

CHAPTER VII

COMING OF AGE: THE FINAL STROH YEARS: 1979-1989

The Setting

The period from 1979 to 1989, hereafter referred to as the 1980s, was one of major change at the international level. World events considered to be impossible, happened. The United States continued to react to the events of the 1960s and 1970s.

The World and the United States

Egypt and Israel signed a peace treaty in 1979. Americans were taken hostage in Iran in 1979 ultimately costing President Carter his reelection. The Berlin Wall was torn down in 1989. In addition, unusual wars took place such as a war between Iran and Iraq that started in 1980, the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, or Great Britain and Argentina's battle over the Falkland Islands.¹

On the national level there was a strong conservative movement. The Moral Majority was founded in 1979 and this organization played a key role in the election of Ronald Reagan to the presidency. President Reagan created public discussion through such issues as tax credits for parents with students in private schools, block grants, and a school prayer constitutional amendment.²

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), 772-798.

²Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1980-1981 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

The equal rights amendment for women failed, yet within two years the first female vice presidential candidate was found on a major party ticket. In 1986, the Iran-contra affair became public as Vice President George Bush began his drive to the White House.³

Nationally, education was attacked in the press with the release of A Nation at Risk in 1983. The press billed this report to be dismal with such headlines as "U.S. School Report Card shows 'Shocking Failure'".⁴ The solution offered was longer school days and years, more homework, and more graduation requirements. Nebraska State Commissioner of Education, Anne Campbell, served on the National Commission on Excellence in Education.⁵ Anne Campbell's role in this national commission resulted in state hearings and the consideration of major legislation impacting education in the state.⁶ By the late 1980s, restructuring was a major topic in public education.

Nebraska

In Nebraska, the 1980s saw the decline of the Omaha stockyards and the building of over one hundred modern meat processing plants throughout the state.⁷ Agriculture continued to be the number one source of state income although the number of farms continued to decrease. Agriculture was followed by manufacturing and tourism. As Nebraska moved to diversify the economy,

³Andrew 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), 772-798.

⁴Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1982-1983 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

⁵Ibid., 1980-1981.

⁶Ibid., 1983-1984.

⁷Frederick C. Luebke, Nebraska An Illustrated History (Lincoln, Nebraska ; University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 349.

telecommunication and computer technologies began to move into both the large cities such as Omaha and out-state small towns.⁸ The insurance industry continued to grow in the state. The cost of higher education greatly increased in the 1980s causing public post secondary education to come under scrutiny by 1990.⁹

Nebraska politics mimicked the national government in 1986 when two women ran for the governor's office, republican Kay Orr and democrat Helen Boosalis.¹⁰ Kay Orr won the election and stated, "My purpose during the next four years will be to accord education at all levels the highest affordable priority of my administration."¹¹ Thus the need for a study on post secondary education.

At the state level in education, the concerns over the certification of public school teachers remained an issue from the 1970s. This issue drew national attention when Jerry Falwell, the leader of the Moral Majority came to Louisville, Nebraska, where the church doors had been padlocked due to the operation of an illegal school by Reverend Everett Suliven.¹² A rally was held as the padlocks were removed on October 4, 1981. Actually the padlocks had been removed earlier but the scene was reenacted for national television coverage. Such schools used the Accelerated Christian Education Program by ACE Incorporated of Louisville, Texas. This program was used by over four thousand students across the country. When the school in Louisville was

⁸Ibid., 350.

⁹Ibid., 358.

¹⁰Ibid., 368.

¹¹Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District),1986-1987 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹²Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District),1981-1982 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

closed, some of the students started attending the Omaha Christian School, another illegal school operating within the Millard Public Schools attendance area. This school was offered help by the Marshall Drive Baptist Church which had operated a similar school in the 1970s.¹³ Due to the nature of the curriculum, Dr. Harding indicated that Millard Public Schools would have to test students entering the district as there was no other way to determine placement. Ultimately, legislation and the resulting Rule 13 from the Nebraska State Department of Education allowed for the operation of such schools.¹⁴

Funding of public education remained a concern. The 1980s were a time of extremes in funding. The state legislature added 40 million dollars to state aid to schools in 1980.¹⁵ The late 1980s ended with a funding crisis for school districts in that the railroads sued the state of Nebraska regarding the taxing of railroads' personal property. During preceding years, concessions had been made to the agricultural community of the state exempting much of the agricultural properties.¹⁶ The Nebraska Constitution requires that taxes must be uniform and the creation of exemptions violated this in that exemptions were not applied to all businesses equally. Thus the railroads pursued judicial means of obtaining tax exemption status.

Furthermore, a decline in the agricultural economy in the 1980s added stress to the financing of public education. This agricultural slump translated into less state funding for the school district and the Board saw a \$200,000.00

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District),1982-1983 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹⁵Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District),1979-1980 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹⁶Ibid.,1987-1988.

loss of state aid due to cuts in their budget made by the Unicameral in late 1982.¹⁷ Such cuts were difficult for the Board, as 80% of their budget was for salaries and the cuts came after the establishing of tax rates.¹⁸ The continuing agricultural slump was extremely difficult for not only the Millard Public Schools, but also rural areas such as Newcastle where property tax generated 66% of the school budget.¹⁹ In addition, Ed Jaksha led tax activist groups to limit the taxing ability of local governments, due to the heavy burden being placed on property taxes.

By the late 1980s, national commissions such as the Carnegie Corporation's Task Force on Teaching as a Profession were calling for the abolishment of undergraduate teacher education programs and board certification of teachers.²⁰ Effective with the spring semester of 1987, the Nebraska State Department of Education required that all students seeking certification in education programs would have to take the Pre-Professional Skills Test.²¹ National trends were having serious results in Nebraska.

A similar national trend started in Minnesota, one that allowed students and parents to make a choice regarding the school district they wished to attend.²² A similar law was enacted in Nebraska, and due to overcrowding, Millard decided for the first year to allow students to leave the district but to not

¹⁷Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), November 15, 1982, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹⁸Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1982-1983 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 1985-1986 School Year.

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹*Ibid.*

²²*Ibid.*, 1987-1988.

accept any option enrollment students as was possible under the new law. The use of thirty-eight portable classrooms and three hundred plus new students each year made the exclusion of option enrollment students possible.²³ The decision to exclude option enrollment students was made in late 1989 under the new Superintendent, Dr. Ron Witt, who assumed his new post with the start of the 1989-1990 school year.

Millard

In Millard, the school district continued its growth as a variety of events took place. Such growth was in part maintained by the continued growth of American Telephone and Telegraph plant, formerly the Western Electric plant which had been one of the original sources of growth for the Millard community. This plant announced one hundred new jobs in January, 1988, at a time when rumors were being circulated that the plant might be closing due to the economy.²⁴

During the 1984-1985 school year, the Board and the district celebrated the community's centennial based on the fact that the town of Millard had been incorporated in 1885.²⁵ Terry Welte, a social studies teacher at Millard North Junior High School, and the Coordinator of Communications, Nancy Holloran, created an instructional packet for teachers to use to teach about the history of the school district. In addition, Mr. Welte's classes had been involved with a oral history project of the Millard area.²⁶ The sense of community was kept alive when long-time Millard Board member, Dr. Robert Ackerman, died in early

²³1989-1990.

²⁴1987-1988.

²⁵Ibid., 1984-1985.

²⁶Ibid., 1981-1982.

1982. An elementary school under construction at the time was named after him.²⁷ Similarly, land owned by the school district was found to have a remnant of native prairie on the site and became part of a major preservation project honoring the past.²⁸

The Board and the administrators faced competition in the form of Catholic Schools when St. Wenceslaus opened in the fall of 1985. The school started with only a K-1 program but anticipated growth to five hundred plus students.²⁹ With the introduction of home schooling under new legislation for Christian schools, the Millard Public Schools experienced a 14% increase in such students within the district.³⁰ In late 1989, the idea of a Catholic high school within the Millard Public Schools attendance area was beginning to be discussed although no formal action had occurred.³¹

Research Sources

Sources of information to write the history of Millard Public Schools from 1979-1989 include type-written board minutes and supporting documentation called board packets which were maintained by the Board secretary with assistance from the secretary to the superintendent. Board minutes used in this chapter are microfilmed from January, 1979, through December, 1985. Beginning with January 6, 1986, the remaining minutes were filed chronologically in binders in a storage room.

²⁷Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), March 3, 1982, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

²⁸Ibid., May 7, 1979.

²⁹Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1985-1986 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid., 1989-1990.

Documentation in the form of a generic history file was preserved by the district and some additional information was found in that source. The newspaper clipping file started in the 1960s was an excellent source regarding informational details on various topics of importance during this time. The clippings of articles of local, state, and national issues served to give a clearer focus regarding what was of importance during this period. In addition, personal interviews were held with Dr. Penny Kowal, Dr. Don Stroh, Dr. Kirby Eltiste, Dr. Rick Kolowski, Dr. John A. Lammel, and Nancy Holloran.

Personal Interviews

Dr. Penny Kowal was first employed by the Board as a Coordinator of Gifted Program. Prior to working in the Millard Public Schools, she had taught in junior high, gifted, and Montessori settings. In addition, she had been employed by the educational service unit in Fremont, Nebraska working in gifted education. Her roles since employed by the Millard district have included gifted education, instructional improvement, strategic planning, and staff development. Presently, she is the Associate Superintendent of Educational Services.

Former Superintendent, Dr. Don Stroh was interviewed a second time to bring more clarity to his final years in the school district. Dr. Stroh served as the leader of the school district from 1955 to 1989. In 1955, Don Stroh was a teacher, coach, and administrator. When he retired, he led a nationally respected school district that was the third largest in the state of Nebraska.

Dr. Kirby Eltiste began his teaching career in the Millard Public Schools in 1970. He had student taught in the district. Seeking administrative experience, he left the district for three years. Upon returning to Millard, Dr. Eltiste taught until appointed principal of Montclair in 1981. In 1987, as an

elementary principal, he directed the opening of Ezra Millard Elementary School. As of the start of the 1997-1998 school year, he serves as the Executive Director of Personnel for the school district.

Dr. Rick Kolowski began his Millard career in 1970 teaching at the new senior high school. At the time of his interview, Dr. Kolowski was principal of the school district's third high school, Millard West. Over the years he has served as a department head for humanities (English, history, reading, and foreign language), assistant principal for curriculum and instruction, secondary vocational director, and director of secondary education. He also served as an assistant commissioner of education in Minnesota for one year.

Finally, Nancy Holloran and Dr. John A. Lammel were interviewed for both this chapter and the preceding chapter. These two individuals worked in the district as the coordinator of communications and senior high school principal respectively.

Growth

The physical growth in land area of the Millard Public Schools during the 1980s was nonexistent. An attempt to exchange some land with the Gretna Public School District was proposed and passed by the Board in 1985, but the Gretna Board of Education took no similar action. Thus, no exchange took place.³² This exchange would have served to square off the boundaries between the two districts in an area where they overlapped. A similar proposal was made in the late 1980s when the Rose Garden Estates was being developed just east of 168th Street. This subdivision was in the Elkhorn school district. Upon study, the Board realized that an exchange of land between the

³²Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), September 16, 1985, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

Millard and Elkhorn school districts would necessitate building of a new elementary school in the northwest part of the school district, as at that time Cottonwood Elementary School was already full. The Board voted not to enter into such an exchange.³³

Being the third largest school district in the state brought with the title a new set of problems. The Board found itself larger than most school districts yet smaller than Lincoln Public Schools and the Omaha Public Schools. The growth brought with it a more heterogeneous clientele. Issues such as child abuse and neglect started to become concerns as reflected in policies. Such problems resulted in policies, regulations, and teacher in-service to deal with changing social issues.³⁴ In turn, increased social needs resulted in the need for a variety of new programs as the social needs of the school district changed.³⁵ The growing social needs of the district continued to be compounded by what appeared to be equal growth at the elementary and secondary levels over the long-term but was really unequal year to year growth. This unequal growth was further complicated by building transfers, concerns over class size, and the movement of sixth-grade into a middle school concept.

School District Population Growth and Changes

The enrollment of 10,200 in the fall of 1978 grew to 16,356, representing a 60.4% increase, by September, 1989.³⁶ Although this increase is less than

³³Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1985-1986 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

³⁴Dr. Dennis Harding, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 29 July 1997.

³⁵Dr. Kirby Eltiste, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 28 July 1997.

³⁶Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), September 5, 1989, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

half the 137.4% increase of the 1970s, the increase was 5401 students as compared to the 6342 students the district had grown by in the 1970s. In the 1970s the growth had been at the secondary level, while in the 1960s the growth had been at the elementary level. The growth in the 1980s was found to be almost the same with a growth of 39.4% in grades K-6,³⁷ while secondary growth was 45.7% in grades 7-12.³⁸

Uneven Growth

What appears to be almost equal growth during the 1980s was more complicated. Due to rapid growth in 1978 and 1979, plans were made to convert the level I and II buildings to comprehensive 9-12 high schools in 1981.³⁹ When these facilities opened as Millard North Senior High School and Millard South Senior High School, the buildings had respective populations of 1,499 and 1,704.⁴⁰ These numbers represented almost the same numbers of two years prior in 1979 when level I started the year with 1,348 students and level II had 1,655 students.⁴¹ Ten years later, Millard North High School had 2006 students while Millard South High School had 2292 students.⁴² Thus the high schools had consistent growth over time. From the inception of two comprehensive high schools in 1979, until they opened in 1981, the high school population grew by only two hundred students. In a controversial

³⁷Ibid. (By the 1989-1990 school year, about half, or 599 students, of the school district's sixth-graders were housed in middle schools. To keep the comparisons accurate, all sixth-graders were counted in the elementary growth.)

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹April 30, 1979.

⁴⁰Ibid., September 8, 1981.

⁴¹Ibid., October 31, 1979.

⁴²Ibid., September 5, 1989.

decision, the Board had decided that the attendance boundary lines drawn for the two separate schools had to be maintained. Many of the upper classmen would have preferred to stay at Millard South High School. The decision to maintain the attendance boundary line was based on a preliminary study indicating that if student preferences were allowed Millard South would be overcrowded when the building reopened under that name in 1981.⁴³ During the 1981-1982 school, Millard North High School was given accreditation by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. Thus the Board goal of having two high schools' with equal programs was achieved.⁴⁴

Many people viewed the establishment of the second high school as a turning point in the school district. "That second high school really changed us from a rural community, whose focus was the public schools to a more urban setting."⁴⁵ This was the start of the growth of two separate communities. The south side of the district was viewed as old Millard in the early 1980s. "The sense of community, that was important to all of us, became more difficult to build as we grew north."⁴⁶ Annexation and merger became times when the community drew together.

The creation of a sense of community was one of the major challenges for Millard North High School Principal, Dr. Pane. He wanted students to have a sense of ownership in their school. This meant new school songs, mascots, and colors. Due to concern over the splitting of the one high school into two

⁴³Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1980-1981 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

⁴⁴Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), March 3, 1982, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

⁴⁵Dr. Gary Barta, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 30 July 1997.

⁴⁶Nancy Holloran, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 4 August 1997.

high schools, there was a great deal of apprehension. Thus, the 1982 prom was planned for the two high schools to be together. By the time of the prom, however, the students felt a sense of community and wanted separate proms, which started the next year.⁴⁷

The small growth rate in the early 1980s was due to a downturn in the Nebraska economy that left the Board questioning whether to build junior high schools approved in a 1979 bond issue of \$29,275,000.00.⁴⁸ In a report to the Board, Superintendent Stroh noted,

At one time, the school district had planned to build two more junior highs, one in the north part of the district and one in the south. However, student enrollment has slowed to the point that "if we built those schools now they would have about 500 students, and we can't afford to operate schools that size unless we think in small units." It is difficult to project the number of new students who might move into the district within the next few years because of the uncertainty of the housing market, he continued. Right now the Millard district has 4,000 to 5,000 undeveloped lots, and if the housing market begins to grow again, projections could change.⁴⁹

The slow growth rate during the early 1980s was due to high inflation. This resulted in low numbers of new homes being built. In addition, the housing trends were changing. Fewer people were moving to the suburbs to avoid busing. There was still a loss of the white population from the Omaha Public Schools but the loss was slower.⁵⁰ In 1983, there was an increased growth rate

⁴⁷Dr. Ike Pane, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 29 July 1997.

⁴⁸Millard Public Schools General History File, (Douglas County District 17), Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

⁴⁹Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), November 15, 1982, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

⁵⁰ibid.

with 450 new homes under construction.⁵¹ By 1986, one subdivision, Pepperwood, had 161 housing starts. This along with rapid growth in several other subdivisions resulted in the school district needing new buildings.⁵² As outlined in a report in 1982, the Board voted to convert to a 6-8 middle school concept "to relieve pressure from Neihardt and Bryan and provide four extra rooms in each building."⁵³ Thus when Harry Andersen Middle School opened in 1986, the building opened using a 6-8 middle school concept. Political considerations often played a part as the Board discussed in 1985 when considering the building of a northwest middle school. "The Board agreed to review the decision in April, after the legislature adjourned, and again in July, when the new census figures are available."⁵⁴

The transfer policy developed in the 1970s became a problem in the 1980s. Decisions to allow elementary transfers had been made on class size and grade size. By 1987, total building size became a factor as the economy rebounded and seven elementary schools were expected to be over capacity for the 1987-1988 school year.⁵⁵ Opposite problems were occurring at the secondary level in that some secondary level courses had enrollments of twelve or less.⁵⁶

⁵¹Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1982-1983 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

⁵²Ibid., 1985-1986.

⁵³ Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), March 17, 1980, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

⁵⁴Ibid., December 16, 1985.

⁵⁵Ibid., May 4, 1987.

⁵⁶Ibid., April 10, 1989.

Rule 6161.1

Instruction

Class Size

The Millard Public School district will strive to maintain a class size in the secondary schools that it deems appropriate for the effective instruction of pupils in accordance with financial realities.

Any class of 12 or fewer students may not be offered unless so mandated by law, the Board of Education or necessitated by district activity programs. When possible, an effort will be made to combine a class of 12 or fewer students with a related class or a program offering from a different grade level.

The course, other than those described in paragraph two will be deleted from the district curriculum offerings after a history of three consecutive years where enrollment has 12 or fewer students. Said enrollment figures will be those derived from class rolls at the end of the first nine weeks.

A report will be prepared for the Board of Education each April indicating, (1) the courses recommended for cancellation for the ensuing year, (2) classes that have been combined, and (3) courses with fewer than 12 students that are being recommended for retention in the curriculum for the ensuing year.⁵⁷

Thus, even the third largest district in the state was having enrollment problems in certain courses.

The foregoing uneven growth rate had an impact upon the school district politically. As new subdivisions grew rapidly within the district, some of the older subdivisions saw a loss of students as starter homes became more retirement oriented. By 1988, the Board was using attendance plans that required the busing of 2100 students to older and less crowded elementary schools. Declining enrollments resulted in the location of special programs in

⁵⁷Ibid., April 17, 1989.

certain schools such as the early childhood program at Cody Elementary school.⁵⁸ Such busing was not popular. In addition, government analysts predicted that by the year 2000 the population center of Omaha would be at 72nd Street.⁵⁹ The Millard population had been further defined earlier when the Omaha World Herald indicated that 70% of the adult population in Millard held college degrees. Furthermore 53% of both spouses worked with an average income of \$33,000.00.⁶⁰ Due to uneven annexation on the part of the City of Omaha, only about half the voting population lived within the city limits of Millard. Thus, the bond issue in 1987 that was held in conjunction with city elections was of concern to the Board and the administrators because more established neighborhoods would more than likely have greater voter turn out due to the need to vote in the city elections, while new subdivisions for whom the new schools were needed would be less likely to vote as the only issue these voters could vote on was the school bond issue.⁶¹ Memories of the low voter turn out for year-round school were recalled.

