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CHAPTER FOUR

Reframing the School Reform Agenda: Developing Capacity for School Transformation

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Over the last decade, the rhetoric of school improvement has changed from a language of school reform to a language of school restructuring.[1] Efforts to make our current education system perform more efficiently have shifted to initiatives that aim for fundamental redesign of schools, of approaches to teaching and learning, and of goals for schooling. Just as the last century's transformation from an agrarian society to an industrial one made the one-room schoolhouse obsolete, replacing it with today's large school bureaucracies, so this century's movement into a high-technology Information Age demands a new kind of education and new forms of school organization.

There is little room in today's society for those who cannot manage complexity, find and use resources, and continually learn new technologies, approaches, and occupations. In contrast to low-skilled work on assembly lines, which was designed from above and implemented with routine procedures from below, tomorrow's work sites will require employees to frame problems, design their own tasks, plan, construct, evaluate outcomes, and cooperate in finding novel solutions to problems (Drucker, 1986). Increasing social complexity also demands citizens who can understand and evaluate multidimensional problems and alternatives and who can manage ever more demanding social systems.

These changes signal a new mission for education: one that requires schools not merely to "deliver instructional services" but to ensure that all students learn at high levels. In turn, the teacher's job is no longer to "cover the curriculum" but to enable diverse learners to construct their own knowledge and develop their talents in effective and powerful ways.

This changed mission for education requires a new model for school reform, one in which policymakers shift their efforts from designing controls intended to direct the system to developing the capacity of schools and teachers to be responsible for student learning and responsive to student and community needs, interests, and concerns. Capacity building requires different policy tools and different approaches to producing, sharing, and using knowledge than those traditionally used throughout this century.

COMPETING MODELS OF POLICYMAKING

Over the last decade, hundreds of pieces of legislation have sought to improve schools by adding course requirements, increasing testing requirements, mandating new curriculum guidelines, and requiring new management processes for schools and districts. Similar reforms during the 1970s had tried to "teacher-proof" schooling by centralizing textbook adoptions, mandating curriculum guides for each grade level and subject area, and developing rules and tests governing how children should be tracked into programs and promoted from grade to grade.

These efforts are the most recent expressions of a model of school reform put into place at the turn of the 20th century—a model grounded in the view of schools as bureaucracies run by carefully specified procedures that yield standard products (students). Based on a faith in rationalistic organizational behavior, in the power of rules to direct human action, and in the ability of researchers to discover the common procedures that will produce desired outcomes, 20th-century school reform has assumed that changing the design specifications for schoolwork will change the nature of the education that is delivered in classrooms—and will do so in the ways desired by policymakers.

This model fits with a behavioristic view of learning as the management of stimulus and response, easily controlled from outside the classroom by identifying exactly what is to be learned and breaking it up into small, sequential bits. However, we now know that, far from being "blank slates" waiting to accumulate pieces of information, learners actively construct their own knowledge in very different ways depending on what they already know or understand to be true, what they have experienced, and how they perceive and interpret new information. Furthermore, they construct this knowledge in a much more holistic and experiential fashion than is assumed by the sequenced teaching packages, worksheets, texts, and basal readers typical of the old approach to teaching and learning (Curtis and Glaser, 1981; Gardner, 1983; Resnick, 1987).

To foster meaningful learning, teachers must construct experiences that

allow students to confront powerful ideas whole. They must create bridges between the very different experiences of individual learners and the common curriculum goals. They must use a variety of approaches to build on the conceptions, cultures, interests, motivations, and learning modes of their students. They must understand how their students think as well as what they know.

This more complex approach to teaching requires that teachers combine deep knowledge of subject matter and a wide repertoire of teaching strategies with intimate knowledge of students' growth, experience, and development (Berliner, 1986; Carter & Doyle, 1987; Doyle, 1978; Piaget, 1970; Shulman, 1987). Furthermore, if schools are to be responsive to the different needs and talents of diverse learners, they must be organized to allow for variability rather than assume uniformity. Teachers must diversify their practice so that they can engage each of their students in whatever ways are necessary to encourage their learning.

