I chose three staff members that I felt could give me unique perspectives on the Fowler community. Each of these individuals have been in Fowler for quite some time offering a long-term perspective on how things have changed in the school over the years. During my time at Fowler Middle School, I perceived Miriam Ibanez, Carly Stratton, and Sam Sharp to be prominent and visible leaders within the school in various ways.

Miriam Ibanez was my cooperating teacher during my student teaching hours. Ms. Ibanez teaches 7th grade Language Arts and Drama, and has been with the school for 9 years. A well-known actress in the area, Miriam is involved in many after-school activities with the students. Every year Miriam directs a play that is performed by Fowler Middle School students. She is also usually in charge of introducing major speakers who come to the school, such as Holocaust survivors, Les and Eva Aigner. Miriam also runs a talent show for an end-of-the-year performance in front of the school.

During the interview, I asked Miriam how she has seen Fowler change over the years. She explained that Fowler used to have teaching “teams” that ceased about 3 years ago. Miriam believes that the teams were a good thing and helped the teachers work as a whole more effectively. Now she feels like there is more work, less planning time, less cooperation, and higher frustration amongst the teachers. According to Miriam, another significant change has been a greater emphasis on testing. She believes this takes the focus away from the individual student success and puts it more on overall objective score improvement.

The second person I selected to interview was Carly Stratton, Media Assistant (a.k.a. Librarian). I chose Ms. Stratton because she is the go-to person at Fowler Middle School for teachers and students. Her unique position, literally in the middle of the school provides her with a unique perspective on the school atmosphere. Carly keeps track of everything, for everyone. If you have a question, Carly can most likely answer it for you. She has worked at Fowler for 17 years, longer than almost anyone. She has also had three of her own children attend Fowler over the years.

During my interview with Carly, I also asked how she has seen Fowler change over the years. Carly mentioned that the district boundaries have changed. When that happened, Fowler lost students and funding. Because of that, Carly believes that the school has gone downhill somewhat. Another change she mentioned, was the move away from teaching “teams” and also school “regions”. I was a little confused by this concept, but apparently, before teams there were also regions. This physically divided the school into separate regions. She described it as a school within a school. This created camaraderie within the regions, and the sense of being a tight community, however it also instigated a bit of conflict. Carly feels like the students were better supported through teams and regions, however, and believes that the new structure, or lack of structure has caused a bit of chaos.

The third person I interviewed was Sam Sharp. Sharp is by far the most visible person in the school. He is omnipresent. You see him everywhere, yet he is impossible to find when you need him. Mr. Sharp’s official title is Alternative Education & Athletic Activities Coordinator. Sam has been working at Fowler for 9 years. During that time he has done everything from teaching Social Studies, Science, Woodshop, P.E., and even created the current pottery program for the school. Sam is loved by every student. They seem to trust him with their problems more than they do anyone else. His classroom seems to be the “safe zone” for the kids that struggle with Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD), Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), and various behavioral and learning challenges.

During the interview, Sam also mentioned that the school had moved away from teams and regions. He also seemed to think it wasn’t the best move for the well-being of the students. Sam seems overwhelmed. He said that he has no time for prep., no time for lunch, and is constantly juggling at least three things at once. Despite being overworked, Sam seems to love what he does. He would like to have more one-on-one time with students, but he also likes to take on additional responsibilities and help out the students, staff, and parents in whatever way possible. One day he intends to go back to school to become a principal, but he says he’s not ready yet and can’t picture himself ever leaving Fowler.