Budget Growth

The student population during the 1980s may have slowed some but the budget continued to grow. In 1978-1979 the total budget had been \$18,475,155.00.⁶² By 1989-1990 the budget had grown by 225.4% to

⁵⁸Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1988-1989 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Ibid., 1986-1987.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), August 7, 1978, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

\$60,128,497.00.⁶³ The general budget had increased from \$15,635,823.00 to \$53,466,242.00 or by 241.9% while bond redemption had grown 184.5% from \$2,038,105.00 to \$5,799,255.00.⁶⁴ The special building fund had increased slightly from \$801,277.00 to \$863,000.00 or by 7.7%.⁶⁵

The rapid rise was due to growing personnel costs, increased special education needs, general inflation, increased bonded indebtedness, technology, and new programs. The growth of the budget fluctuated from year to year depending on the economy and tax issues. For example, in 1980, the following budget reductions were proposed:

Item

1. Eliminate two administrative positions	44,000
2. Combination classrooms (elementary) (5 teachers)	70,000
3. Increase secondary staff/student ratio (3 teachers)	45,000
4. Eliminate student development center - Level I	15,000
5. Eliminate security - Level II parking	26,000
6. Reduce capital outlay (10%)	15,000
7. Reduce field trips	8,500
8. Eliminate Camp Calvin Crest	15,376
9. Reduce Board contributions to athletics by 10%	12,000
10. Make adult education self-supporting	7,000
11. Make summer school self-supporting	6,000
12. Make recreational swimming self-supporting	9,096
13. Reduce in-service travel	7,000
14. Reduce in-service fees	7,000
15. Reduce vocational education (Boys Town)	56,133
16. Eliminate OSACS - Dues and fees	14,400
- Project Recovery	12,000
17. Eliminate MOEBA	2,800

⁶³Ibid., August 7, 1989.

⁶⁴Ibid., August 7, 1978 and August 7, 1989.

⁶⁵Ibid.

18. ESU Science Center	15,369
19. Drivers Education (charge \$25 lab fee)	<u>15,000</u>
TOTAL	\$402,674 ⁶⁶

Juxtaposed against the foregoing cuts are the following additions from two years later.

1. Addition to the allocation for 9-12 textbooks and supplies
2. Additional funds for the new computer literacy program
3. Additional funds to increase the horizontal movement of teachers on the salary scale
4. Adoption of new secondary science programs, a new junior high health education program, and an elementary pilot science program
5. Funds to expand the Montessori program to grade 3
6. Addition of two high school and five elementary classroom teachers
7. Additional support staff:
 - a. 1 elementary guidance person
 - b. 1 psychologist
 - c. 1 instruction specialist for the gifted program
8. Two 7-8 grade assistant principals
9. One K-6 art department head⁶⁷

Grant Monies

President Reagan's program to change the way federal monies were distributed from categorical grants, or specific purposes, to block grants, for general purposes allowed the Board to submit the following to help with the growing educational expenses of the school district:

...for a total of \$86,265.00. They are:

1. Staff Development (Madeline Hunter Program)
2. Library Books (For Ackerman and Abbott Elementary Schools)
3. Special Projects:

a. Math Lab	Neihardt Elementary School
b. Alcohol-Drug	Millard North High School
c. Alcohol-Drug	Millard North High School

⁶⁶Ibid., April 7, 1980.

⁶⁷Ibid., May 17, 1972.

d. Tel-Conference	Curriculum
e. Business-Computer	Millard North High School
f. Outdoor Education	Morton Elementary School
g. Drug Play	Central Junior High School
h. Puppets	Ackerman Elementary
i. Computer Education	Neihardt Elementary
j. Spanish/Music Comp.	Millard South High School ⁶⁸

In addition, the Board and the administrators were constantly looking for new sources of grants as in 1985, when they discovered they could apply for an Education for Economic Security Act, Title II (PL98-377) grant. This grant could be used for staff development in math, science, computer learning and foreign language. The obtaining of the funds was based on a needs assessment using Nebraska State Department of Education materials. Possible second year funding existed. At a minimum, \$11,515.00 was obtainable for the first year.⁶⁹

Education Foundation Created

The Board's increased concern over funding during the 1980s also resulted in the Millard Public Schools becoming one of a growing number of schools nationally to have a non-profit education foundation to help support the school district's educational endeavors.

In addition, the Board and administrators realized the need to have a budgetary cycle. Such a plan was presented to the Board in 1980.⁷⁰ Corresponding to the need for a budgetary cycle, the administrators and Board knew that a strong public relations program was needed in economically difficult times.

⁶⁸Ibid., December 6, 1982.

⁶⁹Ibid., October 21, 1985.

⁷⁰Ibid., January 21, 1980.

Dr. Stroh presented a plan for communicating with the public about school budget and property tax issues. The Board discussed the relative values of making presentations to PTOs and civic clubs and having a community advisory group which would report to the Board. Mr. Olson said that the Board has a short range goal of interpreting the budget to the public and a long-range goal of acquainting the public with the changing nature of financing public education.⁷¹

The importance of the planning cycle and communication was indicated again in 1989, as Dr. Witt was assuming the district's leadership role and working with new school board members, when he reviewed the handouts "that would be used as an informational tool for residents when the administration has the 1989-90 budget hearings."⁷² The administrators worked constantly to educate the general public about the intricacies of school finance. This was difficult in that most taxpayers were concerned only with their taxes and not the needs of the school district.⁷³

Buildings and Bonds

The foregoing growth patterns resulted in a variety of building projects during this period. Seven elementary schools were built while two new middle schools were built and the level I and II buildings with additions, both became comprehensive 9-12 high schools. Two of the elementary schools built during this time were built with funds from the 1976 bond issue. These two schools were Harvey Oaks Elementary School which opened in August, 1979, and

⁷¹Ibid., January 5, 1987.

⁷²Ibid., May 15, 1989.

⁷³Nancy Holloran, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 4 August 1997.

Norman Rockwell Elementary School which was not occupied until October, 1979, due to construction delays.⁷⁴

The remainder of the buildings constructed during this time were accomplished with two bond issues. The first was a bond issue in 1979 for \$29,275,000.00 that passed with a 79% voter approval.⁷⁵ Monies from this bond were used to build Grace Abbott Elementary School which opened in August, 1981; Robert L. Ackerman Elementary School which opened in August, 1982; Harry Andersen Middle School which opened in August, 1986; Peter Kiewit Middle School which opened in August, 1988; and the additions that were made to the level I and II buildings before they became Millard North and South High Schools.⁷⁶ These additions included for Millard North a second gym, the swimming pool, the auditorium, music rooms, cafeteria and classrooms,⁷⁷ while for Millard South the additions included a second gym and cafeteria, more general education classrooms, additional home economics classrooms, and additional administrative and guidance offices.⁷⁸ In essence, the 2-2-2 concept remained with the construction of 9-10 and 11-12 facilities at Millard South and Millard North respectively. The Board wanted separate

⁷⁴Dedication Brochures File for Millard Public Schools (Harvey Oaks and Rockwell Elementary Schools), (Douglas County District 17), Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

⁷⁵Millard Public Schools General History File, (Douglas County District 17), Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

⁷⁶Dedication Brochures File for Millard Public Schools (Abbott and Ackerman Elementary Schools and Andersen and Kiewit Middle Schools), (Douglas County District 17), Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

⁷⁷Dr. Ike Pane, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 29 July 1997.

⁷⁸Dr. John A. Lammel, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 7 August 1997.

programs and facilities when possible for students. Thus both high schools have two cafeterias to help maintain the 2-2-2 concept.⁷⁹

The sagging state and local economy did not necessitate another bond issue until 1987 when the Board asked for \$8,500,000.00. This proposal was passed with a 70% voter approval rate. This money was used to build Ezra Millard Elementary School, which was named after the founder of the Millard community. This building was occupied in December, 1988.⁸⁰ This delayed opening was planned as Abbott, Cottonwood, and Montclair Elementary school could house the students until Ezra was completed.⁸¹ Additionally, an addition was placed on Ackerman Elementary School and maintenance projects were performed at Neihardt Elementary with the 1987 bond monies.⁸²

With the passage of the 1987 bond issue, the superintendent of the Millard Public Schools, Dr. Don Stroh, indicated that he did not foresee a need for any further bond issues for the school district. Dr. Stroh had provided the leadership for nine successful bond issues since 1958 and he felt that the special building fund could handle future growth.⁸³ As he was retiring two years later, however, Dr. Stroh indicated that there would need to be a further bond issue in the early 1990s to add rooms to existing elementary schools and a new elementary to be located near the intersection of 168th and "Q" Streets.⁸⁴

⁷⁹Dr. Ike Pane, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 29 July 1997.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Dr. Kirby Eltiste, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 28 July 1997.

⁸²Millard Public Schools General History File, (Douglas County District 17), Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

⁸³Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1986-1987 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

⁸⁴Ibid., 1988-1989.

The nine bond issues passed from the late 1950s to the late 1980s were small bond issues that were planned to be small. These lesser amounts of borrowed money allowed the school district to maintain a bond rating that allowed for lower interest rates. This was necessary due to the small tax base of the school district. The buildings constructed were of moderate costs. The board and the administrators worked with the community to provide quality facilities at a fair price.⁸⁵

Lease-to-Purchase Program Explored

During the 1981-1982 school year, the Board decided to relocate the central offices from Millard Central Junior High School and scattered rental space to Millard North High School.⁸⁶ In September, 1986, the Board directed the administrators to develop a plan for a lease-to-purchase program for a central administration office.⁸⁷ Within two months, the Board requested the administrators to put the project on hold until financial conditions stabilized.⁸⁸ Two years later, the Board was concerned over whether such a facility could be built in time to move the central office out of Millard North High School so the office space could be reverted to classroom use for the 1989-1990 school year.⁸⁹ In March, 1988, the Board approved a central administration office lease-to-purchase plan to build an administrative center at the cost of

⁸⁵Dr. Don Stroh, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 29 July 1997.

⁸⁶Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1981-1982 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

⁸⁷Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), September 15, 1986, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

⁸⁸Ibid., November 17, 1986.

⁸⁹Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1987-1988 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

\$1,250,000.00 with fourteen payments over seven years.⁹⁰ The administrative center was occupied at the start of the 1989-1990 school year. Relocation to this new central office began in the late spring of the 1988-1989 school year. The building was named after retiring Superintendent Don Stroh and is known as the Don Stroh Administration Center (DSAC).⁹¹

Merger

A recurring theme due to funding concerns was the idea of a consolidation of the suburban school districts with the Omaha Public Schools. In anticipation, due to press coverage of the Omaha Public School Board's discussion of such a merger, the Board passed the following position statement two full months before receiving any formal communication from the Omaha Public Schools.

The Millard School District has successfully developed an outstanding educational staff and facilities for the benefit of the citizens and students of the district. This development has been the result of community cooperation, community development, and community participation.

The Millard School District is of the opinion that its present legal and political status is in the best interest of all citizens and students of the district, and any change would destroy all that has been built and accomplished by the Millard School District community.

The Millard School District is dedicated to continuation of its status as a separate school district serving the needs of all people within its boundaries.

The Millard School District does not feel that any study or investigation is necessary confirm the policy of the district to remain independent.

⁹⁰Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1981-1982 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

⁹¹Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), February 1, 1988, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

The Millard School Board opposes any attempt to merge with any other school district or to be destroyed by another proceeding which would in any way adversely affect either the geographic, political or education integrity of the district.⁹²

Omaha Public Schools was facing a 0% lid due to a successful petition drive and vote led by tax activist Ed Jaksha. In addition, the Omaha schools were continuing to experience a decline in their white population and the 0% lid was viewed as one more reason to leave that school district.⁹³ As the economy became more stable in the late 1980s and Omaha schools began to grow again, the talk on the part of the Omaha Board of Education turned away from merger.⁹⁴ Ed Jaksha during the 1984 state-wide spending lid campaign again noted that the merger of the Omaha Public Schools with the suburban school districts would save on administrative costs.⁹⁵ Tightening fiscal constraints served to keep this topic on the table for discussion throughout the 1980s.

Governance and Administration

The Board of Education

Many of the changes that the Board underwent in the 1980s were very procedural in nature. As in the 1970s, some of the changes were mandated by laws or court decisions while others reflected the changing Board or the growth of the responsibilities of the Board. The Board did continue with its management by objectives program and developed a new philosophy

⁹²Ibid., September 17, 1979.

⁹³Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1979-1980 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

⁹⁴Ibid., 1985-1986.

⁹⁵Ibid., 1984-1985.

statement. As part of the Board's long-range planning program, the Millard Education Foundation was formed in the 1980s.

Procedural Changes

The changing Board caused several procedural changes in the 1980s. Death and resignation from the Board caused the Board to fill a Board seat four times in the 1980s. One of the replacements required the Board to get a ruling from the Secretary of State, Allen Beerman, regarding her running for reelection after her appointment to the Board. This Board member had to declare if her candidacy was for a full, four-year term or the remaining two years of the term she was filling, when the seat came up for election in 1982.⁹⁸ As members of the Board in the early 1980s decided not to run for reelection, the Board realized that a great loss of expertise would take place. To be able to continue to draw upon this expertise, an internal Board policy was developed.

8240.1

Internal Board Policies

Retirement: Members of the Board

1. When members complete their terms on the Board of Education, they will receive a plaque and a lifetime pass to school district activities.
2. During the first year following their retirement from the Board, former members will receive agendas and minutes of regular meetings.
3. In succeeding years, former Board members will receive:
 - a. Regular mailings of school district publications
 - b. Invitations to special school events
 - c. Annual invitations to the budget review meeting

⁹⁸Millard Public Schools News Clippings File. (Douglas County District), 1981-1982 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

4. Former Board members may be invited to meet with current Board members at least once a year to discuss matters of mutual interest and concern.⁹⁷

Procedurally, as part of their public relations program, the Board began to include "showcase" features on their agendas, such as the special music award winners from All-State Band and Orchestra.⁹⁸ During the same year, the first Employee of the Month Award, a program proposed by Nancy Holloran the school district's coordinator of communications, was presented.⁹⁹ The first recipient of the award was Brooke de Malignon who worked in the maintenance department.¹⁰⁰ Mr. Malignon had devised a way to determine which equipment within buildings could be turned off during the weekends to conserve energy and thus, district money.

A new state law in 1982 allowing school boards to have non-voting student members resulted in the addition of such members from each high school.¹⁰¹ In the fall of 1982, each high schools' student council selected a representative. Almost immediately, Student Board Member, Walt Mertz relayed a student concern regarding participation in sports activities and needing to meet a physical education requirement. The Board requested that Dr. Nenneman investigate and report back to the Board regarding this student concern.¹⁰² Board policies were modified in the spring of 1983 to allow the new

⁹⁷Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), November 17, 1980, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

⁹⁸Ibid., November 3, 1980.

⁹⁹Ibid., October 6, 1980.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., November 17, 1980.

¹⁰¹Ibid., April 26, 1982.

¹⁰²Ibid., October 18, 1982.

members selected for such a position to begin their term of office in June after their election for the next school year.¹⁰³

Regarding school calendar development

the Board asked that a new process be used. A small committee of administrators and teachers will develop several alternative calendars, with the options later being reduced to two or three by the Board. A sampling of parents and staff will then be polled to allow them to vote for the calendar they prefer.¹⁰⁴

Prior to this time, the administrators had prepared a calendar based on the Board's parameters each year. For the 1989-1990 school year, the Board requested that an attempt be made to set a common school calendar for the four suburban districts that had formed a special education cooperative.¹⁰⁵

Another change in Board procedures was the committee system. The system at the start of the 1980s remained the same with such standing committees as finance, building and site, instruction and Americanism, policy, staff and student personnel, and public relations and legislation.¹⁰⁶ Within eight months the new Board found the foregoing committee meetings to be inefficient.¹⁰⁷ Within two weeks, the Board decided to use a committee of the whole and meet on the second Monday of each month for such meetings while reserving the fourth Monday for an additional meeting if needed.¹⁰⁸ Although this format started on a trial basis, the process was readily adopted. Further

¹⁰³Ibid., April 18, 1983.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., December 7, 1987.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., January 9, 1989.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., January 15, 1979.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., September 4, 1979.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., September 17, 1979.

meeting modification took place when instead of rotating Board meetings at different school sites, the Board decided to hold all meetings at Millard North High School in the central administrative office area.¹⁰⁹ This was further modified in 1985, when the Board decided to hold meetings at the Educational Service Unit #3.¹¹⁰ This remained the practice until the opening of the Don Stroh Administration Center in 1989 when Board meetings were moved to that site.

Long-Range Planning and Goals

Continued use of management by objectives was modified by a long-range plan developed in 1983. The Board pursued such planning by hiring Shirley McCune as a consultant to assist in developing a long-range planning model.¹¹¹

Motion by Bunnell, seconded by Bosse, to accept the planning proposal/agreement submitted by futurist Dr. Shirley McCune

(Learning Trends, The Naisbitt Group, Denver, Colorado) to assist the Millard Public Schools in development of a strategic long-range plan for district goals. Upon roll call vote, all members voted aye. Motion carried.

--It was noted that much of the information necessary for this project has already been collected through the district's self-study and the report from the external evaluation team.

Board members received a task force report which ranked all self-study and external recommendations in order of priority (Master Plan of District Priorities). They agreed with Dr. Stroh's suggestion that the Superintendent's cabinet review and analyze the recommendations and then Board members and school

¹⁰⁹Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1984-1985 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹¹⁰Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), June 17, 1985, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹¹¹Ibid., February 21, 1983.

administration meet for a one-day retreat to plan for the next three years.¹¹²

From the long-range planning model, six district goals were developed. They included:

1. Extend the excellence of learning in education programs
2. Extend the quality of professionalism in the Millard Schools
3. Extend fiscal support for the Millard education programs
4. Expand early childhood education opportunities in Millard
5. Develop an expanded community school program
6. Expand Millard's continuing education opportunities¹¹³

Each year several subcategories for each district goal were developed. For example, the 1985-1986 goal to extend the excellence in education program included curriculum work in vocational education, an alternative high school, a kindergarten study, K-12 thinking skills, continued staff development regarding Instructional Theory Into Practice (Madeline Hunter Model), and planning for a new middle school to be opened.¹¹⁴

Another self study and external evaluation was conducted during the 1988-1989 school year. In preparation for that study, the Board updated the philosophy and goals of the school district as follows:

Philosophy of the Millard Public Schools

The Millard Public Schools are dedicated to educating young people and improving the quality of life for those living in our community. We recognize the individuality and developmental needs of the students we serve. We meet their diversity with alternatives in teaching and learning. We value the dignity and worth of people as well as our tradition and American heritage.

¹¹²Ibid., April 4, 1983.

¹¹³Ibid., December 19, 1983.

¹¹⁴Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1985-1986 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

We encourage the active participation of students, staff and community to bring about these values.

We believe that education is a life-long process and that the obligation to help all students reach their potential is one that is shared with the family and the community. Collective outcomes of schooling assure that students can participated fully in the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

We believe that the Millard Public Schools are among the nation's most advanced and innovative educational institution, with a commitment to the accomplishment of their goals in an equitable, just and superior manner.