These tasks suggest a radically different approach to educational improvement. Rather than seek to make the current system of schooling perform more efficiently by standardizing practice, school reform efforts must focus on building the capacity of schools and teachers to undertake tasks they have never before been called upon to accomplish. Schools and teachers must work to ensure that all students learn to think critically, to invent, to produce, and to solve problems. Because this goal requires responding to students' nonstandardized needs, it far exceeds what teacher-proof curricula or administrator-proof management processes could ever accomplish.

Reforms that rely on the transformative power of individuals to rethink their practice and to redesign their institutions can be accomplished only by investing in individual and organizational learning, in the human capital of the educational enterprise—the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of teachers and administrators, as well as parents and community members. The new reforms also demand attention to equity in the distribution of those educational resources that build school capacity, including well-qualified teachers supported by adequate materials and decent conditions for teaching and learning. The dramatic inequalities that currently exist in American schools cannot be addressed by pretending that mandating and measuring are the same thing as improving schools.

The shift in our approach to school reform began during what has come to be known as the second wave of reform in the 1980s, which emphasized the need to improve education by decentralizing and professionalizing teaching, by investing in the knowledge and skills of educators rather than in prescriptions for uniform practice. In response, many states and districts have begun to experiment with decentralized decision-making structures, such as site-based management and shared decision-making. If these innovations are to succeed, however, they require highly educated and well-prepared teachers who can make sound decisions about curriculum, teaching, and school policy.

Indeed, all the solutions to the problems cited by education's critics are constrained by the availability of talented teachers, by the knowledge and capacities those teachers possess, and by the school conditions that define how that knowledge can be used. Raising graduation requirements in mathematics, science, and foreign languages, for example, is of little use if we do not have an adequate number of qualified teachers prepared to teach those subjects. Exhortations to improve students' higher-order thinking will accomplish little without able teachers who know how to engender such thinking and who teach in an environment that supports rather than undermines such learning. Concerns about "at-risk" children—those who drop out, tune out, and fall behind—cannot be addressed without teachers who are prepared to understand and meet the needs of students who come to school with varying learning styles, from diverse family situations, and with differing beliefs about themselves and about what school means for them.

Although these arguments may sound persuasive, it is important to realize that American education has been down this path before. The criticisms of current education reformers—that our schools provide most children with an education that is too rigid, too passive, and too rote-oriented to produce learners who can think critically, synthesize and transform, experiment and create—are virtually identical to those of the Progressives at the turn of the century, in the 1930s, and again in the 1960s. Many current reforms were pursued in each of these eras: interdisciplinary curriculum; team teaching; cooperative learning; the use of projects, portfolios, and other "alternative assessments"; and a "thinking" curriculum aimed at developing higher-order performances and cognitive skills. Indeed, with the addition of a few computers, John Dewey's 1900 vision of the 20th-century ideal[2] is virtually identical to current scenarios for 21st-century schools (Dewey, 1900/1968).

These efforts, aimed at more child-centered teaching and more universal, high-quality education, were killed by underinvestment in teacher knowledge and school capacity. Lawrence Cremin argues that "Progressive education . . . demanded infinitely skilled teachers, and it failed because such teachers could not be recruited in sufficient numbers" (1965, p. 56). Because of this failure, in each of its iterations Progressivism gave way to standardizing influences: the efficiency movement of the 1920s, the teacher-proof curricula of the 1950s, and the "back to the basics" movement of the 1970s and 1980s. Disappointment with the outcomes of these attempts at rationalizing school procedures led in each instance to renewed criticisms of schools and attempts to restructure them. Current efforts at school reform are also likely to fail unless they are built on a foundation of teaching knowledge and are sustained by a commitment to structural rather than merely symbolic change.

At this moment, we have two very different theories of school reform working in parallel—and sometimes at cross-purposes throughout the U.S. The first focuses on tightening the controls: more courses, more tests, more directive curricula, more standards enforced by more rewards and more sanctions. Some versions of recent national testing proposals follow this model, as do several states' versions of school reform legislation. These approaches essentially assume that the basic problem is a lack of focus, direction, and effort on the part of school people. In organizational management terms, this is the Theory X of school policy.

