Many of the policy changes made in terms of instruction during the 1970s were a direct result of this study. Other recommendations in the report included the need for a school district psychologist, an expanded work experience program, an expanded district communications program to enhance the extra-curricular program, the creation of a registrar position at the high school level, improved discipline procedures, increased guidance programs, and an expansion of the intramural program.²⁹⁷

Summary

The title of this chapter indicates much about the period, growing pains. In 1971, the school district had been the ninth largest in the state. By 1978, the Millard Public Schools was the third largest district in the state. A newspaper interview with Dr. Stroh in the March 12, 1978, Magazine of the Midlands is indicative of the changes the school district experienced. He spoke of the rapid growth and some white flight from Omaha Public Schools; the need to be flexible in construction of school buildings (movable walls and utilities in the ceilings for possible changes); the keeping of bond promises to the people of the district; the development of innovative programs such as open concept elementary schools or the development of the 2-2-2 secondary concept; the problems with curricular issues such as Harry Stottlemeier (The Philosophy for Kids Pilot Program); the defeat of year-round school; and, the school district philosophy of education being for all people and containing lessons beyond school, lessons from life.²⁹⁸ All the foregoing and more had been part of the growing pains of the 1970s.

²⁹⁷Ibid., May 21, 1973.

²⁹⁸Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1977-1978 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.