The Goals of the Millard Public Schools are:

Develop opportunities for excellence in learning for all Millard youth

Maintain professionalism of high quality in Millard schools

Provide for a patron-enriched community

Promote an efficient educational management system¹¹⁵

This remained the philosophy and the goals until the end of the period under study (1946-1989). The change in leadership at the start of 1989-1990 school year

resulted in preliminary study of moving toward strategic planning.¹¹⁶

Millard Education Foundation

In working on the long-range goal of extending the fiscal support of the educational Programs in the Millard Public Schools, the Board started the Millard Education Foundation. The Board and the administrators began talking about such an idea in late 1982. Westside had formed such a foundation in

¹¹⁵Ibid., December 21, 1987.

¹¹⁶Ibid., September 5, 1989.

1974, and the national trend was for large school districts to have an independent educational foundation. Another option considered was a school district lottery but special legislation was required.¹¹⁷ After much discussion, the Board decided to form a committee composed of citizens

to pursue the feasibility of establishing a Millard Education Foundation. Upon roll call vote, all members voted aye. Motion carried. (Each Board member will submit two names for committee membership and the Superintendent is to submit one name by the first of September, 1983. It was agreed that 75% of the membership would be Millard residents.)¹¹⁸

The idea for a foundation was formally approved in February, 1984.¹¹⁹

Certification of incorporation was approved by the Board for the Millard Education Foundation (MEF) on May 21, 1984.¹²⁰

During the summer of 1984 the MEF prepared plans to open a latch-key program for before and after school child care in one elementary school. The school selected was Montclair. Bonnie Kolowski, a former Early Childhood Director for Westside, was hired as a consultant to develop the program. She assisted in hiring the first director at Montclair, obtaining the licensing for the facility, and designing the activity program. The program was initially located in the art and science centers in elementary buildings. Eventually the programs were located in the elementary gymnasiums. The program was met with resistance both on the part of building administrators and local child care

¹¹⁷Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1982-1983 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹¹⁸Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), July 18, 1993, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹¹⁹Ibid., February 6, 1984.

¹²⁰Ibid., May 21, 1984.

providers.¹²¹ Early fears were abated somewhat in that the Montclair program was to test the concept as a source of income for the MEF. When the latch-key program was found to be a substantial source of revenue for the MEF and a safe place for children before and after school, plans were made to expand the program to more sites during the 1984-1985 school year.¹²² Eventually, federal funding for a breakfast program was obtained and the program expanded utilizing thematic planning led by Bonnie Kolowski.¹²³ Today, the latch-key program, or Kids Network as it is now called, remains as the main source of MEF funds.

Other early plans by the MEF were for the Centennial celebration for the community of Millard in the schools, the development of a yearly banquet that would include Hall of Fame Awards, and the development of a grant funding program for the schools in Millard. Eventually, all the plans of this group were implemented. Most elementary schools had latch-key programs and the revenues generated by the program generated significant support for the district as outlined in the following report to the Board.

September 15, 1989

TO: Board of Education

FROM: Roger Koehler

RE: Millard Education Foundation

¹²¹Bonnie Kolowski, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 25 August 1997.

¹²²Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), March 4, 1985, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹²³Bonnie Kolowski, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 25 August 1997.

As your representative on the Millard Education Foundation Board of Directors, I want to provide you with information on recent Foundation activities. The foundation now has its own office, located at 13322 Millard Avenue. As you know, Don Stroh is serving as executive director.

The Foundation funded a total of \$33,029.00 in grant requests from staff members last spring. The grants provided a HyperCard controlled multi-media classroom for chemistry at Millard North High, a learning skills program at Millard South, a telecommunications project at Cather, a camcorder and replay system for Millard South, a publishing center at Andersen, and a Desk Top Video Production Lab at Millard North High.

The child care program continues to grow, with 12 schools now offering before-and-after school care. Between 125 and 200 children daily participated in the summer program

Last year, 36 scholarships with a total value of \$14,100 were awarded to graduates through the Foundation. Money is already being received from parent organizations for scholarships to be awarded at next spring's foundation banquet.

The student community service program placed approximately 8,000 Millard high school students for 15,000 hours of volunteer work last year. A federal grant has helped fund the program for the past three years. The grant is now reduced to \$5,000, so the foundation is supporting SCS at a cost of \$10,000. The Board of Directors has indicated that unless additional grants become available, a determination will have to be made about where the responsibility lies for funding a district volunteer program.

To enhance communication between the Millard Board of Education and the Foundation Board, we would like to have a joint dinner meeting sometime this fall.¹²⁴

Administration

Flexibility in administrative organizational structure remained a key element during the 1980s as it had during the 1970s. The need for this

¹²⁴Ibid., September 18, 1989.

flexibility was demonstrated throughout the period through studies conducted by Superintendent Stroh regarding administrative patterns of organization. This was a school district objective in 1979-1980¹²⁵ and organizational patterns remained a district goal in 1987-1988. Beyond the changes for growth in size, most of the changes occurred due to the growth of programs within the school district. Changes at the secondary administrative level were necessitated by growth and the structure of the comprehensive 9-12 high schools. The elementary schools also experienced growth and the need for extra assistance in the larger schools initiated major Board debates. The retirement of Dr. Stroh as superintendent also resulted in controversy over his replacement as did the audit investigation of a Millard Education Foundation Program overseen by the district's director of research and evaluation. In 1978-1979 the administrative staff consisted of fifteen central office administrators, fourteen elementary administrators, and thirteen secondary administrators. By 1989-1990, the numbers had gone down to twenty-five central office administrators, twenty-four secondary administrators, and twenty-four elementary administrators.¹²⁶

Central Office

A major administrative change at central office was that the associate superintendent was now an assistant superintendent. This position was held by Dr. Keith Lutz who had been hired by the Board to replace Dr. Witt when he moved to the position of superintendent.¹²⁷ Working directly for the

¹²⁵Ibid., December 3, 1979.

¹²⁶Ibid., February 20, 1989. (One central office person also doubled as a principal of the smallest elementary school.)

¹²⁷Ibid., August 7, 1989.

superintendent was the coordinator of communications and a new position, director of planning and evaluation.¹²⁸ With the move to long-range planning, grant writing, and the need to implement and evaluate new programs, this position had been created for the 1980-1981 school year.¹²⁹ The creation of the director of planning and evaluation was at the expense of separate curriculum directors for elementary and secondary until 1984-1985.¹³⁰ The development of curriculum for K-6 and 7-12 was overseen by one person, until Dr. Rick Kolowski and Ms. Susan Spangler were appointed secondary and elementary education directors respectively at the start of the 1984-1985 school year.¹³¹

The major area of growth in regards to program administration was in the division supervised by the assistant superintendent of educational services, Dr. Nenneman. Within his department there were five directors, three coordinators, one supervisor, and one administrative assistant.¹³² One of the directors, the director of instructional materials and distribution, was under the supervision of the assistant superintendent for auxiliary services as well. The other directors in curriculum included elementary education, secondary education, special education, and instructional improvement.¹³³ The latter had become a topic of focus as the district developed the Madeline Hunter model or Instructional

¹²⁸Ibid., February 20, 1989.

¹²⁹Ibid., July 21, 1980.

¹³⁰Ibid., September 10, 1984.

¹³¹Dr. Rick Kolowski, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 28 July 1997.

¹³²Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), February 20, 1989, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹³³Ibid., July 18, 1983. (This position was originally a coordinator but was changed to a directorship within two years.)

Theory Into Practice (ITIP). Three new positions in curriculum were coordinators. There was a coordinator for of reading and a coordinator for the Chapter I program. A third coordinator supervised the community and partnering education program. In addition, there was an administrative assistant for special education K-6. The supervisor and administrative assistant worked in special education to oversee the pre-school and speech pathology programs.

A major change in educational services division was the loss of the secondary directorship in 1980-1981. Four years latter, however, in 1984-1985 when the director of K-12 resigned, the position along with that of director of vocational, extended, and community education,¹³⁴ was redesigned to create separate elementary and secondary directorships.¹³⁵

Additional growth in the curriculum included emphasis on reading programs and the development of business partnerships. The growth of the number of students requiring extra reading assistance and government programs in this subject necessitated the creation of a coordinator of reading (K-12).¹³⁶ A director of Chapter I already was in existence at the time.¹³⁷ By the end of the decade both positions were coordinator positions. At a Committee of the Whole meeting in June, 1989, Dr. John A. Lammel reported on partnerships with business. The presentation was based on research Dr. Lammel had conducted regarding school partnership programs at award winning Blue

¹³⁴Ibid., April 16, 1984.

¹³⁵Ibid., September 17, 1984.

¹³⁶Ibid., March 19, 1984.

¹³⁷Ibid., April 5, 1982.

Ribbon Schools.¹³⁸ Some programs were already being used in Millard such as business sponsored scholarships, on-the-job training, and part-time employment opportunities. He suggested that such businesses be given public credit for what were mutually beneficial programs. The Board suggested that such a program be adopted with a coordinator to oversee the program.¹³⁹ Within two months, Margo Bassinger was appointed to the position of coordinator of community and partnership education.¹⁴⁰ This position included developing business partnerships and also overseeing the adult community education program that was offered in conjunction with the local community college. Until the creation of this administrative position, adult education had been coordinated by the vocational director or the secondary education director; thus this coordinator position reported to the secondary education director. By the 1987-1988 school year, the district and business partners were receiving positive press coverage in that thirty partnerships were participating in the Partners Assisting Youth Business and Community or PAYBAC Program.¹⁴¹

The assistant superintendent for general administration and personnel was assisted by three directors for personnel, student services, and staff development. In addition, one administrative assistant worked with the personnel director on special projects. The position of director of personnel

¹³⁸Dr. John A. Lammel, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 7 August 1997.

¹³⁹Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), June 17, 1987, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹⁴⁰Ibid., August 19, 1985.

¹⁴¹Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1987-1988 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

was new for the 1989-1990 school year.¹⁴² The Director of Pupil Personnel Services who supervised the school nurses, psychologists, and counselors, also reported to Dr. Witt.¹⁴³

The assistant superintendent for auxiliary services, Dick Lewis, had the assistance of three directors, one each in maintenance and operations, food services and transportation, and instructional materials and distribution, which was shared with the assistant superintendent of educational services. The director of food services and transportation was assisted by a supervisor of hot lunch while the director of maintenance and operations was helped by a supervisor of housekeeping and grounds. In addition, the auxiliary services assistant superintendent had an administrative assistant for business services which aided in special projects such as new buildings.

Secondary Schools

The creation of two comprehensive high schools resulted in a major restructuring of the administrative teams in what had been the level I and II buildings. What had been eight administrators in 1978-1979¹⁴⁴ grew to twelve in 1981-1982 in a plan approved in 1980.¹⁴⁵ Each high school had a principal and two vice principals for discipline for grades 9-10 and 11-12. In addition, there were three assistant principals at Millard North and South High Schools; an assistant principal for curriculum and instruction, pupil services and registrar,

¹⁴²Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), February 20, 1989, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹⁴³Dr. Dennis Harding, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 29 July 1997.

¹⁴⁴Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), March 18, 1978, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹⁴⁵Ibid., November 3, 1980.

and for the activities program. In presenting this plan, Dr. Stroh noted that the level I high school had been understaffed upon opening.¹⁴⁶

The other change at the secondary level in administration was at the junior high level. The number of assistant principals at each building had been determined by the student enrollment. In 1982, an assistant principal was added to monitor curriculum.¹⁴⁷ The job description for this position was as follows:

2100.55

Administration

Assistant Principal (7th) - Building Curriculum Supervisor

Reports to : Principal

Performance Responsibilities:

1. Determines curricular needs for development revision or deletion of program and communicates to the Director of Planning and Curriculum Development.
2. Coordinates planning, implementation, and evaluation (with department head assistance) of all course offerings.
3. Implements, with department head assistance, a curricular articulation process within the junior high building and between other educational levels.
4. Organizes a building level summer school program.
5. Coordinates efforts of the department heads.
6. Assists in the evaluation of staff and provides primary assistance to those needing improvement in instruction.

¹⁴⁶Ibid., November 3, 1980.

¹⁴⁷Ibid., July 12, 1982.

7. Assists in the organization of the staff development program on the building level.
8. Serves as team leader for the seventh-grade interdisciplinary teams.
9. Assists with building supervision, student discipline and student attendance.
10. Performs other administrative duties as assigned by the principal.

Length of contract: 210 days¹⁴⁸

At this time, the high schools each had their own assistant principal for curriculum and instruction, and the director of planning and curriculum development was a K-12 position. Thus these building level positions helped to articulate the district curricular programs at the building level. The number of students in a building became an issue again with the opening of Andersen and Kiewit Middle Schools. In 1989-1990, each of the four middle schools had a principal, a full-time assistant principal, and a part-time assistant principal.

In addition, as in the 1970s, allowances had to be made for special administrative assistants at the high schools. This was the case at the start of the 1989-1990 school year as Dr. John A. Lammell, began his term as President-Elect of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP). This position was viewed as an honor for Dr. John A. Lammell and the school district. A teacher was selected to carry out assigned administrative duties in addition to teaching part-time.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸Ibid., July 12, 1989.

¹⁴⁹Ibid., August 7, 1989.

Elementary Schools

The number of administrators in the elementary schools at the start of the 1989-1990 school year was a problem for the central office administrators. Each building had a principal, thus there were seventeen elementary principals as compared to thirteen in 1978-1979. In the latter school year, there had been one assistant principal who also worked as a coordinator of the new math curriculum.¹⁵⁰ The unequal growth in numbers of students at various elementary schools had required assistant principals over the years. In 1987, the uneven enrollment problem had been handled with the creation of six administrative interns at Neihardt, Morton, Cottonwood, Montclair, Abbott, and Holling Heights Elementary Schools.¹⁵¹ In addition to administrative responsibilities these interns taught part-time. Also, all elementary buildings had personnel serving in some capacity as instructional facilitators working with the challenge program. The Board saw a need for "assistance for principals in schools with enrollments over 600" at the time the administrative intern position was created.¹⁵²

Two years later, when the administrators proposed the creation of elementary assistant principals in buildings with enrollments over 600 students in place of the intern program which had lasted only one year, the Board did not agree that there was a need.¹⁵³ The issue centered around what was the difference between an elementary facilitator and an assistant principal.¹⁵⁴ Some of the Board viewed the two positions as an unnecessary replication of services.

¹⁵⁰Ibid., March 18, 1978.

¹⁵¹Ibid., July 6, 1987.

¹⁵²Ibid., May 11, 1987.

¹⁵³Ibid., February 6, 1989.

¹⁵⁴Ibid., February 20, 1989.

Ultimately, the Board voted on August 21, 1989 to add seven assistant elementary principals to the administrative staff and eliminate instructional facilitators in those buildings with an assistant principal. Two of the positions were half-time, while the other five were full-time.¹⁵⁵

Dr. Stroh's Retirement and Replacement

The Board extended Dr. Stroh's contract in November, 1986, to June, 1990.¹⁵⁶ This was the first time that Dr. Stroh had been given a multi-year contract by the Board.¹⁵⁷ In October, 1988, however, Dr. Stroh presented his resignation to the Board effective July 1, 1989. "Board President Roger Koehler praised Stroh's ability to grow with the school district and expressed appreciation on his outstanding achievements."¹⁵⁸ For the first time in thirty-four years, Millard Public Schools would have a new superintendent at the start of the 1989-1990 school year. At the committee of whole meeting the next week, the Board began a discussion of the process to replace the superintendent. The following week, the Board decided to take no action to replace Dr. Stroh until after the November 8 election, as three board seats were up for election and the new Board should play a role in selecting the new superintendent.¹⁵⁹

At the November 21, 1988, Board meeting Dr. Koehler recognized the newly elected Board members who would take office in January. One

¹⁵⁵Ibid., August 21, 1989.

¹⁵⁶Ibid., November 4, 1986.

¹⁵⁷Dr. Don Stroh, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 29 July 1997.

¹⁵⁸Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), October 3, 1988, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹⁵⁹Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1988-1989 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

incumbent and two new members had been elected. In addition, at this meeting there was a motion

by Bunnell, seconded by Wright, to appoint Dr. Ron Witt as superintendent of the Millard Public Schools. Laughlin said taking a vote at this time would not be in the best interest of the community because there was not a job description or criteria to warrant a selection now. This was not reflection on Dr. Witt, she said but she would like to see more legwork done in developing a selection process. Koehler agreed with Laughlin and felt this would be a premature decision. Bunnell stated he did not want a stranger as superintendent for the Millard Public Schools and felt Millard had the best candidate for the superintendency. The discussion continued with pros and cons on the need for a selection process. Upon roll call vote, Bunnell, Petrie, Wright and Reeder voted aye. Laughlin and Koehler voted nay. Motion carried.¹⁶⁰

The following day, the Omaha World Herald carried a story entitled "School Chief Vote Sparks Controversy."¹⁶¹ Everyone, both current and newly elected Board members, agreed that Dr. Witt was an excellent successor. Some members, however, felt that the decision was not good for the residents of the district. At the next regular Board meeting, the teachers union, the MEA, presented a letter in support of Dr. Witt while community members asked the Board to reconsider the process used in selecting Dr. Witt.¹⁶² Dr. Witt's new contract as superintendent-elect was approved in February, 1989, with one nay vote from the new Board.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), November 21, 1988, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska. November 21, 1988

¹⁶¹Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1988-1989 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹⁶²Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), December 5, 1988, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹⁶³Ibid., February 20, 1989.

Dr. Stroh attended his last meeting with the Board on June 27, 1989, when he received a standing ovation.¹⁶⁴ Dr. Stroh was given a trip of his choice by community members, school district staff, and both present and former members.¹⁶⁵ Over his years with Millard Public Schools, he worked for equalization and reorganization of schools in the state of Nebraska. Dr. Stroh was said to have grown a school district. The new administrative center was named in his honor after breaking a Board tradition of selecting nonliving personages for such an honor.¹⁶⁶

Alleged Administrative Mismanagement

The development of the Millard Education Foundation's latch-key program resulted in a problem for the MEF, the school administrators, and the Board in the late-1980s. Minor problems with the staffing of the various sites had been published by the Omaha World Herald in October, 1988. Various latch-key sites had been found to have an inappropriate ratio of adults to children. New staff members were hired and the policy on "drop ins" modified.¹⁶⁷

In the spring of 1989, another problem was disclosed. The MEF's treasurer was also a central office administrator. The administrator had noticed a problem with receipts from one of the latch-key sites and visited with the site director. The site director had used latch-key funds for personal benefit. At first, the site director was given a chance to repay the debt with no public disclosure. When this did not happen, the site director was dismissed by the central office

¹⁶⁴Ibid., June 27, 1989.

¹⁶⁵Nancy Holloran, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 4 August 1997.

¹⁶⁶Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1988-1989 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹⁶⁷Ibid., 1988-1989.

administrator. The discredit was made, public and the administrator was put on administrative suspension and a successful latch-key site director was asked to administer the program for MEF.¹⁶⁹ Within the course of three weeks, the Board accepted the administrator's resignation for personal reasons effective July 31, 1989.¹⁶⁹

Following the administrator's resignation, he continued on administrative suspension and full pay until the end of his contract. During this time, a further disclosure was made that MEF funds had been expended without the authorization of the MEF Board of Directors for a telephone information line service named "Call Suzie." The program had been presented to the MEF as a way to deliver informational and commercial messages to the Millard school community. Ultimately an \$11,000.00 settlement was reached with the telephone line service company.¹⁷⁰

Retiring Superintendent Stroh agreed to be the Executive Director of MEF until funding could be found to hire someone for the position independent of the school district.¹⁷¹ In addition, a state audit of the MEF's fiscal records was performed in the fall of 1989 regarding federal funds that had been received to assist with a latch-key breakfast program. The close of the year found the MEF waiting to be informed if a fine would be levied or not.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁸Ibid.

¹⁶⁹Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), May 1, 1989, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹⁷⁰Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1988-1989 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹⁷¹Ibid.

¹⁷²Ibid., 1989-1990.

Federal and State Legislative Parameters

The change in the presidential policies on public education had a direct impact on the Millard Public Schools and the actions of the Board and the administrators during the 1980s. The major federal legislation dealt with the removal of asbestos from schools and block grants. State legislation dealt with a variety of issues but tended to be in reactions to the need to raise standards called for in A Nation At Risk. Finally, special procedures within the state of Nebraska's constitution, relative to initiative and referendum impacted education.

Federal Legislation

Often, federal regulations are enforced through state departments of education with the warning of potential loss of federal funding. This was the case with the asbestos inspection. Asbestos in certain forms was found to be a carcinogen. Thus the asbestos needed to be safely removed if possible, or covered in some fashion to protect the health of students and staff. There was a deadline placed on the state departments of education to have all inspections in a state performed by October 12, 1988, or face a \$5,000.00 a day fine. The Nebraska State Department of Education was hoping to get an internal inspector for the state of Nebraska cutting state costs of 3.1 million dollars in half. The problem was that such inspectors could be trained at only eight locations in the country. Having an internally trained inspector added the risk of possible state liability.¹⁷³

To expedite the process, Millard Public Schools entered a consortium of Eastern Nebraska Schools and sent bids out to find an inspection firm. The selected firm was the Institute for Environmental Assessment. The cost of this

¹⁷³Ibid., 1987-1988.

inspection for the district was \$42,812.00. This was an expense the district was required to incur and the Board accepted the bid from the Institute for Environmental Assessment.¹⁷⁴

The Reagan administration made major cuts in social programs. Educational funding was seriously impacted by these reductions. In 1980, Dr. Stroh reported to the Board that the school district would have a 35% loss in federal monies for the hot lunch program. The district would have to make up this loss for those students receiving free and reduced lunches, as this portion of the program was mandatory to receive the federal funding still available. In addition, Title I funding was expected to be cut by 20% but there would be greater local control.¹⁷⁵

One overlapping issue of concern between the federal government and the state government was multicultural education. This issue is evident in the following policy.

5128
6100

Students

Instruction

Multi-Cultural Education

In order to prepare students to function in a pluralistic society, school staff will utilize the resources of curriculum, instruction, inservices, counseling and guidance to reflect the racial, ethnic, language and cultural heritage of both the historical and modern day United States of America.

¹⁷⁴Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), April 4, 1988, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹⁷⁵Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1987-1988 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

Such resource utilization and programming shall be in compliance with policies or laws as identified by TITLE VI and VII of the 1964 CIVIL RIGHTS ACT, TITLE IX of the 1972 EDUCATION AMENDMENT, the FEDERAL REHABILITATION ACT of 1973, 79-213 of the Nebraska law and those rules and regulations stipulated in current accreditation standards.

State Legislation

State legislation and resulting state department of education policies in the 1980s covered a variety of topics indicating a growing set of state requirements on local boards of education. Such requirements occurred in varied areas such as student health, option enrollment, kindergarten curriculum, the number of hours of instruction, and graduation requirements.

The 1979-1980 school year began with a new law requiring all new secondary students to have the same immunizations that were required in the seventh-grade, state-mandated physicals. With the large number of students who move into Millard each year, there were many new students at the secondary level beyond seventh-grade. Over four hundred students at the start of the year when this new state law was enforced were found to be without the proper immunizations. In a similar situation, an outbreak of measles resulted in a rule that all K-12 students would have to be immunized for seven communicable diseases.¹⁷⁶

The close of the decade was dominated by the new school open enrollment law. The Board was required to develop a policy and rule dealing with Legislative Bill 183 (Choice Bill) for the 1990-1991 school year before the

¹⁷⁶Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1979-1980 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

end of 1989.¹⁷⁷ School districts were allowed to limit their incoming enrollments from other districts based on crowded conditions. In addition, each school district in the state of Nebraska was given four years to phase in the law.¹⁷⁸ By October, 1989, the state department of education did not have regulations for the law, but Dr. Witt recommended, due to crowded conditions, that Millard Public Schools not allow transfers into the district the first year.¹⁷⁹ On final decision, the Board followed the administrators's recommendations and did not allow option transfers into the district. Based on administrative recommendation and the realization there would be a loss in state aid to education, the Board did vote to allow transfers out of the school district for the 1990-1991 school year. Furthermore, the Board decided to delay finalization of policy and rules until the fall of 1990 when option enrollment impact could be better analyzed.¹⁸⁰

A task force from the state department of education studied the state's kindergarten programs. Advancements in the knowledge and understanding of early childhood education were utilized to create new kindergarten standards. Appropriate play, use of manipulatives, no tests, and no academic pushing became the instructional method.¹⁸¹ Expansion of the early childhood education opportunities in Millard had been a long-range plan for the Board in the

¹⁷⁷Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), August 21, 1989, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹⁷⁸Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1989-1990 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹⁷⁹Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), October 2, 1989, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹⁸⁰Ibid., November 20, 1989.

¹⁸¹Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1985-1986 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

mid-1980s. Thus Millard Public Schools served as a lighthouse district in terms of kindergarten programs.

Impacts from the national level were not always legislative. A Nation at Risk caused many states to reevaluate educational programs. The public perception of high schools, based on press report reactions to A Nation at Risk, was that high schools were like shopping malls. If a student attended and behaved, the amount and type of learning was left to the student.¹⁸² The report had suggested longer school days and years and more academically rigorous programs. LB 994 was Nebraska's legislative reaction to meet these requirements. The resulting state department rules, Chapter 15, redefined a school year in terms of instructional hours and not days. Elementary and secondary schools were required to have 1032 and 1080 hours of instruction respectively. The Board and the administrators needed to define what was instructional time.¹⁸³

In anticipation of the enactment of LB 994, the Board revised Rule No. 5127.1 (Requirements for Senior High School Graduation). For the freshman class of 1984, 205 credits versus the 180 established in 1980 would be required. Superintendent Stroh stated that most positive effect was "a greater emphasis on math, science, English, and a new oral communications requirement."¹⁸⁴ Conversely, the cost for additional staff, materials, and curriculum required an additional \$129,000.00 in the budget.

¹⁸²Ibid.

¹⁸³Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), December 3, 1984, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹⁸⁴Ibid., December 5, 1983.

Initiative and Referendum

When Nebraska adopted the unicameral legislative form of government in 1934, strong initiative and referendum components were included in the state's constitution. Referendum allows for voter approval of laws the legislature has passed. Initiative allows the citizens of the state to put to a public vote laws they would like to have passed by placing such issues on the ballot through petition drives. Both of these issues impacted education in the 1980s.

In 1978, a tax lid initiative was not approved. During the 1980s, tax activist Ed Jaksha led a petition drive to place a tax lid on local government. Jaksha was quoted as saying, "schools have overspent, earning such limits."¹⁸⁵ Nebraska realtors supported the petition drive and the initiative was voted on and failed in the November, 1984, general election.

In 1986, a referendum issue was voted upon by the citizens of the state in regards to Legislative Bill 662. This legislation was designed to induce school consolidation by forcing K-8 rural schools to affiliate with high school districts. The funding package included a tax shift from property tax to additional state aid.¹⁸⁶ This additional state aid would be generated by a 1% sales and income tax. The Board went on record as favoring Legislative Bill 662 or Referendum 400 as it appeared on the ballot, on a five-to-one vote. Dr. Stroh anticipated a 37% reduction in property tax.¹⁸⁷ The referendum was passed in the November, 1986, general election.

¹⁸⁵Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1984-1985 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹⁸⁶Ibid., 1986-1987.

¹⁸⁷Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), September 15, 1986, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

Both the initiative and referendum issues were important to the Board and the Millard Public Schools due to the high cost of bond redemption in the school budget and continuing cuts in state aid to education in the 1980s. During the three years prior to the referendum, Millard Public Schools had lost over a million dollars in state aid. Without the referendum, preliminary figures saw the Board needing to figure out where to obtain an additional \$220,000.00 to maintain only the status quo of the budget for the 1987-1988 school year.¹⁸⁸ As a result of these state aid cuts, the Board had to cut \$110,000.00 from the 1986-1987 budget mid-year.

Board Policies

Board policy development in the 1980s was influenced by many outside forces such as national reports, state legislation, and state education department rule enforcement. In addition, the judicial system placed requirements on school districts. In 1983, the Board did update the codification of its policies.

Motion by Bunnell, seconded by Reeder, that the Board Policy Manual dated October 3, 1983 containing all existing policies and rules, which has been revised only by renumbering and reindexing some of the policies and rules be adopted as the Board Policy manual. Upon roll call vote, all members voted aye. Motion carried.¹⁸⁹

Social Issues

Of importance, are two Board policies developed in the late 1980s. Both dealt with social issues and were, in part, a result of the administrators' and Board's development of a comprehensive health program and state legislation

¹⁸⁸Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1986-1987 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹⁸⁹Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), October 3, 1983, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

in the case of smoking. The issues were smoking in school facilities and HIV. Both issues were very controversial. In addition, one non-health related social issue of importance was developed into policy, that being sexual harassment.

In 1988, after over a year of study, the Board approved a non smoking rule and policy to meet the Nebraska Clean Air Act. The school district had considered having special smoking rooms, but a study of the ventilation of the buildings made this cost prohibitive at \$2,500.00 to \$5,000.00 per building. With staff members that smoked, the enforcement of the policy and rule also became an issue. "Jan Fisher, Millard North teacher, said she hoped the Board would provide designated areas in each district building when they voted on the smoking policy."¹⁹⁰ As a result, the policy was passed in early September, 1988, while the rule was debated for another two months until passage in late October, 1988. First violations were to result in verbal reprimand, subsequent violations would result in written reprimands or more serious consequences. As the debate took place, several parents testified that the rule was too lenient for teachers in that students faced suspension for tobacco products in school. Of concern administratively was how to handle community members at schools for activities who decided to smoke. An initial low key request to refrain from smoking became the standard operating procedure.¹⁹¹ If necessary, the administrators could call in a law enforcement agency if the problem persisted.¹⁹² During the time of this study no problems resulted from the new rule and policy.

¹⁹⁰Ibid., August 15, 1988.

¹⁹¹Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1988-1989 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹⁹²Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), November 7, 1988, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

The development of a policy and rule to deal with HIV was also very difficult for the Board and the administrators. Even after the policy was set in August, 1987, the rule was not completed for another year. Contraction of HIV was determined to not exclude a student from attending school but the actual development of AIDS could exclude a student depending on a review team's decision. The review team would consist of administrators, teaching staff, school nurse, and appropriate medical professionals.¹⁹³ In curriculum, the district continued to struggle to decide when and how to incorporate such issues into health education.

In August, 1982 the Board adopted the following policy dealing with sexual harassment.

4327

Personnel

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is prohibited by the Millard Public Schools. Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature carried out by someone in the work place or educational setting. Such behavior may offend the recipient, cause discomfort or humiliation, or interfere with job or school performance.

Any individual who feels this policy has been violated may follow the established grievance procedure.¹⁹⁴

During this same year, the Equal Rights Amendment failed ratification. Policies on such issues as sexual harassment were slowly accomplishing what could

¹⁹³Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), and 1987-1988 and 1988-1989 School Years, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

¹⁹⁴Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), August 16, 1987, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

not be achieved through a constitutional amendment. The social issues of the 1960s were beginning to be resolved.

Salary and Working Condition Negotiations

Disagreement between the Board and the administrators with the teachers union over salary was again an issue in the 1980s. In addition, many of the salary issues such as merit pay or flexible benefits also reflected a change in labor and management negotiations and national trends. Finally, the 1980s saw more issues arising in the work place dealing with working conditions versus salary. Some of these working conditions could be viewed as benefits but not always of a monetary nature.

Salary Negotiations

During the latter part of the 1980-1981 school year and during most of the 1981-1982 school year, the Board and the Millard Education Association (MEA) were in disagreement regarding salary. In May, 1981, the MEA president wrote a letter to the Board stating "the members of the Millard Education Association, are extremely disturbed by the unilateral declaration of impasse."¹⁹⁵ As a result of the letter and request to return to the negotiating process, the Board requested that the district's negotiation team meet with the MEA negotiators one more time but to continue the impasse and fact finding procedures.¹⁹⁶

The ensuing meeting was not successful and the negotiation process continued with fact finding. The net results of which would have given the teaching staff \$60,000.00 more than allocated in the 1981-1982 budget. Such a proposal would be accepted by the MEA with a 94% approval rate. The

¹⁹⁵Ibid., May 18, 1981.

¹⁹⁶Ibid.

Board voted to pay the teachers on the 1980-1981 salary schedule at the same meeting that the fact finding was presented.¹⁹⁷ The issue was still not resolved by October 19, 1981, thus the Board indicated they would take the case to the Commission of Industrial Relations (CIR) if MEA did not take any action by the start of November.

The CIR hearing was held on January 5, 1982. After the hearing, the Board directed its attorney to make a motion to dismiss the case based on the fact that the MEA did not represent the teachers.¹⁹⁸ In the meantime, the Board did move to change its policy on the length of the teachers contract from 190 days to 188 days.¹⁹⁹ The Commission of Industrial Relations' Opinion and Order pertaining to the case required that the comparable districts were Bellevue, Fremont, Omaha, Papillion and Ralston. In addition, the school district was required to pay 100% of the cost of long-term disability insurance, and that two salary lanes be altered. The BA +36 lane was to be set equal to the MA lane, while a MA +36 lane was made equal to a doctorate degree. Finally, there was an order to hold an election to determine who was the bargaining unit of the teachers. Of financial consequence to the district was the difference in the number of days in the contract. Millard had a longer contract and thus the teachers would need to be paid more even though they were not required to work all of the days of the contract.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁷Ibid., September 8, 1981.

¹⁹⁸Ibid., February 15, 1982.

¹⁹⁹Ibid., March 15, 1982.

²⁰⁰Ibid., April 5, 1982.

Upon the vote to determine if the bargaining unit was MEA, the vote was 505 yes, 16 no, with 24 votes voided.²⁰¹ At the same Board meeting the voting report was made, the MEA requested that negotiations begin for the next year. The Board attempted to obtain a new trial for certification of the election on the MEA's right to represent the teachers. This motion was denied by the CIR. The Board decided to leave an appeal open, should the CIR change its policy to prevent the matter from becoming final. At the same meeting the Board openly reviewed the negotiations to date for the 1982-1983 school year.²⁰² Within two months, the salary was set for the ensuing 1982-1983 school year.²⁰³

In the following years a strong attempt was made to settle differences at the negotiation table as demonstrated two years later in 1984, when the lid initiative petition drive was taking place. At that time, the Board and MEA agreed to not finish negotiations until the fall of 1984.²⁰⁴ In September of the same year, a new contract was reached.²⁰⁵

For the 1986-1987 and 1987-1988 school years, the MEA and the Board negotiated a two-year contract. The basic contents of the package are outlined below.

Motion by Bosse, seconded by Koehler, to accept the negotiating team's recommendation to enter into a two year agreement with the MEA to raise the base salary for 1986-1987 from \$15,200 to \$16,165 on a freeze for a 6.46% package increase, to raise the base salary for 1987-1988 from \$16,165 to \$16,825 on a roll ahead for a 6.11% package increase, to provide for a 3% longevity

²⁰¹Ibid., May 17, 1982.

²⁰²Ibid., June 7, 1982.

²⁰³Ibid., August 23, 1982.

²⁰⁴Ibid., June 18, 1984.

²⁰⁵Ibid., September 17, 1984.

payment for professional staff members who have completed the equivalent of 20 years of service with the Millard Schools beginning September, 1987 and with provision for reopeners. Upon roll call vote, all members voted aye. Motion carried.²⁰⁶

The freeze the first year and the roll ahead the second year dealt with movement vertically on the salary schedule for experience. Movement was not allowed the first year but was the next. In subsequent years, incoming staff members were given credit on the salary schedule for five years of previous experience if they had such experience, but then were rolled back one year to not give them an unfair advantage over those staff members who had been frozen one year. In addition, the ability to reopen the negotiations for the second year was put in the contract in case the economy changed or unforeseen issues arose.

Merit Pay

In the 1970s the district had a small merit pay program that was used for a few years. Each year fifteen teachers were recommended for an extra \$200.00 stipend.²⁰⁷ In the 1980s as a result of the reforms called for in A Nation at Risk, subsequent reports, and special study groups, merit pay was put forward as a possible solution to perceived declining school standards. Many advocates were calling for a total removal of salary schedules based on years of experience and moving to some sort of merit pay system. In 1983, "Education USA stated, "There is no one single plan that's a panacea, but any school district that involves the staff in decision making is bound to do better."²⁰⁸

²⁰⁶Ibid. May 19, 1986.

²⁰⁷Ibid., July 199, 1971.

²⁰⁸Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1982-1983 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

As a result of the foregoing call for such pay programs, the MEA and the Board included in their negotiated agreement for the 1984-1985 school year the development of a merit pay plan to be implemented in the May, 1985.²⁰⁹ Preliminary work on such a plan had been done during the 1983-1984 school year by a committee which included Board members, two school administrators, four MEA representatives, and a community representative.²¹⁰ During the first semester of the 1984-1985 school year, the following merit pay program was approved by the Board with the stipulation that the plan be reviewed after the first year and appropriate adjustments made.²¹¹

Program of Excellence

PURPOSE

The Millard Public Schools awards incentive/merit pay to recognize outstanding and exceptional performance by members of the certified staff.

The candidate is a certificated employee and has a nonadministrative position. The candidate has already met certain prerequisites including:

- a. shows respect for students, other professionals and community members; and
- b. has an acceptable work record including attendance.

Incentive/merit pay may be granted to a candidate who consistently demonstrates excellence in providing services to students and staff. These people make significant contributions to the school district, education profession and community.

²⁰⁹Ibid., 1984-1985 School Year.

²¹⁰Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), November 7, 1983, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

²¹¹Ibid., November 5, 1984.

**PROCEDURE FOR BEING RECOMMEND
TO THE PROGRAM OF EXCELLENCE**

The current evaluation systems are directed towards the improvement of instruction and delivery of services. These evaluation systems are part of the Program of Excellence.

The principal may use any and all resources available to him/her when compiling the list of nominations for this one year honor.

Indicators

The indicators that are listed below are criteria to be used when considering people for nominations. Taken as a group, these indicators define behavior and attitudes that are considered beyond average or above average. Each of the indicators must be met for a candidate to qualify for the Program of Excellence.

1. The candidate consistently demonstrates effective instructional behavior or excellent in the delivery of services.
2. Students of this candidate achieve beyond their expected level of performance.
3. The candidate exhibits excellent cooperation, rapport, and communication with students, colleagues, administration, and patrons.
4. The candidate is active in improving the profession.
5. The candidate demonstrates a commitment to his or her professional growth.²¹²

The program proved successful and was subsequently continued for the 1985-1986 school year. During that year, a grievance was pursued regarding the program in that two teachers were denied the merit pay based on excessive absences. The teachers had been absent as they were on maternity leave. The MEA and Nebraska State Education Association (NSEA) saw the exclusion

²¹²bid.

of maternity leave candidates to be discriminatory to child bearing females.²¹³ The NSEA, MEA, and the administrators developed a compromise that took into account time missed but also allowed for the merit pay of the two female teachers. At the same time, the Board decided to study the idea of three years of exemplary service before application could be made to the program. In addition the Board decided to develop a separate grievance procedure for the Merit Pay Program. The three year limitation was put into place and over the years the criteria were qualified, but the program remained intact.