The second theory attends more to the capacities of teachers, and to the development of schools as inquiring, collaborative organizations, than to changes in mandated curricula or management systems. Policies built on this theory include efforts to strengthen teacher education, licensing, and certification processes; to create knowledge-building institutions such as professional development schools; to decentralize school decision-making while supporting teacher learning; to rethink local assessment practices; and to create networks of teachers and schools. While this model of educational improvement emerges, however, the old one remains in force, and the education system is pulled in opposite directions.

A COLLISION COURSE FOR SCHOOL CHANGE

There are many examples of these opposing forces. One is apparent in heavily regulated New York State, where a new "Compact for Learning" exhorts schools to set their own goals, to engage in school-based rethinking and redesign, to develop alternative assessments of student learning, to "teach for understanding" through interdisciplinary team teaching and cooperative learning, and to develop more personalized learning environments. Yet at the same time the curriculum is straitjacketed by Regents courses and testing requirements, which are not interdisciplinary or inquiry-based, and by directive syllabi that often maintain the view that teaching means transmitting information to be memorized within the context of traditional age-graded, single-discipline compartments. Practitioners are well aware that there is an unresolved tension between the policy framework that currently exists and the policy desires that are being voiced in the rhetoric of school-based reform. Until the new vision is more fully enacted, practitioners, parents, and students will live in a state of policy conflict.

Top-down directives are based on the presumption that teachers cannot be trusted to make sound decisions about curriculum and teaching. Clearly, school-led innovations will require knowledge building for at least two purposes: to enable more challenging forms of teaching and to disarm negative presumptions about teachers. Meanwhile, however, capacity-building mech-

anisms—such as staff development programs, teacher education im ments, and supports for school change—are funded much less well t activities designed to control the curriculum. Recently, New York Sta mentor teacher program and its teacher centers, which had formed the l rock of the state's professional development program, were eliminated round of budget cuts. The experience in many other states is similar: Ar tious and well-intentioned reforms are enacted while opportunities people to learn new practices are being cut back.

Ironically, the understandings about human learning that have inforr the development of new approaches to curriculum do not appear to h informed the process of policy implementation yet. Teachers are expec to change their beliefs, knowledge, and actions as a result of a change p cess that consists primarily of the issuance of a statement and the adopt of new regulations or curriculum packages. This approach to policy im mentation clearly cannot achieve the goals of reform.

The responses of school practitioners to policies depend on a wide ar of environmental factors: local resources, student needs, community exp tations for schools, competing priorities and ideologies, and previou passed policies, many of which stand as direct or indirect obstacles to pursuit of the intentions of new policies. Speaking of teachers' encount with newly arrived "improvements," Penelope Peterson (1990) notes, "T pedagogical slate is never clean."

A massive geological dig would be required to unearth the tangled fluences that created the many layers of policy that people in schools m now contend with. These influences make the serious implementation new policies difficult, even impossible, without excavation and reform what has gone before.

One example is the set of recently developed curriculum frameworks California that aim to promote a more conceptual, constructivist approa to teaching and learning. Researchers who examined the implementation the new mathematics framework discovered that it had collided with seve existing policies. One was the state system of standardized testing, whi values algorithmic knowledge and rote performances rather than the deeper understandings sought by the new framework. As one teacher plained:

> Teaching for understanding is what we are supposed to be doing. . . . It's di cult to test, folks. That is the bottom line. . . . They want me to teach in a w that they can't test. Except that I'm held accountable to the test. It's a Catch 2 (Wilson, 1990, p. 318)

Not only is the kind of teaching required to achieve the goals of th mathematics framework different from that required for the goals of the cu

rent standardized tests, but the type of teaching that allows students to puzzle and delve deeply, to experience and explore alternatives, may require tradeoffs—at least in the short term—between breadth and depth of content coverage. The same teacher reads and comments on a statement from the framework: "'Teaching for understanding . . . takes longer to learn.' Hey, if I were spending the time to really get these kids to learn it, I might be several pages back" (Wilson, 1990, p. 318).