Voluntary Early Separation Program

As the Millard Public Schools grew so did the number of professional staff who remained with the district for the duration of their careers. Many of these staff members also were at the top level on the salary schedule due to higher levels of education that they acquired over the years. For the 1983-1984 school year, the MEA negotiated an early retirement incentive program.²¹⁴ The resulting rule allowed teachers to make written request by February 1 of the elected year of separation.²¹⁵ If approved, the teachers would be given their incentive pay on October 20, each year for the entire year they qualified for such pay. Allowances were made for continuing to take part in the district's insurance programs. Modification of this policy and rule took place during the 1986-1987 school year. The program remained a part of the negotiated agreement to date.

²¹³Ibid., September 2, 1986.

²¹⁴Ibid., September 6, 1983.

²¹⁵Ibid., October 17, 1983.

Paraprofessionals

During the course of time, the National Education Association and Nebraska Education Association developed union memberships for non-teaching but associated personnel working in education. Thus nurses and paraprofessionals could be represented by the local union such as MEA. In late 1989, a disagreement arose over what services health paraprofessionals could be asked to do in the absence of a nurse. The issue centered around whether a health paraprofessional could be asked to change a catheter on a health impaired student. The cathetering of students by health paraprofessionals had just begun at the start of the 1989-1990 school year with a new job description for the position.²¹⁶

Through the course of the grievance, over which the health paraprofessional ultimately resigned from employment with the Millard Public Schools, the paraprofessionals organized and selected one paraprofessional, Diane Perry, to represent 143 of the 183 paraprofessionals.²¹⁷ As a result the close of 1989 found the Board asking for a Commission of Industrial Relations to verify the Educational Paraprofessionals Association of Millard.²¹⁸ Thus, the paraprofessionals gained representation through MEA.

Elementary Planning Time

Another negotiated issue facing the Board at the close of the 1980s was provision for planning time for elementary teachers. A preliminary joint administrative and MEA study was presented to the Board. The solution

²¹⁶Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1989-1990 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

²¹⁷Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), November 20, 1989, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

²¹⁸Ibid., December 18, 1989.

required that additional blocks of time be designed and made available for planning throughout the year. The Board asked for further study.²¹⁹ This issue was not easily solved.

Association Leave

The growth in the number of teachers in the district necessitated time on the part of the MEA leadership to carry out their union roles. The time needed was during the school day. In 1980, the union negotiated a policy and rule to cover such absences.

4510.9

Personnel

Association Leave

The membership of the teacher organization recognized by the Board of Education will be granted a minimum of eighteen excused absences to attend professional meetings of the teacher's association or other association obligation.

The cost of these days will be shared equally by the Board of Education and the teacher association.

The association would pay half the cost of a substitute teacher for any days its members are absent.

Requests for association leave shall be reviewed by the immediate supervisor before being submitted to the office of the superintendent for consideration. The request shall state how the release [sic] time shall be used.²²⁰

In 1985, the associated policy and associated rule was modified to increase the number of days available so that union leadership could spend more days visiting district schools. Such additional days would cost the district an

²¹⁹Ibid., March 13, 1989.

²²⁰Ibid., March 3, 1980.

additional \$1,219.00 for a total of \$1,610.00. Although eventually denied, the request for a total of seventy days was tabled until final mid-year budget cuts, due to stated aid budget cuts, were determined.²²¹

Employment Assistance Program

A growing student population meant a growing staff population in the 1980s. One of the District Objectives for 1986-1987 was to investigate employee assistance programs. A report to the Board indicated such a program would benefit employees who were having emotional, familial, financial, or substance abuse problems. The Millard Education Association representatives who participated in the study, supported such a program and the union co-presidents saw a need for such services. Cost for such a program would be \$14,000.00 per year for the first three years.²²² Such a program was provided for the 1987-1988 school year by the Omaha Methodist Hospital Employee Assistance Program for assessment and short term counseling.²²³

Legal Issues

The number of legal cases the Board became involved in during the 1980s increased dramatically. Indicative of this was the Quarter Litigation Status Report given to the Board in January, 1986, for the last quarter of 1985.²²⁴ Educational litigation was growing. This was evident in some major cases ruled upon by the United States Supreme Court. Additional growth was evident in the number of suits initiated by the Board in state courts, the number of parent or

²²¹Ibid., October 7, 1985.

²²²Ibid., April 20, 1987.

²²³Ibid., August 3, 1987.

²²⁴Ibid., January 20, 1986.

guardian suits filed against the district, and the number of requests for release of district records to the press and individual citizens.

United States Supreme Court Cases

Three cases during the 1980s demonstrated the growing power of the courts in public education and had direct impact in the Millard Public Schools. The first of these was New York v. Felton in 1985. The judicial rule from this case required no entanglement of public schools with those of private schools. The Board was part of a consortium that used the vocational program at Boys Town, a private religious institution. In addition, as Boys Town was within the boundaries of the Millard Public Schools, the district administered a Title I program at Boys Town. Legal clarification was sought by the Board's attorney from the state department of education and the state attorney general's office.²²⁵ The opinion rendered resulted in the provision of special education services and Title I programs for Boys Town residents, but in a Millard school building or on a neutral site. In addition, the vocational education program used at Boys Town by Millard secondary students was discontinued due to entanglement concerns.²²⁶ Thus the curriculum changes in the vocational program.

In January, 1988, the Board changed policy as a result of a Hazelwood, Missouri, case. "A school need not tolerate student speech that is inconsistent with its basic educational mission even though the government could not censor similar speech outside school."²²⁷ Within months the following policy was adopted.

²²⁵Ibid., August 5, 1985.

²²⁶Ibid., September 3, 1985.

²²⁷Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1987-1988 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska. (This quote was taken from a non revised United States Supreme Court decision dated August 13, 1988.)

Policy 6151

INSTRUCTION**Journalism**

It is the intention of the Board of Education that the school classrooms, buildings, grounds and other property, facilities and instrumentalities be a non-public forum. The Board recognizes that student journalism is an important element of the curriculum and supports the production of newspapers, annuals and magazines as part of classroom work. All materials will be developed with the adopted curriculum and its educational

implications. Any publications which are part of the curriculum shall be subject to the control of the classroom instructor and building principal and shall conform to applicable policies and rules. At all times maintenance of the education process shall be the paramount interest.²²⁸

The foregoing policy was further defined by Board rules in accordance with Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier.

Finally, the Board monitored a related case of which the decision was not rendered until 1990. This case involved Westside and centered around the issue of school being a closed forum. The Westside school administrators had refused to allow the formation of a Bible study group based on the fact that the school as an agency of the state government would then be establishing a religion in violation of the United States Constitution. Thus the school must be a closed forum.²²⁹

²²⁸Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), July 5, 1988, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

²²⁹Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1987-1988 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

Board Litigation

In the fall of 1986, the Board took under consideration the idea of a law suit regarding equal educational opportunities based on the state aid to education formula. The administrators outlined a possible case and indicated other schools might wish to join to challenge the state. The distribution formula was based on student numbers and not assessed value per student.²³⁰

Attempts to get legislative relief appeared to be exhausted. Other school districts decided not to join such a case. During the ensuing summer of 1987, the Board did decide to challenge the state department of education's distribution of in-lieu-of-taxes monies. Public lands set aside for the benefit of public education and managed in public trust by the state commissioner of education were generating funds that were distributed with a greater proportion going to western Nebraska schools. The reason for the latter was a formula that took into account the fact that western Nebraska school districts lost tax revenue due to the fact that most of the school lands held were in the west, thus extra funding was returned to these schools.²³¹ Equalized distribution would amount to \$16.00 more per student in the Millard Public Schools. The Board lost the case but decided to appeal it to the Nebraska State Supreme Court in the fall of 1989.²³²

²³⁰Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), October 20, 1986, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

²³¹Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1986-1987 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

²³²Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), September 18, 1989, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

Parent Litigation

Two important examples of parent litigation against the district occurred in the 1980s. One dealt with an injury sustained by a student receiving physical therapy provided by the Millard Public Schools. The other was in response to the placing of a student in a box within a classroom to isolate him from his peers.

In 1982, the parents of a special education student filed a claim against the Millard Public Schools in the amount of \$250,000.00. This suit was for an injury sustained by their son while receiving physical therapy at Cather Elementary School. During a series of leg pushups, a fracture occurred in his leg which required surgery and extended hospitalization. In anticipation of long-term disability and the \$16,608.72 in medical expenses to date, the figure of a quarter of a million dollars was arrived at by the parents of the student.²³³ Upon ultimate appeal to the Nebraska State Supreme Court, the ruling was made in favor of the Millard Public Schools and the district was found not to be liable. The reasoning of the supreme court in this case was based on the fact that the program of physical therapy was not designed by the school district who oversaw the program. Rather the physical therapist was a state-employee who provided services to the school district. The administrator of the program was not a trained physical therapist but rather relied upon the state employed physical therapist.²³⁴

²³³Ibid., September 7, 1987.

²³⁴Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1986-1987 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

The case regarding the boy in the box was of major concern as the situation was televised on national television.²³⁵ For over three weeks, the parents contended, the male elementary student had been forced to study alone in a box due to asking too many questions. Subsequently, the student was involved in many after-school fights due to the taunting of classmates. A fear of being spanked kept the student from telling his parents. The parents claimed their son was inquisitive as he was a gifted child; however, the school district contended the parents had never signed for gifted testing. A law suit was filed against the district in 1980 regarding obstruction of civil rights.²³⁶ Due to student's legal right to privacy any official discussion of the case was done in executive session on the part of the Board. Thus when approached by the press, the administrators took a "no comment" approach.²³⁷ Press reports indicated the student had a very successful school year the following year while attending a private Omaha school, Brownell-Talbot; however, the \$3,000.00 cost was a financial drain on the family. Subsequent testing by University of Nebraska-Lincoln personnel at the Buros Institute of Mental Measurements did indicate the boy was gifted. The civil rights case was dropped as the district was able to prove that the student had not been placed in a box, but rather had been isolated in a study carrel made with a desk and an old appliance box.²³⁸

²³⁵Ibid., 1979-1980.

²³⁶Ibid.

²³⁷Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), May 21, 1979, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

²³⁸Dr. Penny Kowal and Dr. Dennis Harding, interviews by author, Tape recordings, Omaha, Nebraska, 29 July 1997.

Subsequently, the case was dismissed and the student eventually completed his education in the Millard school district with no further concern.²³⁹

Release of District Records

Two items of concern that did not reach litigation on the part of the Board or other parties dealt with the release of what was deemed public records. In late 1981, the Omaha World-Herald inquired as to whether the Board and the administrators would release standardized test scores of individual schools to the newspaper. Subsequent research by the school district's attorney indicated that such a request had to be honored in group format but that no individual student records could be revealed due to protection of individual rights under the United States Constitution.²⁴⁰ Two weeks later, the written request by the newspaper was received and honored.²⁴¹

Subsequently, in January, 1989, the Board received a similar written request from Nebraska State Senator Vard Johnson for school district records. The Board delayed a decision until the school district's attorney could establish the nature of the request, legislative or personal.²⁴² Again, two weeks later the Board invited Senator Johnson to visit the school district to review the requested information.

Additionally, during the 1986-1987 school year, the State Press Association entered into litigation to obtain judicial enforcement requiring schools to release the information necessary to publish teacher salaries as

²³⁹Dr. Gary Barta, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 30 July 1997.

²⁴⁰Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), December 7, 1981, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

²⁴¹Ibid., December 21, 1981.

²⁴²Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), January 4, 1982, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

required by law. The law excluded the Omaha and Lincoln public schools. Court decisions ruled that this information had to be released if requested.²⁴³

Public Relations

Beyond the public relations of the Employee of the Month award and the showcasing of students and staff at Board meetings, public relations had become a regular part of all that the school district did. Superintendent Stroh worked closely with Millard area clergy to insure open communications regarding educational programming as well as with a parent advisory group. Building principals met with their Parent Teacher Organizations at regular meetings and coffees. The success of such public relations was found in the fact that over seven hundred parents assisted in the passage of the 1979 bond issue.²⁴⁴ In addition, Millard scored well in a public poll conducted by the school district starting in 1980 regarding how patrons would rate the school district. Excellent ratings were given by 63% of the subjects polled and an additional 26% rated the schools as good.²⁴⁵

District goals and long-range planning included public relations objectives as during the 1980-1981 school year when the objective was to "develop a public relations program for patrons who have no children in school."²⁴⁶ To date principals had been surveyed and ideas shared regarding what was already done by individual schools. Arrangements were being made

²⁴³Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1985-1986 and 1986-1987 School Years, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

²⁴⁴Ibid., 1980-1981. (The fact that this information was obtained from a newspaper article about the school district is a further indication of the public relations program at the time.

²⁴⁵Ibid., 1980-1981.

²⁴⁶Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), November 17, 1980, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

to implement a senior citizens program within the school district including a foster grandparent program for special education students. Planning was in process to increase the two yearly district-wide mailings to three. The extra mailing would be targeted specifically at what the schools had to offer non-parent district residents.²⁴⁷ The district's commitment and struggle to communicate the educational needs of the school district with the non-parent element of the school district was an ongoing job of the coordinator of communications from the onset. Inviting the public at large into school facilities was difficult due to rapid growth and crowded conditions at many schools, but yearly the district worked towards this goal.²⁴⁸

Business Practices

Increased size of budgets and staff required updating of several programs started in previous years regarding business procedures. In addition, new programs were implemented due to need or legal requirements.

Technology

Continued use of technology was of importance in the 1980s due to the amount of information to be processed by the business division. Thus, a consulting firm was hired in 1979 to assess the district's future data processing requirements.²⁴⁹ Continued improvement of ESU#3 data processing was of importance as that service provider was used extensively during this period. Starting in 1986, ESU #3 provided data processing services free of charge. Prior to this, the cost had been split with the service unit paying 60% and the

²⁴⁷Ibid.

²⁴⁸Nancy Holloran, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 4 August 1997.

²⁴⁹Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), May 21, 1979, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

school district paying 40%. This service was a major savings to the district which was the service unit's largest customer.

The use of technology was not limited to data processing services. With the relocation of central offices to Millard North High School in 1982, the business office completed a study of the district's telephone system. A change in the system was determined to be needed to save \$49,798.80 over the next two years in phone charges and fees.²⁵⁰

Additionally, the development of electronic transfer of funds resulted in a Board approved mandatory trial basis of direct deposit during the months of June, July, August, and September 1989. After that, direct deposit would be optional for employees and could be changed yearly.²⁵¹ This service was new through the ESU 3# data processing.

The growth in the number of employee records resulted in their being microfilmed during the 1986-1987 school year. Only records of past employees were filmed to protect present employees' privacy. Two copies were made, one for district use at the central office and one for storage in an additional place of safekeeping.²⁵²

District Budget Funding

Increased budgetary demands and lower than expected tax receipts at times during the 1980s required special action on the part of the Board. In 1985, the Board initiated the use of tax anticipation notes which allowed them to borrow money to operate the schools based on the expectation of taxes to be

²⁵⁰Ibid., February 15, 1982.

²⁵¹Ibid., March 20, 1989.

²⁵²Ibid., January 5, 1987.

paid. Delinquent tax interest could be used to offset the additional loan costs.²⁵³ Short term loans had been an operating procedure in the district for quite some time. Increased demand for money at various times during a year further required the Board and the business department to set up a revolving promissory note account with a local bank in the amount of \$8,000,000.00 to allow for appropriate cash flow of the school district.²⁵⁴

During this time of growing concern over the rising costs of public education, the Board also became concerned about fund raising being done by various elementary and secondary schools within the district. The Board requested a uniform building report and a safeguard system of such funds by the district in 1986.²⁵⁵ Further concern was expressed when the Board requested a study in 1988 of the source of monies raised by buildings and those things for which the funds were expended.²⁵⁶ Beyond bookkeeping procedures, no limitations were placed on building fund raising during this time.

Legally Required Business Practices

Legal requirements on the business department came from all levels of government. Negotiations with the teachers union for the 1980-1981 school year resulted in payroll deduction for credit unions.²⁵⁷ The state of Nebraska through its energy office administered a school weatherization grant program. The grants were on a cost sharing basis. The projects selected for

²⁵³Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1984-1985 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

²⁵⁴Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), February 1, 1988, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

²⁵⁵Ibid., August 18, 1980.

²⁵⁶Ibid., April 4, 1988.

²⁵⁷Ibid., September 2, 1980.

implementation were identified by a technical assistance study. To request the fund, such a study would need to be performed by a registered professional mechanical or electrical engineer.²⁵⁸ Such studies were approved and subsequently the grants were obtained.

Federal requirements on the business department came in the form of Internal Revenue Service requirements. In 1987, the district contracted with Insurance Consultants Incorporated PayFlex System to administer a Section 125 flexible benefit program. Federal and subsequent state mandates required such a program, and thus the cost of the contracted program were offset by the mandated costs otherwise placed on the school district.²⁵⁹

Curriculum and Instruction

Curriculum Development

Curriculum development in the 1980s was largely directed by which goals the district decided to pursue in a given year. Most of the work can be divided into the three levels of elementary, middle, and high school. In addition, some of the issues during this period were of concern at more than one level, an example being the need for a community counselor to work with students at-risk of not completing high school. Such a position had been created for the 1978-1979 school year, but the position was not filled.²⁶⁰ Budget cuts during the next several years did not make the addition of this service possible until the 1987-1988 school year.

²⁵⁸Ibid., November 16, 1981.

²⁵⁹Ibid., September 8, 1987.

²⁶⁰Ibid., February 10, 1979.

**THE COMMUNITY COUNSELING PROGRAM
(REVISED 8/13/87)**

The main thrust of the community counseling program is to provide services to secondary students who have not been successful in school (drop outs, students with excessive attendance or discipline problems, and students with other severe problems that require additional intervention) so they will be able to participate effectively in the education programs that are available in the community. The program helps students focus on preventing/resolving personal, social, emotion, and academic concerns.

The community counselor will also serve as a youth advocate and ombudsman. In this role, the community counselor will not only help youth adapt to the requirements of the home, school, and community, but also encourage the home, school, and community agencies to recognize and be more responsive to the unmet needs of youth. The program engages students, parents, faculty/staff, and community agencies in a cooperative effort to facilitate student social growth/adjustment and successful school performance.

The role of the community counselor is to complement and supplement rather than replace the efforts of regular secondary school counselors.

The community counselor will report to the director of pupil personnel services and work directly through secondary principals or their designees.

Initial effort of the community counselor will be directed toward students who have dropped out of school or who are not attending school in compliance with mandatory attendance law. Attempts will be made to encourage students to continue their education through Millard or through other educational programs within the community or to develop a career action plan.

Subsequent efforts will be directed toward establishing liaison with law enforcement officials, juvenile courts, and other youth oriented programs and agencies within the community as well as with various student subcultures within the schools.

The community counselor will be responsive to referrals made by school principals as well as to youth needs related to home, school, and community identified through liaisons described in the preceding paragraph.

The community counselor will keep each principal informed of activities related to youth from his/her school. Records will be kept by the counselor that describe the problem encountered, the intervention strategies used, and the outcomes of interventions.

Judgments about the success of the program will be based not only on the number of youth worked with but also on the outcomes of interventions.²⁶¹

This program was for both middle and high school students. Growing numbers of drop outs were becoming of concern to the Board.

English as a Second Language Program

Another concern that was generic to all levels of education was that of offering English as a Second Language (ESL). The early program in the 1970s had dealt primarily with students from Vietnam or southeast Asia. The 1980s saw a multitude of new students from a variety of places and cultures around the world. During the 1980-1981 school year, the idea of a magnet school for secondary students to receive a half-day of intensive English instruction was discussed. At this time, Millard had twenty-four students in the ESL program. A magnet-school would allow the suburban school districts to unite their resources and efforts in such instruction.²⁶² The Board decided not to join the cooperative program with other suburban schools; instead the district developed three instructional delivery models for the ESL program. One model consisted of direct teaching in one-on-one situations or in small groups. The

²⁶¹Ibid., August 17, 1987.

²⁶²Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1980-1981 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

secondary program in this model was more intense. The second and third models were based on an ESL teacher serving as a consultant. For teachers the consultation was instructional. The consultation for counselors focused on cultural differences and how counselors could assist students with these differences.²⁶³

New Educational Consortium Formed

This work to form a cooperative was popular during this time and was used in vocational education and special education. Never-the-less, the Board's membership in the Omaha Suburban Area Council of Schools (OSACS) was terminated for the 1985-1986 school year as a budget cutting measure.²⁶⁴ At the start of the 1989-1990 school year, the district joined a new consortium formed with grant monies obtained by the University of Nebraska-Omaha called the Metropolitan Omaha Educational Consortium (MOEC).²⁶⁵ This latter organization addressed the needs of all of the metropolitan schools, including the Omaha Public Schools. Early projects by MOEC included child development, staff development, technology, and middle level education.²⁶⁶ The first staff development project was outlined in a MOEC proposal to the United States Department of Education to develop a mentor program for beginning teachers.²⁶⁷

Two self-studies and external visits were performed in the 1980s as part of the accreditation process. The first time the self-study was done in 1981 with

²⁶³Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), October 3, 1981, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

²⁶⁴Ibid., July 1, 1985.

²⁶⁵Ibid., August 7, 1989.

²⁶⁶Ibid.

²⁶⁷Ibid., June 27, 1989.

the external visit completed in 1982.²⁶⁸ Results from this study were used in long-range planning. Another self-study and external evaluation was conducted during the 1988-1989 school year. The results of this study were used as base-line documentation by the district when the Board decided to adopt a strategic planning process in the early 1990s.

Educational Materials Challenged

Finally, the national return to conservatism resulted in parental concerns regarding library materials available to students. During the 1982-1983 school year, books and taped materials were burned by students and their teachers at the Omaha Christian School in protest regarding conservative perceptions of some educational materials. Dr. Corwine, the Director of Instructional Materials and Distribution, indicated that Millard "had not been plagued with censorship issues. Those complaints that we have received have been well-intentioned."²⁶⁹ During the previous five years, only five books had been questioned, and all five were retained on their educational merit. Such an example was found in Board meeting information in June, 1983, within a letter to a parent who had questioned two books, How to Eat Fried Worms, by Thomas Rockwell and Blubber, by Judy Blume. Upon recommendation of two district review committees composed of Millard parents and staff, Dr. Nenneman wrote to the parent who had requested the books' removal:

...Dr. Corwine has submitted to me the summary reports and recommendations. It appears to me that the review committees dealt with the books in a thorough and objective manner. Information received by my office reflects the feeling of the review committees that (1) the story lines presented were realistic, (2) the

²⁶⁸Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1980-1981 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

²⁶⁹Ibid. 1982-1983.

authors dealt with the subject objectively, (3) the peer relationships and values presented were those faced by youngsters in today's society, and (4) the book was appropriately placed as it regards grade level.²⁷⁰

Censorship issues remained of concern during the 1980s as the 1984 Education for Economic Security Act contained the Hatch Amendment that required that no federal funds be used for the support of what the conservatives termed as secular humanism.²⁷¹ This legislation made topics like evolution, dinosaurs, drug education, sex education, and environmentalism subject to intense inspection by various organized groups. In 1986-1987, the Millard district did receive twenty requests to terminate Halloween as the holiday was perceived to be teaching witchcraft. The district had to balance the welfare of single children against the good of the total group. "But the schools cannot permit a parent to limit the horizons for someone else's child,"²⁷² said Assistant Superintendent, Dr. Nenneman. Curriculum options were available, and in the case of the Halloween parties, parents could opt to have their student take part in another activity in lieu of the party.

Elementary Curriculum

Elementary programs of notoriety, Montessori, and grant programs dominated elementary curriculum during the period under consideration. In addition, the high rise in costs forced the Board to consider the curtailment of the outdoor education program. The rising costs of the program and budget

²⁷⁰Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), June 6, 1983, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

²⁷¹Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1980-1981 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

²⁷²Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), January 18, 1987, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

pressures resulted in a move away from overnight camping and the use of Camp Calvin Crest near Fremont, Nebraska, to the use of a closer Young Mens Christian Association (YMCA) camp site. The district would budget for the cost of the one-day program only. In addition, the Board limited the number of elementary schools allowed to participate in a two-day program to eight. Also, the additional cost of the two day program had to be funded from other than school budget sources.²⁷³

Programs of notoriety in the 1980s include the kindergarten program, the volunteer program, and a student initiated fund drive to help remodel and preserve Morrill Hall on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln campus.

Kindergarten program developed

Millard's kindergarten program was viewed as a standard for such programs. The program was based on the Nebraska State Department's ideal program. The major change consisted of a movement away from paper and pencil worksheets. Instead the program was based on the developmental needs of children.²⁷⁴ Such developmental appropriateness had long been a goal in the kindergarten program. In 1980-1981 the district's use of inflated, soft, but durable, letter characters made the teaching of phonics more developmentally appropriate. The district had adopted the Alpha Time Program. This program allowed kindergarten students to learn one letter at a time in a playful and less academic fashion.²⁷⁵

²⁷³Ibid., August 3, 1981.

²⁷⁴Ibid., August 11, 1986

²⁷⁵Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1980-1981 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

Volunteer program receives attention

The volunteer program used by the district received state wide attention in the early 1980s. The Millard district had the state's strongest volunteer program coordinated by Charlene Lenz, principal of Disney and Hitchcock Elementary School. Such volunteers were found at all fifteen schools with some having more than one hundred volunteers assisting with clerical duties, reading, and math. The estimated cost of savings to the school district at the time was \$34,000.00. Several other school districts were visiting Millard hoping to copy the program to save money for other programs as education faced budget cuts.²⁷⁶

Elementary school students work to preserve past

In the 1985-1986 school year, during a field trip to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Morrill Hall, fourth-grade students learned of the need for a climate-controlled, air conditioning system to preserve the animal relics of the past.²⁷⁷ The fourth-grade students, who traditionally study Nebraska history, took the issue to their student council who funded a letter writing campaign to fourth-grade classes across the state of Nebraska, asking them to become involved in a project to raise funds to renovate Morrill Hall.²⁷⁸ As a result of this campaign, a nearby Millard elementary school, Cody, sold seventy-five pounds of peanuts to raise \$150.00 to help Montclair fourth-graders in their drive to renovate the Nebraska State Museum.²⁷⁹ Even the Board supported the project

²⁷⁶Ibid., 1980-1981.

²⁷⁷Ibid., 1985-1986.

²⁷⁸Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), April 7, 1986, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

²⁷⁹Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1985-1986 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

by joining a consortium of organizations in support of the Morrill Hall renovation.²⁸⁰ The student council letter campaign, academic achievement, and the elementary swimming program in conjunction with the Montclair Community Center, resulted in Montclair Elementary School's being named a national Blue Ribbon School in 1987-1988.²⁸¹

Alternative elementary programs studied

In 1978, the Board had asked the administrators to prepare an Alternative School Study with a general plan to provide different choices to parents on how their students were educated.²⁸² The report was to be accomplished early enough to pilot such alternatives during the 1979-1980 school year. In the administrators's report to the Board, two programs were suggested. One was a Montessori kindergarten using Montessori materials and methods, and a Traditional concept program for grades one through four.²⁸³ After the presentation, the Board asked the administrators to pursue the development of both programs. A tentative timeline was presented to the Board in April, 1979, that required parent applications by mid-May.²⁸⁴ Due to a lack of interest, the traditional program was dropped from the plan after the May registration. During the 1979-1980 school year, the Montessori program was piloted at Montclair Elementary School; the following year the program was

²⁸⁰Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), February 2, 1987, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

²⁸¹Dr. Kirby Eitiste, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 28 July 1997. (Other Millard schools to win this award included, Millard South in 1982-1983, Millard North in 1983-1984, Millard North Junior High in 1986-1987, Holling Heights Elementary School in 1989-1990, and Millard Central Middle School in 1991-1992.)

²⁸²Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), August 21, 1978, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

²⁸³Ibid., March 19, 1979.

²⁸⁴Ibid., April 2, 1979.

expanded to grade one and for 1981-1982 a recommendation was made that the program be expanded to grade two.²⁸⁵

During the 1981-1982 school year a Montessori parent group was formed.²⁸⁶ By 1984-1985, the district was having problems obtaining Montessori trained teachers for a program for grades four, five, and six which had been a requirement if the program was to move forward.²⁸⁷ The building administrator where the program was located recommended limiting the program to a K-3 program. The Montessori parent group met with the Board requesting an expansion for a K-6 program. Such an expansion would require a Montessori supervisor position. The parent group indicated that they would be willing to help fund the program through some sort of account possibly through the Millard Education Foundation. The additional cost per student was estimated at \$50.00 to \$150.00 per student.²⁸⁸ The Board indicated that for the program to continue financial support from the parents would be necessary and that the decision to keep the program would have to be on a year-to-year basis. In addition, the Board proposed that if twenty students could be found to begin such a program of the south side of the district, the Board would implement such a program.²⁸⁹ The required number of students did not register to start such a program.

The same issues arose the following school year.

Motion by Bosse, seconded by Wright, to approve the recommendation for the continuance of the Montessori program

²⁸⁵Ibid., February 16, 1981.

²⁸⁶Ibid., February 1, 1982.

²⁸⁷Ibid., March 18, 1985.

²⁸⁸Ibid., April 29, 1985.

²⁸⁹Ibid., May 6, 1985.

with the following guidelines:

Limit of 50 students per grade

Grades K-1-2 to be at Montclair Elementary

Grades 3-4-5-6 to be at Cody Elementary

The excess cost of the program is to be pro-rated back to the students' parents.

The excess cost is to be determined by the following factors:

Additional administrative cost

Additional staff development cost

Additional teacher cost

The excess cost is to be determined each year using the March 15 enrollment as a base for determining the cost.

Payment for excess cost shall be paid in full by May 15 of the preceding school year.

Upon roll call vote, all members voted aye. Motion carried.²⁹⁰

Low kindergarten enrollments for the 1987-1988 school year concerned both the Board and the administrators but the program was kept with fees of \$160.00 for kindergarten and \$240.00 for grades 1-6.²⁹¹ Thus the one alternative elementary program of the 1980s was maintained despite difficulty in obtaining qualified Montessori teachers, the program being perceived as recruiting students away from other elementary buildings, and increased costs of instructional materials.²⁹²

Elementary art grants

One item of focus in curriculum development in the elementary schools was for the arts. In 1980, the Board approved a proposal for the "Artist in the Classroom" project that was co-sponsored by the Nebraska Arts Council. Such

²⁹⁰Ibid., March 17, 1986.

²⁹¹Ibid., June 1 and July 6, 1987.

²⁹²Dr. Kirby Eltiste, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 28 July 1997.

funding would be used to continue the creative dramatics program in third-grade started the year before and to add a fourth-grade program in dance.²⁹³ The following year, a similar grant was sought to continue the program in grades three and four and to begin working on an arts program in grade five to be phased in over two years.²⁹⁴ The development of the “Artist in the Classroom” became a key component of the elementary fine arts program in the 1980s.

Middle School Curriculum

Upon the foundation laid in the 1970s when teaming and other middle school/junior high concepts were first introduced to the Board and the district, a strong middle school program was further developed in the 1980s along with health curriculum that brought the middle schools into the general K-12 health program.

Sixth-grade moves to middle school

The building of two new junior highs with 1979 bond monies was delayed due to slower growth rates. The early recommendation from the administrators called for a limited 6-7-8 middle school. The plan was to transfer sixth-grade students only from elementary schools that had overcrowding.²⁹⁵ Beyond the numbers, the program reflected what was better for early adolescents with a focus on students and their needs. With the permanent move of the ninth-grade students to the high schools, the stage was set to

²⁹³Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), September 15, 1980, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

²⁹⁴Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1981-1982 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

²⁹⁵Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), September 19, 1983, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

include sixth-grade students in the middle schools. Flexibility to group and regroup students in a middle school setting was an important instructional concept.²⁹⁶ The appropriate motions were passed as well as a motion to form a task force to study a 6-8 middle school concept.²⁹⁷ The task force's job was complicated in that they had to create an awareness for a 6-8 middle school program. Parents, however, did not want to be informed unless they knew their children would be involved.²⁹⁸ During a special Board meeting to address this issue, the Board directed the task force to indicate the new southwest school would be a 6-8 middle school.²⁹⁹ In an ensuing task force presentation to parents a few days later, the task force "pointed out that the district's present junior high schools are very similar to a middle school already."³⁰⁰ Based on the results of the parent meetings in January, 1984, the Board decided to develop a 6-8 middle school as stated earlier but to leave the actual attendance areas included open to flexibility based on enrollment trends in the future.³⁰¹ Continued study was to be done during the 1984-1985 school year by the task force made up of parent volunteers and staff through the curriculum division assisted by the secondary education director.³⁰²

²⁹⁶Dr. Don Stroh, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 29 July 1997.

²⁹⁷Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), October 17, 1983, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

²⁹⁸Ibid., January 16, 1984.

²⁹⁹Ibid., January 16, 1984.

³⁰⁰Ibid., January 25, 1984.

³⁰¹Ibid., February 16, 1984.

³⁰²Dr. Rick Kolowski, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 28 July 1997.

During the 1985-1986 school year, further study of the middle school concept was led by the newly appointed southwest middle school principal, Robert Lykke. Core components identified during the previous year's work by the middle level task force included exploratory programs, team structure, and advisee/advisor programs. Approval was sought and given for a two-year grant from the Excellence in Education Program to work with staff to develop the middle school program.³⁰³ Such development would include staff development and training, curriculum development materials, and curriculum writing. In 1987-1988, a year after Andersen Middle School opened, an overview of the district's middle level program was presented to the Board. The presentation included curriculum, the advisement/homeroom programs, and plans for the future. Teaming had been used since the 1970s so the concept was firmly in place in the district's middle school program.³⁰⁴ Within months, a review of existing middle school/junior high level intramural and inter scholastic programs was presented to the Board.³⁰⁵

During the 1987-1988 school year, Andersen Middle School was the only 6-8 middle school in the district. Millard Central and Millard North Junior Highs remained 7-8 buildings, but were renamed middle schools effective August, 1988.³⁰⁶ In addition, for the 1988-1989 school year, Millard North Middle School was to receive sixth-grade students from Cather Elementary School as that building was overcrowded.³⁰⁷ During the 1988-1989 school year, the Board

³⁰³Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), September 12, 1985, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

³⁰⁴Ibid., September 8, 1987.

³⁰⁵Ibid., January 11, 1988.

³⁰⁶Ibid., July 5, 1988.

³⁰⁷Ibid., March 7, 1988.

decided to study an implementation plan for the 6-8 concept at Millard North Middle School. Such a plan was to be phased in over three years.³⁰⁸ No immediate plans were made for Millard Central Middle School. Early proposals called for the facility to remain a 7-8 building until building enrollments dictated a move to a 6-8 program; however, the Board did reaffirm in 1989, a commitment to a K-5, 6-8, and 9-12 organizational plan to be developed over a long period of time.³⁰⁹

Health and drug education programs developed

The other middle school development of major importance during this period was that of the middle level program within the comprehensive K-12 health program. The Health Education Advisory Committee utilized a discrepancy model in developing the new curriculum. The group studied the existing program in the district and then reviewed existing national curriculums. Decisions were made regarding where new curriculum needed to be developed.³¹⁰ The committee recommended two components to be developed and added over a two-year period. These programs were the "Quest" program and the "Know Your Self" class.

The Quest program was piloted at Andersen Middle School as part of the seventh-grade social studies program. Quest became part of this program because of strong ties to the social sciences curriculum of sociology and

³⁰⁸ibid., December 18, 1989.

³⁰⁹ibid., March 13, 1989.

³¹⁰Dr. Rick Kolowski, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 28 July 1997.

psychology.³¹¹ Support for the program was obtained from the Millard Lions Club. The key health component in the program were anti-drug and alcohol messages.³¹²

At the same time the Quest program was being piloted, the recommendation to the Board to pilot a class that would include nutrition, wellness, human growth and development, family life education, and human reproduction as a key components.³¹³ During the subsequent planning, the curriculum division pointed out that the district had the sensitive units in grades five and six and adult living at the high school but no middle school program. In addition, a strong parent component to sex education was already available through an evening class for parents and their students called "Families Talk About Sexuality." The inclusion of a strong parent component was an objective for the new middle school program.³¹⁴ A strong community involvement would be needed in the planning.³¹⁵

During the 1988-1989 school year, the "Quest" program was implemented in seventh-grade social studies classes. Andersen Middle School and Millard North Junior High piloted the eighth-grade course called "Know Your Self" for one quarter of the same school year. Both of these programs were implemented with strong parent components. Positive feedback from the

³¹¹Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), September 8, 1987, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

³¹²Ibid., April 20, 1987.

³¹³Ibid., August 17, 1987.

³¹⁴Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1987-1988 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

³¹⁵Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), November 29, 1987, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

“Quest” pilot and “Know Your Self” plans had been obtained from staff, parents, and clergy.³¹⁶ The Board questioned why the Know Your Self class was not being implemented at all four middle schools. The administrators urged caution with a pilot program and indicated that lack of staff training and that any change recommended by the Health Education Advisory Committee proposal for a pilot on the north and south side of the district could be viewed as a “breach of faith and trust.”³¹⁷ During the following year the “Know Your Self” program was fully implemented, with provisions to option out students if parents so desired.

High School Curriculum

The 1980s saw a variety of programs developed with the 9-12 curriculum. The addition of an advisor program was a key element added to the high school program to meet the affective needs of students. The tightening and increasing of academic and graduation requirements was also an issue in the 1980s. Additional changes occurred in drivers education, weighting of grades, new courses such as Latin, the vocational education program, the activities program, and the development of a job position for scholarship procurement. Of major importance during this time was the gradual development of an alternative secondary, mostly high school, program. Finally, the period was not without its political scandal assisted by a few zealous adolescents.

³¹⁶Ibid., June 20, 1988.

³¹⁷Ibid.

High school advisory program implemented

The advisor program was initiated after Dr. Rick Kolowski and several teacher groups studied a program in the St. Louis area.³¹⁸ The key component of this program was to personalize the school. Regular daily meetings of teachers with students were developed to enhance teacher and student communication.³¹⁹

Funding causes changes in drivers education

Drivers education had originally been a state mandated course; however, the state reimbursement payment for the program was not covering the actual costs. In 1983, the Board approved of a drivers education program for the 1983-1984 school year that required students to pay an additional fee of \$35.00 to cover the extra costs. After the 1983-1984 school year, the program would only be offered in summer school with the cost to the students being the difference in the program cost and the reimbursement.³²⁰ Additionally, no one outside the district could participate in the program.