This is the reality of classroom life in most schools, where the press of teaching is "getting through" the curriculum, even if the students are being left behind (or left numb and unengaged) as the curriculum marches on, page by page and day by day. Contrast this approach with the mathematics curriculum framework in Japan, which, for a major portion of an entire year of the early middle grades, focuses on "deepening the understanding of integer." It assumes that the goal is to learn to think mathematically rather than to cover large numbers of problems, memorizing facts and algorithms along the way.

A second policy collision is occasioned by the earlier introduction in a number of California districts of certain "direct instruction" models for teaching and teacher evaluation. The Achievement for Basic Skills program is used in some schools, and Madeline Hunter's Instructional Theory into Practice model is used in others. Where such programs constitute heavy influences on teaching and evaluation, teachers feel that they constrain their abilities to use student-centered, inquiry-oriented strategies of instruction. Both of these models I've mentioned assume a teacher-directed classroom, structured by brisk presentations of lessons followed by guided practice and evaluation of mastery. The models' implicit view of teaching and learning is quite different from one that envisions a classroom in which exploration guides students to their own discovery and testing of concepts, and right answers are not the only goal of instruction.

Although teachers could sense the curricular conflict that had been produced by this layering of policies, neither the state nor the districts seemed particularly aware of the dilemma or were prepared to help teachers deal with it. Where instructional policies are enacted at the state level, local districts do not have the authority to resolve the discrepancies between conflicting state mandates.

This can create a kind of Alice in Wonderland world in which people ultimately begin to nod blithely at the inevitability of incompatible events—a world in which educators cease to try to make sense of their environment for themselves as professionals or for their students. They have to explain to students the procedures and policies that students encounter only in terms of what some faceless, external, and presumably nonrational "they" say we have to do.

When teachers are unable to help students make sense of the school environment, the students (and often their teachers as well) become alienated. Young people are very good at identifying things that do not "make sense" and rejecting them. They find other ways by which they will organize *their time, their thinking, and their lives.* Solving the problem of contradictory policies is a prerequisite for solving the problems of student engagement and learning in schools.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE COMPETING MODELS

The two very different streams of policy that are creating such cognitive dissonance in teachers stem from radically different notions of how students learn and what is required for effective teaching.[3] In one view, students are raw materials to be "processed" by schools according to specifications defined by schedules, programs, courses, and exit tests. Teachers administer the procedures to the students assigned to them using the tools they are given: textbooks, curriculum guidelines, lists of objectives, course syllabi. Correctly defining the procedures is the key to educational improvement. If the outcomes are not satisfactory, the solution is to provide more detailed prescriptions for practice and to monitor implementation more carefully.

There are no problems of practice in this view. There are only problems of implementation. As a consequence, we have created a superstructure of regulatory offices that prescribe a variety of practices and design a range of programs; they inspect and monitor, receive reports and audit them. In addition to reducing options for meeting students' needs, this approach drains resources out of classrooms into peripheral offices at the edges of the core teaching/learning enterprise: Only half of education professionals are classroom teachers, and a much smaller share of our total resources makes its way to classrooms than is true in most other industrialized countries (Darling-Hammond, 1990). These countries invest more in supporting the work of "frontline workers" in schools than in trying to inspect, monitor, and control that work.

Because this view assumes that students are standardized and that educational treatments can be prescribed, it does not view teachers as needing expertise. Thus most major teaching decisions are handed down through policy and encapsulated in packaged teaching materials. It is better that teachers not be especially "empowered," because correct implementation depends on a certain degree of uniformity controlled from above. There is no rationale in this conception of teaching for substantial teacher preparation, induction, or professional development, aside from "in-servicing" designed to ensure more exact implementation of prescribed teaching procedures.

There is no need and little use for professional knowledge and judgment, or for collegial consultation and planning.

As a consequence of this view, "real teaching" in American schools consists of teaching large groups of students, often one after another in 5 or 6 batches of 30. Anything else that a teacher does is considered "released time." Time is rarely available for planning, for working with other colleagues on changes in the school organization, for meeting individually with students or parents, or for working on the development of curriculum or assessment measures—activities that are not considered part of the teacher's main job.

In contrast, teachers in most countries work with large groups of students 15 to 20 hours per week and spend the other 20 to 30 hours per week working individually with students and parents, planning and consulting with other teachers, and developing curriculum and assessments. The conception of teaching in these countries assumes that collegial work is the basis for instructional decisions and actions rather than that individual assembly-line workers process "products" passing by on a conveyor belt.

It is the logic of our assembly-line approach to teaching that has allowed U.S. policymakers to avoid investing substantial resources in teacher preparation or teacher salaries. U.S. teacher preparation programs typically spend less per student than other schools or departments in most of our universities (Ehmeier, Twombly, and Teeter, 1990). U.S. teachers earn about 30% less than other college-educated workers with the same amount of experience. There is no need to invest in rigorous preparation of teachers if there is nothing of value to be learned. There is no reason to attend to the abilities of those recruited and retained in teaching if these are only marginally related to the outcomes of schooling. If we can fix teaching by developing better regulations, there is no need to produce better-educated teachers.

One of the most extreme versions of this viewpoint has been implemented in one of the nation's largest urban school districts, in which teachers are supplied with a K–12 standardized curriculum outlining the scope and sequence for instruction in each subject in each grade, complete with a pacing schedule showing how much time teachers should spend on each topic as well as lesson plans for each day of the school year. Grading standards are also prescribed, showing how much weight teachers should give to each type of assignment (the assignments are also specified) and how they should calculate grades. Promotion standards are determined by standardized tests, which are developed to match the curriculum. The assumption is that marching the students through these procedures is all that is necessary to ensure learning.

The second view of teaching and learning, the view that underpins the new paradigm for school reform, starts from the assumptions that students are not standardized and teaching is not routine. Consonant with recent research on teaching and learning, this view acknowledges that effective teaching techniques will vary for students with different learning styles, differently developed intelligences, or at different stages of cognitive and psychological development; for different subject areas; and for different instructional goals. Far from following standardized instructional packages, teachers must base their judgments on knowledge of learning theory and pedagogy, of child development and cognition, and of curriculum and assessment. They must then connect this knowledge to the understandings, dispositions, and conceptions that individual students bring with them to the classroom.

Thinking about teaching and learning along these lines suggests a very different approach to education reform. It also suggests a very different relationship between research and practice—and between researchers and practitioners. Among the major sources of conflict in the history of educational research in this century are issues concerning the types of knowledge sought and the uses to which knowledge should be put. Is the goal to discover unvarying relationships between educational processes and outcomes and then to use that knowledge to create the "one best system" of educational practice and thus control curriculum and teaching (Tyack, 1974)? Or is knowledge to be used for illuminating the complexities of human learning for the purpose of enriching teachers' own thinking about their practice, and empowering them to see teaching and learning through many lenses?

In the first instance, researchers produce knowledge for policymakers and administrators, who use it to create the right design specifications. They then "impart" knowledge, usually in memo form or on in-service training days, to teachers who are to absorb it and use it in fairly straightforward ways. In the second instance, knowledge is produced with and for teachers.

John Dewey's quest for the sources of a "science of education" was motivated by the desire to enrich the teacher's capacity for understanding and intelligent decision-making rather than to control the teacher's behavior. Dewey argued that those who thought scientific study would ultimately result in a "uniformity of procedure" misunderstood the problem:

> Command of scientific methods and systematized subject matter liberates individuals; it enables them to see new problems, devise new procedures, and in general, makes for diversification rather than for set uniformity. . . . This knowledge and understanding render [the teacher's] practice more intelligent, more flexible, and better adapted to deal effectively with concrete phenomena of practice. . . . Seeing more relations he sees more possibilities, more opportunities. His ability to judge being enriched, he has a wider range of alternatives to select from in dealing with individual situations. (1929, pp. 12, 20–21)

Contrary to the efforts of many recent reforms to translate research findings into uniform and unvarying rules for practice, Dewey argued that "no conclusion of scientific research can be converted into an immediate rule of

educational art." Educational practice, according to Dewey, is always highly complex and contains "many other conditions and factors than are included in the scientific finding. The significance of one factor for educational practice can be determined only as it is balanced with many other factors" (1929, pp. 12, 20–21).