During the 1985-1986 school year, the Board voted to contract for a drivers education program with ESU #3. This was in response to a complete cut in the state subsidy program for drivers education. The cost with ESU#3 would be \$90.00 per student versus the present district cost of \$115.00.³²¹

Funding for optional programs, whether required by the state or not, was at a premium.

³¹⁸Dr. Rick Kolowski, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 28 July 1997.

³¹⁹Dr. John A. Lammel, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 7 August 1997.

³²⁰Ibid., July 5, 1983.

³²¹Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1985-1986 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

Weighted grades become an issue

The issue of weighted grades had first been discussed in the early 1980s. A task force that had studied the issue found no evidence at that time to justify the weighting of grades in certain courses. Continued study was conducted from information collected during the 1984-1985 school year.³²² By the end of the 1985-1986 school year, student and parent sentiment was high for the weighting of grades. Thus for the 1986-1987 school year such a process began for all advanced placement courses. This weighting process allowed students to increase their cumulative grade point average, as the point value assigned each numeric grade of the grading system was one point higher for advanced placement courses. Thus, a student would earn five points for receiving a grade of one, or the highest grade possible, in an advanced placement class versus the normal four points awarded for such a grade in other courses. Similarly, a grade of a two would still earn the student four points towards their grade point average, thus decreasing the risk of a lowered grade point average due to taking more strenuous academic courses. Additionally, plans were made to add the advanced placement courses in calculus and science during the 1987-1988 school year. Other advanced placement courses would be added as developed.³²³ The April motion regarding this was modified to include juniors only for the 1986-1987 school year and any eligible students thereafter due to student and parent concerns regarding a change in the policy during the last year for seniors.³²⁴

³²²Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), May 2, 1984, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

³²³Ibid., April 21, 1986.

³²⁴Ibid., August 4, 1986.

The renewed interest in more academically stimulating courses called for in A Nation at Risk and the desire for advanced placement courses resulted in a study by the curriculum division regarding the offering of Latin at the high school level. Almost three hundred students between the two high school campuses indicated an interest in the program. The Board decided to place the course in the 1985-1986 curriculum handbook and to offer the course if enough student interest warranted such a course.³²⁵ The 1984-1985 school year would be spent planning for such a course.³²⁶

Vocational program and a court decision

Due to a court decision, there was in 1985-1986 a disentanglement of the Millard Public Schools and Boys Town in the sharing of their vocational education program. Concern about vocational education programs had existed prior to the 1985-1986 school year at a national level when in 1983-1984 there was a call for "equal consideration for those students not planning to attend college."³²⁷ Subsequent years saw the lessening of vocational education due to renewed emphasis on the academics outlined in A Nation at Risk. This renewed academic interest overlooked the fact that nearly 80% of future jobs would not require a college degree.³²⁸ Additionally, in 1985, under a revision of the Perkins Vocational Act of 1984, Millard Public Schools lost \$110,000.00 in vocational funding as such funds were redirected to inner city schools.³²⁹ The vocational program was further complicated by the United States Supreme

³²⁵Ibid., April 16, 1984.

³²⁶Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1984-1985 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

³²⁷Ibid., 1983-1984.

³²⁸Ibid., 1984-1985.

³²⁹Ibid., 1984-1985.

Court case calling for a disentanglement of church and state during the same year. For the 1986-1987 school year the Board and Metropolitan Technical Community College (Metro Tech) entered into an agreement that let Millard high school students participate in the latter's vocational programs.³³⁰ Due to transportation problems in getting students to and from Metro Tech, for 1988-1989 an exchange program was worked out with Boys Town in which no funds were exchanged but only services. Thus Boys Town students took part in academic classes in Millard North and South High Schools while Millard students from high schools took part in the vocational programs at Boys Town. Due to transportation issues, this shared program of services tended to favor Millard North students due to proximity to Boys Town.³³¹

Activities program changes

Changes in the activities program varied. During 1982, the Board discussed the future of soccer in the school district. The high school soccer club had been competing for six years at this time. The Board was requesting recognition by the Nebraska Schools Activities Association (NSAA).³³² No support existed outside of Douglas County, and continued pressure on NSAA did not obtain an official sanction even though by 1985-1986 forty other states had such a program.³³³ By the close of the period under study no sanction had yet been approved. Eligibility standards to participate in activities (not

³³⁰Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), September 15, 1986, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

³³¹Dr. Rick Kolowski, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 28 July 1997.

³³²Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), July 19, 1982, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

³³³Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1985-1986 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

interscholastic sports) was raised effective for the second semester of the 1986-1987 school year. These requirements included twenty hours of credit for the previous semester and enrollment in twenty hours for the current semester for all activities.³³⁴

Board compromise results in new programs

In August, 1987, the Board initially tabled a job description for a Coordinator of Scholarship, Grant, and Financial Aid Information.³³⁵ This position was to work with high school principals, counselors, and the director of student pupil personnel services to increase the quantity, quality, and dollar amounts of scholarships and grants received by Millard students. This increase was to be done by contacting colleges, businesses, foundations, professional groups, philanthropists, and community groups to identify sources of funding for Millard graduates.³³⁶ This position was not actually filled until after the start of the 1987-1988 school year. This position, along with that of the community counselor represented, a compromise on the Board to assist both high academically achieving students and highly at-risk students.³³⁷

At-risk program starts slowly

Of major importance in the 1980s was the development of an alternative high school. This was first discussed by the Board in May, 1979.³³⁸ A program for approximately fifty students who were disadvantaged, who could not

³³⁴Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), April 21, 1986, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

³³⁵Ibid., August 3, 1987.

³³⁶Ibid., August 17, 1987.

³³⁷Dr. Dennis Harding, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 29 July 1997.

³³⁸Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), May 7, 1979, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

succeed in the regular classroom setting due to academic or vocational needs, or who were emotionally disturbed, was outlined to the Board. Such a site would utilize partial funding from the Nebraska State Department of Education. No site was yet specified.³³⁹ Such a site would require one additional teacher and one paraprofessional. The eventual site proposed was the level I attendance center which would create a school-within-a-school concept. A team approach would be used and all level I staff could be used based on student need.³⁴⁰ The program was implemented in January, 1980, as no teacher was found until that time.³⁴¹ A study a year later indicated that thirty-nine students had used the program in the first year of operation. Several students were working on General Education Degrees (GED). In addition, most were enrolled in an occupations class to prepare them for future employment.³⁴²

The need for a separate site still existed in 1984-1985. Further study was recommended by the Board.³⁴³ For the 1986-1987 school year, \$20,000.00 was budgeted for Millard students to take part in an alternative night school to earn their GED. This program was held at Ralston High School.³⁴⁴ In December, 1986, a full alternative learning center program was presented to the Board. This program would serve approximately one hundred thirty students.³⁴⁵ This

³³⁹Ibid., June 4, 1979.

³⁴⁰Ibid., August 20, 1979.

³⁴¹Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1979-1980 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

³⁴²Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), February 16, 1981, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

³⁴³Ibid., May 20, 1985.

³⁴⁴Ibid., March 10, 1986.

³⁴⁵Ibid. December 15, 1986.

was an eighty student increase from when the program was first discussed in 1979. By 1988, the Board was concerned about the number of high school drop outs. The Board suggested that the new community counselor might have an impact on this problem.³⁴⁶ In May, 1989, a full ten years after first discussing such a school, the Board accepted a proposal for an alternative school that was ultimately located at the original K-12 building formerly known as Central Elementary School.³⁴⁷ The program faced a possible cut even before starting; however, the Board left intact the funding and the program began in the fall of 1989.

Community service program receives bad press

Graduation requirements regarding community service in a civics course did result in some bad press coverage in two different elections during the 1980s. During the 1980 congressional race between Hal Daub and Richard Fellman, Hal Daub gave a presentation at the level II building encouraging students to become involved in the political process. Students said that Hal Daub had indicated there would be a pizza and a kegger (beer party) for volunteer workers in his campaign. The legal drinking age for high school students would not allow such consumption. Hal Daub at first denied the rumors that he had made such a statement. The presentation was video-taped for others classes to watch. The video tape was somehow duplicated, by persons unknown in the audio visual center, and released to the press. Hal

³⁴⁶Ibid., July 18,. 1988.

³⁴⁷Ibid., May 15, 1989.

Daub was immediately criticized for his statement and putting a high school community service program in danger. Hal Daub went on to win the election.³⁴⁸

During the mayoral primary in May, 1985, candidate Mike Boyle caught Millard South High School students pulling up his campaign signs. The students appeared to be linked to his opponent in a required community service project. At first, Boyle indicated he would prosecute the students. Later, he decided not to press charges. More than likely probation would have been recommended if the students had been charged and found guilty.³⁴⁹ Both incidents had occurred in a highly successful community service program which continues today as part of a requirement in civics. This course is required for graduation.

Technology

In the early 1980s, a survey regarding computers in the Millard schools was conducted with the following curriculum and instructional recommendations:

Curriculum

1. Computer literacy should be added to the Millard Schools Goal Structure at the definition level, not goal level.
2. Computer programming and analysis should be taught in the Millard schools.
3. Placement of computer courses in the Math Department in light of above comments should be seen as expedient, not as a content mandate.
4. A specially designed curriculum group should develop a proposal for the D.C.C. on curriculum.

³⁴⁸Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1984-1985 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

³⁴⁹Ibid., 1984-1985.

Instruction

5. Since systematic conceptualizations of computer-assisted instruction are still questionable, and since expertise in computer assisted instruction modestly exists in Millard, all activity should be engaged at a very slow pace.
6. Some pieces of an instructional system exist such that low level pilots in those sub-systems may be warranted. In particular,
 - a. a pilot on student record-keeping could be attempted
 - b. a pilot on retrieval of instructional materials could be piloted
 - c. a pilot on some degree of tutorial computer-assisted instruction could be attempted (continue Morton or attempt a pilot on Dolphin).³⁵⁰

By the following year, the curriculum division was completing a 4-8 curriculum for computer literacy. The instructional mode used was to integrate the use of computers into the regular curriculum. Pilots of the new curriculum were to be conducted at Millard Central and North Junior Highs and Cather and Rockwell Elementary Schools during the 1981-1982 school year.³⁵¹

The major problem in the 1980s with technology was the high cost during financially difficult times. When the Board was approached regarding the development of teleconferencing as a means of communication, the Board was interested if such technology did not raise the budget.³⁵² Outside funding was sought for telecommunication materials and the Millard Education Foundation

³⁵⁰Ibid., May 16, 1981. (D.C.C. was the District Curriculum Council that served as a broad based committee to assist the Director of Education K-12 at the time.)

³⁵¹Ibid., June 15, 1982.

³⁵²Ibid., June 10, 1985.

purchased satellite reception systems for both high schools in the district.³⁵³ This concern over cost was further evident in a presentation given to the Board.

Curt Anderson presented the Evaluation of the instructional computing plan and recommendations. The Board members observed a short video which was shown to explain different aspects of the actual usage of the computers in the Millard Schools.

During the discussion, some of the concerns expressed by the Board members were:

- The possibility of the elementary program being more progressive than the secondary program;
- Whether the computer program can be "taken too far";
- Whether computers are used to reinforce teaching rather than to teach;
- An infusion problem and when it can be corrected;
- The availability and updating of software;
- Whether word processing should be taught in the schools (along with the question of spell-check features);
- Computer training (and interest in computer training) of teachers;
- The number of computers needed per year;
- Space problems in many of the buildings for computer labs.

Although the required amount needed to purchase the equipment under the times lines recommend is \$250,000.00, there is only \$100,000.00 budget for computers.³⁵⁴

The computer portion of technology moved along at a slow pace during the remainder of the 1980s due to a lack of funding.

Special Education

Issues in special education centered around state laws, funding, and both secondary and elementary special programs. The most important issue facing special education during the period under consideration was funding. People continued to try to move to the district or claim residency to place their

³⁵³Ibid., March 3, 1986.

³⁵⁴Ibid., July 7, 1986.

children in programs. With the possibility of funding cuts from 90% to 75% of costs beyond regular education being discussed by the state legislature, the abuse of the system was becoming an issue.³⁵⁵

Special Education Costs

Compounding the issue was the fact that special education programs were amongst the fastest growing expenditures in the state. The program had become a "run away train."³⁵⁶ The labeling of students within the special education program was creating a multitude of specialists taking away from the instructional responsibility of the general education teacher. These costs concerned the administrative leadership of the school district.³⁵⁷ In the mid-1980s, qualification was determined by a team or testing, and a student could qualify either way. To curb the number of students placed into special education programs, the law was changed to testing only, with the hope of saving some of the 300% rise in costs of special education.³⁵⁸

Further complicating this issue was Governor Kerrey's calling of a special session of the state legislature to consider budget cuts mid-year during the 1986-1987 school year, possibly ending the 90% reimbursement rate. By 1988-1989, Millard schools were spending 4.5 to 5 million dollars on special education. Not to offer such programs incurred the possible loss of state or federal funding in other programs as all handicapped students had to be

³⁵⁵Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1981-1982 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

³⁵⁶Dr. Don Stroh, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 29 July 1997.

³⁵⁷Ibid.

³⁵⁸Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1985-1986 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

educated.³⁵⁹ Court decisions also entered into the issue, as the Eighth United Circuit of Appeals ruled that Millard schools did not have to pay for the educational cost of out-of-state residential care at a cost of \$40,000.00 but they did have to pay the \$2,000.00 evaluation fees.³⁶⁰

New Programs Mandated

With the start of the 1979-1980 school year, the Board and the administrators were given another mandate by the state government. All handicapped preschool children were to receive services provided by their local school district. The cost for such a program in Millard was estimated to be \$228,323.00. This program would be for children from birth to five years old. Both the cost of services and diagnosis would be covered by the program. In terms of services, they would be the same as required by law for five-to-twenty-one-year-olds. Thus the creation of an administrative assistant in special education to oversee this program.³⁶¹ During the same year, the district decided to place an emotionally handicapped program for secondary students at the old Central Elementary School to house students that were costing the district about \$140,000.00 with outside agencies. An in-house program would cost only about \$45,000.00 for the twenty students.³⁶²

During the 1976-1977 school year the Board signed a three-year lease for a non district building for an elementary handicapped center. By the end of the 1978-1979 school year when the lease ended, space was available for

³⁵⁹Ibid., 1988-1989

³⁶⁰Ibid., 1987-1988.

³⁶¹Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), June 18, 1979, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

³⁶²Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1979-1980 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

such a program at Norris Elementary School with some modifications done to that building. This planned program move created anxiety on the part of parents at Norris.³⁶³ The program was relocated, but not without several community meetings and good public relations directed at addressing parent fears.³⁶⁴

Five years later, the handicapped program for elementary school students was moved to Westside in the former Arbor Heights Junior High School building.³⁶⁵ The empty space at Norris Elementary was then used for the special education pre-school program until 1987, when it was moved to Cody. The new handicapped program was to be a joint effort with the Westside school district and Westside provided the administration for the program.³⁶⁶ In addition, Ralston and Papillion public schools used of the program as well consolidating four separate districts efforts in special education.³⁶⁷ The program remained at that location until the early 1990s when such programs were moved back to neighborhood schools.

Gifted Education

At the start of the 1978-1979 school year, a coordinator for gifted education was hired. Early focus was placed on the development of elementary programs for the gifted or challenge students, as they were called in Millard. With the start of the next school year, gifted facilitators were in each

³⁶³Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), April 2, 1979, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

³⁶⁴Nancy Holloran, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 4 August 1997

³⁶⁵Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), January 3, 1984, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

³⁶⁶Ibid., April 9, 1984.

³⁶⁷Millard Public Schools News Clippings File, (Douglas County District), 1983-1984 School Year, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

elementary building. Saturday morning meetings were held with facilitators developing instructional materials in a variety of areas that required higher level thinking skills.³⁶⁸ Special units were designed and implemented for half-day pull-out sessions. Monthly in-service programs were provided for the facilitators.³⁶⁹ Preliminary work was also done at the junior high schools for testing for giftedness in reading and the placement procedures for the challenge foreign language program. The development of a gifted program at the junior high level was more difficult due problems in scheduling such a program within the team concept. A comprehensive study was completed during the 1981-1982 school year regarding opportunities available to gifted students at the secondary level and a five year plan was developed.³⁷⁰ During the latter part of this five-year plan, the advanced placement program was strengthened.

Like other special programs, funding was of concern for gifted programs. Grants were sought to develop a complete identification matrix and an articulated K-6 gifted curriculum in reading and math.³⁷¹ For the 1980-1981 school year, Millard received \$64,097.00 in funds from the state department of education based on 1,143 students in the gifted program or approximately \$56.00 per student.

Gifted Pilot Program Develops and Expands

In the 1981-1982 school year, a non-pull-out, gifted pilot was conducted at Holling Heights and Bryan Elementary Schools as many parents were

³⁶⁸Dr. Penny Kowal, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 29 July 1997.

³⁶⁹Millard Public Schools Board Minutes (Douglas County District 17), December 7, 1979, Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

³⁷⁰Ibid., July 19, 1982.

³⁷¹Ibid., April 6, 1981.

uncomfortable with the pull-out model used in the gifted program. Originally the focus had been the development of a model of instructional effectiveness for only gifted students, however, as the pilot continued, the program grew to include all students. Nearly 70% of the teachers changed their instructional practices as a result of the program. The addition of two instructional facilitators had occurred for the gifted pilot and two more were planned for the 1982-1983 school year to expand the program to eight elementary schools. Two more facilitators would be required by 1986 to serve all sixteen elementary schools as outlined in the five-year gifted plan.³⁷² The five-year plan was criticized during the 1982-1983 school year as a Challenge Parents Association at Morton Elementary felt that the program was not reaching their students fast enough.³⁷³ Limited funds and personnel resulted in slow and gradual implementation of the program. The success of the model of instructional effectiveness for gifted students eventually resulted in the changing of the coordinator for gifted students to a position of coordinator of instructional improvement.

³⁷²Ibid., July 19, 1982 .

³⁷³Ibid., March 21, 1983.

Staff Development and Instruction

The position of coordinator of instructional improvement was created in 1983.

2100.24

Administration

Coordinator for Instructional Improvement

Reports to: Assistant Superintendent for Educational Services

Performance responsibilities:

1. Assumes responsibility for the development, initiation and coordination of a district plan for instructional improvement.
2. Works with both district teaching staff and administrators in ensuring that a program of instructional improvement is operating successfully in each building, touching all staff and impacting all students.
3. Works cooperatively with other district staff in the development and delivery of in-service program in the area of instructional improvement and/or gifted and talented education.
4. Provides periodic feedback to the office of the superintendent and the Board of Education as to status of the instructional improvement project and the gifted and talented program and makes those recommendations deemed appropriate.
5. Maintains basic responsibility for overall planning and programming for those youngsters deemed to be gifted and talented.
6. Directs, coordinates, and evaluates those staff members assigned responsibilities in the area of instructional improvement and/or gifted and talented education.
8. Communicates to the community those programs assigned to this job description.
9. When requested by the personnel office, provides input on personnel decisions for staff selection and/or assignment.