This is essentially the same conclusion Lee Cronbach and others reached when they investigated the relationships between specific teaching treatments and student outcomes, even after adjusting for "aptitudes" or characteristics of students. Cronbach discovered that interaction effects that may be identified from research on teaching are not confined to easily translatable two- or even three-way interactions, thus limiting the prospects of achieving generalizable rules for practice:

> An ATI [aptitude-treatment interaction] result can be taken as a general conclusion only if it is not in turn moderated by further variables. . . . Once we attend to interactions, we enter a hall of mirrors that extends to infinity. (1975, p. 119)

Cronbach concluded that the search for empirical generalizations "in a world in which most effects are interactive" should give way to "response-sensitive" research, which takes exceptions seriously and makes continual adjustments on the basis of individual, context-specific responses.

This is precisely what teachers must do every day. They must adapt and respond on the basis of individual needs and interactions to a complex, ever-changing set of circumstances—taking into account the real knowledge and experiences of learners, including their cultures, their communities, and the conditions in which they live. Yet this is what many current school reform policies seek to prevent teachers from doing.

In addition to highly prescriptive curriculum and testing policies, such as those described above, the prescriptive policies for teacher evaluation that exist in many states actually impede teachers from teaching responsively and effectively. One such policy, adopted in several states, requires that teachers be rated as "ineffective" for engaging in practices that take into account the needs and interests of their students (Darling-Hammond with Sclan, 1992). Despite research that suggests the importance of linking classroom work to students' personal experiences, the Florida Performance Measurement System (FPMS) codes as "ineffective" any teacher questions that "call for personal opinion or that are answered from personal experience." The coding manual notes that "these questions may sometimes serve useful or even necessary purposes; however, they should be tallied here [in the ineffective column] since they do not move the class work along academically" (Florida State Department of Education, 1989, p. 5b).

Even though the research underlying the development of the FPMS was assembled in a very thoughtful and carefully reasoned research summary, the instrument itself frequently contravenes these findings. Rather than try to put the research knowledge into the hands of teachers for use in making complex judgments, the policy sought to summarize it in a few simple and unvarying rules for practice to be used in the administrative control of teaching.

The FPMS, which has been borrowed by a number of other states, is littered with statements suggesting that beginning teachers should be prepared to be insensitive to the students they teach and ignorant of a broader knowledge base on teaching. Robert Floden and Hans Klinzing's conclusion is on the mark:

> Training teachers to follow a fixed set of prescriptions discourages teachers from adapting their instruction to the particular subjects and students they are teaching. Hence, the instructional effectiveness of teachers given such training is unlikely to be at a high level. (1990, pp. 16–17)

A 21ST-CENTURY MODEL OF SCHOOL REFORM

If we are to move to a new model of school reform, we must reframe the reform agenda by reducing prescriptions for practice while investing in new forms of professional development, policy development, and political development.

Professional Development

Supporting the type of practitioner knowledge that can inform teachers' judgments in complex situations is critical. Such knowledge can be sustained through continued investment in and strengthening of preservice teacher education as well as through investment in ongoing professional development. One of the most puzzling funding decisions by legislatures, government agencies, and foundations is the frequent conclusion that limited resources should be spent exclusively on in-service teacher education—sprinkling tiny droplets of resources among 110,000 individual schools—rather than on concentrated efforts to improve schools of education, only 500 of which prepare 80% of teachers in this country.

The issue of teacher preparation is particularly important today, because there will be 2.5 million classroom vacancies to be filled over the next decade—and nearly the same number in the following decade. It would be shortsighted not to seize this opportunity to improve teacher education programs so that all of them can prepare reflective practitioners, able to teach students knowledgeably and responsively. Efforts to restructure teacher education by redesigning curriculum and establishing professional development

schools are already underway in Holmes Group institutions and many others. If accreditation and licensing standards are strengthened and a commitment is made to invest in program development, all institutions that educate teachers should be enabled to prepare teachers for learner-centered schools.

The new emphases in teacher education will be enhanced by research and development efforts that generate and disseminate knowledge that is useful *to* teachers and constructed *with* teachers. Continued research that digs deeply into the textures of teaching and the nuances of teachers' thinking will augment our understanding of subject matter pedagogy; of curriculum-building; of teacher learning; of student learning; of links between intelligence, performance, assessment, and classroom practice; and of successful teacher education. Such research can also help create more meaningful and sensitive assessments of teachers' knowledge for licensing, certification, and evaluation systems.

At the same time, policymakers and practitioners need to find ways to support collegial discourse and inquiry in schools. Teachers should have opportunities to engage in peer coaching, team planning and teaching, and collaborative research that enables teachers to construct new means for inquiring into their practice. Participation in professional communities through school and teacher networks also deepens teachers' understanding.

Ann Lieberman and Milbrey McLaughlin note that teacher networks—such as the Foxfire Teacher Networks, the Urban Mathematics Collaboratives, and the North Dakota Study Group—can transform practice and create professional communities by inspiring teachers to solve problems, take risks, assume ownership of their teaching, and exercise leadership in their schools. Lieberman and McLaughlin comment:

> The context in which educational change is pursued is everything. Many policies are based on assumptions about contexts for reform that do not take into account the alternative that networks offer. Instead of targeting individuals and attempting to provide them with new skills or perspectives, networks concentrate on building communities of teacher learners. It is thus critical that policy makers and others approach teacher networks not from the standpoint of management and control, but from that of the norms and agreements of communal relations. (1992, p. 677)

This collective perspective has to permeate the entire process of organizational development in order to create schools that can focus on learners.

Policy Development

State licensing and evaluation standards that embody conceptions of the type of teacher knowledge needed for adaptive and reflective practice are key

to building the foundation of a new model of school reform. In addition to redesigned preprofessional programs, internship opportunities in restructured schools are crucial for new teachers; ideally, they should occur in professional development schools. Minnesota is the first state to require—and to begin to fund—such opportunities. A number of other states are considering doing so.

Policies that will build capacity in schools must include the equalization of school funding, so that adequate investments will be made in the capacity of all schools to offer a thinking curriculum and to employ well-qualified and well-supported teachers. Without such investments, current rhetoric about "world-class standards" and new kinds of assessment will perpetrate yet another cruel hoax on children in schools that haven't the remotest chance of offering "world-class" education with the resources they command.

Policies can also promote organizational development by supporting dialogue and shared decision-making, along with opportunities for professional development and reflection. Policies should encourage and allow schools to structure shared planning time for teachers to engage in dialogue about practice and for collective inquiry into what is working well and how students can be better served. States and districts should also fund time for teacher development outside the boundaries of the traditional school year. For example, South Carolina funds an additional 10 days per year for teachers to engage in planning and professional development.

Political Development

By "political development," I mean the ways in which groups of people develop shared goals and understandings—a broad consensus about the kind of education they want for children. Schools today largely function by submerging talk about those things that are likely to be most controversial—and thus are likely to be most important. Debates about the most fundamental concerns of teaching and learning are typically squashed—or tacitly agreed to be out of line—in faculty meetings, parent/teacher organization meetings, and other gatherings of members of the school community.

Schools have tried to implement bureaucratic rules and procedures by burying the dialogue that would allow real problems to emerge. A fragile agreement to maintain the silence allows us to keep on going without struggling to determine what we want from our students and what that requires from our schools. Consequently, we have failed to form true communities in most of our educational institutions.

The foundation of genuine accountability—one of the most frequently used words in the school reform lexicon—is the capacity of individual schools: 1) to organize themselves to prevent students from falling through

the cracks; 2) to create means for continual collegial inquiry (in which hard questions are posed regarding what needs to change in order for individuals and groups of students to succeed); and 3) to use authority responsibly to make the changes necessary. No testing program can produce this kind of accountability. It will occur only if we find ways to empower, encourage, and allow schools to build an inquiry ethic, a community of discourse in the school, that is focused on students and their needs rather than on the implementation of rules and procedures.