10. Organizes and implements a professional library in the areas of gifted and instructional improvement.

11. Performs other duties as deemed appropriated by the assistant superintendent for educational services.

Length of contract: 210 days³⁷⁴

This job description represented a very defined piece of staff development, based on “curriculum being what you teach and instruction is how you teach it.”³⁷⁵ The instructional model remained under the auspices of the curriculum division, while other components of staff development were directed by the associate superintendent of general administration. The responsibility for staff development was shared by several individuals. In 1980-1981, the duty was performed by an administrative assistant to the associate superintendent of general administration and personnel. By 1983-1984, a director for staff development and administrative services worked with the associate superintendent for general administration and personnel and coordinated the district’s in-service programs. By the late 1980s, the staff development work of the director focused on professional growth and staff development of administrators.³⁷⁶

District Instructional Model Developed

With the development of the coordinator of instructional improvement, the instructional model was based on the latest research regarding instruction. The model relied heavily on the work of Madeline Hunter. To develop this program

³⁷⁴Ibid., July 18, 1983.

³⁷⁵Dr. Penny Kowal, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 29 July 1997.

³⁷⁶Dr. Margaret Corkle, interview by author, Tape recording, Omaha, Nebraska, 6 August 1997.

a block grant was sought and funded.³⁷⁷ Cadres of teachers and administrators were trained in the model to provide instructional assistance at the building level. This training resulted in the development of a clinical supervision model to be used by administrators and supervisory personnel. Prior work regarding supervision had been done by Dr. Witt, the Associate Superintendent for General Administration and Personnel, during the 1979-1980 and 1980-1981 school year in work done in conjunction with the University of Nebraska at Omaha in a program called "Improving Instructional Assessment and Performance Through Supervision and Evaluation."³⁷⁸

The 1983-1984 school year also saw the first classes for graduate credit through the University of Nebraska at Lincoln for graduate credit in the Hunter Model or Instructional Theory Into Practice (ITIP) to forty K-12 teachers.³⁷⁹ Within two years approximately five hundred K-12 staff members had taken Basic ITIP as a college course. In addition, a new course, Developing Independent Learners, was ready to be implemented.³⁸⁰

Facilities Reflect Instructional Practices

Beyond the focus on a clearly defined instructional model, the new schools built in the 1980s reflected instructionally the continued emphasis on flexibility in grouping at the elementary level and the middle level concept. In addition, the energy crisis of the late 1970s was apparent in the design of two elementary schools.

³⁷⁷Ibid., August 15, 1983.

³⁷⁸Ibid., July 20, 1981.

³⁷⁹Ibid., June 18, 1984.

³⁸⁰Ibid., September 2, 1986.

All of the elementary schools opened in the 1980s made use of the term “flexibility” in the description of their facilities. The last school constructed in the 1980s, Ezra Millard Elementary School, is a prime example.

Classrooms at Ezra Millard Elementary are grouped in sections of primary and intermediate grades, with glass-enclosed art and science classrooms in both areas. Classrooms are divided by portable walls to allow flexibility for large and small group activities. Several small classrooms can be used for special programs such as tutoring and counseling.³⁸¹

In addition, all of the elementary buildings had the media center in the middle of the building.

Two of the five elementary schools opened during this time took into consideration the energy crisis of the late 1970s and early 1980s. Ackerman Elementary School had more than 50% of the building below the ground level while Rockwell Elementary School had 70% below ground level. In addition, the number of windows was kept to a minimum while natural light was brought in through sky lights.³⁸²

The middle schools built during the 1980s were built from the same floor plans. Thus “classrooms were designed to help students feel a sense of security in their surroundings. Classrooms and lockers were grouped to allow students to spend most of the school day with the same team of classmates and teachers.”³⁸³ The team was one of the principle components of the middle school concept. Again, the media center or library occupied the center of the building. Flexibility resulted in both Andersen and Kiewit Middle Schools

³⁸¹Dedication Brochures File for Millard Public Schools (Ezra Elementary School), (Douglas County District 17), Don Stroh Administration Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

³⁸²Ibid (Ackerman and Rockwell Elementary Schools).

³⁸³Ibid (Andersen and Kiewit Middle Schools).

having movable partitions in classrooms and the use of the stage as part of the band room through the use of movable doors. The large commons areas in both schools served as gathering place for early adolescents to talk and for large group presentations.

Summary

The 1980s can be summarized by what the Board wrote in 1979 when facing merger talks with the Omaha Public Schools. "The Millard School District has successfully developed an outstanding educational staff and facilities for the benefit of the citizens and students of the District. This development has been the result of community cooperation, community development, and community participation.³⁶⁴ Even though the community had ceased to exist as a political entity in the 1970s, the community through its school system continued to exist through the two school communities developed within high school attendance areas. The educational programs developed included active participation on the part of the citizens. The strides made in improving instruction during the 1980s was exceptional. The public relations program of the Board and the administrators kept school issues and concerns in front of the public while at the same time providing quality services and the use of school facilities, so that when funds were needed, the bond issues were approved.

In addition, as the Millard Public Schools matured in the 1980s, the approach to use flexibility in planning continued to be of great importance. Economic problems, slowing and then increasing growth, state and federal mandates, and judicial decisions required that the leadership of both the Board and the administrators be flexible. The notation at Dr. Stroh's retirement that he

³⁶⁴Ibid., September 17, 1979.

grew a school district, also serves to remind readers of the phenomenal growth of the district-growth that required that each year differ from the one before with change for everyone. Such change required proactive thinking on both the part of the Board and the administrators.

CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Research Problem

The purpose of this historical study was to review the development of the Millard Public Schools as the district grew from a rural to a suburban school district of the greater Omaha metropolitan area. The study organized the history of the Millard Public Schools within the context of state, national, and world events of the time. Special attention was devoted to administrative, curricular, and instructional issues faced by board members, administrators, staff members, and patrons of the Millard Public School District due to the school district's rapid growth.

Procedures

Subsequent to data collection and review, a model was synthesized to present each respective period. This model took into account both a chronological and thematic presentation of the history of the Millard Public Schools. The time divisions developed were based on events that represented major growth within the school district. The thematic topics clustered around administrative, curricular, and instructional issues. General local, state, national, and international historical events were presented in the context of the period and the corresponding thematic topic.

Once the major events of each interval were reported thematically and chronologically, personal interviews were conducted with individuals from each

era. Persons selected to interview were chosen based on their relationship to the school district and unanswered questions regarding each identified period. Persons interviewed were provided with a rough draft of the written history completed to review prior to the interview. Questions for each interview were compiled by the author based on the person to be interviewed and his or her role in the history of the district and incomplete information in the primary sources. These interviews served to clarify and verify the data found in written sources of the time.

Thus primary sources were reviewed in the form of Board minutes and supporting documentation. Secondary sources such as newspaper clippings and personal interviews were also utilized in the study. The latter had both the advantage and disadvantage of time and introspection on the part of the people interviewed in regards to the events and their personal role in those events. Finally, the researcher in the role of the historian became the final filter through which all the data were processed as they were collected, evaluated, analyzed, and synthesized.

Findings

The history of the Millard Public Schools from 1946 to 1989 can be divided into five main periods. The first period is that of preparing for consolidation which took place between 1946 and 1955. During the second epoch of 1955-1960, the district experienced consolidation that drastically increased the size of the Millard Public Schools. The 1960-1970 stage was one of early suburban growth. The fourth span of time, 1971-1978, was one of rapid growth and resulting difficulty from growth. The last era, encompassing

1979-1989, was a period in which the district came into its own being, as a large suburban school district.

Thematically, the 1940s and 1950s were periods focused on consolidation. The 1960s was a period in which the Board and the administrative leadership of the district learned to manage growth. The 1970s were a period in which curricular issues became a focus. During the 1980s, a great deal of emphasis was placed on instructional improvement. Other issues and events did occur during each period and were reported.

Conclusions

Conclusions in an historical study do not have the same statistical significance which would be found in quantitative research. A major portion of the research method is the human element in the form of the historian. Conclusions are thus broad generalizations based on the review and study of a multitude of sources both primary and secondary. The resulting conclusions of this study are as follows:

First, the rapid growth resulted in an impact on the Millard Public Schools in the form of magnifying issues. This enlargement of issues made the solutions all that much more difficult.

Second, the more the school district grew as a suburban district, the more urban traits it developed. Suburban districts are not immune from problems associated with large urban districts such as drugs or crime. The increased size of the district resulted in many of the same societal problems found in larger inner city school districts.

Third, the educational administrative leadership required during such rapid growth must be flexible. Such leaders need to be administrators who are

broad generalists in their early years of employment with a growing district. Additionally, these leaders need to be able to specialize as the district matures. Change must be embraced by the administrators because the growth factor makes change inevitable.

Fourth, to sustain the fiscal needs of a rapidly growing suburban school district, the active participation of local citizens in the school district is essential. Such participation can range from the use of school facilities for meetings or athletic facilities to the inclusion of citizens on school district task force committees. This participation must be coupled with a strong public relations program that keeps the issues in front of the district patrons.

Fifth, the larger a school district becomes, the more the school district is subject to outside forces beyond its control. The Board and administrative leadership contended with many issues beyond their control that were mandated by state or national governments. Conversely, growth required that the district leadership become active in the political process at large in order to control the school district's destiny. Additionally, the larger the size of a community, the greater the number of people of like interests and concerns. In turn, such groups become more organized and exert greater influence on decisions made regarding education.

Sixth, growth has an impact on the community's identity. Beyond the annexation of the political entity of Millard as a village or city, the growth from one to two high schools served to divide the old Millard community at large, while at the same time each high school became a new source of community identification.

Seventh, the professional staff and citizens of the Millard Public schools developed a student focused school system. Often the school district was

practicing innovations in education before they were innovations because such strategies were good for the education of the youth involved. Throughout the period studied, both the citizen and the professional leadership of the school district exhibited a strong commitment to provide a quality education for the “boys and girls”¹ of the community. School districts are more than numbers of students, buildings, curriculums, budgets, and instruction. School districts are about people as the history of the Millard school district demonstrates.

Eighth, the assumption that a history of the Millard school district existed was correct in that the researcher found sufficient resources to compile a history. The availability of such resources was not evident at the onset of this study. More importantly, the history is a rich one full of examples for future generations to study regarding suburban growth.

Ninth, in addition to the historical skills needed to complete such research, a broad background in all facets of education was necessary on the part of the researcher. The possession of historical research skills alone would have severely limited this study. Information gained throughout the doctoral program of study ranging from business management to curriculum to school law was necessary to better understand the past of the school district.

Tenth, as much as we think we might know about the past, there is more that we do not know. The availability of persons who were a part of the history of the district resulted in a more complete history than would have been the case had such living sources not been available. If this study were to be

¹This terminology was used repeatedly by the people interviewed in this research. I believe the terminology is indicative of how the district leadership approached education within the school district. The people interviewed did not use students or kids, they preferred boys and girls and what was the best education for these girls and boys.

conducted fifty years in the future, the net result would have been much different in content and truth.

The conclusions represent not only information gained from research itself but also about the process. The latter, I believe can only be gained through being placed in the role of an educational historian.

Recommendations for Further Study

The study of the suburban growth of the Millard Public Schools is the study of only one such school district in the greater metropolitan area of Omaha. Other Omaha suburban districts, such as Ralston, Westside, Papillion-La Vista, and Bellevue need to be studied for similarities and differences from those experienced by the Millard district. For example, a study of the Bellevue would have to include research regarding federal funding due to the air force base, while a study of Papillion-La Vista would need to consider the impact of the merger of two school districts from different municipalities.

The present study ends with the advent of a new superintendent for the school district. This new leadership was the first such change in over three decades. Review and study of the impact of such a change needs to be studied for better understanding of the impact of suburban growth.

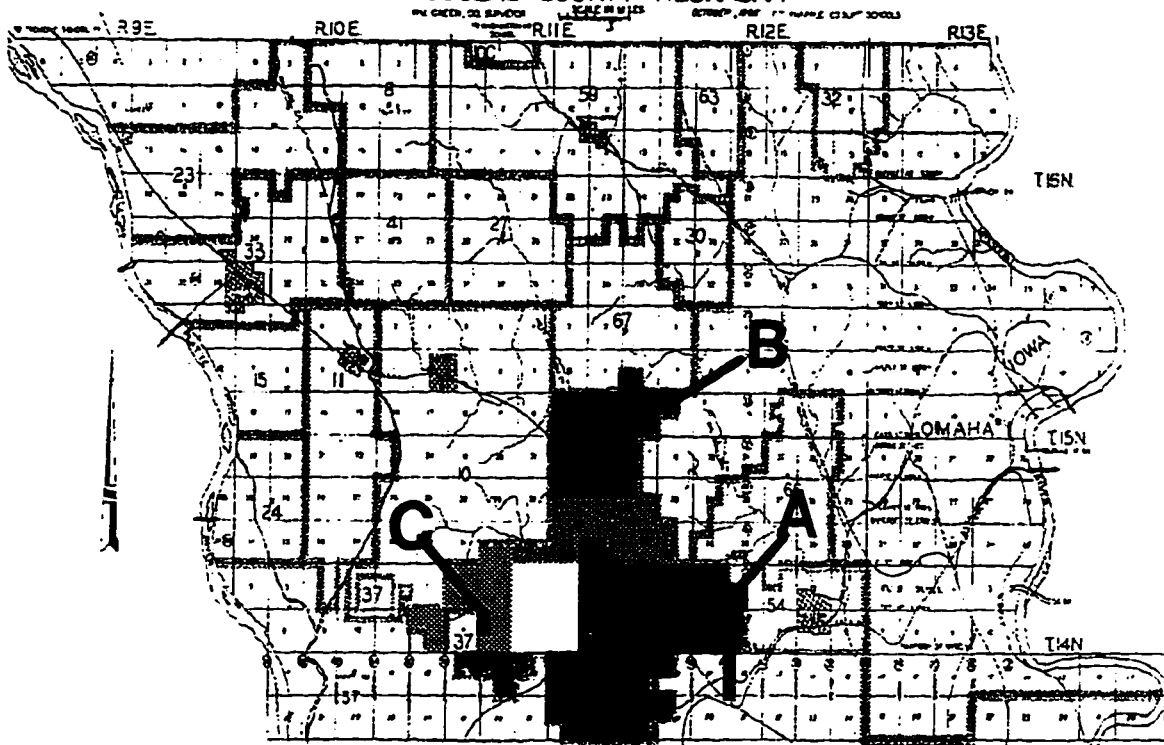
Summary

The history of the suburban growth of the Millard Public Schools is an epoch rich in sources of study regarding administrative, curricular, and instructional issues. Each period was different due to local, state, national, and international events. Educational problems and solutions existed throughout the years studied. Those problems and solutions were based on the needs of a

dynamic school system reacting to suburban growth along with other political, social, and economic elements. Historiographical methods can be used to study such a dynamic system and generalizations can be concluded. This study is only the beginning in that ample venues and case specific issues for further studies in suburban school growth exist. Finally, beyond the research and the results, there exists an interesting story independent of what the story teaches.

APPENDIX I.

SCHOOL DISTRICT MAP DOUGLAS COUNTY NEBRASKA



Original Millard School District - Douglas County School District Number 17

Bloomfield - Douglas County School District Number 18

(Unknown) Douglas County School District Number 25

Chalco - Sarpy County School District Number 25

Willowdale - Douglas County School District Number 45

(Unknown) Douglas County School District Number 12

Lane - Douglas County School District Number 18

(Unknown) Douglas and Sarpy County School District Number J-2

Portal Individual Farms Transferred to Millard in the 1960s

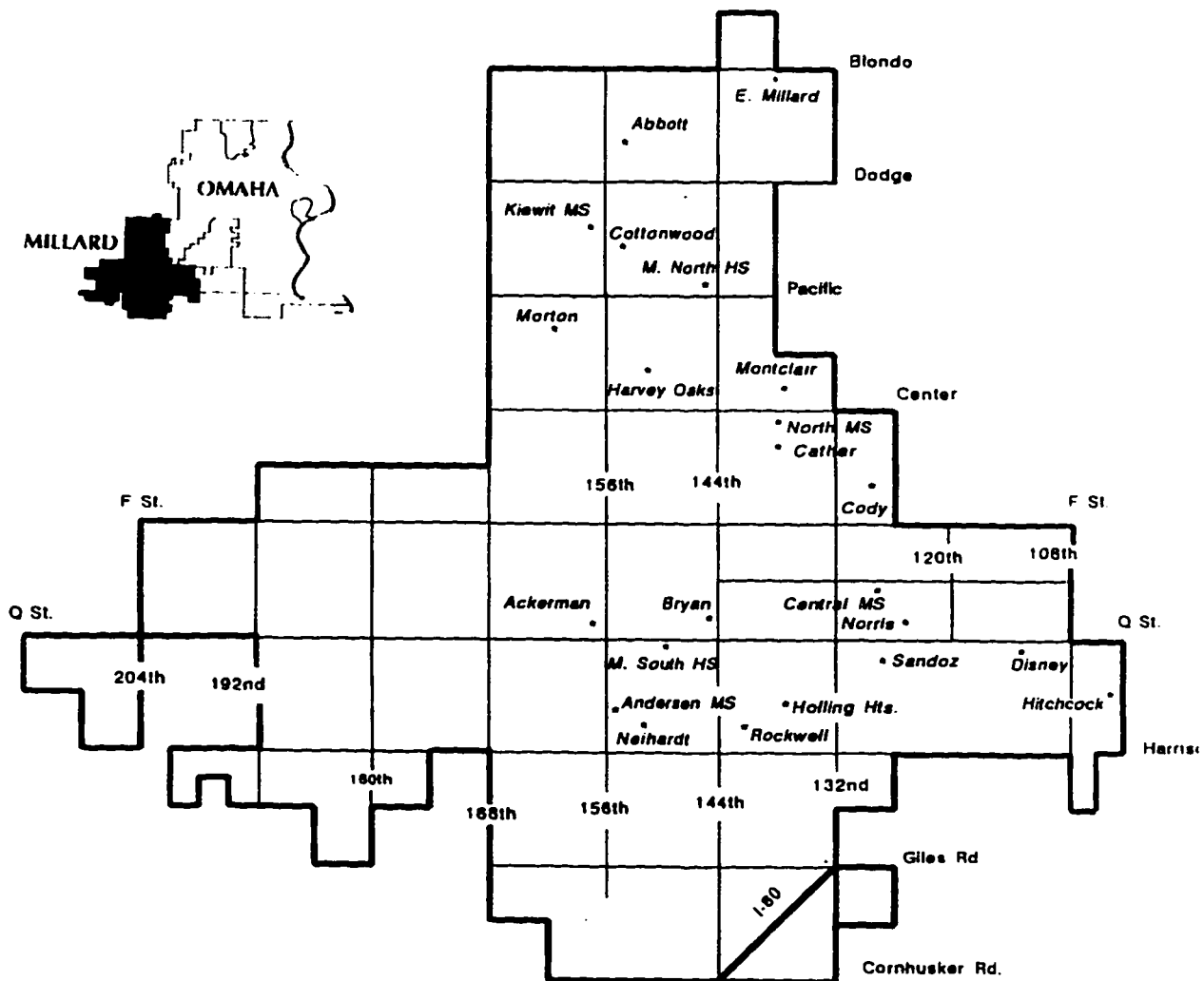
A
B
C

Land Transferred to Ralston Public Schools to Straighten Boundary in 1968

Land Transferred to Omaha Public Schools in 1972

Land Transferred from the Former Douglas County District Number 12 in 1975

Millard Public Schools in 1989



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