This kind of accountability also requires a substantial amount of local control over school procedures and over the assessment of outcomes. One of the things we are learning in our work at NCREST (the National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools, and Teaching) is that local school engagement in developing alternative forms of student assessment turns out to be a powerful tool for organizational development.[4] There are ripple effects throughout the entire school organization when teachers begin to ask questions such as these: What do we want students to be able to do? How will we know if they can do those things? What can we develop as a means for evaluating their knowledge and abilities in an authentic way? How do we develop shared views of what constitutes competence? How will we help students get there? Ultimately, these questions drive transformative changes in curriculum, in collegial discourse, and in the ways in which the organization focuses on students.

For this reason the question of who controls assessment is one of the major dimensions of the current debate about assessment reform. Even the most challenging and thought-provoking performance-based assessments will fail to transform schools if they are externally mandated and delivered. If some significant portion of the assessment process does not support teachers, students, and parents in their efforts to define themselves as a learning community, then the possibilities for organizational change and improvement will once again be wrested away from schools. The engine for school change—the catalyst for a community's political and educational development—will have been removed once again from the local school arena, where it must reside if it is to be effective.

The Eight-Year Study, conducted by the Progressive Education Association in the 1930s, illustrates the significance of this kind of community building. During those years, a group of 30 experimental schools put in place nearly all of the various reforms we are once again talking about. Three hundred colleges and universities agreed to accept students from these schools based on teacher recommendations and student products rather than on test scores and Carnegie units. From its evaluation of nearly 1,500 matched pairs of students from experimental and nonexperimental schools, the study demonstrated that on virtually any dimension of student development and performance—from academic honors to civic and social responsibility, according to the judgments of professors, teachers, or others—the students from experimental schools outperformed those from traditional schools.

Most important, the study found that the most successful schools were characterized not by the particular innovation they had adopted but by their willingness to search and struggle in pursuit of valid objectives, new strategies, and new forms of assessment (Chamberlin et al., 1942, p. 182). It was the process of collective struggle that produced the vitality, the shared vision, and the conviction that allowed these schools to redesign education in fundamentally different ways. If the processes and outcomes of education are already defined by those outside of the schools, there is nothing left to talk about. Thus the removal of local responsibility for thinking things through deprives schools and communities of the opportunity to engage in the kind of empowering and enlivening dialogue that motivates change.

Therefore, we need policies that allow and encourage schools to engage in the kind of democratic dialogue that fosters the development of a polity, a community with shared purpose. As Dewey suggested:

> There is more than a verbal tie between the words common, community, and communication. [People] live in a community by virtue of the things which they have in common; and communication is the way in which they come to possess things in common. What they must have in common in order to form a community or society are aims, beliefs, aspirations, knowledge—a common understanding—like-mindedness as the sociologists say. Such things cannot be passed physically from one to another, like bricks; they cannot be shared as persons would share a pie by dividing it into physical pieces. . . . Consensus requires communication.
>
> Not only is social life identical with communication, but all communication (and hence all genuine social life) is educative. . . . One shares in what another has thought and felt and insofar, meagerly or amply, has his own attitude modified. . . . It may fairly be said, therefore, that any social arrangement that remains vitally social, or vitally shared, is educative to those who participate in it. (1916, pp. 4–5)

The new model for school reform must seek to develop communities of learning grounded in communities of democratic discourse. It is only in this way that communities can come to want for all of their children what they would want for their most advantaged—an education for empowerment and an education for freedom.

NOTES

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2. For example, see the Carnegie Task Force Report (1986), *Teachers for the 21st Century*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy.

3. See Linda Darling-Hammond (1988), "Two Futures of Teaching," *Educational Leadership, 46*, 4-10.

4. See Linda Darling-Hammond and Jacqueline Ancess (1996), "Authentic Assessment and School Development," in Dennie Wolf and Joan Boykoff Baron (Eds.), *95th Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education* (pp. 52-83). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

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